

The Sunday School

BIBLE LESSON

Abridged from Peloubet's Notes.

Third Quarter.

PETER'S CONFESSION AND CHRIST'S REBUKE.

Lesson IV. July 22. Matthew 16: 13-26.

Read Mark 7: 31-8: 30.

Commit Verses 24-26.

GOLDEN TEXT.

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.—Matt. 16: 24.

EXPLANATORY.

SUBJECT: THE TRAINING OF THE TWELVE INTO A TRUER AND FULLER UNDERSTANDING OF THE MESSIAH'S WORK AND KINGDOM.

I. THE RESULT ALREADY REACHED: THAT JESUS IS THE MESSIAH.—Vs. 13-17. 13. WHEN JESUS CAME. The place from which he came is not stated, but it would naturally be through Bethsaida (Mark 8: 22) on his way northward along the road that runs east of the Jordan to the COASTS. PARTS, district, "the region belonging to a city, the country around it." Mark says "to the villages of CESAREA PHILIPPI." HE ASKED HIS DISCIPLES, after he had been praying alone (Luke). As usual, the great epoch, the new work, began in prayer. His object seems to have been to draw out the faith of his disciples, and to reveal to them more fully his nature and his redeeming work. WHOM (in modern English "who," as in R. V.) DO MEN SAY THAT I THE SON OF MAN AM? The Son of man was a title he frequently applied to himself (see also Dan. 7: 13, 14), but it is never applied to him by the apostles. It expressed his human, visible side, as the representative man, "the founder and ruler of the kingdom of God."

14. SOME SAY . . . JOHN THE BAPTIST, returned to life. Among these was Herod (Matt. 14: 1, 2). SOME, ELIAS, Greek form of Elijah, who had wrought some great miracles, and had turned the tide of the nation from heathen worship to the true God, and was the promised forerunner of the Messiah (Mal. 4: 5, 6). AND OTHERS, JEREMIAS, The Greek form of Jeremiah. "Jeremiah is placed first, because in the Jewish canon he was placed first among the Old Testament prophets." OR ONE OF THE PROPHETS, i. e., "that one of the 'old prophets is risen again'" (Luke 9: 19).

15. BUT WHOM (R. V., "who") SAY YE THAT I AM? Observe "ye," plural, and by position in the Greek exceedingly emphatic—in contrast with the discordant popular opinions. What have you learned about me and my work during the two or three years you have known me? What is the outcome of it all?

16. AND SIMON PETER ANSWERED. "The question is addressed to all, and Peter answers as their spokesman, just as he does in many other cases." THOU ART THE CHRIST. The expected Messiah for whom the people were looking and hoping. "Christ" is the Greek and "Messiah" is the Hebrew for "anointed." Anointing was the method by which kings, and sometimes prophets, were set apart for their work. THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD. The "Son of God" in the highest sense, which could be asserted of no other being. God is here styled "living"

"because he is the source of true life, and suggests that his Son is the fountain of life to men."

17. BLESSED ART THOU. Because thou hast opened thy heart to the truth; because thou hast broken from the bondage of Jewish prejudice and worldly vision; because thou hast such firm confidence in such a Saviour. Faith, knowledge of Christ as the Son of God, almighty to save and infinite in love; a heart in which truth finds a natural soil; a character in harmony with Jesus; broader outlooks into truth,—are all exquisite blessings. SIMON BAR-JONA, i. e., son of Jonah. "Bar" is Aramaic (the Syriac Hebrew then in use) for "son." Jonah should begin with a capital J, as in the R. V. FOR FLESH AND BLOOD (man) HATH NOT REVEALED THIS UNTO YOU. It has not its origin in the mere human knowledge, in the workings of the human mind BUT MY FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN. God flashed forth the truth, and Peter did not close his eyes that he might not see.

What think ye of Christ? is the most important question for us. It is the crucial question of our religious life, which will measure its height, its power, its comfort, its quality. Christ as a prophet, as a great teacher, as a noble example, is of great value to us in many ways. But Christ as the atoning Redeemer, as the revealer of God's forgiving love, as the infinite Son of God, with all knowledge of the present and the future, with all power to save and help, everywhere present,—such a Christ is vastly more helpful and comforting.

