

* The Sunday School *

BIBLE LESSON

Abridged from Peloubet's Notes.

First Quarter.

CHRIST'S DIVINE AUTHORITY.

Lesson VII. February 12.—John 5: 17-27.
Study John 5: 1-38. Commit Verses 24-27.

GOLDEN TEXT.

This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world. John 4: 42.

EXPLANATORY.

SUBJECT: A DISCOURSE ON JESUS AND THE FATHER.

The Circumstances. Healing of the Impotent Man at the Pool of Bethesda.

Jesus was accustomed to go up to Jerusalem to the feast of the Passover. It is probable that the feast referred to in v. 1 was the Passover, and that Jesus, in common with many of his countrymen, went up from Galilee to Jerusalem to celebrate it. On the Sabbath, quietly walking around the city, he came to the pool of Bethesda, where were a large number of sick people under the porticos by the pool, waiting for a peculiar movement of the water, which occasionally bubbled up in a mysterious way for a brief time, and then subsided. There was a popular impression (for this part of v. 3 and all of v. 4 do not belong to the Bible, but were introduced into the text from a marginal note) that this mysterious movement of the waters was caused by an angel, who troubled the water at various unexpected times, and thus imparted a healing power to them. Then, whoever entered in first, before the commotion ceased, was supposed to be healed.

It was here that Jesus on the Sabbath wrought a cure for an invalid of thirty-eight years, pointing him and all the sick who heard thereof to a better source of healing, a real fountain of health for body and soul. Bethesda itself would lead to the Messiah.

I. JESUS WORKS, AS HIS FATHER WORKS.—Vs. 17, 18. 17. MY FATHER WORKETH HITHERTO, or until now. For six days the Lord was making heaven and earth, these days being divine days of long duration, and ending with the creation of man. Since then has been his seventh day, wherein he rested from the work of creation. No new species of plant or animal is known to have been created since man. Nothing since then has required the exercise of creative power, as did the origin of matter, of life, and of soul. But God has not been inactive, he has continued the necessary operations of nature, and has been working for the redemption of man, both of which are Sabbath labors. He works thus until now. AND I WORK. Jesus was doing by his works of mercy exactly what God has been doing during the whole of his Sabbath rest. He was keeping the Fourth Commandment. There is no record of Jesus doing secular work on the Sabbath. The eating and drinking necessary for existence was, of course, performed by him. But his works on the Sabbath were works of mercy, of religion, of teaching, of helping men. And these are our Sabbath works. There is no shadow of excuse in Christ's conduct or teaching for a Sabbath spent in worldly pleasures and recreations; nor is the Sabbath to be a day of mere idleness, but of activity in the highest and best things. It is earthly rest to give opportunity for the heavenly activity of worship, love, fellowship with God, feeding on heavenly food, doing works of mercy and kindness.

18. THEREFORE THE JEWS SOUGHT THE MORE. They have now a second reason for their persecution. TO KILL HIM. Nothing less than this would do for them. They could have no peace so long as such a man lived. Nothing less could keep him from teaching things opposed to their traditions. BECAUSE HE NOT ONLY HAD BROKEN THE SABBATH. Not so much the law in any particular case as annulling the law and duty of Sabbath observance. BUT SAID ALSO. Claiming equality with God, which was opposed to the Jewish interpretation of the divine unity, but not against real unity.

II. JESUS CLAIMS EQUALITY WITH GOD.—Vs. 18, 19. (See on John 1: 1-3; Lesson I).

MAKING HIMSELF EQUAL WITH GOD. How and why this was accepted by Jesus as a true inference from what he said is explained in the next verse.

19. THE SON CAN DO NOTHING OF HIMSELF. He is so united with God that he only carries out his father's plan, and works in absolute unity with him. WHAT HE SEETH THE FATHER DO. The Father reveals his plans to the Son (v. 20). There is a unity of knowledge, of wisdom, and of action, which would be impossible between God and a mere man. Thus Jesus knew the Father's view of the Sabbath, and had a divine right to interpret its law.

2. PRACTICAL. This example of Jesus is the best interpreter of the way God would have us keep the Sabbath, as required by the Fourth Commandment.

3. The life of Jesus reveals to us the character and actions our Heavenly Father loves; and by doing things on earth as they are done in heaven we are learning, like apprentices, "to be practised in heavenly ways, when we finally reach the heavenly life."

III. JESUS BELOVED OF THE FATHER.—V. 20. FOR THE FATHER LOVETH THE SON.—"To love" is expressed by two words in the Testament, *Phileo* and *Agapao*. "*Agapao*" indicates a reasoning, discriminating attachment (the deliberate choice of one out of a number) founded on the conviction that its object is worthy of esteem, or entitled to it on account of benefits bestowed. "*Phileo*" represents a warmer, more instinctive sentiment, more closely allied to feeling, and implying more passion. Thus "*Phileo*" represents the "affectional" element of love, and "*Agapao*" the "intellectual" element. Men are bidden to love ("*Agapao*") God; never "*Phileo*" since love to God implies an intelligent discernment of the attributes, and not merely an affectionate sentiment. Both elements are combined in the Father's love to the Son ("*Agapao*" in John 5: 35; "*Phileo*" here, 5: 20). "*Agapao*" is used throughout the panegyric of love in 1 Cor. chap. 13. "*Rao*," "love" in which the idea of sensual passion predominates, is never used in the New Testament.

