

Sabbath School Teacher.

Lesson XXXVIII.

JESUS & JOHN.

Mat. xli. vs. 1-11

COMMIT TO MEMORY VERSES 4, 5.

PARALLEL PASSAGES.—Matt. xiv. 8, 4; John. 8. 30.

With v. 1-3, read Dent. xviii. 15; with v. 4, Isa. xli. 1; with v. 6, 1 Cor. i. 23, 4; with v. 7-9, Luke i. 16, 16; with v. 10, Mal. iii. 1; with v. 11, Matt. xli. 10, 17.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—Christ is "that Prophet."

INTERNATIONAL TEXT.—Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. He was a burning and a shining light. John v. 33, 35.

INTRODUCTION.—It is an unhappy arrangement that begins this chapter with v. 1, instead of finishing with the tenth chapter, to which it belongs. Its real force is, "Jesus having sent out the twelve, did not remain idle, or leave all to them, but instantly proceeded with his own work of teaching and preaching." This is plain, intelligible and instructive. How diligent he was! We are not to put this message from John just after the mission of the twelve. "Now" fixes nothing as to its time. That we are to learn from the other gospels. "Now" simply commences a new part of the narrative.

A hasty reader of the gospel might suppose the notices of the Baptist and the Saviour, casual. But they are not so. There is a definite plan. John, as it were, resigns in Christ's favour, even before his imprisonment (John i. 28, 29, 30), and Jesus here puts his forerunner in his proper place, setting aside popular mistakes on one side, and on the other rating him, as he deserves, as to the kingdom. We have

1. THE OCCASION OF OUR LORD'S WORDS. He was doing many mighty works (ix. 35). His fame was widespread. John the Baptist, on the other hand, was in prison. Why, we learn from xiv. 8, though the facts had been glanced at in i. 12. The prison was on the border of Perea and the desert. We read of it at length in Josephus (Ant. XVIII. 5, 2). Here a tedious witness's imprisonment was endured by the Baptist. He had proclaimed the judgment and "fire that would attend the Messiah's coming. Was there ever greater need of judgment than now? Herod was living in open sin, and Herodias only waiting her time to have the Baptist cut off. John wonders if he has rightly understood his own message. Is this quiet ministry, with the hospitality of publicans and Pharisees accepted, the ministry he counted upon? He has his fears and depression, exactly as Elijah, in whose power and spirit he came (Luke i. 17), fainted under the juniper tree (1 Kings xix. 4), as David hid, as Moses hid. He longs for something more forcible, prompt, visible, that would quell proud foes, and vindicate saints. So he sends his disciples (two of them) with the question of v. 8. So, many modern authorities regard it.

The other and older view is that he used this kindly device to direct his disciples' attention to Jesus. But Christ sends the return message to John; and he knows the object of the question. Besides, this round about way is not like the straightforward Baptist.

We may learn that (a) God's ways are not ours. Mary would hasten Christ (John ii. 3, 4) Peter rebukes him (see Mark viii. 32, 33). Christ checked both. So here, probably.

(b) Good men may have times of doubt and fear.

(c) Prophets and inspired men do not always perfectly understand their own messages (1 Peter i. 11).

(d) The best way is to seek light from Christ.

These lessons we may learn whatever view of John's feelings we hold.

II. CHRIST'S WORDS TO JOHN, v. 4-6. The force of the question was, "Art thou the truth the Messiah, whom we have expected?" Assuming John's knowledge of the prophecies concerning the Messiah (as Isa. xxxv. 5, 6 and lxi. 1), Christ directs them to his works, and as the crown of all, the preaching of the gospel to the poor.

If John was impatient for judgment, the words of Christ (v. 6) were fitted to set him right. If the messengers were unfriendly to Christ's claims, they were for them. They apply to all time and to all men. So, gently, tenderly, meekly and wisely, the Saviour deals with doubters and sets us an example. They were not treated like the scoffing Sadducees.

