

## Sabbath School Lessons.

October 2nd, 1864.

## THE BARREN FIG TREE.

Mark xi. 19-33.

Ver. 19. Jesus returned from Jerusalem to Bethany, after having cleansed the temple on the second day of the week.

Ver. 20, 21. *In the morning of the third day* Jesus went early to the temple to teach the people, Luke xxi. 37, 38. *From the roots;* this showed that the withering had not taken place so soon from ordinary natural causes.—The disciples had heard Christ speak, Mark ii. 14, but perhaps did not give much heed, or allowed it to pass from their minds as not to be followed by anything remarkable.—Peter probably was the spokesman for the rest, Matt. xxi. 20.

Ver. 22-24. *Have faith in God.* This is what Jesus designed to teach by his practical parable of the fig-tree. It showed his divine power and authority. "He spake and it was done." "He can do according to his pleasure," John v. 17. It was giving a motive for having perfect faith in him. Unless we had a God that can do all things, we could never place implicit confidence in Him, John xvii. 2. Jesus has given every proof of His Almighty power and will to help us, "to heal our diseases," Matt. viii. 27; to bring us to himself.

*This mountain, be thou removed:* "mountain" may refer to Mount Olivet, but is figuratively used for anything very difficult and impossible-looking to man, 1 Cor. xiii. 2.—Man is easily cast down, when he has nothing to look to but his own strength and the greatness of the obstacle before him, 2 Kings vi. 16.

*Shall not doubt;* this shows the state of mind in which God will answer the prayer of faith. *A faithless prayer God will not receive,* James i. 6, 7. Christ's miracles showed the necessity of faith in the persons receiving the benefit. *He shall have;* the answer to such a state of mind is sure as the promise itself, 1 John v. 15; Psa. cxvi. 1.

*Believe that ye receive them;* we are to ask God as a kind and loving father who will not deny what is good for us. "A world lying in wickedness" receives many of God's gifts without asking, Matt. v. 45; how much more those that pray in sincerity, *believing.*

Ver. 25, 26. *Forgive;* this shows the spirit in which we should pray. It is the very essence of Christianity, Acts vii. 60; Luke xxiii. 34. No one can pray aright without this Christian spirit. God will not hear

a prayer from an unforgiving heart, more than from one without faith. "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath," Matt. v. 23, 24; Matt. v. 16.

Ver. 27. *As he was walking;* teaching and preaching, Matt. xxi. 23; Luke xx. 1.

Ver. 28-32. The insincerity and hypocrisy of these men showed itself plainly here—afraid to say that John's baptism was from heaven, lest Christ would at once speak of him as witnessing of Him—afraid to say of men, lest they might lose the favour of the people, Prov. xxix. 25.

*We cannot tell;* the hypocrisy becomes a full-grown lie at last. These men were striving against their own convictions; God had favoured them with light, knowledge, and opportunities above many others, yet, for their own selfish ends and supposed personal advantage, they are but too willing to sacrifice every good and honourable principle!

*Neither do I tell you;* Jesus could, but did not: speaking in reply, not to their words alone, but their secret thoughts. The answer was significant and pointed, silencing them better than even if he had directly charged them with their dissimulation.

See how dangerous it is to have men without principle as the religious leaders of the people, "blind leaders of the blind." Those that once fairly begin a course of dissimulation are in Satan's hands, Psal. lxxiii. 3; John viii. 44.

Be honest, truthful, and sincere. Never let conduct or words place you in the list of liars. When called on to do so, state the truth openly, frankly, and fearlessly; God will be on your side; fear not the consequences. Never be ashamed to own what you believe to be the honest truth.

Never trifle with your convictions.—God "will not always strive with the children of men," Heb. x. 29-31.—*Edin. S. S. Lessons.*

October 9th, 1864.

## THE ARK RETURNED.

Read 1 Sam. vi. 1-21.

I. The Proposal, ver. 1-9.

Israel was without the ark seven months; they seem to have made no effort to recover it. Ekron first proposed the return of the ark, chap. v. 11.

The lords were in doubt how to return it, and the priests were consulted on the question. Perhaps some thought of making Israel pay a ransom for it. The priests give wise and honest counsel—generally false priests were bitter enemies to all that was God's. "See Christ's history. The offering was a confession of their shame and guilt; and would keep it