

* The Sunday School *

BIBLE LESSON

Abridged from Peloubet's Notes.

Third Quarter.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

Lesson V. July 29. Luke 9: 28-36.

Compare Matthew 17: 1-13.

Read Mark 8: 31-9: 29.

Commit Verses 33-35.

GOLDEN TEXT.

This is my beloved Son: hear him.—
Luke 9: 35.

EXPLANATORY.

I. THE PRAYER MEETING ON THE MOUNTAIN.—V. 28. ABOUT AN EIGHT DAYS. Matthew says after six days. Luke counts the parts of days before and after the six entire days. AFTER THREE SAYINGS. The announcement of his coming death and resurrection in our last lesson. There was a close connection between "those sayings" and the transfiguration. The revelation of the way Jesus must act his part as the Messiah, and that they must share a cross instead of a throne, threw them into the gloom of the dungeon of Giant Despair. The prospect before him may have shadowed his own spirit. HE TOOK PETER AND JAMES AND JOHN. It was the same favored three who had gone with Jesus into the room where he raised Jairus' daughter. A few months later they were nearest to him as he prayed in Gethsemane, and still later were recognized as the "pillars" of the church, (Gal. 2: 9). There was no favoritism in this selection. He simply advanced to higher studies those who, by faithfulness in the lower, had made it possible for them to understand and use the higher. AND WENT UP INTO A MOUNTAIN. Matthew says, "a high mountain apart," far from the madding crowd. "Scholars are coming to the unanimous conclusion that the mountain was Hermon," whose top is nine thousand feet above the sea.

II. THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS IN ANSWER TO PRAYER.—V. 29. AND AS HE PRAYED. Greek, "in his praying," during his prayer, and in answer to his prayer. We can imagine what he was praying for, for we know what was on his heart. THE FASHION (OF APPEARANCE) OF HIS COUNTERTENCE WAS ALTERED. Matthew says he "was transfigured before them." The original word is elsewhere in the New Testament rendered "transformed" (as Rom. 12: 2; 2 Cor. 3: 18), and is used of a spiritual change. The fashion of his countenance was altered by being lighted with radiance both from without and from within "with a light that never was on sea or land." "And his face did shine as the sun," says Matthew. Nothing less than the brightest and most glorious of all objects within human knowledge—so bright that it destroys the eye to gaze directly upon it—could express the radiant glories of Jesus' face, when his heavenly nature shone through the veil of his flesh, one of the few hints as to our resurrection bodies. AND HIS RAIMENT WAS WHITE AND GLISTERING. R. V., "dazzling." Matthew says, "white as the light," and Mark, "so as no fuller on earth can white

them." The inner light shone through his garments.

III. THE CONFERENCE OF THE GLORIFIED THREE.—Vs. 30, 31. 30. THERE TALKED WITH THEM TWO MEN. Human beings. WHICH WERE MOSES AND ELIJAH. The Greek form of "Elijah." These persons were really present. It was not a vision. The implication is that the disciples not only saw the appearance, but recognized in the persons Moses and Elijah, as is evident from Peter's proposition (v. 35).

31. WHO APPEARED IN GLORY. In their glorified bodies; something like that of the transfigured Jesus, but with less radiance.

The Subject of Their Conference. AND SPAKE OF HIS DECEASE. Of his "exodus" (in the Greek), his going out of this evil world, as the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt. "Departure is a most fitting word, for it contains, at the same time, the ideas both of death and ascension. Ascension was as much the natural way for Jesus as death is for us." WHICH HE SHOULD (was about to) ACCOMPLISH AT JERUSALEM. By being crucified as he had foretold them just before (vs. 21-27), and rising again from the dead.

IV. THE THREE WITNESSES.—Vs. 32, 33. 32. WERE HEAVY WITH SLEEP. Through their hard climb, and a long season of prayer, but they overcame the drowsy influence and kept awake. WHEN THEY WERE AWAKE. R. V., "were fully awake," which phrase "is one word in the original, and means 'having watched through, having remained awake,' for they had overcome the force of sleep." Their reward was that "they saw his glory and the two men that stood with him." It was no dream, no mere vision, but a waking reality.

33. AS THEY DEPARTED. Were departing. Lit., "in their departing." PETER. With his natural impulsiveness. MASTER, IT IS GOOD FOR US TO BE HERE. The experience was good, and would make him a better and more useful man all the rest of his life. It widened his outlook. It gave him a new idea of the glory that awaited the faithful. It exalted his knowledge of Jesus as a Saviour. It increased his faith. It enabled him to bear more bravely his burdens. LET US MAKE THREE TABERNACLES, or booths, woven from the branches or bushes, like those used at the Feast of Tabernacles. He would make one for each so that they might remain there and not haste away as they seemed to be doing. The visit was all too short. NOT KNOWING (realizing) WHAT HE SAID. He had not time to think what was best, to see all the effects of his plan, and how little it could do toward accomplishing his desire that they should remain and prepare for the inauguration of the glorious Messiah.