II. THE TRUST COMMITTED TO THE DISCIPLES.—Vs. 18, 19. Although their understanding of the Messiah and his kingdom was very imperfect, yet Jesus showed them how great was the trust committed to them, and how heavy the responsibility laid upon them. This was a part of their training. It would give them a deep interest in the subject, and lead to a more earnest search after the truth.

18. THOU ART PETER, Greek, "Petros," a stone, a piece of rock, as in Homer of Ajax throwing a stone at Hector ("Iliad," VII., 270). This name was given to Peter in prophecy long before (John 1: 42), and now attention is called to its meaning. UPON THIS ROCK. "Petros," the feminine of "Petros," denoting rock, bed rock, as distinguished from a stone or piece of rock. "In Homer ('Odyssey,' IX., 243) the rock which Polyphemus places at the door of his cavern is a mass which two and twenty wagons could not remove." I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH. "The ideal congregation or assembly of all real Christians" is the great spiritual temple planned and built by God, not by man. Not human organizations, but the one great building in which God dwells by his spirit. Jesus Christ is the builder, the architect. Peter, as one of the apostles, and a representative of all, filled with living experience and faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the living God, is a rock, one of the great foundation stones on which Christ is rearing the building, his enduring and glorious church. (Comp. Eph. 2: 20; Rev. 21: 14). "The rock man is not an individual, but a type."

AND THE GATES OF HELL. Gates of Hades, which is composed of the Greek a not, and "idein" to see, and signifies "the invisible land, the realm of the dead." "Death" personified. "The gates" being the place where business was often transacted and assemblies held, "is an Orientalism for the court, throne, power," as "Sublime Porte," i. e., sublime gate, designates the Turkish government. The realm, the kingdom, the city of death confronts and assaults the church, the kingdom, the city of Christ, but SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT. Church forms and organizations may change and be superseded by better ones, but the real church abides forever. It is indestructible.

19. I WILL GIVE UNTO THEE. As one of the chiefest of the apostles, the first among equals. The others were included, as Peter had nothing in kind that the rest did not have (Matt. 18: 18; John 20: 23). In Rev. 21: 14 the twelve apostles are twelve foundation stones of the heavenly city. (See also Eph. 2: 20). THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. "The keys" are the means by which one enters a house, a city, or a treasury. "The kingdom of heaven," not the abode of the blest, but the kingdom of God on earth, is represented under the figure of a city with gates, or of a large house with gates for entrance, and doors of treasure rooms.

WHATSOEVER THOU SHALT BIND ON EARTH. That is, forbid or declare forbidden. SHALT LOOSE ON EARTH. That is, allow, declare to be permitted. "No other terms were in more constant use in Rabbinic canon law than those of binding and loosing. They represented the 'legislative' and 'judicial' powers of the Rabbinic office." SHALL BE BOUND IN HEAVEN Their decisions should be ratified and confirmed by Jesus in heaven and by the Holy Spirit.

III. THE NEED OF WIDER AND MORE CORRECT VIEWS.—V. 20. THEN CHARGED HE HIS DISCIPLES THAT THEY SHOULD TELL NO MAN THAT HE WAS . . . THE CHRIST. Omit JESUS, or, "that he, Jesus, was the Christ." Why not proclaim this glorious truth from the house-tops? (1) Death the time had not come. After his death they should proclaim it all the rest of their lives, but not at this time, for they themselves did not understand the true nature and work of the Messiah. They would be certain to preach wrong. (2) Because the people would be turned away from their spiritual needs, and the new life which was essential to the coming of the kingdom, to the desire to realize the outward glories of their false conception of the Messiah as king. This danger was entirely removed after the crucifixion. (3) The announcement that Jesus was the Messiah would be likely to excite tumult and rebellion against the Roman government, the people trying to make Jesus the leader of the revolt. This would interfere with his plan of a spiritual kingdom.

