

A BOOK OF INSTRUCTION FOR CATECHUMENS

SECTION I.

THE LIFE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

W. H. T. GAIRDNER

&

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FOREWORD

TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

THESE lessons on the Life of Christ form the first section of a course drawn up by the late Canon W. H. T. Gairdner for use with pupils preparing for baptism in the Arabic Anglican Church in Egypt. Sections 2 and 3 give instructions on the Commandments, Creed, and Sacraments.*

Canon Gairdner himself wrote the lessons of sections 2 and 3, and although in the present section he only wrote one lesson (No. XI.), the plan of the lessons is his, and his colleague wrote them in close co-operation with his thought, drawing upon his great experience of such teaching in the Near East. The most noteworthy feature of the lessons is the care taken in the training of the catechumen's prayer life simultaneously with each advance in knowledge of the Gospel truth.

In the prefaces to sections 2 and 3 Canon Gairdner wrote the following words, which apply equally to the hopes of himself and his colleague in the publication of section 1:

“The need of a systematic handbook of lessons in the Christian doctrine and life, for catechumens in Moham-
medan lands, has long and often been keenly felt by the compiler of the present section, and, he doubts not, by many others of his own and other communions. The existence of a bare course of lessons, with a printed table,

* Sections 2 and 3 may be obtained in English, price 6d. each section, from S.P.C.K., c/o C.M.S. Building, Boulac, Cairo, Egypt, or from Diocesan Bookroom, St. George's, Jerusalem, Palestine.

is indeed something to the good; but it is not enough. The busy worker, the inexperienced teacher, the catechumen himself, need *helps* to the study of those lessons. From the viewpoint of the community there is thus assured a certain fulness of scope, with a certain adequacy of treatment; and, of course, the individual teacher may adapt, modify, and enrich at will. From the viewpoint of the learner, an impossible amount of note-taking is saved; and he is also supplied with material on which to work privately between lessons.

“ If this handbook should be adopted in its entirety by another community, the compiler will only feel the more thankful.

“ Otherwise its material is at the service of any and all who desire to undertake another compilation. It is thought that this English edition may be found useful for translation into the languages of other Mohammedan mission-fields.

“ It is only when the scribes of all sections of the Church bring forth all the treasures of their things new and old that they will be able to learn fully from each other, and will thus be offering to the Holy Spirit the materials wherefrom *He* shall build the rich temple of the unity that is to be.”

W. H. T. G.

C. E. P.

ANALYSIS OF COURSE OF INSTRUCTION ON THE LIFE OF CHRIST

I. NATIVITY AND EARLY LIFE OF CHRIST.

<i>Lesson.</i>	<i>Passage for Study.</i>	<i>Memory Work.</i>
1. Preparations of God for the Entry of Christ into the World:		
(a) Annunciation and Birth of John Baptist ..	{ St. John 1. 6-8. St. Luke 1. 1-25, 57-66, 80.	1 Sam. 16. 7b.
2. Preparations of God for the Entry of Christ into the World:		
(b) Annunciation of the Saviour's Birth ..	{ St. Luke 1. 26-38. St. Matt. 1. 20-25.	St. Matt. 1. 21b.
3. The Birth of Jesus Christ ..	St. Luke 2. 1-21.	St. Luke 2. 13, 14.
4. Presentation of Jesus in the Temple	St. Luke 2. 22-38.	St. Luke 2. 29-32.
5. The Magi and the Journey to Egypt	St. Matt. 2.	Ps. 25. 4, 5.
6. Childhood and Youth of Jesus	St. Luke 2. 40-52.	2 Cor. 8. 9.

II. THE BEGINNING OF THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST.

7. The Preaching of John Baptist	St. Matt. 3. 1-12.	St. Matt. 3. 2, 8.
8. The Baptism of Jesus ..	{ S. Matt. 3. 13-17. St. Luke 3. 21, 22. St. John 1. 32, 33.	Heb. 3. 5, 6.
9. The Temptation	St. Matt. 4. 1-11.	Heb. 2. 18.
10. The Calling of the First Disciples	St. John 1. 29-51.	St. John 1. 29b.
11. The First Miracle	St. John 2. 1-12.	Rom. 14. 14, 15.
12. The Cleansing of the Temple	St. John 2. 13-25.	{ St. Mark 11. 17b. St. John 2. 16b.
13. Nicodemus and the New Birth	St. John 3. 1-21.	St. John 3. 3.
14. Jesus and the Woman of Samaria	St. John 4. 3-42.	St. John 4. 23, 24.

[An additional lesson may be added to this section for pupils who have time:

Later Career and Death of John	{ St. John 3. 22-30. St. Mark 6. 17-29.]	
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III. THE GALILÆAN MINISTRY.

<i>Lesson.</i>	<i>Passage for Study.</i>	<i>Memory Work.</i>
15. First Rejection and First Acceptance in Galilee ..	{ St. Luke 4. 16-31; 5. 1-11.	St. Luke 4. 18, 19.
16. First Miracles of Mercy in Galilee	St. Luke 5. 12-26.	Heb. 7. 25.
17. The Calling of the New Patriarchs and the Giving of the New Law ..	St. Luke 6. 12-49.	St. Matt. 5. 3, 4.
18. More about the New Righteousness	St. Matt. 5. 17-32.	St. Matt. 5. 5, 6.
19. The New Law of Alms, Prayer, and Fasting ..	St. Matt. 6. 1-18.	St. Matt. 5. 7, 8.
20. More about the New Way of Prayer	{ St. Luke 11. 1-4, 11-13. St. Matt. 6. 5-15. }	{ St. Matt. 6. 6. St. Luke 11. 13.
21. Signs of His Power and His Mercy	{ St. Luke 7. 1-10, 11-17; 8. 22-25; 7. 36-50.	St. Matt. 5. 9, 10.
22. Parables of the Kingdom ..	St. Matt. 13. 1-52.	Revise St. Matt. 5. 3-10.
23. The Crisis of the Galilæan Ministry	St. John 6. 1-69.	St. John 6. 51.
24. The Eternal Word of God ..	St. John 1. 1-18.	St. John 1. 18.

[Additional lessons that may be added to Section III., between Lessons XXII. and XXIII., for pupils who have time :

Second Visit to Jerusalem ..	St. John 5.
Jesus and the Jewish Legalists	St. Mark 2. 13—3. 6.
Jesus and the Unclean Spirits	St. Matt. 12. 22-46; 8. 28-34.
Healing of the Woman and of Jairus' Daughter ..	St. Luke 8. 40-56.
Mission of Twelve	St. Matt. 10.]

IV. TRAINING OF THE TWELVE.

25. The Confession of the Twelve and the Announcement of the Passion ..	St. Matt. 16. 13-28.	St. Matt. 16. 24, 25.
26. The Transfiguration ..	St. Luke 9. 28-43.	St. John 1. 14.
27. Jesus teaches Humility, Forgiveness and Brotherhood	{ St. Matt. 18. St. Matt. 19. 13-15.	St. Matt. 18. 4; 19. 14.
28. Jesus teaches God's Love for Souls	St. Luke 15.	St. Luke 15. 18, 19.

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<i>Lesson.</i>	<i>Passage for Study.</i>	<i>Memory Work.</i>
29. Jesus teaches His Love for Souls	St. John 10. 1-18.	St. John 10. 14-16.
30. Jesus teaches that we also must love Souls	{ St. Luke 10. 30-37. St. Matt. 25. 31-46.	St. Matt. 25. 40.

[Additional lessons that may be added to Section IV. for pupils who have time :

Third Visit to Jerusalem ..	John 7. 1-13; 9. 1-41.
Mission of Seventy ..	St. Luke 10. 1-24.
Calls to Repentance ..	St. Luke 11. 29-36; 12. 13-21; 13. 1-9.
Teaching about those whom we consider Aliens and Despised	{ St. Luke 9. 50-56; 10. 25-37; 17. 11-19; 18. 9-14.]

V. THE LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM AND THE PASSION THERE.

31. Jesus and the Friends at Bethany	{ St. Luke 10. 38-42. St. John 11.	St. John 11. 25, 26.
32. Going up to Jerusalem: the Cost of Following.. .. .	{ St. Mark 10. 17-31. St. Luke 14. 25-35.	St. Luke 14. 27, 35.
33. Going up to Jerusalem: Three Encounters	{ St. Mark 10. 32-52. St. Luke 19. 1-10.	St. Mark 10. 44, 45.
34. The Supper at Bethany and the Entry into Jerusalem	{ St. John 12. 1-13, 16. St. Luke 19. 29-44.	St. John 1. 11, 12.
35. The Last Supper	{ St. John 13. 1-30. St. Matt. 26. 26-29.	St. John 13. 14, 15.
36. Synopsis of the Last Conversation	{ St. John 13. 31— 17. 25.	St. John 13. 34, 35.
37. Agony, Betrayal, Desertion, Denial	{ St. Matt. 26. 36-58, 69-75.	Eph. 5. 2. Isa. 53. 6.
38. The Condemnation of Jesus	{ St. Matt. 26. 59-68; 27. 1, 2, 11-26. Cf. St. John 18. 33-38. St. Matt. 27. 32-50.	Isa. 53. 7.
39. The Crucifixion	{ St. Luke 23. 26-49. St. John 19. 23-30.	Isa. 53. 3-8.
40. The Burial	St. Matt. 27. 50-66.	{ Isa. 53. 9. Heb. 2. 9.

[Additional lessons that may be added to Section V., after Lesson XXXIV, for pupils who have time :

Parables of the Last Week ..	{ St. Mark 12. 1-12. St. Matt. 25. 1-30.
Questions and Answers ..	St. Matt. 22. 15-40.
Condemnation of Hypocrites	St. Matt. 23.]

X COURSE OF INSTRUCTION ON THE LIFE OF CHRIST

VI. THE RESURRECTION, ASCENSION, AND REIGN THROUGH THE SPIRIT-FILLED CHURCH.

<i>Lesson.</i>	<i>Passage for Study.</i>	<i>Memory Work.</i>
41. Easter Morning	{ St. John 20. 1-18. St. Matt. 28. 11-15.	Rom. 6. 9-11.
42. The Afternoon and Evening of Easter Day	{ St. Luke 24. 13-35. St. John 20. 19-23.	Isa. 53. 10, 11.
43. The Gospel Mission and Ascension	{ St. Matt. 28. 16-20. Acts 1. 1-14.	St. Matt. 28. 18-20.
44. Pentecost	Acts 2.	St. John 14. 26, 27

TO THE TEACHER AND THE PUPIL

FOR WHOM ARE THESE LESSONS ?

THESE lessons are intended for pupils who can read easily for themselves. Other lessons, less dependent on the power to search for and refer to passages of Scripture, are published for those who cannot read.

The pupils for whom these lessons are prepared are those who, having heard of the life, teaching, and salvation of Christ and finding in Him something that no other teacher has offered them, are now anxious to study *regularly* and with prayer to God the full story of that life and teaching and salvation.

Such a student may be compared to a man who, during the earthly life of Christ, heard from Him a wayside sermon, and straightway desired to follow Him day after day to see His manner of life and hear His teaching more fully.

