

Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS.

FOURTH QUARTER.

(Condensed from Peloubet's Notes.)

Lesson I. Oct. 4. John 11: 21-41.

CHRIST RAISING LAZARUS.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Jesus said unto her, I am the Resurrection, and the Life."—John 11: 25.

INTERVENING HISTORY. After the parable of the Good Shepherd at the Feast of Tabernacles in October, Jesus returned to Galilee. His stay there, however, was brief. Then making His final departure from Galilee (Luke 9: 31), He went forth the seventy unto Samaria, where He soon followed, journeying eastward, till He reached the Jordan. Crossing the river He turned to the south, and slowly moving toward Jerusalem, teaching and preaching as He went, He reached the city about the time of the Feast of Dedication, December, A. D. 29 (John 10: 22). At this feast He spoke the words which in John follow our last lesson (10: 22-39). Then He retired to Bethabara (Bethany) in Perea, beyond Jordan, where we find Him at the beginning of this lesson (10: 40). The large section of the Gospel, according to Luke included in chapters 9: 31 to 17: 10, together with John 10: 22-42, contain the only record we have of these three busy months in the life of Jesus.

EXPLANATORY.

I. At Bethany on the Mount of Olives, about two miles south east of Jerusalem, lived a family of three,—a brother and two sisters,—with whom Jesus made His home when in that region. The family seem to have been in prosperous circumstances, as we judge from their owning their home, from the costliness of the ointment (equal to over \$400 in our day) which Mary used upon Jesus, and the number of the Jews who came to console the sisters on the death of their brother. Martha was apparently at the head of the household, an active, energetic woman, while Mary was more reflective and affectionate. For notices of the family see Luke 10: 38-42; John 12: 1-3. Soon after the messenger had gone, Lazarus died, and as usual, was buried the same day. Hope was gone from the sisters. Friends came to the house to console with them in their affliction. Yet Jesus delayed two days before He set out to aid and comfort his friends,—a delay full of mystery, and yet for the glory of God, and the blessing of the afflicted ones.

THE MYSTERIOUS DELAY. (1) This delay was necessary to complete the work in which Jesus was engaged, and from which He would not suffer Himself to be drawn away even by considerations of personal sympathy. (2) He had taught at the first miracle (2: 4) that the hour of His work were marked out by signs that He alone could read, but that every hour had its work, and every work its hour. (3) This delay was necessary to the consummation of the miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus in such form as to forever prohibit the impression that death had not really taken place.

21. "Then said Martha unto Jesus." The fact that Mary, too, greeted Him with the same words, shows that the sisters were impressed with the same feeling, and probably had expressed it to one another many times. "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." It is the bitterest drop in their whole cup of anguish, and all this might have been otherwise. We, in our affliction, continually echo Martha's "if" saying to ourselves, "if we had not done this, or if we had not done that, if it had not been for our blunder, or that of our friends, or our physician, our beloved would not have died. Chance is the God of the time, and is a comfortless God in the time of our trouble.

22. "But I know now." She knew that twice Jesus had restored the dead to life, and it was possible to do again. 23. "Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again." These words might mean that her brother would be brought back to life again now, or they might have been spoken for the purpose of giving her comfort in the assurance of immortal life through the resurrection, when she would meet her brother again. Jesus speaks thus to her that He may lead her to a higher faith, so that when the desire of her heart is granted, it may not be an empty gift.

24. "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." There is ample evidence that the Pharisees believed in a future life, and in a resurrection of the just. This hope was far off and vague, and brought little comfort to her soul. She needed her brother now.

25, 26. "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life," etc. The intention of the Father seems to have been to awaken in Martha the faith that He could raise her brother from the dead in his highest and proper form. This He does by announcing Himself (it is the expressed emphatic personal pronoun, meaning that resurrection in the last day shall be only by My power, and therefore I can raise now as well, and more than that, the LIFE ITSELF; so that "he that believeth in Me (i. e., Lazarus in her mind), though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth (physically is not yet dead) and believeth in Me, shall never die;" faith in Me is the source of both life here and hereafter; and those who have it, have life, so that they shall NEVER die; physical death being overlooked and disregarded, in comparison with that which is really and only death. Jesus is the resurrection and life both of the body and of the soul. "Shall never die." There will be no extinction of existence, but a continued life unbroken by the dissolution of the body. "Believe thou this!" For the comfort and blessing of it could come only through believing.

