

The First Disciples.

APRIL 11.

JOHN i: 35-51.

Golden Text, John 1: 37.

IMMEDIATELY after his conflict with Satan in the wilderness, Jesus returned to the Jordan and mingled in the crowds that gathered around the Baptist. The time was at hand when the ministry of John should be superseded by that of his Master. None knew that better than John himself, ch. 3: 30. The more we think of John's popularity and influence among all classes and the visible success that attended his ministry, the more we must admire his modesty and self-renunciation. When it began to be whispered that John himself might be the long-expected Messiah, he announced in the most explicit manner that he was not, but only a servant and forerunner, vs. 20-27; and when he heard that the tide of popular favour was following Jesus rather than himself, he even rejoiced on account of it—thoroughly convinced that his peculiar mission was now accomplished, ch. 3: 26, 36. Only one thing more remains for John to do, namely, to introduce Jesus publicly as the Messiah, vs. 29-34. V. 35. *Next day*—after John's testimony. *Two of his disciples*—one was Andrew, v. 40, the other, no doubt the Apostle John himself. These three, with the Master, constituted **THE FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH**. V. 36. *The Lamb of God*. These words would be full of significance to men who had all their lives been accustomed to witness the invariable morning and evening sacrifice of a lamb on the great temple altar. V. 37. *They followed Jesus*—Much is implied in these words. They not only went with him, but resolved to identify themselves with his cause. V. 38. *Rabbi*—Teacher. By making use of this epithet they intimated their desire to be taught by Him. *Master*—The original word also means *Teacher*—frequently applied to Him who was The Great Teacher. V. 39. *They came and dwell*—Where his temporary home then was we know not. Vs. 40, 41. *Andrew*—the first to follow Jesus, yet of whom nothing more is said in the gospels, except that he lost no time in bringing his brother to Jesus; yet, what a noble example for all time! V. 43. *Shalt be called Cephas*—see Matt. 16: 18; in which, however, there is nothing to countenance the idea of Peter's "supremacy." He claimed for himself nothing more than Presbyterian parity, 1 Pet. 5: 1. V. 43. *Philip*—always named the 5th among the twelve: doubtless also one of John's disciples, and also imbued with the missionary spirit, as we see here. Vs. 45, 49. *Nathaniel*—His name occurs only in John—supposed to be identical with Bartholomew, one of the twelve: incredulous at the first, he is convinced by Jesus' divine knowledge of his previous history, and frankly accepts him as his "*Rabbi*—teacher," and, more than that—*The Son of God*, and *The King of Israel*.

The First Miracle.

APRIL 18.

JOHN ii: 1-11.

Golden Text, John 2: 11.

ON arriving at Nazareth, two or three days after the incidents of last lesson, Jesus found that his mother had gone to a wedding in Cana, a small village a few miles to the north, to which himself and his disciples were invited. They went to Cana and would likely be the guests of Nathaniel, whose home was there. A marriage in the East was a time of great rejoicing. The time-honoured feast, Gen. 29: 22, was an essential part of the ceremony. It was provided at the cost of the bridegroom and continued seven days. The evenings were spent in singing, music, and dancing. The presence of Christ and of his mother on this occasion is a guarantee that there was no excess or impropriety connected with it. We may be sure, indeed, that his motive in going to it was to sanctify the innocent enjoyments and amusements of domestic life. Vs. 1, 2. *The third day*—from the calling of Philip. *His disciples*, were probably those mentioned in ch. 1, viz., Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathaniel, James and John. V. 3. *They have no wine*—Probably about the middle of the feast—the supply gave out. This would be considered a great calamity, as it was one of the invariable means of showing hospitality. Mary, probably made this known to Jesus soon after his arrival, so quietly that the guests should not know, nor the family feel themselves disgraced. Doubtless, she hoped that he would in some way manifest the mysterious power which she knew him to be possessed of, to meet this emergency. V. 4. *Woman*—The abrupt salutation meant no want of respect, though it was followed by the mild rebuke, *What have I to do with thee?* intimating that henceforth she must leave him to act as he pleased. *My hour*—probably the time when he should proclaim his divine mission. V. 6. Such stone water-jars were found in every Eastern house, were indeed necessary for the many washings and purifyings of the Jews. *Firkins*—a firkin was 9 gallons. The whole, therefore, would hold over 100 gallons. V. 9. There was no parading of the miracle. He spake and it was done. The water became wine—real, good wine. This lesson does not lend any encouragement to the use or abuse of intoxicating beverages in our times. That is quite a different question, to be argued on its own merits. We learn from this passage of Scripture that we may be in the world, yet not of it: that wherever we go we should take our religion with us, and that all our intercourse with others should tend to do them good. The miracles of Christ attest his divine power, his mission from God, and his love to mankind. Matt. 11: 2-6. We should seek to have Christ with us in our social circles, and in our recreations and amusements. Where we would be ashamed to meet Him, we should never go.