Any man who in days of old came to learn of Christ soon discovered that the training was not a matter of books, of memory, and of thought alone. The disciples of Christ received training in a new way of life with God and men. These lessons will fail if they enlighten only the *intellect* as to the teaching of Christ. They will not truly represent His teaching, which is addressed to the whole man, the man who feels and acts as well as the man who thinks.

HOW TO USE THE LESSONS.

(a) It is most desirable that these lessons should be studied not alone but with a teacher who can help the student to face his difficulties as they arise, join him in his

prayers for light and guidance, and be a friend and adviser to him in his practical experiments.

(b) The teacher and pupil should each have a copy of these lessons and of the Bible.

(c) In these lessons the prayers and meditations suggested *are of equal importance with the information by reading*. The pupil will have a little notebook of a size that he can keep in his pocket. In this book he will write the prayer or meditation connected with his lesson. To write it down will familiarize him with it. He will keep this note-book in his pocket, and will thus be able to seize moments of leisure for recalling to his own soul and offering to God these holy thoughts. He will gradually grow to the understanding of the prayer-life learnt from Christ. The teacher also may share with him in the same prayers and meditations that their hearts may be one.

(d) This introductory course cannot teach the pupil every incident or every saying found in the Gospels. But the *main* incidents and sayings have been arranged for the pupil in connected order, that he may have in his mind not only many stories of Christ, but also an ordered picture of the course of events during the earthly life of the Saviour. In each lesson a short *review* connects the lesson for the day with those that have gone before. These *reviews* should be regarded by both teacher and pupil as important. They deal not only with the succession in *time* of incidents, but with the connection in *thought* of the teachings. Each lesson should begin with the study of the *review* paragraph.

(e) After this review the teacher and pupil should open their Bibles at the passage for study indicated at the head of the lesson.

For the purpose of study the passage is broken up into

small sections, indicated by a reference printed in black type in the lesson book. Read a section, then pause to read the paragraph concerning it in the lesson book, and to discuss any question of the pupil before passing on to read the next section.

It is of great importance that this order should be observed and the passage of Scripture first read, followed by the notes on it, rather than the note followed by the Scriptural passage.

(f) Teacher and pupil will pray together before they part, and the pupil will know that his teacher prays for him every day, as will also those members of the Church appointed to keep a loving watch over the difficult days of his catechuminate. If possible, teacher and pupil will visit one another's homes, so that their friendship may be more than one of lesson hours alone. Neither teacher nor learner will forget that the prayers they pray together owe their value and their virtue to the Master in heaven who ever liveth to make intercession for this soul for which He died.

A BOOK OF INSTRUCTION FOR CATECHUMENS

LESSON I

PREPARATIONS OF GOD FOR THE ENTRY OF CHRIST INTO THE WORLD

(a) ANNUNCIATION AND BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

*Passages for Study: St. John 1. 6-8; St. Luke 1. 1-25,
57-66, 80.*

INTRODUCTION.

When Jesus Christ came into the world, He came to a few individuals prepared by God to welcome Him. We speak not now of the long training, given by God through many centuries, to the nation into which Christ was born. We shall study in these lessons only the preparation of a few individual hearts, and we shall note how this preparation was the work of God Himself. We will read first of John (called by the Muslims Yahyâ b. Zakariya), who was set apart in a special manner even before his birth. As introduction to his story let us read John 1. 6-8: "There came a man sent from God"; today's lesson will fill out those words and show the manner of God's sending.

LESSON.

Luke 1. 5-7: *The Quiet Home.*—These verses reveal a quiet home of prayer and piety. If we hear of the preparations for the entry of any earthly king into his city, we are told of noise and bustle, gay carpets and flags, lights, crowds and shouting. But when God prepares for the entry into the world of One greater than any earthly

king, His preparations are quiet as the dawn, and are concerned not with outward show but with the hearts of men, and with the life of the quiet home of which these verses tell.

Write in your notebook **1 Sam. 16. 7b**: “*The Lord seeth not as man seeth ; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.*” This is one of the fundamental principles of which you must never lose sight in your study of the Gospels, or in your thoughts about the world.

Verses 8-12: *The Vision in the Temple.*—The scene was in the Temple of God in Jerusalem, the holy house of the Jewish nation. The people prayed in courts outside, while one priest, chosen by lot, went alone into a room in the heart of the Temple where was a little golden altar on which incense was burnt. A heavy curtain hung down between the solitary priest and the innermost room of all which he might not enter, the heart of the heart of the Temple, the *qibla* of the Jewish worship. There was the Mercy Seat on which God in the days of old had revealed His presence among His people.

Verses 13-19: *The Work of the Forerunner.*—We shall see in future lessons how the angel’s prophecy about the character of this child was fulfilled. Read these verses with great care, and note that the work of this child sent from God is to be a work of *preparation* (verse 17: “To make ready for the Lord a people prepared for Him”). His father was later inspired by God to prophecy concerning his work, and this prophecy explains further that of the angel. You can read it in verse 76 of this chapter. The child, then, was sent from God to prepare the way for the coming One. But we have already said that God’s preparations are inward and quiet, and the work of this forerunner is to be an inward and spiritual work in the hearts of men.

He is “great in the sight of the Lord” (verse 15). That does not necessarily imply that he is great in the sight of men. (Say again **1 Sam. 16. 7b**.)

Verses 20-25 : *God's Silent Working.*—The secret is still not revealed to the multitudes, for Zacharias is dumb. Nor even to the neighbours, for Elisabeth hid herself.

Verses 57-66 : The surprise of the neighbours shows that the story of the revelation in the Temple was still a secret. Yet these neighbours felt that spiritual power was at work and were roused to expectancy.

Verse 80 : Again, with the strange quietness of God's methods, the child who raised such expectation was hidden from the sight of men in the desert, where men retired for silent prayer.

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **1 Sam. 16. 7b.**

FOR PRAYER.—*A prayer to be written in the pupil's pocket notebook for constant use :*

O Thou who lookest not on the outward appearance but on the heart, turn my heart and the hearts that I love to Thyself, O Lord our God; that we may be a people prepared for Thee.

LESSON II

PREPARATIONS OF GOD FOR THE ENTRY OF CHRIST INTO THE WORLD

(b) ANNUNCIATION OF THE SAVIOUR'S BIRTH

Passages for Study : St. Luke 1. 26-38; St. Matt. 1. 20-25.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

Of what preparations have we already heard for the coming of Christ to earth? Who came as the fore-runner?

Read again **Luke 1. 19**, a verse from our last lesson, which teaches us that, quiet as were these preparations on earth for Christ's coming, in heaven they were regarded as of the first importance. No less a person than Gabriel (whom the Muslims call Jibrîl, Malik al wahi), who stands before God, was sent to announce the birth of the fore-runner of Christ.

Today we read of the same heavenly messenger.

LESSON.

Luke 1. 26-29: *The Angelic Salutation*.—Gabriel, one of the great ones in heaven, was sent to a city despised on earth. Throughout the Gospel story we are to find the same contrast between what is of importance in the eyes of God and what makes noise and show upon earth. Repeat once more **1 Sam. 16. 7b**.

Verses 30-38: *The Nature of the Coming One*.—The visit was secret; to a poor home, and to a heart prepared by prayer. Yet it was to announce the greatest fact in history, that Incarnation which was to bring the forces of the Divine Life (see **verse 33**) into action in human life: to announce a reign with no ending (see **verse 33**), the

character of which is summed up in the name of the king (see **verse 31**).

This name Jesus means Saviour. (It is a Hebrew name, and is found also of old as the name of the prophet Joshua, *khalîfa* of Moses.) The change in sound came through the use of the word by Greeks, who have no "sh" in their language.

Matt. 1. 20-25: *Further Announcement of the Nature of the Coming One.*—See how heaven is concerned in this matter. Here is another revelation from God by an angel. And here is a further explanation from God of the nature of the Coming One. It is again summed up in His Name. See **Matt. 1. 21b**: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."

We saw in our last lesson that the work of the forerunner of Christ was to be interior, the preparation of hearts (**Luke 1. 17**). Here we see that the primary work of Christ Himself was to be interior, the salvation of His people from their sins, not first of all from their enemies or their poverty. *What are you seeking from Him?*

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **Matt. 1. 21b**.

FOR PRAYER.—*A prayer for heart purity to be written in the notebook, learnt by heart, and used constantly:*

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts: And see if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (**Ps. 139. 23, 24**).

Say this prayer often in your heart, sometimes as it is written, and sometimes in the plural, "search us," praying with yourself for those whom you love.

FOR READING ALONE.—Between this lesson and the next read for yourself the continuation of the story in **Luke 1. 39-80**. It contains two holy songs, one which the Virgin Mary herself was inspired to sing and one put

into the heart of Zacharias, the father of John. Both of these songs are treasures of Christ's people, and you will find that they are often sung by Christians throughout the world as a part of their worship. (Refer to their place in the Anglican Prayer Book.)

LESSON III
THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST

Passage for Study : St. Luke 2. 1-21.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

In what year are we living ? Most of the countries of the world today date their calendars from the birth of Christ. Yet at the time of His birth no government official guessed that an event was taking place which would change the world's history. Only His mother knew something of His greatness (review **Luke 1. 32-35**), and you have seen in your reading this week that Zachariah (**Luke 1. 76-79**) and Elisabeth (**Luke 1. 42, 43**) were in the secret.

LESSON.

Luke 2. 1-7 : *The Earthly Scene.*—What could be humbler than this scene ? Even the peasant women in Egypt today sometimes laugh in scorn when they hear the story of this Baby born among the cattle. So humble was this coming that any fellâha, looking at the " outward appearance " of it, may scorn it. Repeat **1 Sam. 16. 7b.**

Verses 8-14 : *The Heavenly Comment.*—Like the last lessons, this teaches us that heaven was deeply concerned with a matter which seemed of no moment to anyone, rich or poor, abed in Bethlehem that night. The very manger bed that makes the peasant women laugh is used by the heavenly messenger as a sign to point to the greatest event of history.

What is the title of the Babe as announced by the angel ? " A Saviour which is Christ the Lord " (verse 11). The word Christ means *Anointed King*.

Verses 15-21 : *The First Worshippers.*—The first worshippers to One with such a title are shepherds.

What man would have chosen such to welcome the world's Saviour? Yet see how their simple thankful acceptance of the good news from God proves them to have been prepared in heart (verses 15 and 20).

(Review our three lessons—on Birth of John, Annunciation, Birth of Christ—and note in them the points which confirm the words of the Taurat in 1 Sam. 16. 7).

Verse 22: *Jesus*.—This became His human name, given Him on the eighth day when all Jewish babies were named. You remember the reason for the name? (**Matt. 1. 21b.**) What other names or titles for this Babe have you already heard?

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **Luke 2. 13, 14.**

In the notebook in which you write your prayers keep one page for writing all the names of Christ that you learn from time to time from the Bible or from Christian hymns or prayers. Sometimes when you are alone with Him, walking in the street or sitting in your house, call Him in your heart by His names. Already you know several: **Matt. 1. 21, 23; Luke 1. 35, 2. 11.**

To write in the notebook and say often to God :

(a) *A prayer.*

Grant, O Lord, that, like the shepherds of old, like Mary and like Joseph, I may be prepared in heart to welcome Him whom Thou dost send. Let Him be a Saviour to me and to my people, to save us from our sins.

