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Lesson XII. Dec. 21. Luke 24: 44-53.

JESUS' PARTING WORDS.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself."—John 14: 3.

EXPLANATORY.

I. THE SUMMARY OF INSTRUCTION. Luke, not being an apostle or an eye witness, sums up in a few words at the close of his book the story given more in detail by some of the other evangelists. But he knew, and records it in his story of the Acts of the Apostles, that forty days intervened (Acts 1: 3).

FIRST, THEIR UNDERSTANDING OPENED. 44. *These are the words which I spake unto you.* See Luke 18: 33; Mark 10: 33. These strange events which have staggered your faith should be the means of strengthening it, because they are the fulfilment not only of what I told you beforehand should take place, but of what was foretold ages before in the Scriptures. *Which were written in the law of Moses.* The Old Testament Scriptures are full of Christ. He is the focus on which are concentrated the rays from all the ages of revelation.

45. *Then opened He their understanding.* This is what first of all they needed as a preparation for their work of proclaiming the Gospel. Thus alone would they understand God's plan of salvation. "Christ's scholars never learn *above their Bibles* in this world; but they need to be learning still more and more *out of their Bibles*, and to grow more *ready* and *mighty* in the Scriptures." The means by which Jesus opened their understanding is reported by John 20: 22. "He breathed on them and said unto them, receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John 14: 26; 16: 13).

SECOND, THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY. 46. *And thus it behooved.* Was fitting. The Rev. Ver. omits this word, and connects what follows with "It is written." The *Christ to suffer and rise from the dead.* These were the two great essential facts of the Gospel. The Christ made an atonement on the cross for the sins of the world, and He was raised again to prove His divinity, to reveal immortal life, and open heaven to the world.

THE MISSIONARY DUTY OF THE CHURCH. Observe that this command implies (1) that Christianity is a universal religion, not merely one of the religions of the world; (2) that it is adapted to all nations and all classes (Rom. 1: 16), a claim which history has abundantly justified. The very soul of our religion is missionary, progressive, world-embracing; it would cease to exist if it ceased to be missionary, if it disregarded the parting words of its Founder.

48. *And ye are witnesses of these things.* The idea contained in Luke 1: 2, "which from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word," is here found once more. The word "witness" afterwards meant "martyrs" (which is, in fact, the Greek word itself); for Christ's witnesses died to support their testimony. The Gospels are the summary of this witness of the Apostles. Matthew was one of the witnesses; Mark's Gospel is supposed to be the preaching of Peter, and Luke the preaching of Paul, who learned directly from Jesus Himself (Gal. 1: 11, 12), and John was another of the witnesses. These Gospels were written many years after the apostles began to preach, and are the story that had been told many hundreds of times by these witnesses.

THIRD, THE PROMISE OF POWER. 49. *And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you.* The promise of the gift of *another* Comforter contained in Christ's last conversation with the eleven (John 14: 16–20, 26; 15: 26, 27). This was the promise of the Father, made in the Old Testament (Isa. 44: 3; Ezek. 36: 27; Joel 2: 28–32), recalled to the remembrance of the nation by John the Baptist (Matt. 3: 11), and renewed by the Son. *But tarry ye in Jerusalem.* Make this your home. They waited for ten days after the ascension, praying, conversing, studying the Scriptures, thus being prepared for their great work. Then came the great day of Pentecost, when the promise of the Father was fulfilled, and each one received a consciousness of a new and mighty power, and felt, as man had never felt before, the presence and love of God.

II. SEVENTH APPEARANCE. The very morning of the resurrection the angels in the tomb sent a message by the women to whom they appeared, that the disciples were to go into Galilee, and Jesus would appear to them there (Matt. 28: 7). Accordingly the eleven (Matt. 28: 16) went away into Galilee, and waited for the special appearing of Jesus there. It was during this time that the three next appearances occurred. The reason they did not go immediately on receiving the message from the angels was doubtless because Jesus at His appearance that same evening made the appointment, and they went just before the time. It was at this appearance that Peter was restored fully and completely after his fall.

III. EIGHTH APPEARANCE. About the same time, on a mountain in Galilee, to the eleven (Matt. 28: 16–20). This was the appointed meeting, when Jesus especially commissioned His disciples to preach the Gospel to all nations.