27. "She saith unto Him, yea, Lord: I believe." The tense is perfect as in the Revised Version, and expresses a well-established faith. She not only is convinced, but it is no new experience. "I believe that Thou art the Christ. Believing that Jesus is the Christ, she accepts as true all He has said, and believes in His power to raise the dead.

28. "When she had so said, she went her way" to impart to her sister the comfort and hope she herself had received. "Called Mary her sister secretly." She did it secretly (1) because the interview with Jesus would be much more free and blessed if it could be with Jesus alone, with no unbelieving Jews present. (2) Lest some of the Jews who were present from Jerusalem might be unfriendly to Jesus and take occasion to inform the rulers of His presence. 29. "She arose quickly," anxious to see and hear Jesus, and obey His summons. 30. "Now Jesus was not yet come into the town," for the same reasons which led Martha to call her sister secretly. 31. "She goeth unto the grave," according to the custom of Jewish women. 32. "Then Mary . . . fell down at His feet." Not so Martha (ver. 21). Mary's feelings were of an intenser and stronger kind, or she was more given to expression. She uttered the same words as Martha had done. They were doubtless an oft-repeated refrain . . . on the subject of their sorrow. No further conversation with her is recorded. Either the author would not repeat what had been said before; or Mary's faith did not need the aids which Martha had received; or the presence of the Jews prevented.

33. "He groaned in the spirit." The word translated groaned expresses not sorrow, but indignation. Jesus was deeply agitated in his soul with indignant emotions, probably in view of the power of sin producing disease and death, an example of which was before Him. He felt all that the sin had wrought. He beheld the wages of sin. He saw the great foe of the human race, behind which was concealed the personal enemy, Satan, combined perhaps, with the thought that for vanquishing this death by the most glorious of His miracles He should Himself have to pay the penalty of death.

35. "Jesus wept." It is well that this short sentence should be in a verse by itself, the shortest verse in the Bible, but one of the most blessed. Why should Jesus weep? (1) He wept in sympathy with the sorrow around Him. (2) His heart was full of sorrow, as He saw in this instance before Him but one of the multitude of sorrows filling the earth. We have here an instance of the ten degrees of the character of Jesus. The same Saviour wept over Jerusalem, and felt deeply for poor, dying sinners. To the same tender and compassionate Saviour, Christians may now come (Heb. 4: 15); and to Him the penitent sinner may also come, knowing that He will not cast him away. The action of Jesus on this occasion, and on others, show that the working of these greater miracles brought on an intense strain on His physical system. It was a part of His vicarious bearing of our infirmities. The good that He did was at a real cost to Him.

37. "Could not this man," etc. The miracle of the blind man was referred to because it was of recent occurrence, and in the immediate neighborhood, while the two previous miracles of raising the dead (Luk. 11: 17; J. 41-42), were performed in distant Galilee, about a year and a half before.

38. "Cometh to the grave. It was a cave." The numerous sepulchres which skirt the valleys on the north, east, and south of Jerusalem, exhibit for the most part one general mode of construction. A doorway in the perpendicular face of the rock, usually small and without ornament, leads to one or more small chambers excavated from the rock, and commonly upon the same level with the door. Very rarely are the chambers lower than the level of the ground.

39. "Martha . . . saith unto Him." It was merely Martha's opinion, from what generally happened under like circumstances, that decay had already commenced. Nothing can be known as to the fact. But, it is asked, had not Lazarus been embalmed? Undoubtedly he had, but after the manner of the Jews, who limited themselves to wrapping the body in perfumes (see John 19: 40), a process which could not prevent corruption.