(b) *The song of the Angels.*

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.

A MEDITATION.

Quietly and alone open your heart to God and ponder these words :

The world's Redeemer came to earth in no palace

prepared of men, nay, not even in a poor man's house, but as a stranger of strangers in a shelter that was no human home. He came thus homeless to remind us that the only home He seeks is in the hearts of men.

The hearts of men are full of desires for self; we desire comfort or money or advancement for ourselves, and this makes us hurt others. It is selfishness that causes anger, dishonesty, lying, laziness, impurity. In these sinful hearts of ours, no better than an unclean stable, Jesus Christ desires to be born. He wishes to be in us the beginning of a new life, the Christ life.

Invite Him to live there. Say, with desire, "Come, Holy Babe, cleanse my sinful heart by Thy sacred presence." Every day ask Him there.

Ask Him to change and cleanse you and to live His life in you. Ask Him to put into your heart new, pure desires, Christ-like desires.

Were Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem born
But not in thee,
Still wert thou all forlorn.

LESSON IV

PRESENTATION OF JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

Passage for Study : St. Luke 11. 22-38.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

Is it true to say that when Christ was born more preparations were made by the inhabitants of heaven than by the inhabitants of earth? Recall what our lessons have shown us of this matter.

Today we are to see the Babe about whose coming earth was so little concerned, and heaven so much, taking His place as one of the Jewish babies of the year, recognized only by those who are deeply taught in the ways of God.

LESSON.

Luke 2. 22, 23: *Obedient to the Law for us.*—"Up to Jerusalem"—that is to say, up to the Temple of the Lord which stood on the hill on the eastern side of the city. This Temple was the central place of the Jewish worship, and the place where the sacrifices ordained by the law of Moses were offered. It is mentioned again and again in the Injil, and it is well to know the fashion of it. (Turn again to the note in Lesson II. on **Luke 1. 8-12.**) You must imagine the holy place as a small building surrounded by several courts like the courts of a mosque, much as the Kaaba stands in the midst of a great court.

Verse 24: The law of Moses ordained this offering for poor families. Rich families were to offer a lamb. Christ, though announced by Gabriel as One who had come to reign for ever, threw in His lot on earth with the poor and lowly.

Verses 25, 26: *Recognized by the Spirit-Taught.*—"Waiting for the consolation of Israel"—that is to say, for the

coming of Christ foretold by Israel's prophets. Notice in these verses that this sheikh had two means of spiritual information:

First, the study of the Taurat, in the books of which God had foretold the coming of the Christ by the pens of His prophets centuries before.

Secondly, the life of prayer, in which his spirit was taught by the Spirit of God, so that he possessed also *al 'ilm ar-rabbāni, al-laduni* (the direct communication of the spirit of the mystic with God). Thus he was both a *mujtahid* (who diligently searches the word of God) and an *'arif* (who knows God by the direct touch of the Spirit), and this is what God, who made both the intellect and the spirit of men, would have of *us all*. With our minds and with our spirits we must learn from Him.

Verse 27: *The Parents*.—Joseph was the father, not according to the flesh (Lesson I., **Matt. 1. 18**), but according to the law, which required for each child its natural father or a guardian standing in the place of father.

Verses 28-32: *The Song of Simeon*.—This is one of the first, the shortest and most beautiful of the thousands of the songs of thanksgiving for the coming of Christ to the world. Perhaps you will yourself make such a song to God one day. In any case, you can sing that of Simeon. It is often sung in Christian worship.

Notice how the old man, taught of God, recognizes that Christ had not come to be the Light of his own nation only.

Verses 33-38: *Recognized by the Prayerful*.—When Christ first came to the Temple as a Babe of a poor family, who among the crowds in the Temple courts recognized Him?

Only two, a man and a woman, who by a life of prayer had hearts prepared to understand the ways of God. (In this matter of welcoming and understanding, of loving and serving Christ, men and women are equal.)

Their means of spiritual growth were the reading of

God's words, prayer at the hours of prayer in God's house, and solitary prayer at all times. Are these means not at our disposal too ?

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Write out and learn the song of Simeon, as suggested above (**Luke 2. 29-32**).

A prayer to be written in the notebook for use after the lesson :

O Lord, who dost reveal Thyself to praying souls, teach me to pray with Thy worshippers in Thy house, and also continually in the secret temple of my heart.

A MEDITATION.

Go apart and quiet your soul before God and ponder these words:

Simeon and Anna worshipped night and day, and the Lord revealed to them His secret and made them glad.

Why did God choose those two to know His secrets ?

Because of what He found in their hearts, for "the Lord looketh upon the heart."

O Lord, make clean my heart within me. Cleanse my heart that I may become fit to enter into Thy holy secret, as Simeon and Anna were cleansed by Thee and entered into Thy secret and were glad.

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

LESSON V

THE MAGI AND THE JOURNEY TO EGYPT

Passage for Study : St. Matt. 2.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

We have seen in what holy quietness the Christ of God came into the world. To how few waiting souls did God announce His coming ! Besides His Mother and Joseph, who heard, as we have seen, from an angel, there was Elisabeth, the mother of John Baptist, who was told by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. (Look again at **Luke 1. 41-43.**) And there were shepherds at Bethlehem told by an angel (**Luke 2. 10**), and again, Simeon and Anna, who were told by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. (Look at **Luke 2. 27-38.**)

All these belonged to the Jewish nation into which Christ was born. Recall, however, the song of Simeon, which you have learnt by heart (**Luke 2. 32**), and you will find there words which show that this Jewish sheikh, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, knew that the Babe should be not only "the glory of His people Israel," but also "a light to lighten the Gentiles" (the nations).

LESSON.

Matt. 2. 1 : *The Astronomers.*—Today's lesson shows that God Himself had chosen, among the very few to whom He had as yet revealed the secret of this Child's birth, a company from among the nations other than the Jews.

They came perhaps from Persia, or perhaps from Babylon in Irâq 'Arabi, for astronomers in that land from very early days would prophesy from the stars good or evil that was to come upon the "Westland," as

they called Palestine. Astronomers often connected some bright star with the birth of a King. Thus, on the night when Alexander the Great (Dhu Qarnên) was born, magi prophesied from the stars that the conqueror of Asia was born, and so it came to pass.

When Jesus was born, the whole world was weary and looking for a King who should bring peace.

Verses 2-10: *God's Guidance.*—How did God guide these men to Christ ?

(1) By a star (**verses 2, 9, 10**).

(2) By the advice of a wicked king, drawn from the searching of the Scriptures (**verses 4-8**).

Verse 5: "The Prophet"—*i.e.*, the prophet Micah, whose book is one of the books of the Taurat. It was written 700 years before the birth of Christ. (Read **Micah 5. 2.**)

Verses 11, 12: *Guidance Followed in Faith.*—How great was the faith of these men who left a distant land and came to find a King, and who, when they were led by God to a Babe in a poor family, were unshaken in faith and testified that He was a King over a spiritual, not an earthly, kingdom, by worshipping Him and giving Him kingly gifts ! Have we the same faith in God's way of working, or do we desire to see the Christ of God outwardly successful before we accept Him as King ?

In verse 12 we find a third way in which God guided these men of faith.

Do you believe that God has guided you ? (Perhaps teacher and pupil may here share their experience.)

Verses 13-23: *A Second Story of Guidance which was Followed.*—By leaving all and obeying God, the poor and simple were able to outwit the wicked king. Perhaps the rich gifts of the magi paid the expenses of travel. Why was Herod so implacable a foe to a little Babe ? It was the word "King" (see **verse 2**) which excited him who had committed many a crime in order to hold the kingdom. He had already murdered some of his relations for fear they should reign in his place.

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Write in your book, learn by heart, and use often as a prayer the words of the Psalmist (Ps. 25. 4, 5):

Show me Thy ways, O Lord;
Teach me Thy paths.
Guide me in Thy truth, and teach me;
For Thou art the God of my salvation.

Turn the prayer sometimes into the plural, "Show us Thy way," and use it for those you love.

A MEDITATION ON FOLLOWING GOD'S GUIDANCE.

The chief priests and scribes of Jerusalem, who thought themselves very religious, might have found the Christ of God (Christ means "Anointed King"). They heard from the magi that their King was born. They knew from their holy books where God's promised King would be born. But they did not go six miles to Bethlehem to find Him. Why? To worship the King sent by God would make King Herod angry. They cared more for safety and peace than to follow God's guidance. If God's guidance led me to sacrifice my peace and safety, should I follow it?

Herod the king had the very same guidance and he used it, not to worship and learn the ways of God, but to defy God and plunge into treacherous wickedness. God does not force men to follow His guidance.

The magi and Joseph, guided by God, took trouble, left what was dear, and travelled to strange lands. Am I ready to offer myself to God, to follow His guidance wherever it leads me? "When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek" (Ps. 27. 8).

Show me Thy ways, O Lord;
Teach me Thy paths.
Guide me in Thy truth, and teach me;
For Thou art the God of my salvation.

LESSON VI
CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH OF JESUS

Passage for Study : St. Luke 2. 40-52.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

Read again **Matt. 2. 21-23**. Archelaus was grandson of the Herod who killed the babies of Bethlehem, and as wicked and cruel as he. He reigned in Judæa, the southern part of the little country of Palestine, in which lies the capital, Jerusalem, and the town of Bethlehem where Jesus was born. Galilee is in the northern part of Palestine.

The little town of Nazareth, in Galilee, was in those days despised, so that men said in proverb, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Yet it was God's will that Christ should go there and know the temptations that come to boys in towns of bad repute.

LESSON.

Luke 2. 40: *The Childhood of Jesus*.—The history of the childhood of Jesus in this secluded corner of the world is not a history of miracles and wonder-working, but the greater wonder of a life exposed to all the temptations that can come to boys in the house, the school, the shop, the street, yet without sin. Think of the daily lives of boys and see what this means.

One of the epistles says that He was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (**Heb. 4. 15**).

Verses 41-48: *The Boy in the Temple*.—This is the only story in God's book of the years between the infancy and the manhood of Jesus. It shows us the Child just as He grows up to take a man's part in the life around Him.

Verse 41: *The Feast of the Passover.*—Jewish families went to Jerusalem to keep this feast by sacrificing a lamb in the Temple. The lamb was eaten at night at a solemn meal with prayer and thanksgiving. It was a memorial of a night many centuries before in Egypt when God had saved Beni Israel from death on the simple condition that they sprinkled their house-doors with the blood of a sacrificed lamb.

The Boy Jesus, no longer a Child, now journeyed up with the men and women of Nazareth to take part in the solemn sacrificing of the lamb and the memorial meal at night. For the first time since He was a tiny Babe He entered the great temple of God in Jerusalem.

Verse 46: *Sitting among the Teachers.*—Under the colonnade of the Temple courts sat the sheikhs of the Jews, as the sheikhs sit in the Azhar and other great mosques. They taught the Taurat and its commentaries and traditions.

Verse 49: “*In My Father’s House.*”—These are the first recorded words of Christ. They contain the great fact that He came to make real to men that God is a Father. They show us that this Boy thought of God’s Temple as His Father’s House, and that He already knew that God had claims on Him greater than any human claims.

