

## Sabbath School Lessons.

September 21st, 1861.

## THE REJECTION OF JESUS AT NAZARETH.—LUKE IV. 16-34.

I. VERSE 16-17.—Jesus having come to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, came to the synagogue on the Sabbath day according to his custom, and the book of the prophet Esaias having been handed him, he read from it the lesson of the day, and directed the attention of his audience to the fact, that the passage was specially applicable to himself.

Nazareth was not a place of any note previous to the coming of the Lord. It is not mentioned in the Old Testament Scriptures; and only by the uninspired Jewish writer as the birth-place of Jesus. It had in fact rather an evil notoriety among the Jews, in the days of our Saviour. This we may infer from the question put to Philip by Nathaniel, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth," John i. 46. It was infamous not from its wickedness, but on account of the rebellious and seditious character of its inhabitants. Being situated also at a distance from the capitol, its dialect was corrupt; and its population was of a mixed nature, being made up of Jews and Gentiles. For these reasons Nazareth was despised by the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judca, who were, at all events, disposed to view with sovereign contempt the people of Galilee. But as has already been observed the expressions, Nazarene and of Nazareth, were not meant to convey any idea of obloquy in the days of our Saviour. The town is beautifully situated in a romantic valley, of about a mile long, and a quarter of a mile broad, and is surrounded by hills. It is about six miles north-west of Mount Tabor. From Neby Ismael, which crowns the heights about Nazareth, one obtains a most magnificent prospect. From its summit Mount Carmel is seen in the distance. The lofty Hebron, whose top is enveloped in eternal snow, fit emblem of aged time, and the Mediterranean suggestive of eternity, are also distinctly visible. The environs of Nazareth produce luxuriant palm-trees, olive-trees, and fig-trees; and its corn-fields are unrivalled throughout the length and breadth of Canaan. Amidst these scenes, were spent thirty years of our Saviour's life upon earth, v. 17.

2. "Jesus came to Nazareth." He commenced his gracious work among his own neighbours. He made them an offer of mercy whatever their reception of it might be— "whether they should hear or whether they should forbear." It is a true proverb, that "charity begins at home. When a stone is

thrown into the midst of the ocean, first a small circle is seen on the surface, which goes on ever increasing, till as philosophers tell us, though the circumstance becomes imperceptible to our senses, every particle of that mighty ocean is embraced within it. Just so with true benevolence, beginning with the family circle, and thence extending to the neighbourhood, it ceases not till the remotest countries of the earth are comprehended within its grasp. 'Tis a questionable philanthropy, which incites to active exertions on account of far distant strangers, to the neglect of our own families and neighbourhoods. While there is room enough for all in the heart where Christian love resides, yet nearest home we witness its warmest, its brightest manifestations.

III. "And as His custom was." It was then the regular practice of our Lord to resort to the synagogues, the Jewish places of worship, on the Sabbath days to teach. In this as in every thing else regarding Christian morality, he sets before us an example for our imitation. "Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children," Eph. v. i., and obeying the injunction of the apostle "let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together," Heb. x. 25.

IV. "He stood up for to read." It was the custom, in the synagogue, to stand up to read the Scriptures; and they would not even lean on anything while engaged in this exercise. In the synagogues there was a priest to superintend the service, and to see that everything was done in an orderly manner. As he thus served in divine things he was called the minister. It was not, however, at all inconsistent with the general mode in which public worship was conducted that Jesus read the portion of the Scripture allotted for that Sabbath. Strangers were often invited to read and exhort on such occasions, and there were many reasons why the Lord should have been requested to do so. He had been for some time absent, and his thus being called on to address those present in the synagogue of which he himself had been, doubtless, a member, would have served as a kind of introduction. They must also have been assured that he was extraordinarily qualified to address them. They had heard, too, of the miraculous cure he had effected at Damascus, Luke iv. 23. It was moreover customary to invite the originators of any sect to speak publicly on such seasons, that the people might have an opportunity of hearing and testing their doctrines.

V. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." The High Priest was set apart for his office, under the Mosaic economy, by being anointed with the oil of consecration. Our great High