Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS.

Adapted from Peloubet's Select Notes.

FIRST QUARTER.

Lesson IV. Jan. 27. Matt. 16 : 13-23

THE GREAT CONFESSION.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Thou are the Christ, the Son of the living God."—Matt. 16 : 16.

THE SECTION extends from Matthew 15 : 1 to 16 : 28; also Mark 8 : 22-26, and the

PARALLEL ACCOUNTS.—Mark 8 : 27 to 33; Luke 9 : 18-22.

EXPLANATORY.

1. THAT JESUS IS THE MESSIAH BECOMES THE SETTLED CONVICTION OF THE APOSTLES.—Vs. 13-17. 13. "When Jesus came," in his journey from Bethsaida northward, along the road east of the Jordan (Mark 8 : 22). "Into the coasts," regions or borders, "of Cesarea Philipp."

We learn from Luke 9 : 18 that this new era or epoch began in prayer alone with his disciples. "He asked his disciples." His object seems to have been to draw out the faith of his disciples, and to reveal to them more fully his nature and his redeeming work. He would put and have them put into definite form what they had been gradually learning from his words and works,—that he was indeed the Messiah, the Son of God. "Whom," in modern English 'who' as in R. V., "do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" The Son of man was a title he frequently applied to himself (see Dan. 7 : 13, 14), but it is never applied to him by the apostles. It expressed his human, visible side. He would know what they had found the popular impression to be concerning him, how far they understood his nature and his work.

14. "Some say . . . John the Baptist," returned to life. Among these was Herod (Matt. 14 : 1, 2). "Some, Elias." i. e., Elijah, the forerunner of the Messiah, who had wrought some great miracles, and had turned the tide of the nation from heathen worship to the true God. "And others, Jeremias," the Greek form of Jeremiah. "Or one of the prophets," i. e. "that one of the 'old prophets is risen again'" (Luke 9 : 19.)

NOTE that this variety of opinion shows that the people were thinking and discussing, but had come to no certain beliefs. None of them speak of Jesus as the Messiah, for his appearance was in too great a contrast with their expectations.

15. "But whom (R. V. 'who') say ye that I am?" Observe "ye," plural, and by position in the Greek exceedingly emphatic—in contrast with the discordant popular opinions. The question is addressed to all, and Peter answers as their spokesman, just as he does in many other cases.

16. "And Simon Peter answered." "Thou art the Christ," the Anointed One, the Messiah. "Christ" is the Greek and "Messiah" is the Hebrew for "anointed." Anointing was the method by which kings, and sometimes prophets, were set apart for their work. "The Son of the living God." The "Son of God" in the highest sense, which could be asserted of no other being. God is here "living God," because he is the author of all life and existence; hence, self-existent, eternal. "The Son" of the "living" God was one who partook of that living, self-existent, and eternal nature. If Jesus were the Messiah, then he must be whatever it had been foretold that the Messiah should be, the promised seed of Abraham, the anointed King, "the wonderful Counsellor" the angel of the covenant."

17. "Blessed art thou." Because thou hast opened thy heart to the truth; because thou hast broken from the bondage of Jewish prejudice and worldly vision; because thou hast such firm confidence in such a Saviour. "Simon Bar-jona;" i. e., son of Jonah. "Bar" is Aramaic (the Syriac Hebrew then in use) for "son." Jonah should begin with a capital J., as in the R. V. "For flesh and blood;" no man, no weak mortal, "hath revealed" this unto you. It has not its origin in the mere human knowledge, in the workings of the human mind. "But my father which is in heaven." God flashed forth the truth, and Peter did not close his eyes that he might not see.

VALUE OF CONFESSION. It must have required great courage for Peter to come out thus distinctly at variance with the whole trend of opinion of his countrymen and his own pre-conceived opinion. It was not easy to see in a human being, like himself in appearance, a divine being. It shows the truth and power of Jesus' character, that his most intimate friends had the highest opinion of him. Confession of the truth strengthens one's faith in the truth. Peter had thought this before. He had his ups and downs of faith. But now he settled down upon the firm rock.