Verses 51-52: *The Silent Years in Nazareth.*—Here was humility: to be subject to people who did not understand, and to practise that subjection in a carpenter’s shop in Nazareth after tasting the pleasure of sitting among the learned in Jerusalem.

And so passed eighteen years. We are told that after learning carpentry He became a working carpenter. And no one in Nazareth guessed that Jesus the carpenter, working to gain food for Himself and His Mother, was the heaven-sent King and Saviour of mankind. The Bible says of this King and Saviour that “He was not ashamed to call the sons of men brethren.” And He showed that He had come to be not only a King but a Brother, by sharing the hard life of common people.

PUPIL'S WORK.

1. *Memory.*—Write in your notebook and learn by heart **2 Cor. 8. 9**: “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.”

2. *A prayer to be written in the notebook and used very often :*

Thanks be to Thee, O Lord Most High, for the daily life of work and poverty and spotless purity lived for our sake by Jesus Christ. Teach us to love Him as a Brother, to obey Him as a King, and to find in Him a Saviour from the temptations and defilements of our hearts. Amen.

3. *A Meditation.*—Go apart by yourself and quiet your soul in the presence of God. Then ponder these thoughts:

Jesus, didst Thou come into the world a King, whose kingdom has no end ?

Didst Thou come from the bosom of the Father to reveal to us the unseen God ?

And art Thou truly not ashamed to call us brethren ?

And didst Thou for our sakes become poor ?

And didst Thou humble Thyself to be obedient to Joseph and Mary ?

And did men speak of Thee as “Jesus the carpenter” ?

And didst Thou fight all the temptations of the flesh and the mind ?

And art Thou ready to succour them that are tempted ?

And may I fly to Thee for help when I am tempted ?

O, the depth of the riches of Thy love to me !

May I and mine through Thy poverty become rich with wealth eternal !

4. You will find many more references in the Injil to the Feast of the Passover, the Jewish feast attended by Christ at twelve years old and many times afterwards. You will like, therefore, to read about the origin of this feast. You will find the story in the Taurat (**Exod. 12**). Better still, you can buy a book (in Arabic) called “The First

Passover" (price 4 Egyptian piastres, from C.M.S. Building, Boulac, Cairo, or from Bookroom, St. George's, Jerusalem), in which, besides the words of the Taurat, are twelve beautiful pictures. And if you want to understand the subject still more fully, you should buy another small Arabic book for 1½ piastres from the same place called "Passover Night," which will add much to your understanding of this history.*

Note on Christ's Endurance of Temptation.

Some of our Muslim brethren have said to us that it was not fitting that Jesus Christ should be tempted as any and every man is tempted; and that it ill became His dignity and high place. From our lessons up to this point you will be able to answer this objection. You have seen that in coming into this world the Christ of God thought not at all of outward dignity, but of expressing fully the love of God even for the lowest. He came to a birth in poor surroundings, a fugitive babyhood, a boyhood in a despised town, a young manhood in the working classes. He chose to be made "in all things like unto His brethren."

But His identification with His brethren would have been far from perfect if He had been immune from the temptations that harass every man born of woman. He chose, then, to be perfect man, sharing all man's temptations. And we read that "He was in all points tempted like as we are."

Temptation is not shame or defilement. Shame and defilement come from *yielding* to temptation. And Jesus never yielded. "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4. 15). Therefore He can help us in our temptations. The Victor knows more of the true extent of the enemy's power than he who has yielded. The Victor has felt *all* the power of the foe ere He overcame him.

* "The First Passover" is also published in French by the Algiers Mission Band, Dar Naama, El Biar, Algiers, and the S.P.C.K., London.

LESSON VII
THE PREACHING OF JOHN

Passage for Study : St. Matt. 3. 1-12.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

Read again the promise of God, made before His birth, as to the work of John the Baptist (Yahyâ b. Zakariya): **Luke 1. 16, 17.** His work was "to turn the hearts" and "to make ready a people."

Today's lesson shows us how this promise was fulfilled eighteen years after that visit of Jesus to the Temple of which we read in the last lesson.

LESSON.

Matt. 3. 1, 2: *John's Message to his Nation.*—*Repent ye.* This was the great cry of John. "Repent, and so be ready for the kingdom that is coming and the Lord of that kingdom." It is important that before you go further in these lessons you should understand the meaning of the word "repentance" as used in the Injil. Often in Arabic lands today it is used very lightly, and how many times does a naughty boy or servant caught in a fault say, "I have repented," meaning "Please don't punish me"; and then repeat the fault the next day!

When the word is used in the Injil its meaning is far different. *It means a change of mind leading to a change of conduct.* When a man repents in this way he is ready to confess his sin, not lightly, but with dreadful shame, because his mind has changed and he now abhors what he once did or thought. He does not think how he can avoid punishment. He hates the sin so that he almost welcomes punishment. His one thought is how he can get rid of the sin and start a new, changed life. The man who is found justifying himself and saying that his own

life and behaviour is good, has gone only a *very* little way in his knowledge of God and of himself.

Verse 3: *John's Description of Himself.*—This great prophet had no task in life but to prepare men for the heavenly kingdom, which Christ was soon to establish in the hearts of men. The preparation of each heart was repentance.

Verse 4: *John's Appearance.*—Like the hermits of the desert.

Verses 5, 6: *John's Work.*—He preached where the desert tracks run down to the fords in the wadi, and there he baptized those who came to repentance. (You see here the reason for his title “the Baptist.”) The meaning of this act was that the men who publicly confessed their faults desired, as they stepped down into the waters of the river, to signify the beginning of a new, clean life. This was John's baptism. There is fuller meaning in the baptism later ordained by Christ Himself.

Verses 7-12: *John and the Sheikhs.*—The Pharisees and the Sadducees were the leaders of the two greatest schools (*madhâhib*) of the law of Moses at that time. We read much of them in the Injil. They comprised the most learned men of the nation and the most exact in carrying out religious rites. Yet see how severe the young prophet John is with these sheikhs (**verse 9**). His severity is explained by what he says about their false belief that because they belonged to the chosen nation and the chosen religion, their position with God was safe. John says their position with God depends not upon their descent nor their *madhab* (school of legal interpretation), nor their *tariqa* (membership in a devotional order), but upon repentance and the fruits meet for repentance.

What are “fruits meet for repentance”? Spend a little time in thinking over this question. Supposing a man had stolen or had borrowed money and not repaid it (which may be a form of stealing), or had lied or quarrelled, or treated a friend ungratefully. What would be the “fruits meet for repentance”?

Verses 11, 12: *John points to the Coming Christ.*—The prophet, so severe with the elders of his nation, is now seen humble and reverent before that great One who is coming.

Later you will learn the meaning of this prophecy of his concerning Christ's work, which has both been fulfilled in the past and is still being fulfilled in our day. These strange words could not have been said of a prophet who was merely one among the sinful sons of men.

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Write in your book and learn by heart the message of John (**Matt. 3. 2, 8**):

“Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance.”

A Prayer.—Search me, O Lord, and know my heart, and show me what in it is sinful. Try me and know my thoughts and show me which of my hopes and desires are selfish and impure. And teach me to repent with a true repentance, and to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance.

When God shows you one act in your past that was sinful, ask Him to forgive you and to help you not to delay in bringing forth the “fruit meet for repentance” concerning that particular act. Your pastor or teacher will help you if you make him your real friend and tell him about it.

LESSON VIII
THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

*Passages for Study : St. Matt. 3. 13-17 ; St. Luke 3. 21-22 ;
St. John 1. 32, 33.*

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

What was Jesus doing while John the Baptist was preaching sternly to the crowds? Read again **Luke 2. 51, 52**, and compare **Mark 6. 2, 3**. Jesus, then, while John was preaching, was living in a humble household in Nazareth and working as a carpenter. As ever in the story, we have need to remember the words of **1 Sam. 16. 7b**.

Now Jesus leaves the silent life of Nazareth.

LESSON.

Matt. 3. 13-15 : “ *Made like unto His brethren.*”—Jesus comes forward like the rest for baptism. He alone has no confession of sin to make as He steps down into the water. But baptism for Him, as for the rest, means the beginning of a new life; for He at last is leaving the life of Nazareth and coming forth openly among men as a Teacher sent from God.

Matt. 3. 16 ; Luke 3. 21, 22 ; John 1. 32, 33 : *The Heavenly Sign Seen.*—What did this coming of the Spirit mean? Was not Jesus “ conceived of the Holy Ghost ”? Did He need any filling with the Holy Spirit?

This coming of the Spirit with a special sign at a special moment does not imply any change in the nature of Jesus, but a change in the nature of His work. The Divine Spirit had rested upon His spotless infancy and boyhood, and upon His holy home life of daily toil. Now He leaves the family life for a public ministry as God’s

Evangelist and Anointed King. His baptism was the sign of a new beginning, and the Father granted the further sign that in the new life He should be filled with the Divine Spirit. As in the life of two lovers there is perpetual love and yet a perpetual rebirth of love with every happening that makes them more and more to one another, so in the life of one filled with the Spirit of God may there be perpetual fulness and yet perpetual fresh comings with the changes of life's demands.

Matt. 3. 16: *The Nature of the Sign.*—But notice now the sign of the Spirit's coming. In our last lesson we read of John telling the people that the Christ who was coming would "baptize them with the Holy Ghost and with fire"—*i.e.*, He would give men the Holy Spirit that they might begin a new way of life (for that is what baptism always stands for), and since their hearts were stained, this giving of the Spirit would be a gift of purifying fire to burn away evil. And so it has always proved. The coming of the Holy Spirit in the life of a sinful man always means a burning away of sin. You shall learn more of this.

But in the case of Jesus, how different! There is no need for purifying fire. When the Spirit comes to God's Anointed King, He comes in form of a dove, a symbol well known to men then and now as the sign of meekness, gentleness, peace. Here we are met once more with the sharp difference between heaven's idea of kingliness and men's. The emperors of the world in those days and often since have had for their sign the eagle or the leopard or the lion.

Matt. 3. 17; Mark 1. 11; Luke 3. 22: *The Heavenly Voice Heard.*—We have seen that the first recorded words of Jesus (**Luke 2. 49**) show Him even in boyhood to have known His heavenly Father. Yet we can reverently believe that the fresh task, and indeed each new entry into the will of God, would bring a deeper knowledge of the depth of that relationship. And since God for our help has used the human words "Father" and "Son"

to describe this mysterious spiritual relationship, we shall not do wrong if we reverently try to see something of the meaning of this moment through a picture of human life.

Picture, then, some father sending out his son to carry through some plan that was the dearest purpose of his heart. What an hour of communion might not those two spend together before the son set out! The son, always obedient and loving, never felt so much a son as in that moment of shared enterprise. The knowledge of their relationship would not be new to either, and yet the father might say to his son in that hour, "Now you are indeed my son, my joy and pride."

These thoughts may help us to some faint and dim conception, such as we can grasp, of what that moment meant when Jesus, praying (Luke 3. 22) in communion with His Father, saw the heavens opened (sign of revelation of the heavenly life and purposes), and the Voice reaffirmed more signally and more personally that great mystery of His Sonship.

