

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON.

MARCH 6, 1881.

WITNESS OF JESUS TO JOHN.— Luke vii. 19-30.

I.—John's Question.

Though not mentioned here, we learn from Matthew (xi. 2) that John was in prison. By whom and for what offense he was imprisoned we are told elsewhere—(Matt. xiv. 1-4; Mark vi. 17-20). St. Matthew also tells us that he had heard in the prison the works of Christ. The question he sent his disciples to ask—“Art thou he that should come?” can only mean, art thou the true Messiah? But the motive which prompted the question it is not so easy to determine. Was it for his own satisfaction or that of his disciples that he asked it? The commentators are hopelessly divided in opinion on the matter.

It was not greatly to be wondered at if his faith were shaken for a time in the solitude of his dungeon. It is easy to understand how depressing that confinement would be to one accustomed to the wild, free life of the wilderness. Probably the mission of Jesus was not shaping itself quite in accordance with John's preconceived notions of it. And that Jesus should allow him to linger in prison, instead of exerting the miraculous power of which he heard so much, in his behalf, may have been a mystery that painfully exercised his mind and perturbed his heart. This view of the case is taken by Canon Farrar and Dr. Geikie in their lives of Christ, as well as by many other high authorities. Nevertheless, we incline to the older view—that of John Wesley and Watson, amongst others—that the question was asked for the sake of the disciples, and did not express any doubt or wavering in John's own mind. This view seems much more consistent with the answer of Jesus and his subsequent testimony to John's character. The miracles of which he had heard were quite in accordance with what he expected to hear, a confirmation of the establishment of Messiah's kingdom. But if that kingdom were really established, it was the duty of all his disciples to transfer their discipleship to Jesus, however strongly they might cling to him. And so he sends two of them with a question which he knew would not be misunderstood by Jesus, that they might become fully convinced.

II.—The Answer.

No direct answer in words was given. The answer was contained in the miracles of healing wrought in the presence of the messengers. The message he sent to John referred to those acts in unmistakable terms as proofs that he was “He who should come,” for that message contained quotations from two of the great prophecies which by general consent were held to apply to the Messiah (Isa. xxxv. 5, 6; xi. 1). The latter of them he had previously applied to himself in the synagogue at Nazareth. The passages he quoted the signs by which the Messiah was to be known. He had more than fulfilled them, for he adds “the dead are raised up”—a manifestation of Divine power not mentioned in the prophecy, but of which he had shortly before given a marvellous exemplification (ver. 11-18). These works ought to have been to all unmistakable signs, for they accorded not only with the prophecies but with the popular expectation (John vii. 31). John's disciples were thus bidden to go and tell their master that Jesus was engaged in the very works Isaiah had said the Messiah would perform. The two who had been sent would report to their master in the presence of the others. It is probable there had been a discussion, and that John sent these two as a deputation that their report of what they saw and heard might help the wavering ones amongst his disciples to a decision. The concluding words of Jesus (verse 23) look in this direction. They had been in danger of allowing their prejudices to blind their eyes to the real evidences of His Messiahship. And so Jesus, with that omniscience which marked all his dealings with men, in the concluding words of his message, touched the real cause of their doubts. Let us take care that our prejudices do not prevent our recognizing Jesus as our Saviour. It is still possible to be offended—to make the Saviour “a stone of stumbling and rock of offence,” instead of the foundation of our faith and hope. (1 Peter ii. 4-8.)

III.—John Eulogized.

As soon as the messengers had departed Jesus proceeded to bear the most marked and emphatic testimony to the greatness of the character and mission of John. He does this apparently to counteract any impression produced by the question of the messengers that John himself stood in doubt as to his claims to be the Messiah. He had plainly told his hearers that Jesus was “He who should come” (John i. 15, 26, 29-37; iii. 26-30), and he was not a reed shaken by the wind, though he had been for weary months shut up in a dungeon. They had thought him a prophet—but as His forerunner he was more than that—and no greater man could be found even in the roll of the ancient prophets. And yet—so essential is it to belong to Christ's kingdom—the humblest believer under the Christian dispensation is greater still, having the perfect Gospel to experience and disseminate.—Abridged from Wesleyan Meth. S. S. Magazine.

The Christian who prays for grace, for holiness, while all the while he is living so as to frustrate all these prayers, is sowing among thorns.

LIQUOR SELLING.

Two liquor dealers were arrested in New York on a recent Monday for selling liquor the previous day. The information on which they were charged was contained in the pathetic appeal of a wife and mother which she sent to Dr. Crosby, President of the Society for the Prevention of Crime. She said: “I am a broken-hearted mother, all on account of the rumshops being kept open on Sundays. My husband had left last Sunday morning when he left us at nine o'clock. We were nearly famished from cold and hunger, but he took all his dollars to a liquor saloon, and stopped there till noon on Sunday. He then went to another saloon and drank there till four o'clock. He then returned home and kicked and beat me till I fell nearly dead. Ah! doctor, save him from hell and my dear children from ruin! Ah, save him and them, and me, doctor, from the rumshops!”