II. FOUNDATION STONES OF THE CHURCH. V. 18. "And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter." "Petros" in Greek, "Cephas" in Aramaic; a name given him long before in prophecy (John 1 : 42). "And upon this rock (petra) I will build my church." 'Petros' usually means a stone, a piece of rock; "petra," the rock in mass, the foundation of bed rock. The rock here is plainly Peter himself, but as the representative of the other apostles, as shown by the history of the church; by Jesus' including the apostles with Peter in similar promises (Matt. 18 : 18; John 20 : 23); and by the uniting all together as foundations in Ephesians 2 : 20 and Revelation 21 : 14. "The Bed Rock, 'the Rock of Ages,' is here, as elsewhere, God as revealed in his son, and Peter is the first one 'well and truly laid' upon it." This verse has been the source of "an immensity of discussion." We will give first what seems to us the TRUE VIEW: The church is represented as a great building, a temple of the living God. Jesus Christ is the builder, the architect. Peter, as one of the apostles, and a representative of all, filled with living experience and faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the living God, is a stone, one of the great foundation stones on which Christ is rearing the building, his church during and glorious church. (Com. Eph. 2 : 20; Rev. 21 : 14)

APPLICATIONS.—1. Every one who possesses a like faith is, according to the measure of his faith, a Peter, that is, a rock; and Christ builds his church on this rock, that is, on this living experience of faith in the Christ, inspired in the hearts of men by the Spirit of God. 2. The condition of true power in the church is always vital faith in Jesus Christ in the hearts of its members.

OTHER VIEWS.—There are two other principal views of this verse, held very strongly by their advocates, among whom are some of the leading scholars. 1. That the rock is the confession of Peter; i. e., the Messiahship and divine sonship of Jesus. Here the rock is a doctrine, and indeed the central doctrine of the church. 2. The other view is that the rock is Christ himself, who is, indeed, the foundation of the church (1 Cor. 3 : 11). As if he had said, Thou art Peter, "a piece of rock"; and I will build my temple on the Rock of Ages, of which you are a portion, since you are filled with me.

THE CHURCH.—"I will build my church." The word for church properly denoted a congregation or assemblage of people called out. In its technical Greek usage it denoted the assembly of the free citizens duly called out to transact the business of the community. The church is the organized form of the Kingkom of God, "the congregation of the faithful throughout the world, united under Christ as their head." "The ideal congregation or assembly of all real Christians," it is the great spiritual temple planned and built by God, not by man. Not human organizations, but the one great building in which God dwells by his spirit. "And the gates of hell": or Hades, the kingdom of death, of destruction, "shall not prevail against it" to cause it to enter into destruction, represented as a walled city or castle. "Gates" are the entrance into death. Thus, in Æschylus' "Agamemnon," Clytemnestra addresses the gates of Hades, and prays that she may have a speedy and easy death. "All earthly things go down through those dread gates," but Christ's church, for which he gave himself, will never cease to exist; there will always be Christians in the world."

III. THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM.—Vs. 19, 20. 19. "And I will give unto thee:" representing also the other apostles, for the history shows that nothing was conferred upon Peter that the others also did not receive. In Matthew 18: 18, 19 the others are specially included in the promise in the last part of this verse. (See also John 20 : 19 23)

FIRST. THE KEYS "the keys of the kingdom of heaven." The ancient oriental key usually bore not much resemblance to the artistic little metallic instrument which we mean by the word and which Italian painters pictured in Peter's hand. It was a wooden apparatus, which often would heavily lade a man's arm. There was a crook at one end so that it could be worn about the neck as a badge of office.

SECOND. THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. This does not refer to heaven, the abode of the blessed, as is represented in the legend of Peter sitting at the gate of heaven. It means very nearly the same thing as "the church" in the previous verse. Here it is represented under the figure of a city with gates, or of a large house with gates for entrance, and doors of treasure-rooms.

THIRD. THE SYMBOL OF THE KEYS (a) In great houses and palaces there was of necessity a steward or general manager of the establishment, to whom were committed the keys of the gates and of the treasure-house and store-rooms, and who thus had a general authority and control over the whole. (b) "The scribes of Israel were thought of as stewards of the treasures of divine wisdom (13: 52). When they were admitted to their office they received, as its symbol, the 'key of knowledge' (Luke 11: 52), which was to admit them to the treasure-chambers of the house of the interpreter." When the Jews made a man a "doctor" of the "law," they put into his hand the key of the closet in the temple where the sacred books were kept, and also tablets to write upon; signifying by this that they gave him authority to teach and explain the scriptures to the people.