III. CHRIST'S WORDS TO THE PEOPLE. All teachers have to guard their words and prevent mistakes. So Jesus does. To people may think John has changed his mind as to Jesus, or that Jesus sets little value on him. So, not with a compliment to John, for his disciples to repeat to him, for they were gone (v. 7), but at once, so that the people may be under no mistake, he defines John's position.

He is (v. 7) no "reed shaken with the wind," but a strong, earnest prophet; and (v. 8) no supple courtier, flattering those in power for his own interests. He is more than an ordinary prophet, himself predicted of, in Mal. iii. 1, a passage which identifies, as our Lord interprets it, John and Jesus, the latter the "messenger of the covenant" and the Lord of the temple. This greatness of John refers to his position. He is nearest to the Messiah in time, and in close association with him. Of the latter qualifying clause two renderings are given: (1) "He that is less" (which the Greek word means), i. e., later in time, namely, Christ himself. So the Baptist taught (John i. 15, 27, and iii. 28-31). (2) He that is less or last in the gospel dispensation is greater in knowledge than John, who is more properly of the old. One may be great in one respect, and not great in another. John was great in nearness to Christ, and rank. But in definite knowledge of Christ's work, the feeblest disciple after Pentecost was in advance of him. —G. S. Robinson.

fort, and more definite views of the work of Jesus Christ than even the Baptist.

It must be admitted that this word rather indicates that the Baptist's mind wavered (as well it might), than that he sent the disciples to attach them to Christ.

Learn (1) How complete the harmony of the Old Testament and the New.

(2) How much we owe to God's goodness for our freedom, safety, peace. How many eminent saints have suffered, even for their fidelity!

(3) How rich are our privileges!

ILLUSTRATION.

JUDAS AMONG THE TWELVE.—The teachers might with advantage require the older pupils to trace out (as an exercise) the calling, home, character, names and relationship of the twelve. This would be a good opportunity also to explain—that many do not know—the use, value and cost of a concordance, by the aid of which any name, or word, or subject, can be followed through the Scriptures.

"Judas Iscariot," so called from Kerioth, from which he came, a town of Judah (Josh. xv. 25); so that Judas may have been the only disciple not a Galilean, but of Judah.

His being among the twelve, may show us (1) That absolute purity is not to be obtained in the church below.

(2) That only grace, and not privileges, can hold us up.

(3) He may be a kind of type of the Jews—betraying Christ and destroying themselves.

(4) His conduct and course are a strong testimony to Christ's purity of life. Living with Jesus, knowing all his way, carrying the bag, if any deceit was practiced he knew it, and he had the strongest reason to announce it. But, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood."

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.

Christ's activity—John's suffering—why imprisoned—by whom—where—how informed of Christ's works—what he did—the message by the disciples—meaning of it—the reply of Christ—what the disciples saw—the meaning of this reply—foregoing prophecy—how the works answered the question—meaning of "offended"—two views of John's motives—the first—the second—the Saviour's words to the people—meaning of "reed shaken"—John's character—of "soft clothing"—John's firmness—his greatness as a prophet—wherein it lay—prophecy regarding him—meaning of it—who is greater—two views—of state—the inferiority of John—in what it consists—and lessons to us.

Compare the rapid and racy chat of half a dozen bright school boys and girls about anything in which they are really interested, with a series of compositions written by the same children, according to ordinary school methods. An hour of their conversation literally reported would be the most entertaining reading; their school compositions would be a fearful nightmare to the teacher doomed to correct them in the regulation way.

One day last summer, we received a letter from a little city girl, giving her first impressions of her new boarding-place in the country. She says: "Mother has written all about our journey and the village and the people we have seen; so I'll tell you about the garden and yard behind our house." So she rattles through half a dozen pages of pretty poor handwriting and miscellaneous grammar, till her arm is tired, and she stops in the middle of her talk. But we see the garden in front, the back-yard, the hen-house, the dilapidated rooster with one tail-feather askew after a fight, the tomcat on the fence snarling at the butcher's dog—in short, the little girl has made a daguerrotypy of the whole scene with her pen that, with slight grammatical correction, would be worthy a place in Dickens. She had evidently not been greatly interested in the journey; the village was too big to be disposed of in her first day; she was already tired of people in the city; but she had rushed through the little world around her new home, and told what she had seen in the most natural way.—National Teacher.