Here is part of the fulfilment of the angel's prophecy to Mary which you read in Luke 1. 32. Not from man, but from the heavens this message and this title come. Beware, then, lest earthly, fleshly meanings creep into your thoughts about it, for God is Spirit, and this truth of God is a spiritual truth.

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Write in your book and learn by heart **Heb. 3. 5, 6:**

"And Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant. . . . But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

A prayer to be written in your book and used during the week :

O Holy Spirit of God, who in form like a dove didst light on the Christ at His baptism, make us ready for Thy

coming to our sinful hearts, though that coming be as fire to burn our impurity. Prepare us to receive Thy cleansing fires and Thy life-giving power, that we may be made anew in Thee. Amen.

[*N.B.*—Our Muslim friends sometimes say to us, “The Christian faith announces that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are not three, but one. How do you reconcile this with the baptism story where there was the Voice from heaven, the Dove, and Jesus who was being baptized?”

You will probably reply at once that if the manifestations of the Infinite God to our world of space and time were a millionfold, that would not alter His essential and eternal unity. As for the deeper question of the nature of the Christian belief in the Trinity in Unity, you may read about it either in “God as Triune” (Gairdner), pp. 1-20, English edition by C.L.S.I., Madras, or, more briefly and simply, in “Siratu-'l-Mustaqim,” pp. 66-68, English edition by C.L.S.I., Madras.]

LESSON IX
THE TEMPTATION

Passage for Study : St. Matt. 4. 1-11.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

Matt. 3. 16, 17. It is a common experience of all who have tried to live with God that after some great moment of heavenly communion the enemy of souls makes special assaults upon them. Perhaps they are tired with high spiritual endeavour, and the enemy would use fatigue to make them doubt and fall. You will have this experience yourself as you try to know God. Did it come even to Jesus? Yes, to Him also, for He was "in all points tempted like as we are." How He met this struggle in its fullest force when physical fatigue was at its greatest we shall read today; and how He came through it, as through the other temptations of life, "without sin," you shall see for yourself.

LESSON.

Gen. 3. 1-5 ; Matt. 4. 1-4 : *The Earliest Story of Temptation.*—From the very beginning when he tempted man the Evil One had opened his attack by throwing doubt upon the truth of what God had said, and upon the goodness of God. At the temptation of Jesus (and He is the "second Adam") the Evil One threw doubt upon the truth of that word of God that we read in **Matt. 3. 17**, and also upon God's care. He said, "Prove that you are the Beloved Son by doing an act which would show that you do not trust the Father to provide for you."

Matt. 4. 4 : *The Reply of Jesus.*—The reply of Jesus shows that the Father's word was of more importance to Him than the circumstance of hunger. It was taken from the Taurat, from **Deut. 8. 3.**

It is one of the wonders of this story that, when He was tempted, Jesus always met the temptation by words that rose to His memory from what He had learned from the Book of God. This is one of the reasons why, after each lesson, we ask you to learn by heart a verse which will be part of your mind's store of thoughts from God's book.

Verses 5-7: *The Second Temptation.*—And now it is as if the Evil One says, "Do you, then, so trust in God? Show forth your trust by a great deed of daring. You can thus both prove your faith in God, and also, by the wonder of the deed, you can make all the city of Jerusalem know that you are the Son of God. In other words, use your trust in God to make men glorify you."

Verse 7: *The Reply of Jesus.*—Again from the Book of God (**Deut. 6. 16**). If we trust God we shall call upon His help in our need, knowing that He will not fail us. It is only those who do not really trust God who would ever think of inventing some test to see whether God will help or not. That is called "tempting" or trying God.

Verses 8, 9: *The Third Temptation.*—The Evil One knew that Jesus had come to be the Saviour of mankind, and he showed Him how He could become king of the world by an easy way, without the life of poverty and struggle that he had chosen a life that would lead Him to a death of shame. If Jesus had accepted the proposal He would have been Lord of the world, but subject of Satan. He would then have failed in His work of rescuing men from the power of Satan.

Verses 10, 11: *The Reply of Jesus and the Defeat of the Tempter.*

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **Heb. 2. 18**:

"In that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted."

A prayer to be written in your notebook:

Lord, we beseech Thee, grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil,

and with pure hearts and minds to follow Thee the only God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Use this prayer for all who are God's people, not for yourself alone. Especially use it for any whom you have seen to fall into temptation.)

A MEDITATION.

Quiet your mind before God, and then offer Him your thankful thoughts of the victory of Jesus over all the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil:

From the very first the sons of Adam had failed before the subtle onslaughts of the Evil One. If God had sent avenging angels to drive away the Evil One from the world of men, that would have been no victory for the sons of Adam. They would only be a defeated nation rescued by a stronger power. God willed better things for them, even victory. And He sent to lead them to victory One who was truly man.

O loving wisdom of our God!
 When all was sin and shame,
 A second Adam to the fight
 And to the rescue came.

O wisest love! that flesh and blood,
 Which did in Adam fail,
 Should strive afresh against the foe,
 Should strive and should prevail.

Jesus the Conqueror prevailed against all the temptations of Satan. Be sure that He is "able to succour them that are tempted," and that He is ready as well as able. He will never refuse one of the least of His brother men who truly asks for His help against Satan. What is the temptation of Satan that *you* find hardest to resist? Will you not ask the help of Jesus the Conqueror?

LESSON X

THE CALLING OF THE FIRST DISCIPLES

Passage for Study : St. John 1. 29-51.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

While Jesus was alone in the wilderness, tempted of Satan, John the Baptist was still preaching to the crowds by the water-side. Some of those who heard him felt that they could not leave him, but joined him in his rough life as disciples. Day after day they heard him teach the people of the Greater One who was coming, and whose way he was preparing. Read again **Matt. 3. 11.**

LESSON.

John 1. 29-34 : *How John pointed out the Coming One.*— Jesus returned from the wilderness, and John knew that the Greater One had come; he told his disciples of his knowledge. Look at the two titles by which John called Jesus:

Verse 29 : “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

Verse 34 : “The Son of God.”

You know that John learned this second title not from man but from the revelation of God Himself. Read again **Matt. 3. 17.**

Verse 29 : *Lamb of God.*—The first title is a strange one and of very great importance. You have heard of the feast of Passover kept in Jerusalem by the people of Israel every spring, and we said that at that feast every family sacrificed a lamb, in memory of a night when the sons of the nation were saved from death by the blood of a sacrificed lamb. The inward meaning of this strange title “Lamb of God,” then, denotes *One who saves, but saves by the sacrifice of his life.*

Read again **Matt. 1. 21** and see how this title given by God's prophet John resembles the name given from heaven before Christ was born.

Verses 35-37 : John's work was to point men away from himself to Christ. If his disciples left him to follow Christ, it meant not failure but highest success in his work. This is the principle behind the lives of all who truly preach Christ, now as then.

Note in the following verses the experience of those who came to Jesus.

What the first disciples found in Jesus :

Verses 38, 39 : (1) They found Him ready to be known of them and to welcome them.

Verses 40, 41 : (2) They found the Prophet their nation had been looking for.

Verses 42-47 : (3) They found that when He looked on them He read the individual character of each. He gave to Simon a new name, indicating a new character which he had not yet reached, but which through the power of God he would one day reach.

Verse 48 : (4) They found Him understanding the secrets of their inner life when they thought no one was by.

Verse 49 : So wonderful was this to one of them that he gave to Christ the title that was hidden from most men, the title that John had given (**verse 34**) and the angel had told to His Mother before His Incarnation (**Luke 1. 35**).

Verses 50, 51 : (5) They find Him promising to reveal to them more and more of God. The reference in verse 51 is to a vision of the patriarch Jacob when he saw a ladder set up between heaven and earth, between the life of God and the life of man (**Gen. 28. 12**). Such a ladder had Jesus come to be.

All this they found in Jesus at their first acquaintance. All this anyone may find in Him who will ask for His acquaintance.

[*N.B.*—In verse 51 we find Jesus using for the first time His favourite name for Himself. He was not, as

you know, the son of *a* man, but through His birth from a human maiden He was truly Son of man, Son and representative of humanity. Christ has told us that the disciple when he is perfected will be like the Master. If we did not know that He was really man we might say, "It is no use trying to be like Him." But Jesus kept calling Himself Son of man that we might know that He was truly man in all He did. Even of His miracles He told the disciples that they should also do the like. We believe that the greatest of His miracles, the resurrection from the dead, will take place in us also.]

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **John 1. 29b** :

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

A prayer to be written in your notebook :

O Thou to whom all hearts are opened, cleanse the thoughts of my heart.

O Thou to whom all desires are known, strengthen my desire for the life of God.

O Thou from whom no secrets are hid, make me ready to see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

LESSON XI
THE FIRST MIRACLE

Passage for Study : St. John 2. 1-12.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

Read again **John 1. 43**. Galilee, as we said before, is the northern part of Palestine. From Galilee Jesus' group of first disciples came. It is a country of hills in the midst of which lies Nazareth where Jesus was brought up. Deep among the hills is the cup of the Lake of Tiberias, and round its shores in those days lay a ring of white cities, one of which, called Capernaum, was the home of some of the disciples and the scene of much of the work and teaching of Christ. As this verse indicates, He led His group of first disciples to Galilee, where their homes lay. Our lesson today will follow them to one of the Galilean villages.

LESSON.

John 2. 1-11 : *The Beginning of Jesus' Miracles.*—The first miracle of Jesus Christ was done in the bosom of a family: at a wedding. Thus He sanctified for us *family life and marriage*.

The drinks which were usual at the time, owing to some stupid mistakes in the arrangements, had run short! Far too little had been ordered! The family was going to be put to shame that would be remembered against it for ever.

We know the agonies which such misadventure causes to hosts. Jesus knew also and sympathized. How beautiful that He feels even for such troubles as these—so small to look back upon, so dreadful at the time.

The Mother of Jesus also knew; and perhaps thought

that this was the opportunity for Him to declare Himself Messiah (the name the Jews gave to the expected Christ of God) by a startling sign, or perhaps she just turned to Him from habit as the One on whom she always leaned. The conversation which passed might perhaps thus be paraphrased if its *hints* were made *clear utterances* :

The Mother : "The sharbât have run short. Now help us and show Thy glory."

Christ : "My Mother has no right to interfere in what concerns My work for God in His Kingdom. The hour of My glorification has not yet come. And when it does, its first stage is the Cross."

The Mother : "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it according to Thy will." (*To the servants later*) "If He chances to give you any directions, carry them out without questions, and at once."

She had surrendered. Jesus was now free to fulfil His loving purposes to His friends by relieving this cruel embarrassment; and also to show forth His glory; but only to the little circle of believers, not to the public. He does not want admiring crowds, but faithful surrendered hearts. He turned water into the desired sharbât.

Note 1.—Those who sometimes say that Christ spoke disrespectfully to His Mother, show that they are unfamiliar with the original Greek of this passage. The word "gunai" in the original, translated "woman" in the English, was so respectful an address that it could be used to queens and princesses. "Lady" would perhaps be a better English translation.