FOURTH. THE INTERPRETATION. From the above facts we learn that in giving the power of the keys, Jesus made Peter and the other people his prime ministers, his authoritative representatives on earth in the developing and organizing of his kingdom after his death. Somebody must have this authority, and it was best committed to those who had been trained under the personal supervision of Jesus, and afterwards endowed by the abundant gift of the enlightening and guiding Holy Spirit. (1) They would be taught the true doctrines of the gospel, through which those who believed would come into the kingdom. (2) They would be the instrumentality by which many would enter the kingdom. Thus, Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost turned the key "which admitted three thousand into the kingdom in one day." (3) It gave them authority, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to decide the many administrative questions which would come up, as the admission of the Gentiles into the church (see Peter's vision, Acts 10); whether the Gentiles must conform to Jewish rites, decided in the Council at Jerusalem, under the leadership of Peter (Acts 15); the appointment of deacons; the case of Simon Magus, and of Ananias and Sapphira. (4) It gave them the key to the interpretation of the Old Testament scriptures. (5) It gave them the key to the treasure-house of gospel knowledge. It was through their witness and preaching that we have the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament, which are the authoritative rule of the church in all ages. The powers of the keys is the assurance of the inspiration of the New Testament.

FIFTH. PRESENT POWER OF THE KEY IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD. In some degree all Christians have the power of the keys. On their faithfulness, and true living, and earnestness often depends whether those living in dark places shall see the light, whether the heathen shall receive the gospel. So, too, the Christian has the keys to the treasure-house of divine truth. The Holy Spirit will guide him in his search, enlighten his eyes, and he shall continually see new treasures in the word, and works, and providence of God.

"And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth," etc. This is an explanation and confirmation of the gift of the keys, though some refer the keys to the admission of "persons," and the binding and loosing to the permitting or forbidding of "things." The phases "whatsoever thou shalt bind" and "whatsoever thou shalt loose" were common Hebrew expressions, having a definite and well known meaning. "To bind" meant to "forbid," or "to declare forbidden." "To loose" meant "to allow," or "to declare allowable." "Bound in heaven, i. e., receive the sanction, and authority, and approbation of God. They were to be guided infallibly in the organization of the church, first, by the teaching of Christ, and, second, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. For examples of the exercise of this power, see Acts 1 : 15-22; 5: 3-10; 6: 2-4; 11: 1-18; 15: 4-29. The power in this sense ceased with inspiration. Most of the difficulties connected with the interpretation of this passage are obviated by considering that the full gospel could not be preached until after the passion, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord. The apostles, who had to lay the foundation and be the foundation, must therefore have knowledge and authority which no one after them needs or can rightly claim.

20. "Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man," etc. Why? (1) Because the apostles were not as yet fully schooled in the doctrine of the true nature of Christ's kingdom and office, and would not be so till the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon them. If they preached it now, they would be certain to preach wrongly. (2) Because the people would be turned away from their spiritual needs, and the new life which was essential to the coming of the kingdom, to the desire to realize the outward glories of their false conception of the Messiah as king. This danger was entirely removed after the crucifixion. (3) The announcement that Jesus was the Messiah would be likely to excite tumult and rebellion against the Roman government, the people trying to make Jesus their leader of the revolt. This would interfere with his plan of a spiritual government.

IV. THE WAY TO THE KINGDOM IS THROUGH THE CROSS.—Vs. 21-23. They had seen the foundation of the kingdom, and received the keys of the kingdom; now they must see the necessary condition of its institution, so different from their previous expectations. 21. "From that time forth," because now, after their full recognition of him as the Messiah, they were prepared to know more about the way the true Messiah must come into his kingdom, and they needed this knowledge to correct and complete their views of the Messiah, and to prepare them for the events now hastening on. "Began Jesus." This was his first announcement of this great fact. "How that he must go:" not because he had not power to do otherwise, but because it was necessary to the accomplishment of his work of redemption. "Unto Jerusalem" The capital of the Jewish nation, the symbol of the church, the place of the temple, and its sacrifices which he had come to fulfil. "Suffer many things:" as described in the last chapter of the gospel. "And be killed:" by crucifixion, thus making the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. This is stated to guard the disciples from being disappointed when this necessary event took place, and thus losing faith in him as the Messiah. They must see it as an essential part of the plan of salvation. "And be raised again the third day." The resurrection of Jesus was essential to the proof that he was the true Messiah, essential to his work of redemption, and reigning as king at the right hand of God (1 Cor. 15: 14-18). This is stated in each of the three accounts, and is emphasized for the sake of the faith and hope of the disciples. It was an enigma to them as yet, but its solution would be a cornerstone of their future faith.

