

Jesus the Good Shepherd.

JULY 11.

JOHN x: 1-18.

Golden Text, John 10: 11.

THE blind man in the last lesson was ex-communicated because he maintained that Christ in healing him had given evidence of His divine power and authority, ch. 9: 34. This allegory is plainly a continuation of the narrative, its design being to show the difference betwixt a true teacher and a false one, leaving the bigoted Pharisees to decide for themselves to which class they belonged. Vs. 1-3. To appreciate the imagery it must be remembered that a sheepfold in the East was a large enclosure surrounded by a stone wall, with thorn bushes on the top as a protection against wolves and robbers. The sheep, it might be several different flocks, were brought into it in the evening and left in care of the watchman who stood by the entrance all night, while the shepherds retired to their homes. In the morning they returned to the fold, the porter opened the door, and each shepherd separating his own flock, by calling them, lead them out to their several pastures. V. 4. *Putteth forth his own*—in the R. V. *all his own*, intimating the care which the shepherd has for every one of his sheep, John 18: 9. *The sheep follow*—They are not driven, but led out. The proof of discipleship is that we recognize the master's voice and follow in his footsteps, Matt. 7: 24; 1 Pet. 2: 21. V. 5. It is well-known that the sheep would not follow a stranger but instinctively recognized the familiar voice of their own shepherd. V. 6. The Pharisees must have understood the homely imagery, though they did not apply it to themselves. V. 7. *I am the door*—the only way through which both sheep and shepherd must pass into the fold, the church of God, Acts 4: 12. V. 8. *All that came before*—false prophets and teachers who rejected the Messiah and held out some other way of access to God than through Christ. V. 9. *Shall be saved*—the great object of the pastoral office is that men may be saved from their sins. V. 11. The good shepherd feeds his sheep, provides shelter for them, loves them collectively and individually, and will defend them at the risk even of his own life. None knew better than David the qualities of a good shepherd, 1 Sam. 17: 34. *Giveth his life*—Emphasize the *voluntariness* of Christ's atoning death, Matt. 20: 28. For this purpose he came into our world, Matt. 1: 21; 1 Pet. 2: 21. V. 12. *The hireling*—one who serves only for gain; who has no real interest in the welfare of those committed to his care. *The wolf*—the enemy of souls in whatever disguise he assails the Christian, Matt. 7: 15. V. 16. *Other sheep*—the Gentiles, who were also to share in the redemptive work of Christ, Ephes. 2: 14; Rom. 10: 12-13. V. 18. Christ's life was his own. He died on the cross because he *chose* to do his Father's will. There are many "folds," but Christ's people are only one "flock," under one SHEPHERD.

The Death of Lazarus.

JULY 18.

JOHN xi: 1-16.

Golden Text, John 11: 11.

THE time is about three months after our last lesson, and three months before the crucifixion. Christ had made his final departure from Galilee, Luke 9: 51. He had sent out "the seventy," Luke 10: 1, and had returned to Jerusalem, but on account of the repeated attempts of the Jews to kill Him, knowing that His time had not yet come, He had retired to Bethabara beyond Jordan, ch. 10: 40. It is remarkable that John is the only one of the four Evangelists who records the raising of Lazarus, and Luke the only one who records the raising of the widow of Nain's son, ch. 7: 11-15. The raising of Lazarus was our Lord's greatest miracle—always excepting that of his own resurrection. V. 1. *Bethany*—A village on the eastern slope of Mount Olivet, about two miles from Jerusalem; its chief interest for us is its connection with this lesson and as the place from which our Lord ascended up into heaven, Luke 24: 50. It would seem from the incident in Luke 10: 38-42, that Martha was the oldest of the family and head of the household. V. 2. John is careful to distinguish this Mary from the three other Marys mentioned in the Gospels. The anointing which he speaks of is that recorded in Ch. 12: 3—two days before the crucifixion and which was quite distinct from the anointing mentioned in Luke 7: 57, by the "woman which was a sinner." V. 3. *He whom thou lovest is sick*—Those whom Christ loves are not on that account exempted from the trials and troubles of this life; indeed they are taught to expect their full share of them, Heb. 12: 6. V. 4. *Not unto death*—Christ foresaw both the death and the restoration to life, which gave his words a meaning that friends could not understand. *The glory of God*—by this most convincing manifestation of the divine power of Christ, leading many to believe on him as the Messiah. V. 6. *He abode two days*—to test the faith of the sisters and his disciples and also that the miracle might be such as could not be disputed. Vs. 7-8. *Let us go*—from Bethabara to Judea—to certain death as the disciples thought, V. 16. Vs. 9-10. The fear of death did not prevent Christ doing his appointed work, at the proper time. *If a man walk in the night*—without the light of duty shining on his path. *He stumbleth*—makes many mistakes. V. 11. *Steepesth*—death does not end our existence. The awakening out of natural sleep is an emblem of the resurrection, 1 Cor. 15: 20. V. 15. *I am glad*—explained by what follows—to the intent ye may believe. Had he come while Lazarus was living, he might have cured him, or, immediately after his death, he might have recalled him to life. But in neither case would the Saviour's purpose have been accomplished. "God moves in a mysterious way."