IV. NINTH APPEARANCE. About the same time and place, to 500 disciples at once (1 Cor. 15: 6). Some think this was the same appearance as the eighth above, and doubtless it was in close connection with it. All were included in the great commission, and all were to have part in the evangelizing of the world.

V. TENTH APPEARANCE. Probably in Jerusalem, to James only (1 Cor. 15: 7). Nothing further is known about this appearance.

VI. ELEVENTH APPEARANCE. THE ASCENSION. All the apostles present. Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives, near Bethany. Mark 16: 19, 20; Acts 1: 13–11.

50. *And He led them out.* From Jerusalem, where the last interview had taken place. *And He lifted up His hands and blessed them.* He expressed in word and act His divine blessing upon them,—a blessing which was real and powerful, and continues upon His people to this day.

51. *He was parted from them.* By beginning to ascend upwards. *And carried up into heaven.* The tense of the original is picturesque, and indicates a continuedness, a gradual going up out of their sight. He wished, however, to leave them in such a way that they should not think He had simply vanished from them, and wait for His present re-appearance. His ascension is not His separation from His people, but the ascension of His throne and the beginning of His reign at the head of the church which "is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1: 23).

It was at this time, doubtless, that the great change came over His body, described in 1 Cor. 15: 51–53. When a cloud had received Him out of their sight two angels bade them be comforted, for the time was coming when He should return. Why did Christ leave His disciples to work out the kingdom of God? We must remember that He is personally present, only invisible, and that He has sent the Holy Spirit to guide and teach and give power. (1) By Christ's ascension we see His true nature, as divine; (2) that He may be the omnipresent Saviour of all men alike; (3) that we may be taught to live by faith, and not by sight; (4) to train us up into His character by doing His work; (5) He has gone to prepare a place for us, as well as us for the place.

52. *And they worshipped Him.* Acknowledging now that He was indeed divine, they gave Him the religious worship due only to God. *And returned to Jerusalem with great joy.* Every sorrow had been turned to joy. The proof that Jesus was the Messiah had greatly increased; they saw how His death was the redemption of the world; they had learned how He could fulfil His promises; they saw new meaning in the Scriptures; they were full of love and joy in the Holy Spirit. It was like the blossoming of the night-blooming cereus, a marvel of beauty, upon its deformed and ugly stem.

53. *And were continually in the temple.* The house of God, meeting together there, and joining in its worship. They seem also to have had a place of meeting elsewhere in the city (Acts 1: 13).

Is It Wrong to Dance?

Bishop Vincent of Chautauqua fame, received a letter from a young woman prominent in society upon the subject of dancing. In her letter she said she had been received into the Methodist church, yet was fond of dancing, and, moreover, was constantly brought in contact with those who did dance. She could not forego the pleasure of dancing, unless Bishop Vincent instructed her to do so.

The letter which he wrote in reply treated the vexing subject in a thorough and comprehensive manner. His quotation of authorities are apt and to the point, and parts are here reproduced. The bishop says:

The great lion-faced orator, Daniel Webster, when asked why he did not dance, replied: "I have not brains enough." Thackeray, the great novelist, has written: "When a man confesses himself fond of dancing, I set him down as a fool." Alfred Cleveland Coxe, Episcopal bishop of New York has said: "Alas, that women professing to follow Christ and godliness should not rally for the honor of their sex and drive these shameful dances from society." Gail Hamilton has written: "The thing is, of its very nature, unclean and cannot be washed. The very pose of the parties suggests impurity."

Bishop Vincent also quotes one of the most fairminded of Congregational pastors in England, who says:

"Fashionable dances as now carried on are revolting to every feeling of delicacy and propriety and are fraught with the greatest danger to millions."

In his own opinion and of his own knowledge, Bishop Vincent says:

"It is not the rattle one hears in the neighborhood of a snake that he objects to. A child might play with it. The dance is the rattle, but the danger is in the fang and the poison. Its associations and tendencies must come into count. Now, in the dance there must be at some point a peril, or so many wise and good people would not have written, taught and preached against it. It has been said: 'To the pure all things are pure,' but, alas, who are the pure, and how many such are there? Let those dance who will; the humble, the earnest, consistent Christian who desires to consecrate his or her every word and act to Christ will deem it wrong and inconsistent to dance."—*New York Tribune.*

The New Tariff on Eggs.