Affectation in Names.

Lovers of the good old name sanctified by centuries of use cannot but regret the fashionable affectation which prompts so many of our modern young ladies to disguise them with French terminations. or to discard them altogether in favor of some silly prettiness born of the familiarity of the home circle. Our Marys are all Maries, our Julias Jules, our Harriets Hatties, our Carolines Carries, our Sarahs Sadies, our Catharines Kates, our Susans Susies, and so on to the end, each fashioned after a common model, and adapted to that Gallic standard of beauty to which everything must conform. Still more absurd are the meaningless pet names born of the nursery, the Dollies, the Pussies, the Minnies, and the Lillies (we have heard even of Babie used Lillies (we have heard even of Babie used by a full-grown young woman), which, appropriate enough for children, seem inconsistent with adolescence and long clothes. It is true, it is used as a diminutive for Mary, and Lillie for Elizabeth; but there is no reason for the former, and the latter is the diminutive of Lilian, if of anything. If we must have diminutive of these names, which seems by no means a necessity, especially after a young lady has reached peculiarly the good old English Molly nature years, the good old English Molly and Polly for Mary, and Bessy, Betty, and Lizzy, for Elizabeth, are preferable to the Lillies, for Elizabeth, French terminations. But our affected French terminations, by discarding the would display better taste by discarding altogether, on taking their places in the adult world, the pretty nicknames and pet names of their childhood.—Appletons Journal.

There is folly in being disheartened at delay. God sometimes takes natural methods of removing obstacles over which they appear most dilatory. Philip II. used to say, "Time and I will work wonders."—G. S. Robinson.

Our Young Folks.

God is Always Near Me.

God is always near me, Hearing what I say; Knowing all my thoughts and deeds, All my work and play.

God is always near me, Though so young and small, Not a look or word or thought, But God knows it all.

One Way to be Happy.

"Hush!" whispered Teddie, with his finger on his lips, "papa is asleep."

"Well, what if he is?" said Horrie, puffing and out of breath; "I guess I am going to have my kite."

"You must not come in now," whispered Teddie through the door crack, holding the door as tightly as possible with his little chubby hand. "I am keeping everybody away; I'll get the kite."

So Horrie stuck his hands in his pockets, and whistled and waited, swinging round this way and that way, first on one foot and then on the other.

"Hush!" whispered Teddie, slipping the kite through the crack. "Your boots squeak, they do."

But away scampered Horrie, clicking his heels at every step; untangling his bows and fixing his strings, and stumbling over Aunt Susan's rocking-chair, carrying a clatter every inch of the way.

Hardly had the door-latch clicked behind him, when a merry little voice, laughing in great glee, came nearer and nearer up the lane and in at the bowed-up shutters. "There she comes now," said Teddie to himself, peeping through the lattice. "I'll just go this minute and meet her."

But before he could tip-toe to the door, the big latch in the hall came up with a click, and a bustling, frizzle-headed little girl came bounding in, just commencing some exclamation, when she spied Teddie on his tip-toes with his finger on his lip.

"My! what's the matter, Teddie?" she said, all earnestness in a minute; "has mamma got that dreadful headache again?"

"No," he said laughing and pulling her out at the door, and further and further along the porch, and peeping into the tiny lunch-basket that was brimful of red cherries. "You'd get them! What a lot! Why no, nobody is sick, only papa came in from his work so tired-looking, and when he sat down on the settee I got him a pillow, without saying anything, and tucked it up in a bunch in the corner, and in two minutes he was sound, sound asleep; and I've been keeping everybody still so that he could get a good long rest."