40. "Said I not unto thee?" He had doubtless repeated to her what He had said to His disciples (ver. 4). "If thou wouldst believe," trust in the goodness and power and promises of Jesus, not in any definite work to be accomplished. For He has not told just what He would do. Such must be our faith. But her faith was necessary to the blessing. "See the glory of God." They would see a work of God which would manifest His power and love to men, which would exalt His Son as the Messiah, and bring divine blessings to the family, and His disciples, and to the world.

41. "Jesus lifted up His eyes." A natural, simple, but expressive act of worship. The natural forms of worship are an aid to worship, both for ourselves and those who are with us.

42. "And I knew that Thou hearest Me always." He was never denied, for He always prayed in the right spirit, with the right motive, and in the right faith. The prayer was answered, both when He seemed to be denied (as when He prayed in Gethsemane that the cup might pass from Him), and when the request was visibly granted, as here. So it is with us; our prayers are always answered, even when God denies our particular request. Even then He always grants the spirit of it, and gives us what we saw all the circumstances and results, we would have asked for. "Because of the people which stand by I said it." So that they would know that His power was from God, and recognize His relation to God. "That they may believe that Thou hast sent Me." Not merely that they might believe intellectually that He was a messenger or representative sent by the Father, but that their thoughts might be turned from Him, who was by the instrument, the voice of God, to the invisible Father Himself, who spoke in Him and wrought through Him.

43. "He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth." The one word, speak loud to awaken a sleeper. The loud voice with which He spoke was the expression of a decided will, sure of being obeyed. Undoubtedly these external signs were only, as Hengstenberg says, for the individuals present, the power of raising the dead dwelling, not in the voice, but in the will of Jesus expressed thereby.

44. "And he that was dead came forth bound hand and foot with grave-clothes." It was the Jewish custom to wrap the dead comparatively loosely in a winding sheet, which would have impeded though not prevented arising and walking. The expression, he came forth, does not necessarily indicate that he walked, especially if the sepulchre were dug vertically, but simply that he arose, which he could easily do notwithstanding the line cloths in which he was enveloped. "Loose him and let him go." Christ gives them something to do. In this is a moral significance; we cannot raise the spiritually dead; but we can bring Christ to their grave by our prayers, and we can aid in their perfect liberation when the divine voice has called them from their sleep of death.

Beauty. "All pleasant, good-natured boys and girls have pleasant faces." While walking one day with a friend of mine, who is a governess, we met two children. One had long, curly, golden hair, large blue eyes and pink cheeks; the other had a muddy complexion, small eyes, and short hair, and the two were such a contrast after the usual friends of mine, who were opposite, cross, exacting, selfish, disagreeable to every one at home, and will not study. She has smiles for company always and makes a much better impression on strangers than I do. I know her so well that I cannot think her pretty." My friend, who had spoken to both, asked "Which one?" and then seeing my look of surprise, she added, "I suppose, of course, you mean Estelle; but do you know, I cannot see anything lovely in the child? I have seen her in their home. Nellie is a cousin dependent upon Estelle's father for her support, and she is kind, gentle, unselfish, helpful, studious, indeed so lovely in every way in character, that I forget her face; but Estelle is just her opposite, cross, exacting, selfish, disagreeable to every one at home, and will not study. She has smiles for company always and makes a much better impression on strangers than I do. I know her so well that I cannot think her pretty."

A Father's Love. Now I am going to tell you a real true Chinese story. There was a very rich man in one of the capital cities in North China who fell sick and died, and he had a very grand funeral. Now, you know the Chinese do a great many things very differently to what we do in England, and when a rich man dies they bury his money and treasure with him. The coffins are very large and deep, and the lids are not screwed down as they are in this country, but simply fit as the lid of a box. But, to go on with my story. The rich man was buried, but one night three young men, brothers, opened the grave, look out the treasure, and filled up the grave as if nothing had happened; but they were found out and taken before the magistrate. They were tried, and the eldest one was sentenced to be crucified and the others to be imprisoned. Their poor old father went to the magistrate and said: "I am old, seventy years; I shall soon die, but my son is young, he may do better, let me die instead of him." The old man was accepted and he was crucified. Cruelty there means that the victim is to be tied to a cross in the full heat of the sun and remain there until he dies, which is generally about three days. But, the children you could tell me a story of one who died, who was crucified for you and for me—Jesus. Do you love Him?—Sel.