Some one has advised the Canadian egg raisers to get the eggs from their hens when they command high prices in Boston and New York; and then they won't feel that extra five cents a dozen which the new tariff imposes.

We think we hear them reply: "well that's pretty poor comfort when the hens and pullets too instead of laying are simply standing around looking and asking for more corn." Please keep in mind if you feed them much corn you won't get an egg, that is a certain fact.

If we could only get an egg a day or even every other day at this season we would soon get rich, says many a party who keep hens. John T. Porter, of Swathmore, Pa., offers hints to such that they might profitably try.

He writes I. S. Johnson & Co., Boston, Mass.: "In the contest which began on the 1st of January last, I began under many difficulties. I had never used Sheridan's Condition Powder and was pretty much out of conceit with any food or powder to make hens lay. My hen house was not well heated, but for all that I determined to give the matter a full vote and a fair count. I soon saw increase enough to encourage the use of Sheridan's Condition Powder, prize or no prize. The result proved I was the sixteenth winner. I kept on using the Powder about three times each week after the contest and find that during the first 23 days of this month my 22 Black Minorca Hens did what I should have presumed an impossibility. I will make affidavit that under the influence of your Powder, the product was 450 eggs. Now I am fully aware that this means nearly 21 eggs per hen in 23 days; but these are the facts nevertheless and facts which would have made me the first prize winner could it have occurred during the contest. I challenge the world to excel it and am willing to enter the list with any who will agree for a prize of $200 and to use a given quantity per hen of your incomparable Powder. I would not be without it though it cost five dollars per lb." I. S. Johnson & Co., 22 Custom House St., Boston, Mass., will send free to any one keeping hens, full particulars of this year's premium offers on request.

Obeying Pleasantly.

Little Harry had seen some older boys fly their kites from the tops of the houses, and he thought it would be nice fun if he could do so, too. So he came to his aunt, and said:

"Aunt Mary, can I go to the top of the house and fly my kite?"

His aunt wished to do everything that was proper to please him, but she thought this was very unsafe, so she said:

"No, Harry, my boy; I think that is very dangerous sort of play. I'd rather you would not go."

"All right. Then I'll go out on the bridge," said Harry.

His aunt smiled, and said she hoped he would always be as obedient as that.

"Harry, what are you doing?" said his mother, on one occasion.

"Spinning my new top, mother."

"Can't you take the baby out to ride? Get out the carriage, and I'll bring him down."

"All right!" shouted the boy, as he put his top away in his pocket, and hastened to obey his mother.

"Uncle William, may I go over to the store this morning?" said Harry, one day at breakfast. "I want to see those baskets again that I was looking at yesterday."

"O yes, Harry," said his uncle; "I shall be very glad to have you."

"But I cannot spare you to-day, Harry," said his mother; "I want you to go out with me. You shall go to the store another time."

"All right," said Harry, and went on eating.

No matter what Harry was asked to do, or what refusal he met with when asking for anything, his constant answer was, "All right." He never asked, "Why can't I," or "mustn't I?" Harry not only learned to obey, but he had learned to obey in good humor.—*Little Christian.*

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— A countryman visiting the Surrogate's Office, on observing the huge volumes of wills on the shelves, asked if they were Bibles. "No, sir," said the clerk, "They are testaments."—*Selected.*

— "I have used Burdock Blood Bitters for attack of bilious headache, and it always gives immediate relief," says J. White, flour and feed merchant, Riverside, Toronto.

— "Well, Fritz, did you have a good time at your aunt's?" "O, yes, father; she took such good care of me; she used to ask me every day whether I was not homesick."

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— Grocer—"Well, my little boy, what will you have?" "Fifteen cents worth of molasses." Grocer (as he hands the pitcher over the counter)—"Where is your money?" "In the pitcher; I put it there so as to be sure not to lose it."

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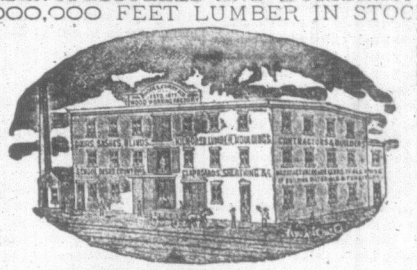

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