"And you never came to get a single cherry. Oh my, but we had lots, and lots, and lots—and Lucy Watson! she got twice as many as I did; and you could have had some too if you just had come right on after Lucy and me, up the road, as you said you would."

Teddie looked very sober as she went on, "And now you cannot have any at all, for Mike has picked the very last, single one he can, because he's going to Denver's market, and nobody can get them but Mike; and, besides, mamma will not let you go when there is nobody there like Lucy Watson and me, to see to you."

The tears were pretty nearly in Teddie's eyes, but he tried to keep them back, and still the frizzled brown head went on bobbing up and down, and every way over the cherry basket, while the tongue trotted on, too, as fast as possible.

"You see I could not spare you mine; for I must have them for luncheon to-morrow—I might spare you four, maybe, and maybe Lucy might spare you six; that makes"—counting on her fingers—"let me see, why it would be quite a lot! six and four make ten; but I just do think you might have gone to get your own, and—"

"But, sister," broke in Teddie, "I don't want yours a bit; only just to taste. I did want to go, but then you know papa was so tired, and there was nobody to take care about the noise; and you must not speak so loud now; it will just wake him right up, after all."

But, as it happened, papa had been awake several minutes, and had come to the window just in time to see the little frizzle head thrown back laughing and slaking at the idea of anything so little as Teddie staying home from the cherry tree to take care of anybody so big as papa; in time, too, to see a tear roll down the little brown cheek, as Teddie tip-toed back to the hall door, his heart almost breaking between thinking of the lost cherries, and of being so little that he could do no good to any one so big as papa. But when Teddie peeped softly in the door and saw papa looking bright and refreshed after his good sleep, and felt the kiss which said, "My little Teddie has done all, all this for me," plainer than any words could, he forgot all about cherries, and about being so very little, and knew that to give happiness was in truth to receive it, and that though only "little Teddie," he had done papa good.—N. Y. Observer.

Bow low the head, do reverence to the old man once like you. The vicissitudes of life have silvered his hair and changed the round, merry face to the wan visage before you. Once the heart that beat with aspiration was crushed by disappointment, as yours is destined to be. Once that form stalked proudly through the gay scenes of pleasure, the beau ideal of grace; now the hand of time, that withers the flowers of yesterday, has bent that figure and destroyed that noble carriage. Once at your age, he possessed the thousand thoughts that he possessed the thousand thoughts that he possessed through your brain, now wishing to accomplish deeds equal to a knight in fame; anon imagining it a dream and that the sooner he awakened from it the better. But he has dreamed the dream very near at hand; his eyes never kindles at old deeds of daring, and the hand takes a firmer grasp on the staff. But bow the head, boys, as you would in your age be reverenced.—

"I'm a Temperance Boy."

Charlie B. is a boy of fifteen, living in a western town. He made his first journey to New York, and visited his relatives, many of whom he had never seen. In the house of one of his uncles he sat at a Sunday dinner where wine was drunk by all—the parrots, children and visitors. When it was presented to Charlie he said,—

"No, I thank you."
"What," said his uncle, "won't you drink wine with your cousin Nellie, who is soon to leave us for a home of her own?"
"No, sir," said Charlie, "I'm a temperance boy."

That was true bravery. Charlie was among those he had been accustomed to respect, and the temptation would have been very great to many boys. His mother heard it and said, "Charlie, I am proud of you."

Which of you would have done as Charlie did? You must learn to say no to everything that would lead you into harm. Better to say no to those who ask you to drink even wine, for drinking wine gives a taste for stronger drink, and then a boy runs to ruin.

See that noble looking young man, handsome, educated, gentlemanly, the son of good Christian parents, with a good business and every thing to make him respectable beloved and useful. What is the matter with him? His face is red and bloated, and he totters as he walks. Ah! he did not learn to say no when tempted, and he has fallen a victim to the great vice of the day.

Children in the Church.

