

## International S. S. Lessons.

### THE RICH YOUNG RULER.

10 March.

Les. Mark 10: 17-27.  
Mem. vs. 21, 22.

Gol. Text, Matt. 6. 33.  
Catechism Q. 12.

This lesson was in March, five or six weeks before Christ's death.

The story of the few weeks between the last lesson, the raising of Lazarus at Bethany, and this one was as follows:—

The raising of Lazarus had led so many of the Jews to believe in Christ, that the rulers sought to kill him, see John 11: 47-54; and Jesus could not remain near Jerusalem, so He went forth into the hill country of Ephraim, some twenty miles north: then to the Jordan and across to Perea, where He healed the ten lepers, spoke the parables on prayer, took young children in His arms and blessed them, see Luke 17: 12-18-17. Shortly after follows this lesson.

I. What the young ruler had done to win Eternal Life, vs. 17-20.

Vs. 18. "Why callest me good, there is none good but One, that is God." Christ does not deny that He is good, for He Himself is God, but the young man had addressed Him with merely the common title of respect due to a teacher, and wanted direction in the way of more good works, in order that he might thereby win Life; and Christ is trying to lead him away from His self-righteousness to higher ideas of what Eternal Life is.

It is as if Christ would say, "Why do you, thinking of me as a man, call me good. God alone is good."

Then he answers the question by quoting the commandments, and the young man thinks he has kept them all. His keeping was a merely outward observance, and not that of the sermon on the mount. He had lived a good moral life, but was still unsatisfied.

II. What the young man would not do, vs. 21-22.

Christ looked into his heart, and gave him a test. This would be the surrender of all to Christ, and he would not do it. His faith was not strong enough to give up all at Christ's command, or to obey him in all things.

Vs. 22. When Christ calls, those who reject are sad, the choice of the world does not give peace. Those who accept Him and obey have gladness in their choice. He would always be wretched as he looked at his possessions, for he would always remember the price he had paid for them.

Christ here teaches, not that we should necessarily sell all and give to the poor, in order to have a title in heaven, but, that if we would be His, we must surrender heart, will, possession, hopes, aims, everything, to Him, to be held in trust from Him, and used according to His will.

III. The difficulty of entering the Kingdom, vs. 24-27.

V. 23. Riches tends to centre the heart upon itself, and to draw men away from God. "A Christian man may become rich, but it is very seldom that a man after he gets rich becomes a Christian." And the Christian man who is getting rich needs to be doubly watchful lest his heart become too much set on His gains.

But it is not merely riches in itself, it is the love of it, that keeps one from Christ. A poor man may have his heart as much set upon the world as a rich man, hence the explanation of:—

V. 24. It is the "trust" in riches that keeps the heart from trust in Christ. It is impossible for both riches and Christ to have the supreme place, and hence the figure of:—

V. 25. The camel was the largest animal that they knew, and the eye of the needle a very small hole, and the proverb was a fitting one to describe an impossible thing.

V. 27. God has all power. He can wear the heart from the world and draw it to Himself.

#### LESSONS.

1. The chief question of life is how we may have Life Eternal.

5. To Christ we should come with it, for He only can answer it.

3. Those who receive Christ must yield all else to Him.

4. He who chooses the world is always made sad by his choice, while the choosing of Christ makes glad no matter what the sacrifice.

### ZACCHEUS THE PUBLICAN.

17 March.

Luke 19: 1-10.  
Mem. vs. 8-10.

Gol. Text, Luke 19: 10.  
Catechism Q. 13.

The end is drawing near. It is but a week from the crucifixion. About a couple of months before this, in answer to the call of the sisters, Jesus had come from Perea, beyond Jordan, to Bethany, near Jerusalem, and raised Lazarus, and the rulers, angry and jealous that so many believed in Him, sought to kill Him, and He had gone away back to Perea, where he spent a few weeks healing and teaching.

The Passover was now drawing near, and He started again for Jerusalem, to lay down His life, for but two or three days after His coming He was crucified.

He crossed the Jordan, and came to Jericho, the chief city of the Jordan Valley, lying about six miles west of the Jordan and twenty miles N. E. of Jerusalem, and there took place the story of the lesson. Jericho was a commercial centre and the residence of the chief publican or tax gatherer.

The Roman Government collected taxes from the subject countries as follows. They sold the taxes of a district to the highest bidder. He in turn sold the taxes of parts of the districts to others who collected them from the people, who were practically at his mercy. These Publicans were usually Jews, and were detested by the Jews for gathering taxes from their own countrymen for a Foreign power.

Zacchæus wished to see Jesus. It was not a mere idle curiosity. He was a Jew, familiar with their hopes, and living at Jericho near where John preached, and where Jesus was baptized, he had no doubt followed with interest the movements of the past two or three years. He was willing to make himself ridiculous by running ahead and climbing. The throng drew near. The Saviour who always welcomed a seeking soul looked up: "Come down Zacchæus, I am going to stay at your house to-night."

Joyfully he came down and received Christ, not only into his home, but into His heart, and the proof of the latter was at once forthcoming in the promise that he would give half his goods, perhaps he meant half his income, to the poor, and restore fourfold to any from whom he had extorted too much taxes.

There was a general murmur of disapproval at His going to stay with a Publican, but Zacchæus heeded not the murmurs. The Saviour blessed him and his home and he was happy.

#### LESSONS.

1. When any one really wishes to meet the Saviour, he is sure to find Him, for the Saviour is more anxious to find the sinner than the sinner can be to find him.