



LESSON IV.—APRIL 28.

Jesus Appears to the Apostles

John xx., 19-29. Memory verses, 19, 20.
Read Mark xvi., 14; Luke xxiv., 36-43.

Golden Text.

'Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.'—John xx., 29.

Lesson Text.

(19) Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. (20) And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. (21) Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. (22) And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: (23) Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained. (24) But Thomas, one of the Twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. (25) The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. (26) And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas was with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. (27) Then said he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. (28) And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. (29) Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

Lesson Hymn.

O Saviour, make Thy promise known
To all who doubt Thy word and Thee;
And teach them in that word alone
To find the truth that sets them free.

And we who know how true Thou art,
And Thee as God and Lord adore,
Give us, we pray, a loyal heart,
To trust and love Thee more and more.
—Hymns A and M.

Suggestions.

Our Lord Jesus Christ on the day of his resurrection had already showed himself to Mary of Magdala, and to the other good women that went to his tomb, to Peter, and to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. We are now to study the fifth and sixth appearances.

When Cleopas and his companion realized that they had been talking with the Lord Jesus himself, they hastened back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples how they had seen him. As they were eagerly telling the glad news, Jesus himself quietly entered the room and was standing in their midst when they looked up. He greeted them with a benediction, and his peace filled their hearts. He pointed to his hands pierced by the cruel nail, and his side wounded by the spear-thrust on Calvary. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord and recognized that he was indeed alive again. They were not afraid nor anxious, for their hearts were filled with the peace he breathed upon them. As they were rejoicing Jesus said to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. Receive ye the Holy Spirit: whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained. The exact meaning of this passage has been

much disputed. The Rev. F. N. Peloubet, in his S. S. notes, gives the following explanation:—'From the corresponding passage in Luke xxiv., 46-48; it seems clear to me that the meaning of this whole verse is: I have now by my death prepared the way for proclaiming forgiveness of sins to the whole world. Go ye forth, and wherever you preach this truth, men will repent and believe, and their sins will be forgiven. Wherever men reject your word and refuse to repent and believe, their sins will be retained. The whole work is committed to your hands, and you will be sustained in your mission by God. There will be no failure. But if you do not preach remission of sins to any people, they will be still without the gospel. For instance, on the day of Pentecost through Peter's preaching three thousand persons entered the kingdom in one day. And through the testimony of the apostles, their work, and the Scriptures they wrote, all that have become Christians have come into the kingdom. 'Ye remit,' 'apete,' send away, let go, or give up, as a debt, forgive. They were to preach the divine conditions of forgiveness,—penitence and faith,—under the influence and with the power of the Holy Spirit; and these conditions should not change; God himself would forgive, and continue to forgive all who repented and believed, even to the end of time. This power was not conferred on the apostles alone, for others were with them (Luke xxiv., 33), but upon the society, upon the disciples.'

Thomas, called Didymus, a Twin, was not in the upper room with the other disciples when the Lord Jesus visited them that Easter Sunday evening. His heart was filled with sadness, he could not believe the stories of those who said that they had seen Jesus. Thomas felt that he must see the Lord himself before he could believe. But he was honest, he was ready to believe when he did see Jesus. He was not building up barriers of unbelief around his heart purposely so as to shut out the sight of Christ. He was not casing himself in unbelief as an excuse for disobeying God. Many doubters are simply rebels, they will not believe on Christ because it would involve giving up their favorite idols and acknowledging themselves as sinners. Many persons are doubters simply from lethargy, it is easier to go on in their self-pleasing way than to make any effort to live true lives. Some are doubters through hatred, they blame God for their unhappy lives, and hate their neighbors for their lack of sympathy. Some claim to be constitutional doubters, they say that they are born without the power to believe. It is curious that some men declare that they cannot believe God's Word, but they put perfect faith in the newspapers or in any tale told them by their neighbors.