At a late meeting of a Western Presbytery, this fact was stated: "Out of 7000 children within the bounds of the Presbytery, only 1000 are regular attendants at church." This gives a glimpse of a great evil. If we expect our children to love the house of God and the services of the church, we must train them in youth to attend upon them. The habit should be formed before the stay-at-home or vagabond roving-about fashions fixed upon them. The children may not understand and remember all the sermon. We have heard of fathers and mothers, who sometimes gets drowsy, and who once in a while do not seem quite to appreciate and carry away the whole of the good pastor's discourse. There are a few well authenticated instances of failure to remember the text on the part of full-grown adults. But if the young people are sometimes restive or drowsy or inattentive, they understand and remember more than you give them credit for. At all events, let us train them to attend on the ordinances of the Lord's house. "While my boy eats at my table, he must sit in my pew." Let him grow up to honor the religion of his fathers and the services of God's house.

We venture the assertion that those who can be depended on as attendants at church and staunch supporters of the institutions of religion, are those who in early youth were trained to attend church. And we hazard nothing in asserting that those on whom church vows and church allegiance sit lightly, who wander about from church to church, or stay at home on the slightest symptoms of a cold, or a headache, or for a cloud less in size than a man's hand, are precisely those who were allowed to stay away from church when young. Like causes produce like results. An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure.—Presbyterian at Work.

Interesting to Toppers.

The Financial Reformer, writing on this subject, remarks that Dr. Hodgo, of Belfast, has publicly stated that a bottle of whiskey, described as a fair sample of liquor sold in low class public houses, was heavily adulterated with naphtha, Cayenne pepper, and vitriol; that another sample consisted almost entirely of naphtha, with a slight coloring tinge of genuine whiskey; and another charming compound was composed of Cayenne pepper, vitriol, spirits of wine, and blue-stone, which could be produced at the rate of a penny a gallon. A writer in the Scientific Review, some three or four years ago, enumerated among the multifarious ingredients for the adulteration of ale, beer, and porter, cream tartar, alum, green vitriol, copper, lead, pyretic acid, cocculus, indigo, grains of paradise, coloring matters of various descriptions, quassa, and other cheaper and more hurtful butters, ledum palustre, myrica gale, and datura stramonium; besides liquorice, molasses, coriander, capiscum, caraway seed, salt horse beans, etc., etc. Hence, though the honest products of barley, hops, and the vine may have much to answer for, they are debited with a vast amount of evil which is really occasioned by noxious, and in some instances, murderous substitutes for them. One of the multifarious receipts for fraudulent concoctions, given in a book published for the guidance and assistance of publicans and vintners, winds up with "A pinch or two of oxalic acid" does something or other, we forget exactly what, but it is something in the way of improvement!—Science of Health.

There is dew in one flower and not in another, because one opens its cup and takes it, while the other closes itself, and the drop runs off. So God rains goodness and mercy as wide as the dew, and if we lock them it is because we will not open our hearts to receive Him.

There is no sort of wrong deed of which a man can bear the punishment alone; you can't isolate yourself, and say that the evil which is in you shall not spread. Men's lives are as thoroughly blended with each other as the air they breathe; evil spreads as necessarily as disease.

A man who, while seeking to be good, takes no thought of God, is like one who should try to till a field shut up and roofed in by walls through which the light never came. And he who seeks to gain the divine favor without seeking to improve his daily life, is like a farmer who should let his fields lie fallow while he thought to catch the sunbeams in a trap.—Christian Union.

Be Always Neat.

Some folks are very charming at evening parties; but surprise them in the morning when not looking for company, and the enchantment is gone. There is good sense in the following advice to young ladies:—

Your every-day toilet is part of your character. A little girl who looks like a "fury" or a "glown" in the morning, is not to be trusted, however finely she may look in the evening. No matter how humble your room may be, there are eight things it should contain, a mirror, washstand, soap, towel, comb, hair-brush, nail-brush, and tooth-brush. These are just as essential as your breakfast, before which you should make good use of them. Parents who fail to provide their children with such appliances not only make a great mistake, but commit a sin of omission.