V. THE VOICE FROM THE CLOUD.—Vs. 34-36. 34. WHILE HE THUS SPAKE. Here was a wise answer to a foolish prayer, denying the petition in order to grant the best answer. THERE CAME A CLOUD. A bright cloud (Matthew), like the Shekinah of old, betokening the immediate presence of the Father. Like the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness; the shining cloud on Mount Sinai; the dazzling cloud that once filled the tabernacle and the temple. AND OVERSHADOWED THEM. The whole company, for THEY ENTERED INTO THE CLOUD. "It was first above them, and then seemed to descend over them and envelop them." The cloud was an incarnation of the ineffable light of God, veiling its glory, yet making it visible to man, as the clouds that veil the sun enable us who cannot gaze into his face yet to see his beauty and glory. "Fit symbol of the divine presence: the cloud suggesting mystery, and the brightness, glory."

35. AND THERE CAME A VOICE OUT OF A CLOUD, SAYING, THIS IS MY BELOVED SON. God now gives his testimony. It revealed nothing new, but confirmed the old, for it was the same voice which had once before been heard at his baptism, and which should salute him again as he stood on the threshold of his passion; thus, at the beginning, at the middle, and at the close of his ministry. (See 2 Pet. 1: 17). HEAR HIM. He is worthy of your attention and obedience. He is my messenger, and speaks the truth, the truth you need.

36. AND WHEN THE VOICE WAS PAST. The disciples fell on their faces in great terror (Matthew). Jesus came and "touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid." Then they looked up, and JESUS WAS FOUND ALONE. AND... TOLD NO MAN IN THOSE DAYS. As Jesus commanded them, "until the Son of man be risen from the dead" (Matthew).

VI. THE DESCENT FROM THE MOUNT.—When the disciples came down from the Mount of Transfiguration, they found themselves in a wicked world, confronting its evils, and with abundance of common work to do and daily battles to fight. The first thing they met was symbolical of the work this experience would help them to do,—a demoniac boy, whom the other

disciples could not relieve, but from whom Jesus cast out the demons.

VII. LESSONS FROM THE TRANSFIGURATION.—1. Our riches and most heavenly experiences come in and through prayer, and often from united prayer.

"Lord, lead us to the mountain height; to prayer's transfiguring glow. And may we bring a heavenly light to the dark world below."

"Tell me your prayers and I will write the history of a soul."

Illustration.—"Remember the lamp of Aladdin, which needed only to be rubbed to bring forth unseen powers to do the bidding of the possessor."

Note how much the other nine lost by not being present at this prayer meeting. They had not taken the steps in climbing the moral mountain, and so missed the scene and its blessing.

2. Only those who have served Christ faithfully in the valleys of daily duty, and have lived near to him, can climb with him the Mount of Transfiguration. Daily faithfulness is the ladder to heaven. "Unless a man has trained himself for his chance, the chance will only make him ridiculous. A great occasion is worth to a man exactly what his antecedents have enabled him to make of it."

3. There is a glory in the Bible, and in Christ beyond our ordinary conception, and often veiled, but always there to those who can see.

* * *

Vexatious Children.

One would like to get the ear of children and suggest to them how much the parents' life—which means peace, hope, faith and joy—depends on their conduct, in speech and deed, in manner and bearing. If young people could only put themselves in their parents' place and imagine, wonderful things would follow. Some idler, who will not work from motives of fear or respect or ambition, might be spurred by love, if only to save his mother from reproach. Some thoughtless, selfish girl might deny herself whims and pleasures to bring satisfaction to the hearts of her people. Some young man might bear himself with a little more humility, and even condescend to give occasional information about his movements, if he had any idea of his father's feelings on certain occasions. Parents are kept at a distance, are denied proper confidences, have their convictions, wishes, tastes—if you please, foibles—disregarded, look in vain for signs of affection and gratitude, have their just pride in their children wounded, not because the children are bad or cruel, but only because it does not occur to them that, although they consider themselves independent of the old folks, the old folks are continually, willingly, pathetically dependent on them for what is more than living—for love.

Prodigal is too strong a word to describe a large number of children who are, however, a constant trial to their parents. They are bad tempered, sullen, disoblige in the home, or they are frivolous, light-headed, unstable; or they are extravagant, wasteful, luxurious; or they are deceitful, unreliable, scheming. Sons will not fall into their father's plans, although they be most just and reasonable; daughters will form unfortunate attachments, which can only prove disastrous; and which the wisdom of older people would have prevented. It is one of the cruel ironies of life that a man should spend the best years of his life in hard, self-denying, successful work to make a home for his family, such as neither he nor his people before him enjoyed, and that it should be made miserable for him by the disobedience, self-will and impracticableness of his children; that a man should amass great wealth, every penny of which is a sign of industry and integrity, and that he should see it become an instrument of mischief, supporting incompetent sons in idleness, and making his daughter a gilded bait for mean-spirited fortune hunters. The possibilities of joy and sorrow within a family are known only to God.—Ian Maclaren.

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Bedlock, June, 11, 1897

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