Note 2.—The drink was *wine*, called in Luke "the first fruit of the vine." Many in the East here believe that this was simple grape juice syrup, unfermented, or something of the sort. They do not like to think that the Lord Jesus Christ had anything to do with real wine.

But, remember, neither Judaism nor Christianity nor Islam has ever pronounced wine *harâm in itself*—*i.e.*, bad in itself. It is the abuse of it in drunkenness and crime that has led Jews, Christians, Mohammedans, to attack it and other alcoholic drinks, and to preach total abstinence. In the time of Christ the life of individuals and nations was not corrupted by alcohol, and there was no need for any form of *tahrîm* (rendering illegal), but only, as always, for temperance. In the present day it is very different, and many of the best people think there is no cure save an absolute *tahrîm*.

Such action is based on the principles learnt from Christ, and explained fully in **1 Cor. 10. 24, 31-33**. Avoiding that which is an "offence." Alcohol is an "offence" today in the Near East. Followers of Jesus should therefore join in abstaining as part of "the law of love."

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **Rom. 14. 14, 15**.

Some thoughts for meditation on the first miracle of Jesus :

What was this "glory" of Jesus that He manifested forth? Was it sovereignty over the processes of nature? This it was, but equally was it the glory of gracious character that reveals to us His care and sympathy with people who were embarrassed and ashamed.

Then we, if we would follow Him, must learn not to join in the laugh at someone who is embarrassed or ashamed. Jesus hid the cause of embarrassment. And when He had both hidden and removed it and the feast was gay again, He did not say, "I have done this; see how much trouble I have taken on your behalf." To help and to say nothing was part of the glory that Jesus manifested.

Is there in my acquaintance someone shy, stupid, clumsy, careless, embarrassed, at whom it is easy to laugh? Can I help to remove his discomfort, not drawing attention to it, but following the silence of Jesus?

A thanksgiving to be written in your book :

I give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, for Thy great glory. I thank Thee that I may behold this glory in Jesus Christ, the Friend whose presence may make family gatherings glad and holy. Glory be to Thee on high, for Thy goodwill towards men, declared unto us in Christ Jesus, the Son of Man and the Lord of Glory. Amen and Amen.

LESSON XII

THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

Passage for Study : St. John 2. 13-25.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

Read again **Luke 2. 46-49**, and see how Jesus regarded the Temple in Jerusalem. What was His boyish name for it ? We read again today of a visit of Jesus to the Temple at the time of the Passover Feast, and see His boyish love for it grown with His growth and turned into action.

LESSON.

John 2. 13, 14 : *The Action of Authority.*—Jesus found God dishonoured in the very house of God. Men sold animals for sacrifice, or changed money to the special coins used for Temple offering, and in all this they were bargaining, cheating, and scheming for their own gain in a place which should have been a house of prayer.

Verses 15, 16 : Whence comes Jesus' authority against sin ? Its secret is in the words "My Father." He is acting on the commission received (**Matt. 3. 17**). Consider the faith in His heavenly Father manifested by one alone, poor, unconsidered, who can dare in God's name to defy the existing order and anger all the people of authority and wealth (as though a carpenter from a village in Upper Egypt should suddenly issue orders in the Azhar Mosque or the Coptic Patriarchate, or the Haram at Jerusalem !).

"*My Father's House.*"—We find Him again using the name that we noticed as His boyhood's name for the Temple, "My Father's House." Consider with care what is implied in this name. It was not the building, beautiful as it was, that was sacred, but the Holy Presence

in it. Reverence and love to the Heavenly Father make it fitting that the building where we worship shall be worthy and beautiful, and lovelier than our own houses.

But will God, indeed, allow that one building shall be called His house and made beautiful in His honour? No teacher more than Jesus Christ has made it clear that the Heavenly Father is everywhere present and may be called upon everywhere. How can we reconcile such teaching with His phrase "My Father's house"?

The life of your own human spirit may help you to understand something about the presence of the Infinite Spirit of God. When you walk in the streets among many men who do not know you or care whether you live or die, you are present there, it is true. But now, when you enter a room made ready in your honour and filled with friends who know and love you, and are there especially to welcome you, how much more intensely are you present! How fully you live in their love and joy at meeting you, and how you give yourself in love to their welcoming spirits. You were present in the street, but you are present in a fuller, deeper sense among the friends who love you. This little picture of what happens in our own lives may help us to see that while our Heavenly Father is present in love and power throughout His universe, yet His presence will be fuller and richer in a place where His children come to meet Him and offer Him their love and adoration. For this reason it is fitting that we show the greatest reverence in our Churches, as the Presence Chamber of the Heavenly King and the trysting-place between the Heavenly Father and the hearts that love Him.

Mark 11. 17b: *The House of Prayer.*—Now turn to **Mark 11. 17b**, and you will find a second name, taken by Jesus from the Scriptures, and used by Him for the Temple of God. You see that He regards His Heavenly Father's House as a house of prayer for all nations. So the disciples of Christ must widen their hearts and beware of any unreadiness to welcome any son of Adam to their houses of prayer.

John 2: Jesus' Mysterious Reply.—They asked for a sign of His right to do God's will. "Work some wonder," they said, "and then we will acknowledge that you are a prophet to be obeyed." You will read of this request again and again in the life of Jesus. He always refused to work a special wonder to prove His power to His enemies. He always gave them an answer which would set them thinking, and so help them to learn more about Him if they were willing to take the place of learners, but He would not force any man to believe in Him by working marvels. He desires the belief of loving disciples, not of forced slaves.

John 2. 23-25: *Jesus and the Crowds.*

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **Mark 11. 17b**: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations." **John 2. 16b**: "Take these things hence. Make not My Father's house a house of merchandise."

FOR PRAYER (*to be written in the pupil's notebook*):

O God, who hast revealed that Thy house shall be a house of prayer, help me, when I come to Thy house, or to my hour of prayer, to drive out thoughts of money or business or the cares of this world, and to meet Thee in holy quietness.

O God, who hast revealed that Thy house of prayer is for all nations, bless all my fellow-worshippers of every race, and take from all of us unkind, proud, or jealous thoughts of one another.

O God, who hast taught us through Jesus Christ that Thy house of prayer is our Father's house, give to me and to all of us the spirit of a loving family, that we may meet in Thy house as brothers and sisters who care and pray for one another.

O God, when I am tempted to neglect Thy house or to be cold in spirit, give me that zeal for my Father's house which burnt in the spirit of Jesus Christ my Lord.

[On entering a church it is our custom to spend a few moments in silent prayer. The prayers written above may guide you to some thoughts which you can offer to God in those silent moments.]

LESSON XIII

NICODEMUS AND THE NEW BIRTH

Passage for Study : St. John 3. 1-21.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

Return for a few moments to the account of John the Baptist's preaching and read **Matt. 3. 7, 8.** Who were the Pharisees? (See Lesson VII.) John's message to them was very severe, because they thought themselves great in religious position in this world and the next, and did not show the fruits of repentance.

We are to read today how one of the Pharisees came to Jesus. Read again the last verse of our last lesson (**John 2. 25**). When any soul came near Jesus, needing help, He always had ready the very medicine that that soul needed.

LESSON.

John 3. 1, 2 : *The Night Visitor.*—Why did this Pharisee come by night? Probably because he did not wish his fellows to know that he, who was himself a teacher, came as a pupil to One who lived among the poor and simple, and was not known to any of the great families.

Verses 3-10 : *The Message of the New Birth.*—What is the message of Jesus to the man who is learned and a teacher? It is not a message concerning 'ilm or kalâm or sharîa, but life. *Has the man begun to live a new life?*

Verse 5 : *Water.*—That is, the washing away of sins.

The Spirit.—That is, the infusion of the new life of God.

At birth the child passes from a blind life within the womb to a life in a great world where it can learn to see and hear and think. The change of birth from blindness to vision and from confinement to space is used by Jesus

to describe the change that must take place in the soul before a man can see the Kingdom of God or live in it. With what surprise did Nicodemus hear that such a change was necessary for himself, a religious teacher in Israel.

Verses 11-15: *The Spiritual Authority of Jesus.*—We saw in our last lesson how Jesus showed His moral authority in cleansing the Temple. Here He speaks with spiritual authority as one who brings man certain news of the unseen life of God. If the teaching of the new birth was surprising to Nicodemus, still more must he have been startled by the tone of certainty and authority with which this Teacher spoke of the Kingdom of God and the heavenly world. **Verse 13** gives an explanation of the source of His mysterious spiritual authority.

Verses 14, 15: These words point *backward* to a story well known to Nicodemus in the history of his nation, when Beni Israel were dying in the desert of poisonous serpent bites (you will find the story in **Num. 21. 9**), and Moses, by God's command, raised on a pole in their midst a serpent of brass whereon all who looked were healed. These words also point *forward* to the day when Jesus would be raised on a cross for the saving of men.

Verses 16-21: *Love and Judgment.*—**Verse 16** has been called the heart of the Gospel, or the Gospel in miniature.

“God has put into the heart of every one in the world a power of distinguishing good and evil. The more we use this power, in choosing the good and refusing the evil, the more accurately we can make the distinction; just as a little child first distinguishes light from darkness, then by practice distinguishes red and blue and yellow, and then, as he grows older, if he studies as an artist, he can distinguish the most delicate shades of colour. People first accept Christ because they recognize that He is better than others of whom they have heard; and then, by practice in choosing Him and His ways, they come to see more and more of the surpassing beauty of His goodness.”

Every man who reads a fine book or meets a fine character is judged by his response to this experience. He who reads wrong moral sentiment in a book without experiencing revulsion has pronounced himself wrong in sentiment. He who meets a saint without being attracted by the beauty of holiness has pronounced himself deficient spiritually.

How much more, then, those who are face to face with the true Light that is the life of men. We are judged, we pronounce sentence on ourselves by our response to that Light or our shunning of it.

Finish your lesson by reading again the solemn words of **verses 18, 19.**

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **verse 3.**

A prayer to be written in the pupil's notebook :

Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts. And see if there be any love of darkness in me. And let me be forgiven because I have often chosen darkness rather than light. And bring me into the light, even though there my deeds must be reprov'd. And let me be born anew even now and become one of the children of light, that do the truth and see the Kingdom of God.

[*N.B.*—If the words of **verse 16**, “His only begotten Son,” prove a difficulty, as they have done to many, let the pupil consider whether the difficulty does not arise from his importing into them some fleshly idea taken from human generation. When the words “Father” and “Son” are used of a relationship within the eternal life of God, they contain no sense (as in human fatherhood and sonship) of a relationship *in time*, with a birth and a beginning. Rather they are used to describe an eternal relationship within the Divine Unity.