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES.

A gifted lady, who devotes herself to Bible study, and who has wonderful power in unfolding the hidden treasures of the Word, tells how new light came to her upon the word search. She was in Sweden, and though she knew but little of the language of that country, yet she liked to read her chapter in Swedish every day. One morning she came upon the words which stand in our translation, “Search the Scriptures,” and found that the first word in that passage was one which we render in English “ransack.” Ransack is a very strong word. It means to search up and down, high and low, from right to left, and in the corners and by-places! It means to search with the purpose to find; and he who searches the Scriptures thus will not fail of his reward. That is what we all need to do—ransack the Bible! It is full of hidden treasure. We shall not find it if we search with a lazy, half-informed purpose; but if we set ourselves earnestly to ransack the Bible for our food of life, O, how it will open to us, and how strong and courageous we shall become!—Kind Words.

THE POOR MAN'S SUNDAY.

The advocates of what is called “The Poor Man's Sunday,” forget that when Sunday ceases to be a day of rest, it very speedily becomes a day of toil. There is no middle ground between the two.

Admiral Hall, of the British Navy, in a recent address to the working men, makes a very telling use of this point.

He first states the fact, that while “commanding a naval vessel at Hong-Kong, after Divine service had been performed one Sunday on his ship, and the sailors were at rest, his intelligent Chinese pilot called his attention to the fact that work was going on on shore as usual, and said: “Your Joss (God) is better than our Joss, for He gives you holiday and rest one day in seven, and we have only one day in the year, on New Year's Day.”

He then uses this fact as follows:—“And this is the case. Just picture working hard from morning till night three hundred and sixty-four days, and only one day of rest, and then prize the Sabbath! They who use the day of rest as a day of pleasure, forget that when it ceases to be a day of rest it will soon become a day of toil; and then comes the ceaseless grind of care and labor which weakens the body and starves the soul.” It is a point never to be lost sight of.

THE HOUSEHOLD.

If when bread is taken from the oven the loaves are turned upside down in the hot tins, and are allowed to stand a few minutes, the crust will be tender and will cut easily.

Three applications of vaseline will cure the worst case of chilblains. For ordinary cases one or two applications will be sufficient. Although vaseline is made from petroleum, it is far more rapid in its work of healing than kerosene.

A novel and remarkable article of food prepared from the product of the sea is in use in this country, though only in certain districts. It is fish flour. The article is manufactured in Norway from dried fish, codfish, of the best quality. It is thoroughly desiccated, and then ground in a mill. It grows in favor wherever it has been tried any length of time.

Beets are quite as good baked as boiled, and the sugar is better developed by the baking process. The oven should not be too hot, and the beets must be frequently turned. Do not peel them until they are cooked, then serve with butter, pepper and salt.

The best way to fry fish is to first fry some slices of salt pork, then roll the pieces of fish in fine Indian meal, and fry in the pork gravy. About three slices of pork for a medium-sized fish. Whitefish needs less fat than almost any other.

The late cold snap makes a republishing of the infallible cure for frost bites desirable. If it be the feet, make a strong lime water, as hot as you can bear; then whitewash will do. Soak your feet 15 to 30 minutes; then rub them thoroughly with the palm of the hand, removing all the dead cuticle that the lime has loosened. Anoint with sweet oil or lard. Repeat a few times, and you are cured, not merely relieved, but cured, and that terrible itching is gone, that may otherwise follow you a life-time. Ointment made of lime-water and sweet oil can be used on the ears, if they are frosted.

INFORMATION.

For colds, coughs, asthma, in short, for any and all derangements of the lungs or respiratory organs, or for any complaint tending towards consumption, nothing is so reliable as AYER'S CHERRY PECTORAL. In all ordinary cases it is a certain cure, and it affords sure relief even in advanced stages.

California spends \$3,000,000 a year on her schools, and the value of her school property is \$7,000,000, yet there are only 100,000 attendants in the schools out of 150,000 of school age.

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MOTHERS! MOTHERS! MOTHERS! Are you disturbed at night and broken of your rest by a sick child suffering and crying with the excruciating pain of cutting teeth? If so, go at once and get a bottle of MRS. WINSLOW'S SOOTHING SYRUP. It will relieve the poor little sufferer immediately—depend upon it; there is no mistake about it. There is not a mother on earth who has ever used it, who will not tell you at once that it will regulate the bowels, and give rest to the mother, and relief and health to the child, operating like magic. It is perfectly safe to use in all cases, and pleasant to the taste, and is the prescription of one of the oldest and best female physicians and nurses in the United States. Sold everywhere at 25 cents a bottle. Jan 28—1y

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