IV. JESUS MAKES A NEW REVELATION CONCERNING THE MESSIAH.—Vs. 21-23. 21. FROM THAT TIME. The disciples were now strong enough in their conviction that Jesus was the Messiah to have their errors concerning his nature and kingdom corrected. HOW . . . HE MUST GO UNTO JERUSALEM. The capital of the Jewish nation, the symbol of the church, the place of the temple, and its sacrifices which he had come to fulfil. SUFFER MANY THINGS, as described in the last chapters of the Gospel. AND BE KILLED, by crucifixion, thus making the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. This is stated to guard the disciples from being disappointed when this necessary event took place, and thus losing faith in him as the Messiah. They must see it as an essential part of the plan of salvation. AND BE RAISED AGAIN THE THIRD DAY. The resurrection of Jesus was essential to the proof that he was the true Messiah, essential to his work of redemption, and reigning as king at the right hand of God (1 Cor. 15: 14-18).

22. THEN PETER TOOK HIM ONE SIDE TO SPEAK TO HIM PRIVATELY. AND BEGAN TO REBUKE HIM. Only began, for he was soon interrupted. His was a mingled motive of love and self-assurance that he was right. SAYING, BE IT FAR FROM THEE, LORD. The plan of redemption outlined by Jesus was so contrary to all Peter's expectations and hopes, so completely opposite to his picture of the Messiah king and his reign, that it seemed inconceivable to Peter. It was absurd, ruinous, a death blow to their own hopes and a triumph to their enemies.

23. BUT HE TURNED. Turned round to the disciples (Mark 8: 33). AND SAID UNTO PETER. Publicly before them all. GET THEE BEHIND ME, SATAN. Satan means "adversary," the great "enemy" of all good, used in the Saviour's time as a proper name. "He did not call his apostle 'Satan,' a 'devil,' but he looked for the moment through Peter, and saw behind him his old enemy, cunningly making use of the prejudices and impulsive honesty of the undeveloped apostle." THOU ART AN OFFENSE. A stumbling block instead of a foundation stone; a hindrance, by placing before him the very temptation which Satan had presented to him in the wilderness. FOR THOU SAVOUREST (misdest, "partake of the quality of") NOT THE THINGS THAT BE OF GOD. God's wise plan for his kingdom. BUT THOSE THAT BE OF MEN. The natural, human view of the Messiah, a worldly kingdom, riches, honor, glory and triumph. There ever has been, and still exists, a tendency to fall into Peter's error, and seek the growth of the church by temporal power and worldly wealth and greatness, instead of by suffering for the world.

V. THOSE WHO BELONG TO THE MESSIAH'S KINGDOM MUST HAVE THE SAME QUALITIES.—Vs. 24-26. 24. IF ANY MAN WILL (would, wishes to) COME AFTER ME. Be his follower, his disciple; and seek to attain his character and his reward. LET HIM DENY HIMSELF. Renounce self as master and accept Christ as master. TAKE UP HIS CROSS. Daily, not merely on special occasions. The cross is the symbol of self-denial even to the utmost cost. AND FOLLOW ME. To follow Christ is to take him for our master, our teacher, our example; to believe his doctrines, to uphold his cause, to obey his precepts, and to do this though it lead us by the way of the cross. It is not merely to do right, but to do right for his sake, under his leadership, and according to his teaching.

25. FOR WHOSOEVER WILL SAVE HIS LIFE. Wishes, wills to save it, by doing wrong, by avoiding hard duties and self-denial, by gaining worldly good at the expense of religion and righteousness. SHALL LOSE IT. Shall utterly fail, shall lose even the earthly rewards he seeks, and his eternal blessedness. "Life" is the same word as "soul" in the next verse. It is the man himself, and all that in his eyes makes life worth living. AND WHOSOEVER WILL LOSE HIS LIFE. The

lower life, the things that seem to worldly men to make life worth living. But note this is to be FOR MY SAKE, "and," Mark adds, "for the Gospel's." The mere loss of life has no promised blessing. It is only loss for the sake of Christ that has this promise.

26. FOR WHAT IS A MAN PROFITED, IF HE SHALL GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD (which he never does), AND LOSE HIS OWN SOUL? All that makes it possible for him to use or enjoy the world he has gained. What good do worldly things do to one who is sick, or suffers the stings of conscience, or destroys the character which makes heaven possible to him? WHAT SHALL A MAN GIVE IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS SOUL? R. V., "his life." Life physical or spiritual, earthly or heavenly; in exchange for himself.

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