The honest doubter need not be in darkness very long, for God has declared that anyone who seeks him with the whole heart will surely find him, (Deut. iv., 29; I. Chron. xxviii., 9; II. Chron. xv., 2, 4; Ps. ix., 10; xxxiv., 4, 10; cxix., 2; Amos v. 8; Acts xvii., 27-31; Matt. vi., 33; vii., 7, 8, 11), for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. The door of heaven is not barred on God's side. God does not hide the love we are seeking, our own sins blind our eyes to the gift he is holding out to us. God is not deaf to our pleading, his ears are ever open only sin makes us dumb. God's promises are never broken, the reason we do not always receive their fulfilment is that we do not honestly seek and claim them. All God's promises are conditioned on obedience to Christ.

There is only one cure for doubt. It is the vision of Christ, it is the voice of Christ speaking to the longing soul. There can be no peace until the voice of Christ is heard in the soul. Thomas had not an emotional nature, he wanted hard facts to believe; and the Lord Jesus respected his honest yearnings after the truth. Thomas was anxious to see the Lord Jesus or he would not have been with the disciples on the following Sunday as they again sat in the upper room and Jesus again came to them with the greeting of peace. Then his first words were for Thomas. He bade him not only to look but to feel the scars in his hands and side, using the very words that Thomas had used in demanding proof of the resurrection. But the vision of Christ was all that Thomas needed, his doubts were all swept away by that sight, and with joy he worshipped the risen Saviour.

Questions

When did the risen Lord first appear to his assembled disciples? How did he greet them? How did he prove his identity? Did they believe in him? What apostle was not with them at the time? What did he say about it? Did Jesus know how this man felt? What did he say when he saw him? What did the one who had doubted say? What is the lesson for us? What is the Golden Text?

C. E. Topic.

Sun., Apr. 28.—Topic—Fidelity to pledges: 'I promise.'—Ps. lxxv., 1-4; lxi., 1-8; cxvi., 12-14.

Junior C. E. Topic.

WHATEVER HE WOULD.

Mon., Apr., 22.—Learning Christ's wishes.—Acts iv., 6.
Tues., Apr. 23.—Obedience tests love.—John xiv., 15.
Wed., Apr. 24.—Going where Christ sends.—Bark. xvi., 15.
Thu., April 25.—Speaking Christ's word.—I. Kings xxii., 14.
Fri., Apr. 26.—Doing in Jesus's name.—Col. iii., 17.
Sat., Apr. 27.—After Christ's example.—John xiii., 15.
Sun., Apr. 28.—Topic—Pledge meeting No. 2: 'Whatever he would like to have me do.'—John xv., 13-16.

Free Church Catechism.

45. Q.—What are the outward signs in the Lord's Supper?

A.—Bread and wine: which the Lord has commanded to be given and received for a perpetual memorial of his death.

46. Q.—What is signified by the bread and wine?

A.—By the bread is signified the body of our Lord Jesus Christ in which he lived and died; by the wine is signified his blood, shed once for all upon the cross for the remission of sins.

47. Q.—What do they receive who in penitence and faith partake of this sacrament?

A.—They feed spiritually upon Christ as the nourishment of the soul, by which they are strengthened and refreshed for the duties and trials of life.



Make a Beginning.

('Friendly Greetings.')

'Save? Why, what nonsense you're talkin', Jim Bond! Here I earn a pound a week, and now and again a trifle overtime, and I've a family to keep. 'How's a fellow to save, I'd like to know?'

Jim Bond and Hal Gray lived in the same street, and as they walked home together from their work one evening, Jim was speaking about the importance of saving, and Hal made this reply.

'But,' said Jim, 'surely you could put by something, if only a few pence?'

'I don't see how,' replied Hal; 'what with rent and food and clothes, the money goes like water. You see we've got to live, and when anything extra turns up I haven't a farthin' to fall back upon. Now tell me, Jim, how do you manage?'

'It's very simple. I earn a pound a week, same as you do, only that I've no overtime money. Well, every week I make each shillin' I earn pay me a penny. As soon as my wages are given me I carry the money home to my wife, and she takes care always to have change handy, and when I hands her my pound, she pays me the tax—twenty pence—one-and-eight. The shillin' of that goes to the post-office bank, and the eightpence I pop into a little cash-box as was a weddin' present to my wife. We let the interest on the money in the post-office be added to the principal, so as the sum may grow big enough to be a help when the children is older and needs more schoolin'. The eightpence a week we keep for extras—an outin' in the country on Bank Holiday, or a special charity we're in-