



LESSON XIII.—SEPTEMBER 23, 1906.

### The Review.

### Golden Text.

And they were astonished at his doctrine, for his word was with power.—Luke iv., 32.

### Home Readings.

Monday September 17.—Matt. xviii., 1-14.

Tuesday, September 18.—Matt. xviii., 25-35.

Wednesday, September 19.—Luke xi., 1-13.

Thursday, September 20.—Luke xv., 11-22.

Friday, September 21.—Luke xviii., 1-14.

Saturday, September 22.—Luke xviii., 35-19.

Sunday, September 23.—Matt. xxi., 1-17.

(By Davis W. Clark.)

If the Bible is a ring of gold, Jesus is its solitaire. He is worth all the rest. In point of fact all the rest is for Him. Its glory is that it holds and displays Him. All prophets give witness to Him. They mark stages in the evolution of the ideal life, which is clear and incapable of erosion—the life of a man filled with God.

Jesus is the unapproached Teacher of men, not so much for what He said as for what He was. In point of fact, what he said, He was. His life is a Divine comment upon His Divine words. His own character is the irresistible, irrefutable argument for His doctrine. Incidentally it may here be noted that the true defense of religion still takes this form. It is not a book, but a life. It is not a philosophical statement, but righteous conduct. Ethical living is the 'salt' and 'light' of the world. The true defender of the faith is armed with neither pen nor sword. He just lives the good life.

The training of the twelve apostles taxed the skill and endurance of Jesus. The controversy as to which should be first is an example of the misconceptions of which they were full. It was a master stroke when He placed a child in their midst. It was a living tableau of docility, self-oblivion, and love. And from the parable, as was His wont, Jesus passed to practical development and application of the principles of His kingdom. (Lesson I.)

As was His custom, Jesus used a current event for purpose of illustration. Rulers of Palestine were often summoned to Rome to make an accounting. Such an instance had just occurred. Jesus likens the accounting to God to it. It is not the last judgment that is here referred to. The preliminary accounting reveals insolvency, and is the occasion of Divine forgiveness. Application is made to man's forgiveness of His fellows. Forgiven sinner showing unfor-giving spirit is paradoxical. (Lesson II.)

The parable of the Good Samaritan is the pearl of the parables. With the freedom of Oriental audiences one injects a question. It proves to be only a dialectic gauntlet. Jesus, with consummate skill, takes the man on his own ground, and has him answer his own question. The attempt to refine upon the term neighbor is the immediate cause of the parable. The term is not defined, but the subjective state which makes a man neighbor to every one is superbly illustrated, and the terse application, 'Do thou likewise!' is made. (Lesson III.)

The request which the disciples made for a form of prayer was natural. They had observed Jesus in prayer, and John the Baptist had set the precedent of teaching his followers a formula. It remains for the universal Teacher to give the universal

form. The first part relates to the Father, His name, kingdom, will. The second relates to man—bread, forgiveness, deliverance. From the form Jesus proceeds to the spirit of prayer, which He illustrated by a parable, the force of which is its marked contrasts. (Lesson IV.)

Sociability was a marked trait of Jesus. Asceticism finds no support in Him whatever. In this instance He is the guest of a Pharisee who covets His table talk. A sufferer lies in the vestibule. Jesus does not avoid him. He does not merely toss a small coin to him. He determines to heal, but forestalls criticism by asking, 'Is it lawful to cure on the Sabbath?' He answers His question by curing. Later He has a word for guests and another for host. (Lesson V.)

The strength of Jesus' parable of the great supper is its improbability. The preposterous inadequacy of the excuses shows at a glance the disinclination to accept the invitation. It is a deliberate insult. The Master dwells upon the practical rather than the speculative phase—namely, upon the personal attitude of the individual toward the Messianic kingdom rather than the accidents of that kingdom. (Lesson VI.)

The parable of the Two Sons is the 'pearl of parables.' Its primary object was to justify Jesus' attitude towards publicans and sinners by picturing them as subjects of Divine compassion. The secondary object is to picture sin as a revolt against a beneficent Father. The incidental lessons are: The freedom of the will; folly of sin, its unsatisfying nature, and desperate consequences; the nature of evangelical penitence, as discriminated for legal penitence; the process and course of recovery; the Divine compassion. (Lesson VII.)

The parable of the Pharisee and publican is one of the most pictorial of all. Two sorts of worshippers are made to fairly live before the reader. The one is false and fruitless; the other true and successful. The one haughtily denies all gross sins and affirms all active pieties. The other is penitent, makes no comparisons, attempts no palliation. The Pharisee's exit is not so much as noted, while the publican goes out justified—his miserere transposed to a hallelujah. (Lesson VIII.)

The incident of the 'Rich Young Ruler' is the record of a subtle interview, the meaning of which has universal application. This knight of legality betrays a disquiet spirit, in that he approaches Jesus at all. Jesus meets him on his own ground and uses his own methods. Relative goodness is made to face absolute goodness. The legalist is bidden to do and live. Obedience is averred, but the weak spot is touched in the crucial command, 'Sell and give!' Self is revealed. Lordship of mammon recognized; but the subject fails in the final test. (Lesson IX.)

