

LESSON VIII — February 24th.

Christ and the Man Born Blind. JOHN 9: 1-11.

(Commit to memory verses 1-3.)

GOLDEN TEXT.

"I am the light of the world." John 9: 5.

PROVE THAT
Christ works wonderful cures. Matt. 11: 5.

LESSON HYMNS.

CHILDREN'S HYMNAL, Nos. 5, 23, 35, 176.

SHORTER CATECHISM.

Quest. 10. *How did God create man?*

A. God created man male and female, after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness and holiness, with dominion over the creatures.

DAILY PORTIONS. *Monday.* Christ and the Man Born Blind; John 9: 1-11. *Tuesday.* Questions by Pharisees; John 9: 13-23. *Wednesday.* Cast Out; John 9: 24-34. *Thursday.* Spiritual Light; John 9: 35-41. *Friday.* Bartimæus; Mark 10: 46-52. *Saturday.* Light in the Heart; 2 Cor. 4: 1-6. *Sabbath.* Light of the World; John 1: 1-3. (*The I. B. R. A. Selections.*)

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

INTRODUCTORY. Jesus was now at Jerusalem attending the Feast of the Dedication, October, A. D. 29, about six months before the crucifixion. Read the accounts of cures of other blind men. Mark 8: 22-26; Matt. 20: 29-34; Mark 10: 46-52; Luke 18: 35-43.

LESSON PLAN. I. Misfortune Explained. vs. 1-3. II. A Sufferer Relieved. vs. 4-7. III. Sceptical Friends. vs. 8-11.

I. MISFORTUNE EXPLAINED. 1. And as he passed by — That this incident followed closely the stormy scene in the temple, described in the preceding chapter, is shown by the strong connective "and," together with the expression, "as he was passing along," which immediately follows, in the R. V., "went out of the temple." The only objection to this is the calmness of Jesus, the presence of the disciples, and their speculative mood of mind. But Jesus was always calm amid danger. It disturbed His serenity but little. The disciples were not scattered by the mob, which did not pursue them beyond the temple precincts, and the incident may have taken place an hour or two afterwards, when new thoughts may have come into their minds. **Blind from his birth** — Jesus probably stopped to look at him. What infinite pity must have shown itself in his countenance as he gazed upon that appealing face. He was probably a familiar character on the street, and the fact of his having been born blind was known to everybody. Of the six miracles connected with blindness, recorded in the gospels, this is the only case described as blindness from birth. Such cases are incurable still. (verse 32). Diseases of the eyes are exceedingly common in the East. I. Egypt one person in every hundred is blind.

2. Who did sin? — The disciples took for granted that somebody's sin was the cause of this man's blindness ("that, as a result, he was born blind"). That special suffering meant special guiltiness. The man himself could not be guilty—unless he had (1) sinned in some

previous state of existence. Some Pharisees believed this to be possible. (2) Sinned before birth—in support of which view reference is made to Gen. 25: 22; Luke 1: 41, 44; or (3) suffered a penalty in anticipation of sins he would commit, which would be strange justice. It was not so fanciful to suppose that the misfortune was owing to his parents' sins. Diseases are hereditary. How much misery a parent's dishonesty, or intemperance, may bring upon his family. God does not make a child suffer a *penalty* for his parents' sin, but by the physical and moral constitution of the family he often has to suffer innocently. The answer of Jesus brushes aside these questions, by giving a third reason and the true one. The disciples "did not see, at the moment when they put the question, the self-contradiction, so far at least as words go, which was involved in the first alternative which they put before their Lord; so that while they rightly, and by a most true moral instinct, discerned the intimate connection in which the sin and suffering of the world stand to one another, yet in this case they did not realize how it must have been the sin and suffering, not of this individual man, but of him as making part of a great whole, which were thus connected together. They did not at the moment perceive that the mere fact of this calamity reaching back to his birth at once excluded and condemned the uncharitable suspicion, that wherever there was a more than ordinary sufferer, there was also a more than ordinary sinner,—leaving only the most true thought, that a great sin must be cleaving to a race, of