



LESSON V.—APRIL 29.

Jesus and John the Baptist.

Luke vii., 18-28. Memory verses 22, 23.
Read Luke vii., 11-35.

Daily Readings.

- M. The Parallel. Mt. 11: 1-15.
T. Great Faith. Lk. 7: 1-10.
W. Great Hope. 1 Jn. 3: 1-11.
T. Great Love. Ro. 5: 1-8.
F. Great Grace. Ac. 4: 31-36.
S. Greatness. Mt. 20: 20-28.

Golden Text.

'He hath done all things well.'—Mark vii., 37.

Lesson Text.

(18.) And the disciples of John shewed him of all these things. (19.) And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? (20.) When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? (21.) And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. (22.) Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. (23.) And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me. (24.) And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? (25.) But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in king's courts. (26.) But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. (27.) This is he, of whom it is written, Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. (28.) For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

Suggestions.

John the Baptist, the fore-runner of the Messiah, had been cast into prison because of his faithful rebuke of Herod the tetrarch's sins. (Matt. xiv., 3, 4.) His prison was the dungeon cell of Macherus, that gloomy fortress in the mountains east of the Dead Sea.

In prison his disciples visited him and told him of the wonderful works of Jesus, and how his fame spread and grew daily. John pondered over this news and thought of all that he knew about this Prophet to whom he himself had borne witness that he was the Son of God. He had seen him first when Jesus came to be baptised by him and the Spirit of God had descended like a dove, and a voice from heaven proclaimed, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.' (Matt. III., 13-17.) He had seen him again two or three times after Jesus returned from the forty days' conflict in the desert. And had pointed him out to his own disciples as the Lamb of God, the Messiah whom he had heralded, and for whom he had been sent to prepare the way. With joy he bore testimony and ungrudgingly he saw his own favorite disciples leave his side to follow the Man who was greater than he.

With noblest humility John had subsequently testified again that Jesus was the Messiah whose power must increase in every way while the power of the Baptist must decrease, his mission of preparation being almost accomplished. But his ministry was brought to a close sooner than he could have possibly anticipated. Suddenly he was seized and thrown into prison. Probably he comforted himself at first with the thought that the Messiah who was born

King of the Jews (Matt. II., 1, 2.) would soon set up his kingdom on earth and immediately release and give honor to his faithful forerunner. But as the days and weeks and months passed by and still no message came from Jesus, John began to wonder if this Man could really be the king whose coming he had heralded with such enthusiasm.

The long confinement in the unwholesome dungeon had told on the strong man's strength. John, who had lived his life free and untrammelled in the open air of the desert, was quickly affected by the unaccustomed restraint and the close atmosphere, and the condition of the body to a great extent influences the condition of the mind. A man in ill-health often becomes discouraged and harbors doubts and questions which could not have tempted him when he was strong and well. An honest doubter is not one who prides himself on his inability to believe, it is rather that one who in the midst of doubts and fears cries out, 'O God—if there be a God—save me.' And to such an one God does reveal himself in wonderful love and mercy. The honest seeker finds God. He who comes to God with his doubts shall have them solved. (John vii., 17.) But God is and always will be unknown to those who wilfully doubt and discredit him.

John had his season of doubting, but he was not overcome. He was an honest man and took his doubts to the fountain head of all wisdom, he was sincere and willing to be convinced of the truth. Many doubters of to-day are not honest. Either they have given the matter no thought at all simply accepting other men's doubts—second hand unbelief. Or they have decided that they can not believe on Christ and at the same time live a life of luxurious self-pleasing or dishonest success.

Whatever the excuse of doubters, the fundamental difficulty in every case is the same. The man who professes to doubt God's existence is really trying to hide even from himself the fact that he is not willing to surrender his will to God. This is the crucial point, for if a man honestly seeks the truth and is willing to accept it when found, God will not allow him to remain long in darkness. The man who is willing to obey God if God is a reality—finds that God meets him more than half way, for the Father seeketh such to worship him (John iv., 23.)

When John sent to Jesus asking him if he were indeed the Messiah, the long promised King and Saviour, Jesus answered by pointing out to the messengers his miracles of healing and love. Isaiah had prophesied (Isa. xxxv., 5, 6.) that the Messiah should come in the power of God, opening the eyes of the blind, healing the deaf and dumb, giving strength and life to the maimed. Our Lord pointed out that he was fulfilling these prophecies, and added a tender word of caution to John—Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me. We can not understand all God's ways, but that is no reason to doubt his wisdom rather is it the surer proof of his omniscience, for if our little minds could fathom the workings of God's mind, he could not be the God of all wisdom and might.