Friedel. BY HARRIETTE REA. Paula and her mother had left their home in Christiania, Norway, and sailed across the ocean, because they heard wonderful stories about the good times poor people had in America and their easy ways of making money. They went to Lowell, Mass., and could tell me half as clean and well kept as their own in the north of Europe, for there the streets are swept every day by order of the city government, and if children drop paper, or sticks or any old toy out of doors someone is sure to pick them up.

Paula was homesick, although she found a nice place to work in a pleasant house that overlooked the Merrimack River. Her mother lived in a street that ran back of Paula's home, so she was not far away from each other. But it was hard to learn a new language, and to get used to strange sights and sounds, and she missed her old pets that she was forced to leave in Norway.

Paula was greatly pleased with the windows in her house. In Norway there was a tax upon glass, and so people try to get along without the sun and light as much as they can and to be contented with open doors in the summer. It seemed to Paula, sometimes, as if she were almost living in a glass house, and she was confused with trying to see what was going on in the street and in her own kitchen at the same time.

One morning when she opened the side door there sat a beautiful tortoiseshell kitten on the piazza, with eyes so bright and friendly that Paula's heart gave a leap for joy, and she cried out: "O, you are just like my Friedel at home! Kom her, Friedel!"

Paula sat down in a low chair and the kitten jumped into her lap. She spoke to him in the Norwegian language, and the kitten purred and rubbed his nose against her face, and seemed to understand and to comfort her as no cat or dog in Lowell had understood before. Paula adopted the kitten at once, and soon it became a pet of the whole family, and was given the freedom of the house.

Paula was very loyal to Paula, always sleeping at night in a chair in her room and showing a strange fondness for the Norwegian language. If some one called "Kitty, kitty," Friedel would take no notice; but let Paula say "Friedel, katto," and the kitten would jump at once, and run to her arms when she went over to see her mother. A day or two after Friedel walked over by himself, and jumped on

the window sill, a way he always had of attracting attention. Paula's mother was greatly pleased, of course, to see him and rewarded him with a saucer of saffron, of which he was very fond, and then took him home. This call suggested an idea to Paula, and the next day she wrote a note to her mother, tied it around Friedel's neck and, opening the door, said, "Go and bring me my Friedel, please!" The kitten walked off through the garden, and Paula sat down to wait. In about three-quarters of an hour he returned with another note tied to his collar—the answer from her mother. So Friedel was established as a regular letter-carrier. In course of time he became known throughout the neighborhood, and was a welcome visitor wherever he chose to call. He becomes very dignified when he is entrusted with a note. He never litters by the way, but goes straight to the house, rattles the latch, if the door is closed and waits for the note to be untied. At other times he stops in the garden, climbs trees and enters rooms uninvited. Indeed, he is quite friendly with a family in the line between Paula's home and her mother's. But no one can coax him to stop, although the effort has been faithfully tried, when he feels the responsibility of a letter. Paula says he is a Norwegian cat, and she is sure that his ancestors came from her own country.—Sel.

THE CONCEITED PUMPKIN. Through the bright September mellow Lay a pumpkin rich and yellow, Rounding out from side to side, Till at last, puffed up with pride. "What a pumpkin big am I!" "What a pumpkin big am I!"

Midst the withered cornstalks standing, While his form was still expanding, Said he, proudly, "I will go To the fair, myself to show, And the world will say of me, 'What a pumpkin big am I!'"

But alas! while he was talking, Came the farmer's daughter, stalking Through the field to where he lay; And in most ungracious way, Seized him ere he'd time to sigh, Stewed and made of him a pie. —Mrs. J. T. Greenleaf.

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