

FOR THE SABBATH SCHOOL.

International S. S. Lesson.

LESSON XI.—SEPT. 9.—JOHN III., 1-16.

(Jesus and Nicodemus.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." John iii: 16.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—Regeneration.

ANALYSIS.—The Earnest Inquirer. (vs. 1, 2, 4, 9.) The Divine Teacher. (vs. 3, 5-8, 10-16.)

TIME AND PLACE.—Passover Week (March-April.) A.D. 27, in Jerusalem.

EXPLANATORY.—THE SEEKER AFTER TRUTH.—Vs. 1, 2. Nicodemus—a Greek name, meaning Conqueror of the People, but was in common use among the Jews. All we know of him is recorded by John. *First.* A PHARISEE. The strictest and most religious sect of the Jews, who believed in a future state, studied the Scriptures, and were looking for the Messiah, whom they expected to be a temporal deliverer and king. *Second.* A MEMBER OF THE SANHEDRIN. A ruler of the Jews. This phrase is indefinite; but it would appear from John vi: 50 that he belonged to the Sanhedrin, a body of about seventy men, whose position was dignified and much respected. *Third.* A SCRIBE. An authorized religious teacher, as we learn from verse 10. *Fourth.* A MAN OF GREAT INFLUENCE. Tradition reports him to have been a man of great wealth and a rigid observer of the Pharisaic forms. *Fifth.* HIS LATER LIFE. Twice, later on, we obtain a glimpse of Nicodemus. After this interview he seems to have become a secret disciple, or at least strongly inclined to accept of Jesus as the Messiah, for he, in a manner, defended Jesus before the Sanhedrin a year or so after this interview (John vii: 50). But it was not till the crucifixion that he came out boldly and decidedly as a disciple of Jesus (John xix: 39).

THE TEACHER SENT FROM GOD.—The true teacher was (1) sent from God, taught of God. (2) He knew the truth (vs. 11, 13). (3) taught the truth. (4) He came with proofs of his authority, deeds that showed that God was with him, and were signs of God's goodwill, kindness, power, and opposition to all evil.

THE FIRST GREAT ESSENTIAL NEED OF HUMANITY.—NEW LIFE FROM ABOVE.—Vs. 3-8. Except a man (any one) be born again, or anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. The declaration is explicit that a new spiritual life is necessary; not only to enter into but even to form any correct conception of the kingdom of God. Christ's answer is equivalent to, "It is not learning, but life, that is wanted for Messiah's kingdom, and life must begin by birth." Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit. Our Lord here speaks of the second birth as completed by two agencies, water and the Spirit. John the Baptist baptized with water for the remission of sins, but he was always careful to disclaim power to baptize with the Holy Ghost. His baptism symbolized the washing away of sin from the soul. Assurance of pardon John was empowered to give. Those who humbly submitted to his baptism with confession of their sins went from it forgiven and cleansed. But more was needed, a new life in the soul implanted by the Holy Spirit, a new love, a new purpose, a new motive power, new affections. The declaration is that no man can enter the kingdom of God except by (1) a public acknowledgment and confession of sin, a public putting off of the old man and entering into the new; and (2) a real and vital change of life and character wrought by the Spirit of God in the heart of the believer. By the one act he enters into the visible and external kingdom; by the other, into the spiritual and invisible kingdom.

THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS.—(1) As to those spiritual and external things, we need the authority of one who knows. Hence we have the testimony of an eye-witness. (2) Jesus Christ was peculiarly fitted by his nature to make this revelation to us. Being God, he knew all things. Every hope, every possibility was plain to him, and what he reveals to us from heaven bears the stamp of perfect, universal truth.

Application and Illustration.

BORN AGAIN.—An old Irishman having chanced to hear the expression, "Ye must be born again," was greatly exercised as to its meaning. At length his anxiety became unbearable, and sick in body and soul he dragged himself to a mill near by, and asked for one of the proprietors, whom he knew was a Christian. He was not in, but his partner went to him. "Well, Mike, do you want a drink? Here's a sixpence for you," he said. "No," said the old man, refusing the coin, "I am dying, and unless I'm born again I can never see the Kingdom of God. What is it to be born again." Touched by his earnestness he sent for the Christian partner, who coming took the old man to the hospital and on the way gave him Christ's answer to his question. The next day he called early, and asked, "Well, Mike, do you know what 'born again' means now." Raising himself in his bed, he replied, "Not altogether; but if I'm born again, and loving Christ is being born again, I am born again." And so he went home. He had learned the mystery, "Everyone that loveth is born of God."