When we say that God is One, Christians attribute to Him the intensest kind of unity. Such unity is not the

unity of a stone which can be shattered without pain to any of its parts. Nor is it the higher unity of a plant in which all the parts, root, stem, etc., co-operate together in life processes and are more necessary to one another, more truly one than the parts of a stone. Above this, again, is the unity of such a creature as a dog or cat in which the diversity of parts is great, and yet such is their unity that you cannot cut away any part without causing pain and weakness to the rest. Higher again is the unity of a man in which body, mind, and spirit are mysteriously one though different, and play upon one another continuously. This triple unity in a man makes what we call "personality." And the man's personality, in which he conceives of himself as "I," separate and apart from the whole universe, is a much more sensitive unity than that of plant or animal, because it is more self-conscious. Thus we see that the higher forms of unity contain within themselves complexity. We are not surprised, therefore, if the Gospel reveals to us that the Divine Unity, which must be of the highest degree, contains within itself complexities and relationships. "God loved the world," this verse says. But His love did not begin with the world. It was an eternal attribute (*sifa*), and His eternal life contained within itself the love (*mahabba*) of a Lover (*muhibb*) and a Beloved (*mahbub*). This relation the Gospel pictures to us under the words "Father" and "Son." It is a unique relationship, and therefore the Sonship is described as "only begotten."]]

LESSON XIV.

JESUS AND THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA

Passage for Study : St. John 4. 3-42.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

Refer once more to **John 2. 25**, and recall how Jesus knew the heart and needs of Simon, of Nathaniel, of Nicodemus. Once again we shall read how Jesus knows how to meet the need of each soul that comes to Him.

Read **John 3. 16**. This verse, "the summary of the Gospel," shows us that there are no exceptions in God's love, and that the promise of life ("eternal" life means a sharing of the life of God) is made without exception to all who fulfil the condition of believing in Christ.

There is a difference which must never be forgotten between believing in a living person and only believing words or teaching.

Our last lesson showed us that Jesus expected self-abandonment and readiness to enter as a little child into the Kingdom, even from those who were leading men and teachers.

Today's lesson shows that in His love, which knew no exceptions, He would take as much pains to help a poor sinful woman into the Kingdom as to help the distinguished visitor Nicodemus.

LESSON.

John 4. 3-5: *The Alien Town and the Alien Woman.*—*Samaria*, the district surrounding the city which we today call Nablous, was inhabited by people with whom the Jews had a great antagonism. They spoke of one another with curses. To the Jews it seemed that the Samaritans were worse than heathen, for many of them were, in their

origin, of the Jewish religion, but had altered its customs and built another temple in their own country instead of coming to the temple at Jerusalem to worship.

Jesus was, as you know, born into the Jewish nation. He now goes into the country of the Samaritans, and we can see from His behaviour there that He will not have anything to do with religious antagonism. It is one of the most saddening sights when those who call themselves by His name, Christians, can yet admit religious bitterness and pride into their hearts. If you would be a real disciple of Christ, you must do away with this bitterness in your life.

Verses 6-19: The sixth hour by Roman time is at noon (verse 6). Noon is a most unusual time for a woman to draw water, and some have thought that this woman came alone at noon to avoid the other women, because, as we shall see later, she was living a life of shame (verse 7).

The answer to the question asked by the woman was that Jesus had a gift for her as for every other human soul (verse 9). His purpose in speaking to her was not to gain the water from the well only, but rather to give her the water of life, the life of God in her soul.

In the following conversation we see Him gradually drawing her mind, which at first can only think of buckets, to seriousness, and we watch her becoming more and more impressed with this stranger who must be a prophet. He speaks to her curiosity and also to her sense of need in verses 13 and 14. In verses 15-18 He speaks direct to her conscience.

Verses 19-26: *Jesus reveals Truths about Worship and about Himself.*—She was a woman, she was a bad woman, she belonged to an enemy nation and religion. But for Jesus she was a soul that needed the life of God. See how in these verses He spreads before her spiritual truth and reveals Himself. This passage gives His attitude to religious quarrels and hostilities and bigotries. It also gives His attitude to the mind and soul of women. In

spite of her despised and impure life, He believes that her mind and soul can respond to high and deep and spiritual calls.

Verses 27-42: *The Hunger of Jesus.*—These verses show the hunger of Jesus to bring the life of God to human souls. And they show how this work, which was to Him meat and drink, knew no barriers of hostility in nation or religion.

Jesus has not changed now. He is still as anxious to bring life to every human soul of every religion.

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **verses 23, 24**, which are of great importance.

A prayer to be written in the pupil's notebook:

Lord, I too am a sinner.

(After these words leave a little space in your notebook, and when you use this prayer, fill up the space by confessing to God the thing you are most ashamed of and can least bear to dwell upon in your deeds or in your mind.)

Help me to know the gift of God and to taste for myself the water of life. In my heart also light the desire for goodness till all uncleanness is burnt away.

(If you have friends for whom you desire the same experiences of the spirit, pray this prayer also for them, mentioning their names before God.)

A MEDITATION.

Go into a quiet room or a quiet spot out of doors, or into the quiet of a church when no service is taking place (if you live in a town where a church is found open to welcome you). There read again the story of Jesus and this woman and then ponder these thoughts:

This great revelation of God was made to a sinful woman who had lost the respect of her neighbours. Jesus

Christ still thought her soul worth care and loving pains.

In our street (or village) there are some who have lost the respect of others. There is much wrong going on. If Jesus Christ came here He would find a very great deal to trouble and wound Him. There are few whose life is quite clean and pure.

Yet even to us Jesus Christ is willing to give living water. Into the heart of the woman by the well He poured living water that would cleanse her life. She would never forget Jesus Christ. She brought others to Him. And when she brought them she brought food for His hunger! His hunger is to help and save men. Could I help to satisfy His hunger?

LESSON XV

THE FIRST REJECTION AND FIRST ACCEPTANCE IN GALILEE

Passages for Study : St. Luke 4. 16-31; 5. 1-11.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

Read again **Luke 2. 51** and **John 1. 45, 46**. You will remember that Jesus was brought up as though He were the son of Joseph the Carpenter, in the despised town of Nazareth in Galilee. After thirty years He came forth from Nazareth and was baptized of John to mark the beginning of His new way of life as the teacher of men; but the people of Nazareth only knew Him as a Carpenter, and He had not yet returned to their town to announce His new way of life as the Prophet and Teacher of His people.

Today we read how He returned to Nazareth and announced His Divine Mission.

LESSON.

Luke 4. 16-19: *Jesus Announces His Mission.*—He chose words written of Him many hundred years before by one of the Prophets of God. The people of Nazareth had heard the words many times before, but had not guessed that they were to be fulfilled in One who was leading a sinless life among them in their own town.

Verse 20: The preacher in the Jewish ritual sat down to expound the passage which he had stood to read.

Verses 21-31: *Jesus Rejected in Nazareth.*—The effect of the announcement: first, wonder at His graciousness; then, wrath at His claim to be more than they had thought Him.

The people of Nazareth thought they had condemned

Jesus. Really they had condemned themselves. Great was their opportunity in that Jesus had grown up amongst them, and later generations are filled with amazement and sorrow that those to whom such an opportunity was offered should have been so blind as to reject the Gracious One.

Luke 5. 1-3: *Jesus Accepted by the Crowds in Galilee.*— In another part of Galilee, beside the lake, the people, instead of thrusting Him out, were hanging upon His words. Jesus was always ready to teach the crowds, but He cared more for the faith and surrender of even a very few hearts which entered the Kingdom of God than for the idle listening of great multitudes.

The True Acceptance of the Individual Heart.

Verses 4-7: Jesus tried the faith and obedience of Simon Peter (of whom we have already read in **John 1. 40-52**).

Verses 8, 9: Simon Peter, by the presence and power of Jesus, is brought to the point of realizing his sinfulness. He now knows what Nicodemus had to learn, that a man is not fit in himself to enter the Kingdom of God. His nature must be born again.

Verses 10, 11: Jesus can accept as His disciple the man who knows his own sinfulness. He speaks encouraging words. It is to be noticed that a man does not become a disciple of Jesus for his own comfort merely. From the beginning Jesus holds out before His disciples that they are to help Him bring other souls to the Kingdom of God, "to catch men."

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart the words which Jesus chose to describe His mission on earth (**Luke 4. 18, 19**).

A prayer to be copied into the pupil's notebook :

O Lord, I am a sinful man. Yet depart not from me, but let me hear Thy Voice bidding me fear not and calling me to catch men for Thy Kingdom. Though I have still

much fear, I believe that Thou canst make me a man of courage. Though I have many bad habits and have often told lies, I believe that Thou hast called me to become like Thee. Though I am weak in goodness, Thou canst make me strong. This day and every day help me to follow Thee.

(Perhaps you would like to tell your teacher what you most fear, and what sin is hardest to conquer, so that he may join his prayers and faith with yours. Perhaps you will ask him to tell you of any weakness he sees in you that Jesus may make strong.)

LESSON, XVI

FIRST MIRACLES OF MERCY IN GALILEE

Passage for Study : St. Luke 5. 12-26.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

Recall again the verses you learnt by heart, which Jesus chose to describe His work on earth: **Luke 4. 18, 19.** Then read again **Luke 5. 1-3.** Here we have already seen Him "preaching good tidings."

Today we shall go on to see Him fulfil another part of the prophecy and "heal the broken-hearted."

LESSON.

Luke 5. 12-15 : *The Leper.*—This disease was the despair of doctors and the world. The leper was driven out as one dead, and must not come near enough to touch any human being or enter any village or city. Nothing, then, could so demonstrate to the leper the fearless love of Jesus as His touch on the defiled body. "According to the law of the Jews, one who touched a leper became unclean. But when Jesus touched the leper, Jesus did not become unclean, for the leprosy was cleansed. This teaches us that the contagious power of love and goodness is greater than the power of sin. 'For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world' (1 John 5. 4)."

Verse 16 : In this verse we find one of the secrets of the life of Jesus spent so much among crowds.

If it was necessary for Him often to leave the talk of men and to be alone with God, how much more is it necessary for us !

(Teacher and pupil may discuss together what opportunities they can make for this—whether out of doors or in some quiet corner of a building. This side of life, so neglected in many cities of today, must be cultivated from

the very beginning. The "meditations" after some of our lessons are to help men to learn to ponder and wonder and spread out their soul's life before God, not only to speak to Him in prayer.)

Verses 17-19: *The Paralytic.*—In healing leprosy Jesus showed His power over the disease which was the despair of physicians. We now read of a case in which He dealt with despair of *soul*, and with disease that was probably the result of sins of the body.

Verse 20: This verse is encouragement to those who exercise faith on behalf of others who have not yet come to have faith in Christ. Seeing the faith of the four friends, Jesus gave His message of good cheer to the sick man. He who knew what was in man saw that the trouble of that sick one was not only bodily. His trouble lay in unforgiven sin. He was tied and bound by the chain of his sins. If his spirit were given new life and freedom, new life and freedom for his body would follow. So the healing of the body was in this case a witness to the reality of the previous healing of the soul.

Verse 21: Return again to **Matt. 3. 7-12**, and the note upon it in Lesson VII., to remind yourself who were the Pharisees, rebuked by John the forerunner, and now showing themselves hostile to Jesus. This hostility continued throughout His earthly life with more and more cruel intensity.

The disciple of a Master who was so hated cannot expect that he will escape the treatment given to his Lord. You and I may be hated if we follow Him.

Verses 22-26: The crowds are afraid, astonished, and sure that God is at work. The enemy is silenced for a while. The sick man and his four friends know for ever and ever that the saving power of God is in Jesus.

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart these words about Jesus the Mighty to save, now as then:

He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come

unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them (Heb. 7. 25).

