

SUPPLEMENTARY LESSON NOTES.

A.D. 28]

LESSON VI.

[August 7]

JESUS IN GALILEE.

Matt. 4. 17-25. Gold. Text, Matt. 4. 16.

THE Sea of Galilee now became our Saviour's most frequent place of resort. Though called a sea by Matthew, it is a fresh-water lake. This lake is a depression between the mountains which bound it on either side, filled up by the water of the Jordan. It is twelve miles long from north to south, and six miles wide in the widest place, which is toward the northern end. Its water is clear, about 150 feet deep, and abounds with fish of several excellent varieties. The fish are still caught principally in dip-nets, and the fishing is done mostly in the night.

Decapolis was a district southeast of the lake of Galilee, including ten cities and their territory. The word means *ten cities*. Those who came from Judaea came across the territory of the Samaritans, yet none of the latter came to hear Jesus. They were kept away, notwithstanding the favorable impression he had made on some of them (Jno. iv. 39-42), by their unwillingness to mingle with the Jews.

How fruitful of suggestion are the Jordan, the wilderness, and the Sea of Galilee! About them cluster the important events of the life of Jesus. In the Jordan stood John the Baptist baptizing; in the Sea of Galilee stood John, the beloved, drawing the fisher's net. These fishers were to become fishers of men. A man is worth more than a fish, and hence more important to labor for. Why should Jesus have chosen men of this occupation? For several reasons. They were honest and capable men. They had never been corrupted by the prejudices of the schools of thought in Jerusalem. They were trained in their eyes and ears by their business as fishermen, and hence made good witnesses of what Jesus said and did. They had faith in Jesus and his mission. They had a good reputation with the cities on the coast of Galilee. They were good subordinates, ready to obey their Master. When Jesus said, "Follow me," they did so. They did not say, "I have married a wife, and can not come;" or, "I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I desire to prove them;" or, "Lord, I will, but let me first bury my father." Nor, on the other hand, were they so eager as to volunteer their services, like some, without contemplating the hardships that must ensue. They attended to their own business till called to a higher one, and then they went. When they went, they went through with their task, as they did when they fished the lake over. Jesus always makes a radical call. "Except a man forsake houses and lands, father and mother, wife and children, he can not be my disciple." No thing, and no one, must stand between you and your Christ. Bring everything and every one with you. Consecrate all to God. You are your brother's keeper; go out, therefore, like the first two disciples did when Jesus called,

and bring two others. Do like the Samaritan woman—having talked to the Master, call out the whole city to hear him. Let every one justify his call, as the apostles did, by enlisting in the work of redeeming men. Salvation is as precious to others as to you. What would you have done had Jesus overlooked you?

A.D. 28]

LESSON VII.

[August 14]

THE BEATITUDES.

Matthew v. 1-16. Gold. Text, John i. 17.

By reference to the other gospels it will be found that the Great Teacher has now formally selected his twelve apostles (Luke vi. 13-16), and he is about to unite them into one band on the green summit of this sacred mountain. We may suppose that on one of its peaks he had passed the night in prayer, being joined by the twelve at the early dawn. The present choice of the apostles was regarded as final. Henceforth there was to be no return to the fisher's boat or the publican's booth, as the object of life. These disciples were to share the wandering missions, the evangelic labors, the scant meal and uncertain home which marked even the happiest period of the ministry of their Lord. As the day developed, a vast and promiscuous crowd had gathered. Not only from the densely populated shores of the Sea of Galilee, but even from Judaea and Jerusalem, even from the distant sea coasts of Tyre and Sidon—they had crowded to touch his person and hear his words.

The Sermon on the Mount has the highest significance as setting forth the character and aims of the coming "reign of heaven," and its contrasts with the Jewish law and with the reigning spirit and maxims of that time among the Jews. The design is to set forth the principles of the coming kingdom; its spiritual character; its peculiar power as an internal spiritual force, possessing the heart, and thence controlling the life; and the code of morals that belongs to such a spiritual kingdom. It therefore has unspeakable value for all times, as imparting a knowledge of the principles of the reign of Christ.

The mountain on which the Sermon on the Mount was delivered cannot be identified, because there is nothing said in the text that is characteristic. About four miles west of the city of Tiberias there is a mountain called Hattin by the Arabs, which was fixed upon by the crusaders in the eleventh century as the one, and it has been called since the Mount of Beatitudes; but its sides are too steep for the assembling of such a multitude, and its summits, of which it has two, are not sufficiently capacious. Hundreds of other mountains in Galilee would have answered the purpose better, and there is nothing pointing to one more than to another. When tradition about sacred localities is known to be groundless or false, it is wrong to perpetuate it by even a silent consent. Neither Matthew, nor the Spirit-guiding him, saw fit to identify the spot, and we cannot if we would.