IV. JESUS THE REVEALER OF THE FATHER.—V. 20. SHEWETH HIM ALL THINGS. We can comprehend but little of what God does, though God does show us some of the things he is doing in the world. We have dim visions of God's plans as we look through the windows of his prophets, but we are not good enough, nor wise enough, nor possessed of minds large enough, to understand all of God's ways with man, any more than a blind man can comprehend all that the eye can see, or a savage in his native wilds can be made to know the wonders of civilization, of literature, art, and science. But to Jesus God can reveal all these things. AND HE WILL SHW HIM GREATER WORKS THAN THESE. Such as the healing of the impotent man at Bethesda, and his other miracles; even the far greater marvels of life from the dead, of changes in the characters of men, of a new kingdom transforming the world. THAT YE, who now question my authority, MAY Marvel. For they could be astonished even if they would not believe; and the marvels might lead to faith.

V. JESUS THE LIFE-GIVER, LIKE THE FATHER.—Vs. 21, 24, 26. 21. FOR AS THE FATHER RAISETH UP THE DEAD. This is one of "the greater things." AND QUICKENETH. Maketh alive. Referring to the great resurrection of the dead, and also to the spiritual life from death in sin, and the Father as the source of all life, natural and spiritual. EVEN SO THE SON QUICKENETH. Maketh alive WHOM HE WILL. It is in his own power, dependent on no will but his own. Of course that power is exerted only according to infinite wisdom and love. Herein he stood on a par with the Father. (See Lesson I, or John 1: 14).

24. VERILY, I SAY UNTO YOU. I, who have this power to give life, will now show you how every one may obtain everlasting life. It shall be given to every one THAT HEARETH. Listeneth to, attends to with a receptive mind, MY WORD, AND BELIEVETH ON HIM THAT SENT ME. Accepts him from his heart as his Father, and Teacher, and Lord, commits himself unto him to obey him and receive the messenger he has sent. HATH EVERLASTING LIFE. It is already imparted to him, the new life, the heavenly life that never ends has begun in his soul, that life which nothing can destroy, which endures beyond the grave, and grows fuller and richer as the ages roll on. It is more than mere endless existence. It implies blessedness, fullness, joy, glad activity. A tree exists when it is dead, but it lives only when it carries on freely the processes which make it leafy and blossom, and bear fruit. SHALL NOT COME INTO. Cometh not; the present tense states a general principle. CONDEMNATION. Better in R. V., "judgment." IS PASSED FROM (out of) DEATH UNTO (into) LIFE. From the realm of death to the realm of life, as one passes from one kingdom to another, or one condition of existence to another.

25. VERILY, VERILY. Again marking the importance of what is said. THE HOUR IS COMING. It is drawing near; it is sure to come. AND NOW IS. It has already begun. "These words exclude the meaning of a bodily resurrection, the hour for which has not yet arrived." WHEN THE DEAD. The spiritually dead; those without eternal life, as mentioned in v. 24. SHALL HEAR THE VOICE OF THE SON OF GOD. That voice shall sound to that the outward ear shall recognize it. AND THEY THAT HEAR. Harken to, yield to so as to obey.

26. FOR, etc. Giving the reason why he could promise this great blessing.

It is said that once Mendelssohn came to see the great Freiburg organ. The old custodian refused him permission to play upon the instrument, not knowing who he was. At length, however, he granted him leave to play a few notes. Mendelssohn took his seat, and soon the most wonderful music was breaking forth from the organ. The custodian was spellbound. At length he came up beside the great musician and asked his name. Learning it, he stood humiliated, self-condemned, saying, "And I refused you permission to play upon my organ."

There comes One to us and desires to take our lives and play upon them. But we withhold ourselves from him and refuse him permission, when if we but yield ourselves to him, he would bring from our souls heavenly music."

VI. JESUS OUR JUDGE, LIKE THE FATHER.—Vs. 22, 27. 22. FOR THE FATHER JUDGETH NO MAN. Rather, "For not even doth the Father," to whom the work of judging primarily and essentially belongs. (Psa. 50: 4; Ezek. 18: 30; Dan. 7: 10; John 8: 50; Rom. 2: 16; 2 Tim. 4: 1; Heb. 10: 30). "Judgeth no man" directly. He has transferred this duty to the Son.

27. HATH GIVEN HIM AUTHORITY TO EXECUTE JUDGMENT. The word for "authority" includes both authority and power.

BECAUSE HE IS THE (OF A) SON OF MAN. (1) His character and teachings as shown by his presence in the world are the test. His very presence is a judgment. (2) Being a Son of man, a representative man; one who has a feeling for our infirmities, and who was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin," he is fitted to be our judge, and we can recognize that fitness and see how kindly as well as justly he will judge us.

VII. JESUS TO BE HONORED, AS THE FATHER IS HONORED.—Vs. 23. HONOR THE SON, EVEN AS THEY HONOR THE FATHER, etc. For they are one God. If Jesus is not divine, then to honor him thus, to love him and trust him as a Saviour, would lead us away from God. Now, all honor and worship of the Son's honor and worship of the Father. The more we love Christ, the more we love God.

Warning and Advice To All Those Going Deathward.

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