

The Sabbath School.

LESSONS FOR AUGUST.

FIRST SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*The Water of Life*, John 4: 5-15.

This is one of the most beautiful and instructive passages in the Gospels. It presents the tender love of Christ in such a light as should constrain every reader to exclaim, "He is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely."

V. 5.—*Sychar*, called also in scripture *Sychem* or *Shechem*. It is upwards of 30 miles North of Jerusalem, and is situated between mount Ebal on the north and Gerizim on the south. Its modern name is Neapolis or Nablous. Gen. 33: 18, 19.

V. 6.—This well has been identified, and is regarded by travellers with great interest. *The sixth hour*—12.00 noon. The day was divided into twelve hours which were reckoned from sunrise till sunset.

V. 7.—Christ asked her for a drink to arrest her attention. He thirsted for her soul more than for water and he would from a simple beginning lead her on till she received from Him the water of life. Thus Jesus says to the sinner still, "Son, give me thine heart," as if it were a boon for himself he asked. How wonderful!

V. 9.—The feud between Jew and Samaritan was of old standing. See Neh. 4: 1. For the origin of the Samaritans, see 2 Kings 17: 24-33.

V. 10.—The gift of God means either Christ Himself, or His spirit. See Ch. 7: 37-39. Thus, in an easy and natural way Christ turns this woman's attention to higher than earthly things. And Christ would have sinners now come to Him for living water. The reason why many do not come is they do not know the gift of God—they do not realize who He is that says, Come unto me.

Vv. 11, 12.—Evidently this woman did not know what Christ meant. She has low views, her affections are grovelling. How dark the mind is in a state by nature! How great the need for spiritual illumination!

Vv. 13, 14.—Christ is very patient with this dull scholar. He continues his teaching, presenting the truth in clearer light.

V. 15.—Still her views are carnal. Christ offers salvation, and she supposes he means some kind of water that will slake for all time to come the natural thirst. And had Christ left her at this stage she would never have discovered His meaning. But as He purposed to save her, He let light into her dark soul. And she believed in Him as the sequel shows. A good proof of her conversion is seen in the fact that she wished to save others. See vv. 28, 29.

LESSONS.

1. How benighted the soul is in a state by nature! It is guilty, polluted, a stranger to true happiness, and yet it realizes not its condition.

2. The world can never satisfy a human soul. All the cisterns of earth's joys may be tried, but they will be found to be "broken cisterns that can hold no water." He who drinks of these waters shall thirst again, shall still ask the question, Who will show me any good thing?

3. Christ alone can satisfy the cravings of the soul. He alone can pardon and restore to God's favor and image. By taking up His residence in the heart by His blessed Spirit. He alone can enable a man to say from sweet experience, Now I am happy. See *Romans* 5: 1-5.

4. What matchless grace in Christ! He sought out this poor woman, addressed her most tenderly, led her on step by step until she was saved. Who would not love such a Saviour as this?

SECOND SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*Jesus at Bethesda*, John 5: 5-15.

When Christ was on earth He went about doing good. He healed all manner of bodily disease, thus showing that there was no spiritual malady beyond His reach. This miracle of healing recorded here occurred in the earlier part of our Lord's ministry,—during His second appearance in Jerusalem after His baptism.

At Jerusalem, near one of the gates, was a pool named Bethesda—which signifies *house of mercy*. At certain times its waters were moved, and then whoever stepped in first was healed of whatever disease he had. As might be expected many ailing persons crowded into the covered recesses around the pool waiting for the opportune moment. Among others was one whose case was indeed most distressing. For thirty-eight years he had an infirmity. Some suppose that this was brought on by certain habits of sin. See v. 14 in which Christ told him to sin no more. If this view is correct we are taught the greatness of Christ's compassion which brought healing to such a one—and that too unsolicited.

Christ knew all about the case. He therefore be divine. Incidentally many prophecies of our Lord's divinity are given in the Gospels. He asked the impotent man if he wished to be healed. The reply was, "While the desire was strong, hope was feeble. He was helpless. He could not go into the healing water with sufficient alacrity, there was none sufficiently sympathizing to aid. Each one was intent on a cure for himself or for his friends, leaving others unprotected. What selfishness! But Christ perceived the words of omnipotence, and the cure was effected.

The Jews found fault with the healed man carrying his bed on the Sabbath. If they had not known who this man was, the question they asked him was right. But if they had known that he had been a cripple and had been healed by Christ, then the question was prompted through hatred to Christ. However this may have been, v. 12 implies that they had a suspicion, at least after their question was answered, who had wrought this miracle and given the command to carry his bed.