Look tidy in the morning, and after dinner-work is over, improve your toilet. Make it a rule of your daily life to "dress up" for the afternoon. Your dress may or need not be anything more than a calico; but with a ribbon or some bit of ornament, you can have an air of self-respect and satisfaction that invariably comes with being well dressed.

A girl with fine sensibilities cannot help feeling embarrassed and awkward in a ragged and dirty dress, with her hair unkempt, should a stranger or neighbor come in. Moreover, your self-respect should demand the decent appareling of your body. You should make it a point to look as well as you can, even if you know nobody will see you but yourself.

Growth in Vice.

It is a sad truth, that, left to ourselves, we tend in the direction of wrong doing. From childhood, while physically growing up, we are morally growing down, unless there is some greater power than ourselves restraining and correcting us. This is bad enough, and ought to be humiliating, especially when we think of our great endowments, opportunities, and possibilities. But it is all made worse by the fact that, added to the natural predisposition, there are many kinds of education which, instructing us in methods of sin, stimulate us more and more to love and cherish it.

Nor are we all born alike. "Blood will tell" in this as in other of life's phenomena. Some children are born at a point in vice at which others only arrive after practice and training. They have inherited propensities, which, accommodated with the methods of after years, make them masters in vice when it would seem that they might only be beginners. And if all circumstances tend to foster their natural bent in the direction of evil, how rapid must be their growth, and how fearful must be their end! If under careful training the viciously hatched boy is barely saved, or perhaps not saved at all, can we wonder that, nurtured and stimulated in some hot-bed of vice, he grows hastily into a monster?

This suggests the need always existing of the most careful youthful instruction and training. In any case, he who is indifferent with respect to his child is exposing him to fearful risks. His prayers, lessons, and examples are all needed from the boy's infancy up to manhood, in order that he may be saved from his propensities and temptations. With all this the exemplary parent may endure the anguish of failure; as a rule, the Scripture stands proven—"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it;" but the exceptions to it have wrong many a pious parent's soul with indescribable bitterness. Knowing this to be so, we are astonished at the amount of youthful profligacy which exists in city and country under a family training that is often absurd.—United Presbyterian.

Everything to Die for.

A New England friend relates this suggestive incident:

"We recently called on a lady of culture and refinement who having just taken possession of a new house with elegant surroundings had suddenly been called to face the approach of a fearful disease that seemed beyond human power to avert. With a loving husband and winsome daughter, with a home filled with evidences of wealth and taste, encircled by warm, true-hearted friends, with everything earthly to make life glad and joyous, we were led: 'You have everything to live for. Does it not depress you to think that all this must be given up if this disease is not stayed?' The reply, simple, earnest, truthful, 'Why? I have everything to die for?' indicated the rich, abiding wealth of a soul whose trust is stayed on God, and showed that she was lifted up into a life of serenity and peace that could never be shaken by storms and tempests. Can any faith or any religion save that of the Christian, enable one thus to triumph over pain, thus to look upon death, thus to contemplate separation from the dear ones linked by the holiest of earthly ties! All things to die for! Reunion with friends who long since left us; pain and suffering only memories of a former past; complete and eternal freedom from sin; complicity with unseen power of evil at an end; the presence of the pure and the holy; communion with him who shall wipe all tears from our eyes; at home and at rest forever with the Lord—was not the remark of our friend most emphatically true?"

"On the grandeur and the beauty of that faith which sees through the rited clouds the glory beyond, which can say amid the deepest darkness, 'The morning cometh; that faith which with things seen and temporal," most beautiful and attractive, can raise one up into a full appreciation of the things that are unseen and eternal; that faith which bridges over the dark river, enabling the believer to tread with firm footstep and alone the way that leads to the unknown land; that faith which will lead one enfolded by richest earthly gifts, to say, 'I have everything to die for!'"—Advocate.