

Scripture Lessons.

International Lesson Department, 1874

FOURTH QUARTER—LESSONS ABOUT JESUS.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 1874.

LESSON V.—THE FIG-TREE WITHERED Mark
11. 12-14, 19-24.

GOLDEN TEXT: Luke 13. 7.

Berean Notes on the Lessons.

I. GENERAL STATEMENT.

A double lesson: 1. Concerning *fruitlessness*, and 2. Concerning *faith*. A contrast grows out of it between the barrenness of unbelief and the efficiency of faith. The soul that yields promises and professions only and no fruit is a soul without faith in God. The soul with faith bears fruit, withers by its word the fruitless tree, and removes mountains. The symbol of unbelief shall be a *withered tree*. The symbol of faith shall be a *mountain-hurling Hercules*.

II. OUTLINES.

1. Barren; 2. Blighted; 3. Believing. 1. "Nothing but leaves;" 2. "Withered away;" 3. "Have faith in God." 1. Large promise; 2. Utter failure; 3. Final doom.

III. NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

ON THE MORROW. After his public entry into Jerusalem—Tuesday, March 15, (according to Dr. Strong.) HUNGRY. Jesus as a man was wearied and hungered. Had he spent the night in prayer? FIG-TREE. A favorite and much cultivated tree of Palestine. The fig highly esteemed. There were three kinds of figs: (a) The *early fig*, which ripened in June; (b) The *summer fig* which ripened in August; (c) The *winter fig*, which came to maturity only after the leaves were gone, and would hang through a mild winter into the spring. HAVING LEAVES, and leaves only. No old fruit, no promise of new fruit—"nothing but leaves."

"The Jews boasted of their law, temple, worship, ceremonies, and good works, thus resembling the fig-tree with pretentious, deceitful leaves, without fruit. Their condemnation

was not that they were sick, but that being sick they counted themselves whole."

The old proverb, "*Great bruit, little fruit.*"

HEREAFTER FOREVER. The doom of the tree was a symbol of the more dreadful doom of a people. It is a terrible thing to make large promises to God and man, and yield but little performance. God's curse is upon such waste of energy, and falsity of profession.

That word did not *make* the tree barren, but sealed it up in its own barrenness.—J. F. B.

What do we bear before men and God? We profess to *know* the truth. We profess to believe in the truth. We profess to honor the truth. What are the practical fruits of this profession?

HAVE FAITH IN GOD.—The second lesson—the importance of faith, was worth more than the first lesson—the doom of the fruitless soul. So when Peter referred to the withered tree, Jesus turns to the point of the *power of faith*. THIS MOUNTAIN. The conviction of utility and of the Divine approval of such a feat would be necessary it could be necessary to one's having faith and doubting not. If such miracle was necessary it could be wrought. No physical barrier can resist the power of a divinely-grounded and inspired faith.

WHAT A WONDERFUL PROMISE IS RECORDED IN VERSE 24!

Learn: 1. The Gospel, though a dispensation of mercy, has its warnings and retributions. Jesus, who blessed the penitent and humble, cursed the incorrigible and proud. The prediction of "everlasting punishment," as well as the promise of "eternal life," fell from his lips. The same power that restored the withered arm withered the living tree. Christ is the stone to build upon, or, rejected, is the stone that grindeth to powder. 2. The tree, having received life and support from the air, the sun, the soil, might reasonably be expected to yield some fruit. "Nothing but leaves." No fruit of the last winter ("which came to maturity only after the leaves were gone, and would hang through a mild winter into the spring") this spring remained. Perhaps, indeed, it had borne no fruit last season. And no unripened fruit now hung from the tree to be ready for use when the time of figs should come. "Nothing but leaves." The curse of Christ fell upon it. 3. The power of faith. When for spiritual ends a given work upon material things is needed, God's power is able to do that work |