Grace was magnified in the salvation of Zacchaeus. The corrupt child of an age of corruption and fraud, steeped in an atmosphere of oppression, social suspicion, national aversion; confronted for the first time in his life with absolute personal honesty, transparent truth, and singlemindedness—heart and life were changed at a stroke before the burning gaze of incarnate honor. (Lesson X.)

Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem was no mere incident. It was an event of large degree. It was not accidental, but designed. It was consistent with Jesus' plan to present Himself to the nation for acceptance or rejection. It presents points of contrast to other 'triumphs.' It was characterized by meekness, a lowly equipage, absence of captives and spoils. It was accorded by the common people, not by Church or State. Yet it was the most significant triumph of all history. No similar spectacle was ever fraught with such influence upon the destiny of the human race. (Lesson XI.)

Jesus' moral agony was greater than any physical pains He ever suffered. The cause of it was the contradiction of sinners against Himself, their effort to entangle Him in His words, their refusal to accept Him or His message. Jesus was crucified again and again before ever He came to His cross. In this instance the effort is to elicit from Him a categorical statement which can be used against Him in His trial, then impending. Jesus' answer is a miracle of genius, a flash of inspiration. He

escaped the snare. He allied Himself with no faction. He carried the question over into an entirely new realm, where there are no disjointed commands or sacramental offices, but where there is a Life which gives continuity, vigor, progress to the whole. With one splendid flash, Jesus discloses the fundamental element in religion. Absent, it makes the Christian a heathen; present, it makes the heathen a Christian. This disputatious coterie fades. Jesus is speaking to the universal human heart. The man of to-day, even though technically rated an unbeliever, recognizes the Divineness of the message, and receiving it, begins the life of love toward God and his fellows. And that is religion. (Lesson XII.)

### LESSONS THIRD QUARTER.

1. July 1st. Jesus and the Children. (Matt. xviii., 1-14.)

2. July 8th. The Duty of Forgiveness. (Matt. xviii., 21-35.)

3. July 15th. The Good Samaritan. (Luke x., 25-37.)

4. July 22nd. Jesus Teaching How to Pray. (Luke xi., 1-13.)

5. July 29th. Jesus Dines with a Pharisee. (Luke xiv., 1-14.)

6. August 5th. False Excuses. (Luke xiv., 15-24.)

7. August 12th. The Parable of the Two Sons. (Luke xv., 11-32.)

8. August 19th. The Judge, the Pharisee, and the Publican. (Luke xviii., 1-14.)

9. August 26th. The Rich Young Ruler. (Mark x., 17-31.)

10. September 2nd. Bartimaeus and Zacchaeus. (Luke xviii., 35; xix., 10.)

11. September 9th. Jesus Enters Jerusalem in Triumph. (Matt. xii., 1-17.)

12. September 16th. Jesus Silences the Pharisees and Sadducees. (Mark xii., 13-27.)

13. September 23rd. Review.

14. September 30th. A Temperance Lesson. (Gal. v., 15-26; vi., 7, 8.)

### C. E. Topic.

Sunday, September 23.—Topic—A strong will: how to get it, and use it for temperance. I. Pet. iv., 1-11.

### Junior C. E. Topic.

THE LORD ROUND ABOUT HIS PEOPLE.

Monday, September 17.—The chariots of God. Ps. lxxviii., 17.

Tuesday, September 18.—The angel of the Lord. Ps. xxxiv., 7.

Wednesday, September 19.—Jacob and the angels. Gen. xxii., 1, 2.

Thursday, September 20.—Daniel and the angels. Dan. vi., 19-22.

Friday, September 21.—The angel guardians. Ps. xci., 11, 12.

Saturday, September 22.—Elisha and the king. II. Kings vi., 8-12.

Sunday, September 23.—Topic—'The Lord is round about His people.' II. Kings vi., 13-17; Ps. cxxv., 2.

### A Tree Four Hundred Years Old.

There are few more fascinating subjects to study than is supplied by the age of trees. Legend generally credits the broken and war-worn monarchs of the field with a term of life that foresters are somewhat doubtful about. Lately, Mr. Clayton read before the Linnaean Society a paper on the famous Cowthorpe Oak. Two hundred years ago this tree was regarded as a marvel, and it was carefully measured in 1700, when it gave a height of 80 feet, and a girth of 78 feet on the ground. In 1893 it was again measured, when the height had diminished to 37 feet, and the girth to 54 feet. The shrinkage of the girth is said to be due to the gradual sinking of the tree into the ground. Mother Earth, if left to her own will, finally absorbing again what she so laborously produced. Legend says of this tree that it was standing when William the Conqueror fought the battle of Hastings, and in 1842 Professor Burnett made it out to be nearly as old as the Christian era; but our age is more skeptical, and, says 'Country Life,' the modern expert holds that the tree is probably about four centuries old.—'Wetsminster Gazette.'