22. "Then Peter took him:" one side, apart, to speak to him privately. "Began to rebuke him." He only began—for he was soon interrupted—to find fault with what Jesus had been saying, and to argue against its truth. It was love to Jesus, devotion to his cause, mingled with his native self-confidence, perhaps increased by the promise just made to him by name, which led Peter to speak thus "Saying, Be it far from thee, Lord." The plan of redemption outlined by Jesus who so contrary to all Peter's expectations and hopes, so completely opposite to his picture of the Messiah king and his reign, that it seemed inconceivable to Peter. It was absurd, ruinous, a death blow to their own hopes, and a triumph to their enemies.

23. "But he turned:" turned round to the disciples (Mark 8 : 33). "And said unto Peter:" publicly before them all. "Get thee behind me, Satan." Satan means "adversary," the great "enemy" of all good, used in the Saviour's time as a proper name. In this suggestion, that he might gain the crown without the cross, and attain a kingdom of this world, the Christ saw the recurrence of the temptation which had offered him the glory of those kingdoms, on condition of his drawing back from the path which the Father had appointed for him (Matt. 4: 1-11). He did not call his apostle a "satan," a "devil," but he looked for the moment through Peter, and saw behind him his old enemy, cunningly making use of the prejudices and impulsive honesty of the undeveloped apostle. "Thou art an offence:" a stumbling-block instead of a foundation stone; a hindrance by placing this temptation before me, by your blindness is not understanding the true nature and work of the Messiah. "Thou savourest not" (mindest not) "the things that be of God:" God's plan of salvation and work of the Messiah, as just before revealed by Jesus (v. 21). "But those that be of men:" the natural, human view of the Messiah, a worldly kingdom, riches, honor, glory and triumph. There ever has been, and still exists, a tendency to fall into Peter's error, and seek the growth of the church by temporal power, and worldly wealth and greatness, instead of by suffering for the world.

B. Y. P. U.

OUR OBJECT.

The unification of Baptist young people; their increased spirituality; their stimulation in Christian service; their edification in scriptural knowledge; their instruction in Baptist history and doctrine; their enlistment in missionary activity, through existing denominational institutions

OUR FELLOWSHIP.

All Young People's Societies of whatsoever name in Baptist churches, and Baptist churches having no organizations are entitled to representation. We depend for our unity not upon any young people's name or method. Our common bond is in the New Testament, in the full affirmation of whose teachings

WE ARE ONE PEOPLE WITH ONE MISSION.

Kindly address all communications for this column to Rev. G. O. Gates, St. John, N. B.

Prayer Meeting Topics for Jan. 20.

B. Y. P. U.—"The Great Gulf Fixed," Luke 16 : 19 31.

C. E. TOPIC.—"A Christian's Problems and Perplexities," 1 Kings 4 : 29-34; Luke 11-31 and 2 : 46 47.

Under the last mentioned topic, Rev. W. G. Temple in Golden Rule—asks the following questions as among the number that may perplex some young christians. 1st. Cannot I be a Christian without joining the church?

2nd. Can I be a faithful Christian in any occupation which interferes with my religious duties?

3rd. How far ought I to interest myself in the conventional amusements which especially distinguish those who are not Christians?

4th. What rule should I follow in supporting my own church?

He answers the first question in the affirmative, but says the kind of Christian you will be will depend on circumstances.

If one lives so far from any church that he cannot attend, then, he may be exonerated. If a person is bedridden, or permanently housed this would be a sufficient excuse. To most of readers of this column there can come no adequate excuse for taking a position of silent influence against Christianity. . . . That is a poor love which will not take the trouble to express itself so that there shall be no mistake in classifying it.

