

Jesus, to whom they came hoping that He was the Messiah of Israel, John 1 : 35-51.

The return to Galilee with His few followers was the occasion of the *first miracle* (John 2 : 1-11), but Jesus did not yet come forth publicly, v. 12.

JESUS IN JERUSALEM—Jesus shares with His people in the great national feast (John 2 : 13), and like a prophet He cleanses the temple, vs. 13-22.

The visit of Nicodemus shows that the attention of the ruling classes was early drawn to Him. Jesus teaches the necessity of the new birth. No natural privileges such as the Jews enjoy make men members of the Kingdom of God. Those alone belong to it who have their sins forgiven and possess the Holy Spirit, John 3 : 1-15.

JESUS IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA—It was not long until jealousy arose on the part of the followers of John (John 3 : 22-30) ; so Jesus leaves the region of the Jordan. Another reason why He withdrew to Galilee was that soon Herod cast the Baptist into prison, Mark 1 : 14. On His way to Galilee through Samaria, Jesus has a wonderful reception from the half-heathen people of that country, John 4 : 35-42.

To the woman at the well Jesus reveals the highest truth ever yet known concerning God. He is the Father : worship of Him is not confined to any one place : He is to be worshipped in sincerity and in truth, that is, not with outward ritual performance or symbol, but with the sincere devotion of children to a holy Father, John 4 : 20-24.

LESSON IV.

THE HOLY LAND AS A WHOLE

Jesus is not to be explained by the conditions amid which He lived ; but apart from them He cannot be explained. A native and a citizen of Palestine, He drew His parables from its daily scenes, and His ministry never left its narrow limits. Open and sensitive to the influence of country, climate and institutions, the real Jesus cannot be seen without a knowledge of the geography and life of the Holy Land.

SYRIA—The whole, of which Palestine forms a part, is Syria, the northern and most fertile strip of Arabia, and geographically one land, though divided among many tribes.

The highway between Asia and Africa, it was the road of commerce and travel as well as a great battle-field of both ancient and

modern times. Egypt and Assyria invaded each other by this way, and over the same route came Alexander, Pompey and Napoleon. Even the sea, once a barrier, became a path to the nations of Europe.

IMPORTANCE OF SYRIA'S SITUATION—Her seclusion enabled her to preserve the Semitic character due to the influx of Arabian tribes.

From Africa and Asia she received strongly contrasting impressions, and the Mediterranean gave her the opportunity of influencing the nations of the West. To this position of natural isolation God brought a people who should receive and keep His revelation, and when Judaism was fulfilled in Christianity, it was the point from which the gospel could be most easily carried to the world.

THE FORM OF PALESTINE—The lower part of Syria, shut in before by the sea, behind by the desert, on the south by waste lands, and on the north by the Lebanon range, is Palestine.

Four parallel lines running north and south divide it naturally into as many parts. (1) Beginning at the coast there is, first, the maritime plain, across whose great shore road the armies of the nations marched. (2) Overlooking the entire length of the plain is a range of mountains of varying heights. (3) On the east of the mountains lies the Jordan valley, in which the one river of Palestine rushes to the Dead Sea, sinking 1,290 feet below the level of the ocean. (4) Then, on the east side of the Jordan valley, another series of mountains closes the prospect towards Arabia. Besides these general features, there are plains crossing the mountains and gorges from the higher to the lower levels. All together have gone to shape the course of the nation's history.

CLIMATE—The remarkable range of level, and the nearness of the sea and the desert, combine to cause immense differences of climate and fertility.

Within the short distance of a hundred miles, the traveller passes from the snow and ice of the Lebanons, to the tropical region of the Dead Sea, with corresponding contrasts in the animals and plants of these parts. *The great feature of the climate* is a dry and a rainy season. During the latter, which lasts from April to October, scarce ever a cloud is seen in the sky. The winds, too, are important to the life of Palestine, bringing moisture from the sea in winter, tempering the heat of summer, and sometimes carrying destruction from the desert. Palestine is not a land of forests : the woodland is open and scattered, yet abounding in variety and contrast. From the oak and the pine, it is but a few miles to the palm, the fruits, and the flowers of the tropics.