

International S. S. Lessons.

Adapted from the Westminster Question Book.

Sept. 9.

Jesus and Nicodemus.

Les. John 3: 1-16.
Mem. vs. 1-3.Gol. Text 3: 16.
Catechism Q. 92, 93.

Jesus had been baptized at the Jordan, probably in January; had been tempted in the wilderness; had returned to the Jordan and called his first disciples; had gone with them North to Galilee and wrought his first miracle at Cana; had paid a brief visit to Capernaum and then returned to Jerusalem, to the Passover, where the event of this lesson took place, in April.

His first act at Jerusalem, at this His first Passover after beginning his ministry, was to cleanse the temple, as told in last lesson. This was followed by many other miracles, and the young teacher from Nazareth was the talk of the town and of the visiting strangers.

Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrim, the civil and religious supreme court of the Jews, heard of Him and His miracles, and was anxious to learn more of Him. Being very busy during Passover time, and knowing that Jesus was also busy, and wishing to have a quiet talk with Him, Nicodemus called upon Him one evening after tea. Jesus would perhaps be alone in the guest chamber, on the house top, resting after the day's work; and going up an outside stair, Nicodemus would find Him there.

The visitor gives the customary greeting, introduces himself, and addressing Jesus by the honorable title of Rabbi, he says;—"We know by your miracles that you are a teacher sent from God."

"Do you wonder at miracles such as these Nicodemus?" I have to tell you of a miracle more wonderful than any you have seen, viz., that a man must be born anew before he can enter into the kingdom which I have come to establish. Unless a man be born anew he cannot enter into that kingdom.

Nicodemus could believe the miracles, but how was such a miracle as this possible. How can a man be born when he is old?

Jesus then explains his meaning, viz., that as a man is once born as to his bodily nature, so he must be born again as to his spiritual nature, must have a new spirit, a new heart, a new character, begotten by the Spirit of God, before he can be in the kingdom of God. He mentions water in connection with Spirit, because as an agent of outward cleansing it is a type of the Spirit which works the inward cleansing from sin.

Nicodemus exclaims in wonder, "How can these things be," and Jesus goes on to tell him of the atonement and the way of life through faith in the Son of God.

The Jewish ruler was already familiar with the story of the brazen serpent, and Christ now shows him that it was but a type of the death that was to save men from sin and its terrible consequences, and speaks to him that wonderful sixteenth verse, the golden text of the whole Bible.

Nicodemus had called upon the young Nazarene Rabbi to learn of Him and His teaching, but He heard far more than he had dreamed. He went home full of wonder and conviction that finally led him to accept Christ as the Messiah, for about a year after this, John 7: 50, he advocated in the Sanhedrim, fair play for Christ, and at the Crucifixion, John 19, 39, he showed himself a true disciple.

Sept. 16.

Jesus at Jacob's Well.

Les. John 4: 9-26.
Mem. vs. 11-44.Gol. Text, John 4: 14
Catechism Q. 94.

Eight months have passed since the events of last lesson. Jesus has spent that time in teaching in various parts of Judea. Many of John's followers now left him for Jesus. Some of John's disciples jealous for their master, told him of it. John was not jealous, but bore his last testimony for Christ. "He must increase but I must decrease."

At length Jesus decides to go again into Galilee, and December finds him journeying northward, towards the Province of Galilee, and Nazareth, His village home, about a year after he had first left it to go to the Jordan for baptism.

The little Province of Samaria lies between and He must pass through it. After a long forenoon's travel, He and His disciples, in passing along a narrow valley, came to the mouth of another narrow valley running west at right angles to it. Turning into this, with Mt. Ebal rising rugged on their right and Mt. Gerizim on the left, they soon reach a deep and ancient well, which Jacob had dug nigh two thousand years before. Jesus, wearied, sat down to rest. His disciples went to buy some bread.

Soon a woman came to get some water, not for common use, for she could have got it much nearer and more easily at some of the numerous springs in the valley; but probably for some act of ceremonial cleansing or worship. Knowing Him, either from His dress or language, to be a Jew, and knowing how the Jews despise the Samaritans, she is surprised when He asks her for a drink.

He tells her, as he did Nicodemus, that there is something more wonderful than His asking a drink of her, that if she knew who he is, she would ask and receive from Him living water.

As did Nicodemus, she wonders how this can be, as the well is deep. Then He explains, as in last lesson, that His meaning is a spiritual one, that the thirst which He satisfies is the unrest of soul caused by the guilt of sin, the longing for peace and rest, which can come only through reconciliation with God, and that He, Christ, alone, can give that reconciliation.

1. Find out the sayings of Christ at the well.
2. As did Christ, we should improve opportunities, no matter how small they may seem.
3. True Christlikeness breaks down all prejudice between race, class, caste, and sees in others but brethren.
4. Christ, and He only, can give rest. "Our souls were made for Thee, and they cannot rest until they rest in Thee."
5. The living water, the pardon which gives peace, is ever at hand for the thirsty. Have you yet taken it? Delay not.

"A ship, after long tossing in the storm and making no port, was without water; and its crew, fainting from thirst, hailed a passing vessel with the cry, "Water, water!" "Let down your buckets, you are surrounded with fresh water," was the reply. They were off the coast of Brazil in the outflow of the Amazon, which pushes its tide of living waters away out into the Atlantic a hundred miles." "So we, surrounded on all hands by God and upheld by Him, and living in Him, yet do not know it, and refrain from dipping our buckets and drawing out of His life-giving fulness."