In his answer to question four—He says your pledge says in every way according to your ability. Its Sunday services, *both of them*, its midweek prayer meeting, ought to stand out in your mind with special prominence. Financially every member of the church ought to come into personal contact with the treasurer. The bills must be paid and you have your proportion to do. If your church has the pew rental system, hire one sitting or more if you are able. If you cannot pay the assessed price pay what you can. You can always be accommodated. A false pride may tempt you to avoid the question. That is dishonest. Put yourself on record as doing something. If your church is free, feel no less the obligation. After you have done squarely in this particular, give all you can in missionary and other benevolence.

Do the young members of our churches contribute regularly to their churches and also to the Benevolent work of the church. Sometimes we read of great revivals, scores are brought into the church—the role is increased, but at the end of the year, deficits as before; and Convention reports show but little if any advance in amounts for work to which we have pledged ourselves. Our Young People's Societies ought to seek to remedy this. Every young Christian at some time in the year has some money that he calls his own. He owes it to the church—to his Lord—to a needing humanity—more to himself that a percentage is regularly set apart for a religious use.

Here is a department that calls for special training and the Pastor and the Society that succeed in making this impression on Young Christians' minds that giving is a sacred and religious duty—as religious as learning to publicly testify for Christ, will have done a work of untold value for these developing lives.

And just here let us urge on the parents by example and precept to instill this principle of *systematically* giving for benevolent work.

Please do not *dole* out a collection cent to your children. It is time that the *one cent* collection was done away. Teach the children to do their own giving out of their own funds. Common sense will tell you these have no mint to which they can repair; then see that in some way you give them an opportunity to earn a little and of the little see that a portion is set apart to service of the Lord.

Do our young christians know what it means to give up for the sake of the gospel being sent to others?

In the Germain St. church the other evening a young brother from the Missionary Training school in Boston set hearts aglow as he spoke.

Do we wonder? We found out in a conversation after the meeting that last winter that young brother went without his dinner day after day so that he could be among those who *give* to send the gospel to the regions beyond.

Jesus said "It is more blessed to give than to receive," but there are hosts of the followers of that Blessed One who have not learned the truthfulness of such words yet.

Our young people's societies are the training schools of the church. Here the trembling youth is helped in his confessing his Lord; here he is taught to pray before his companions; here he begins his career as a church worker. Will not these societies see to it that the *teaching to give* is faithfully done. Missionary work is yet but in comparative infancy. The next generation ought to send hundreds where now tens of missionaries are being sent. The hour has come when a tremendous advance must be made if the church will be true to Christ. Our Lord looks to the coming host.

"Twould make a better world"
If men dealt less in stocks and lands,
And more in bonds and deeds fraternal:
If Love's work had more willing hands
To link this world with the supernal
If men stored up Love's oil and wine,
And on bruised human hearts would pour it;
If "yours" and "mine"
Would once combine:
The world would be the better for it.
—*Selected.* M. H. COBB.

We have only one report for this issue. Surely now that the "New Year's festivities" are of the past societies will see that reports of their work are given us.

It seems to the writer of these notes that some people are afraid to tell of the new and successful methods employed by them lest others should copy them. Brothers and sisters of the Young People's societies we want to help each other. If you are being blessed report it for others' sake. If some new department of work has been undertaken and you are making a success of it, tell it out that it may be an incentive to all the rest. We ought to realise the successes of one true cause joy when thrown among the multitudes. Let us seek to realize more and more in this Young People's movement we are members one of the other.

We are hoping for good news from many of the societies. Special meetings will be held by the churches and special efforts should be put forth to win the associate members for Christ. In these extra services let the young people be right to the front, ready for every good work.

HILLSDALE, N. B.—The Hillsdale B. Y. P. U. held its annual business meeting on the 21st. ult. The following officers were elected. President, Weldon Pickles, Vice-President, Mrs. Spurgeon Smith, Sec.-Treas., Miss Julia Sherwood. Several of our members have moved away, but there are 50 names on the roll. There is a deep interest in the work and the Union is being blessed of God. Our church has been helped very much by the young people who have thus banded themselves together and although we miss many advantages of the city Unions, yet we are "strong in the strength which God supplies," and are praying and working for greater blessings.

G. A. LAWSON.

Resignation is putting God between one's self and one's grief.—Madame Swetchine.

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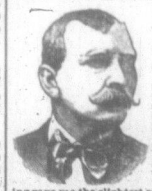

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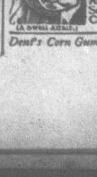

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