As soon as the messengers of John had gone, Jesus began to speak to the multitudes about his great forerunner. In words of highest praise he pictured the strong, true, fearless character of John, as he had preached in the desert. But great as was John the last of the old dispensation messengers from God—greatest because of his nearness to Christ, the least important of the followers of Christ are, under the new dispensation, given a greater place because they may abide in Christ.

'The two St. Johns' by Dr. Stalker, will be found a very helpful study on this subject.

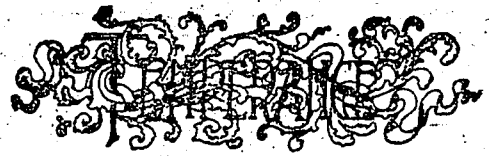
Junior C. E. Topic.

PAYING GOD.

- Mon., April 23. Love. 1 John 4: 19.
Tues., April 24. Service. Ps. 100: 2.
Wed., April 25. Talent. 2 Tim. 1: 6.
Thu., April 26. Talents. Rom. 12: 6.
Fri., April 27. Youth. Eccl. 12: 1.
Sat., April 28. Age. Prov. 16: 31.
Sun., April 29. Topic—What do we owe to God? Luke 20: 21-25.

C. E. Topic.

April, 29.—What is God's due? Luke 20: 19-26.



Alcohol Catechism.

(Dr. R. H. Macdonald, of San Francisco.)

CHAPTER X.—(Continued.)

9. Q.—What diseases of the brain and nerves does the continued use of alcohol produce?

A.—Epilepsy, insanity, and delirium tremens are the worst; but all hard drinkers have their nerves so broken down that they can hardly manage their limbs or do any kind of business.

10. Q.—What is epilepsy?

A.—It is a disease in which the sufferer is continually losing all control of the muscles and falls down in convulsions or fits.

11. Q.—What is insanity?

A.—It is when the brain becomes diseased until the mind is impaired or wholly lost, and the person becomes crazy or like a fool.

12. Q.—Do drunkards ever become crazy or foolish?

A.—Yes; strong drink, such as brandy, whiskey, rum, gin, and even wine often turn men into raving or murderous madmen more dangerous than wild beasts, while beer and ale sometimes change men into fools and idiots.

13. Q.—What is delirium tremens?

A.—It is one of the most awful diseases in the world. Drunkards call it the 'jim-jams.'

14. Q.—How does delirium tremens affect drunkards?

A.—A man suffering from this disease becomes perfectly wild and crazy for the time. He seems to see hideous snakes all around him or devils sent from hell to torment him, which so distract him with fright and rage that he is ready to kill himself, his wife or children, or anybody that comes in his way. It often takes two or three men to hold him on the bed.

15. Q.—Do many drunkards have this disease?

A.—Almost all drunkards, if they live long enough, sooner or later have this disease, which often proves fatal.

16. Q.—How many persons in the United States are made insane annually by the use of alcoholic drinks?

A.—Statistics prove that over nine thousand are made insane every year by the use of alcoholic drinks. 'At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder.'—Proverbs, 23rd chapter, 32nd verse.

Bishop Wilberforce on Abstinence.

The Bishop of Chichester, at a public meeting at Bradford, held in connection with the half-yearly council of the C. E. T. S., after referring to the dual basis of the society, made this earnest appeal:—'But remember that when you have got to stand between the living and the dead, when you have got to pluck the brand out of the burning furnace, then it is the teetotaler that has got to do the work—and thank God, he does it, he and she together, every member. There are brothers and sisters who are working together in this cause, and we want more of you to be total abstinents—more for the work, more for your own sakes, more for the future that is coming; more, that there may be an ever increasing army of strong, earnest, enthusiastic teetotalers, who shall show by their own lives that alcohol is not a necessity either for the labor of the hands or of the head. I remember the time when I did not see the question as I do now, and if there is any shaky person amongst you tonight, on the question, I should like very much to have the chance of converting that person. I should say, do you want a little more money in your pockets? Then become an abstainer. Do you want to be strong? I suppose there is not one of us who would not like to possess real strength—then become a total abstainer. Do you want intellectual power always at command? Go and ask your doctor, and he will tell you that brain workers should not be users of alcohol. Remember all