When the saintly Sumnerfield was lying ill he was asked by a clergyman, "How old are you?" His answer was "I was born at Preston, in England, in 1798, and was born again at Dublin, in Ireland, in 1817." His reply led to the conversion of the then unregenerated minister.—S. S. Lesson Illustrations.

GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD.—"Darling, don't you think that wonderful?" asked a mother to her little girl, as she read to her Jno. iii: 16. "No, mother," replied the child. "And why not,

dear?" was the surprised enquiry, "Because," answered the little one, "it is just like God."

GATHERED GOLD.—Men cannot earn life, so God gives it. Rom. vi: 23.

As the fish cannot live on land, so cannot the natural man dwell in Heaven. V. 3.

The "how" of honest inquiry never goes unsatisfied. V. 4.

As the unseen wind is manifested in its effects, so is the unseen Spirit revealed in the lives of new born men. V. 8.

We have in this lesson the "must" of man, and the "must" of God. Regeneration and Propitiation. Vs. 7, 14.

CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR.

Daily Readings.

First Day—Death or life—John vi: 47-58.

Second Day—Sin or holiness—1 John v: 12-21.

Third Day—Poverty or plenty—Isa. xxxii: 9-20.

Fourth Day—Unrest or peace—Ps. lxxviii: 12-35.

Fifth Day—Weakness or strength—Ps. xlviii: 1-50.

Sixth Day—Sorrow or joy—Ps. xliii: 1-5.

Seventh Day—THE ALTERNATIVES—John iii: 16-21, 31, 36.

PRAYER MEETING TOPIC, Sept. 9.—"The Alternatives," Jno. iii: 16-21, 31, 36. A young lady lay dying. Her pastor was by her bed-side pleading with her for Christ. Her answer came with awful decision, "I can't, I can't! Two Sundays ago as you solemnly urged the need of conversion I wrote something awful in my hymn book, and I can't take it back!" Thus rejecting Christ her soul went out into the darkness. In her hymn book the sorrowing pastor found these three dreadful words, "I'll chance it!" Comrades in Christian Endeavor make this meeting one of decision. Use every effort to gather to it those you know to be unsaved, your associate members and others of your church unconnected with the Society. Let no one leave the meeting without feeling that the alternative, life or death, depends upon their choice.

Receive CHRIST NO Condemnation.
Reject Condemned already.

"The next step" should be urged upon associate members, and some opportunity given to all for decision. May God bless this topic to the saving of souls throughout the world. Reference passages: Gen. xiii: 8-13; Dent. xxx: 15-20; Josh. xxiv: 14, 15; 1 Kings xviii: 21, 36-39; Matt. iv: 18-22, vii: 13, 14, xxi: 28-30; Luke xiv: 25-30.

JUNIOR TOPIC, Sept. 9.—"Christ's Scholars; who were some of them, and what did they learn?" Simon and Andrew learned to be fishers of men, (Matt. iv: 18, 19.) Nicodemus learned the need of being born again, and that "God so loved the world," (Jno. iii: 1-21.) The woman at the well learned of the water of life, and true worship, (Jno. iv: 7-26.) Teachers of Juniors, learn how Jesus taught. He talked fishing to the fishermen; water to the woman at the well; and theology to the learned Pharisee.

The First National Chinese C. E. Convention.



MR. LING, OF FOOCOW.

The first Chinese Christian Endeavorer.

China there are 1,069 Endeavorers.

The first annual convention of the United Society of Christian Endeavor for China was held last June in the City of Shanghai. Delegates were present from north, south and east, the greater number being native Chinese. Among the eleven banners which decorated the convention meeting place, was one bearing an immense dragon with a golden cross planted on its head. "China for Christ," was the sentiment which found greatest favor among the many devices.

Endeavor work in China was begun in Foochow in 1885, and here the first one to take the pledge was a Mr. Ling. Within the last few years the Society has grown rapidly, and now among the 50,000 converts of

Christian Endeavorers are returning now from their holidays, and societies will be planning for their winter campaign. We would like to hear from you on two points. First, what did you do for C.E. during your vacation? Second to what work are you going to devote yourselves during the winter? Drop us a postcard. We will consider it a favor.

An English pastor, in a printed address to his people, says: "I am persuaded that everywhere in Christ's Church the great requirement is not more meetings, more organizations, more active work, but first more leisure to look into his face. For extensivity of work you need intensity of life; for much labor you need much life. Is he our life? If we are too busy to walk with Christ, we are only idly busy." Do not those words show us why many Christians are cypresses in the church and the world?—Inquirer.