Some thoughts to be turned into prayer in your own words, or in the silent wordless cry of the heart :

(1) Some whom you know are like this leper and this paralytic in needing the strong help of One who came to heal the broken-hearted. They are ill in body or tied and bound with the chain of their sins. Can you find some other who believes in Jesus (or several others) to help you to bring these weak ones to the living power of Christ ? You will be like the four who carried the paralytic to Jesus. You will lay your friend's weakness, need, and sin before the living, powerful One, and ask for His help. Perhaps your teacher can tell you of a group that you may join where this is done regularly. In church, too, we bring our friends in this way to the power and love of God when we pray for them by name.

(2) Are you yourself, like the paralytic, tied and bound with the results of old sins that weaken you when you try to do good or to pray for others ? Then ask Him who came "to preach deliverance to the captives" to set you free from your fetters.

A prayer to copy in your notebook :

O Lord, we beseech Thee, absolve Thy people from their offences; that through Thy bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the bands of those sins which by our frailty we have committed: Grant this, O heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our blessed Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

LESSON XVII

THE CALLING OF THE NEW PATRIARCHS AND THE GIVING OF THE NEW LAW

Passage for Study : St. Luke 66. 12-49.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

What we have Learnt about Jesus' Nation.—When a woman of another race spoke to Jesus about His nationality, what did she call Him (**John 4. 9**) ? But we have read some other names which the Jews liked to use for their own people, and which reminded them of their fathers of old. See again **Luke 3. 8** (“Children of Abraham”), **John 1. 47** (“Israelites”).

An *Israelite* means one descended from Jaqûb b. Ishâq b. Ibrahîm, for God gave to Jaqûb the name of Israel, and we call his children Beni Israel, or Israelites. This Israel had twelve sons and their twelve families made up the nation of Beni Israel. You can find all this set out very clearly in one verse if you look at **Acts 7. 8**, where Jacob's twelve sons are called “the patriarchs.” Among their twelve families or tribes of descendants the land of Israel was divided.

When Jesus came to call men into a spiritual kingdom He also appointed twelve patriarchs; not that the land might be divided between them (for His kingdom was a spiritual one in the hearts of men), but that they might share His work and suffering and love; and their spiritual children after them were to be like this—sharers of the work and suffering and love of Jesus.

LESSON.

Luke 6. 12-16 : *The Calling of the New Patriarchs.*—See how great a step this is in the life of Jesus. He spends the whole night in prayer before choosing these men from

among all His disciples, to be the closest to Him in His work, in His sufferings, and in His joys. The new name which He gives them shows that in His Kingdom to be great is not to be comfortable, but to serve. He calls them His sent-ones, His missionaries, His apostles.

You have read how the first two of these came to be disciples of Jesus (**John 1. 40-42**). The others were none of them great in the eyes of the world. James and John were fishermen, Matthew was a customs official (*sarráf*), the second Simon (the Zealot) was a strong nationalist belonging to a group in disgrace with the government. If these twelve passed along the street no one would turn to stare. You have to return again to the principle you learnt in **1 Sam. 16. 7b**. It runs through the whole story. You have to notice again, as you noticed in our first lessons, God's silent way of working.

Jesus was founding the greatest kingdom of human history. For His kingdom millions have spent their lives or proudly laid them down. No king or government in the world has so many loyal subjects as today would lay down their lives for Jesus Christ. And one morning on a mountain side, after a night of prayer, Jesus Christ began to build this mighty kingdom on the foundation of twelve simple men chosen to share His life and learn His work. And no one in any of the government offices of the world had an idea that the greatest of kingdoms was being built that morning.

Verses 17-19: It is not the first time that these twelve have been with Him while He heals and teaches, but today is a great day for Him and for them, and in His teaching He will lay down the principles of His new kingdom. There are two points which you must grasp before you go any further in your lessons:

(1) Jesus provides for His kingdom *principles, not rules*.

A *principle* is a general law, the *spirit* of which is to be applied in different ways to suit particular cases.

A *rule* is a direction for particular action in a particular case.

EXAMPLES.

A principle : God's house is a house of prayer.

A rule based on this principle : Do not chat with your friends in church.

A principle : Keep under your body and discipline it.

A rule based on this principle : Fast on Fridays.

Rules are sometimes very useful, but they are always for particular cases. Principles are universal. The sacred law (*shari'a*) of Jesus' new kingdom is a *series of principles*, often thrown by Him into picture form.

(2) It may seem to you that you understand these principles at once, but in reality you will find them so deep that it will take all your life to penetrate to the heart of them.

Verses 20-26 : *The Character of the Citizens of the New Kingdom*.—Exactly the opposite of any character that the world envies.

Verses 27-38 : *The Behaviour of the Citizens of the New Kingdom*.—Exactly the opposite of any behaviour that the world calls sensible.

Verses 39-49 : *Heart-Reality is what matters*.

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **Matt. 5. 3, 4**. (The character that Jesus came to make in us.)

FOR PRAYER AND MEDITATION.

Every day until your next lesson write into your notebook *one* of the principles laid down by Jesus (from this sixth chapter of Luke).

Then ask that you may not be one of those who are hearers only, but may learn to *do* the things which He says.

Ask Him to show you how to carry out this principle in *your own life*. (Be careful not to judge the lives of

others.) And write in your notebook what you think is the result—what you must do next in order to follow out this principle of Jesus. If you have difficulties about this, your teacher or your pastor will help you. It is a wise plan to tell your difficulties to those who care to help you.

LESSON XVIII

MORE ABOUT THE NEW RIGHTEOUSNESS

Passage for Study : St. Matt. 5. 17-32.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

What do you mean by saying that Jesus Christ laid down principles, not rules? Give some examples to show the difference between them. Up till now God had given many rules to Beni Israel (look again at **Luke 1. 6**); but all of God's rules were in accord with some great principle which He wanted His people to learn.

Little children have to be taught good behaviour by rules and orders. Afterwards they come to understand and share the principles which caused their parents to make those rules. Then there is no further need for the rules. You cannot say to a baby of two, "My son, I want you to share my principle of thankfulness and gratitude." But you can teach him not to eat till he has put his little hands together and said, "Thank God." And you can teach him to thank his mother or his friends for everything they put into his hands. When he is older you will no longer need to make such a rule, but you hope he will share your principle of gratitude and thanksgiving, and of his own free will, will show more thankfulness, not less, than when he lived by your rules.

When Beni Israel were children in spiritual things God guided them by rules. Then came Jesus and said, "Every one of these rules that came from God is part of a deep principle. The rule was given so that you might learn the principle. Your fathers thought they were perfect when they had kept the rules. But I say unto you that you are not perfect till you have lived according to the principle behind the rules."

LESSON.

Matt. 5. 17-20 : *The New Righteousness Fulfils the Old.*—
“ I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”

When your son has learnt the principle of thankfulness, all the little rules that you made for him about saying “ Thank you ” are unnecessary. They are not destroyed, they are fulfilled; for now of his own free will his grateful spirit will make him do these and *many more* spontaneous acts of gratitude.

So Jesus came to *fulfil* the laws under which Beni Israel had lived by teaching a righteousness which “ exceeded ” the righteousness of the best keepers of rules.

Verses 21-26 : *The Old and New Law of Murder.*—The old law, “ Do not kill,” turned into the principle of perfect peace with your brother man. The negative is turned into positive.

Verses 27-32 : *The Old and New Law of Adultery.*—The old law, “ Do not commit adultery,” turned into the principle of perfect purity of eye and heart. Negative again turned into positive.

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **Matt. 5. 5, 6.** (The character that Jesus came to make in us.)

FOR PRAYER AND MEDITATION.

Read through the principles of Jesus that you have now learned, whether in **Luke 6** or **Matt. 5**, very slowly, and after each one say, “ Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.”

- (i.) You see that this prayer means much more than “ Help me to do the acts enjoined.” It means “ Give me a heart that shares Thy principles and therefore *wants* to act so.”

- (ii.) You may think of someone you love, and pray the prayer for yourself and for him or her *together*. But if your conscience pricks you and tells you of much failure in keeping one of these laws, change the prayer and say, "Lord, have mercy upon *me*, a sinner, and incline *my* heart to keep this law."

LESSON XIX
THE NEW LAW OF ALMS, PRAYER, AND
FASTING

Passage for Study : St. Matt. 6. 1-18.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

Recall again **1 Sam. 16. 7**. See how this principle governed the teaching of Jesus. In His teaching on the law of murder, the man who comes up with a gift to the altar looks outwardly a good and pious man, but Jesus says that his inward state, his unseen feelings in regard to his brother, can make his outward piety valueless (**Matt. 5. 23, 24**). In the same way no human eye can tell that a man "has committed adultery *in his heart*." But Jesus says this inward reality is so important as to justify a man in taking desperate steps like putting out an eye.

Today we are to see how Jesus in His new law (*Shari'a*) deals with almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. If you are to be His follower, you will need to know His law upon these matters. The same principle is found in His teaching upon all of them—the outward appearance is nothing: it is the inward reality that counts. And what is that inward reality? It is the relation of the man with his God. Does each act of almsgiving, prayer, fasting, bring a man closer to God? Then it is of value. Does it only make him look better before men? Then it is quite valueless.

LESSON.

Matt. 6. 1: *The All-Important Preface*.—This is a key-verse to all the teaching that follows, and to Jesus' whole teaching about righteousness.

What is to be the Reward for Doing Right ?

Not what men think of us. Sometimes they will hate and persecute us for doing right. Even if good men love and praise us, *that* is not to be the reward we seek.

The reward is with God.

But with what sort of God ? With *our Father which is in heaven*. A good father's reward to his boy for doing right, for beginning to understand and follow his father's right principles, is not like that of a Sultan who orders bags of gold, or makes a man a Pasha, or gives him a grant of lands. The father's reward is his dear love and understanding friendship and the sharing of more and more of his life with his boy. It is this relationship with a heavenly Father that Jesus wants to give men, and that He considers the heart and essence of righteousness.

Verses 2-4: *The New Law of Almsgiving.*—It is to be a secret with the Heavenly Father.

Verses 5-15: *The New Law of Prayer.*—Another secret with the Heavenly Father.

What was the reward that the people received who prayed that they might be seen of men ? Men's good opinion.

But even if you have given up trying to get men's good opinion, if you have made your prayers secret, the Heavenly Father looks into deeper secrecy still, into the unseen depths of your heart to know if there is reality there. Jesus says prayer is a matter of intention (*nityya*) rather than words. The Heavenly Father will not accept a child of His who comes saying "Thy will be done," and cherishes in his heart thoughts of anger and revenge which are *not* the Father's will.

[*N.B.*—This teaching about the secretness of prayer was a warning against acting for show. It was not a warning against coming together for prayer. Jesus all His life long continued to join His fellow-men when they met for prayer, while He also had a life of secret prayer alone on some mountain side.]

Verses 16-18: *The New Law of Fasting.*—Again, what matters is not what men see, but what the Heavenly Father sees. If He sees us fasting that men may think well of us, we receive our reward in men's opinion, but we are no closer to our Heavenly Father. There are many ways of fasting besides going completely without food, that we may practise as a secret between our Heavenly Father and ourselves—such as giving up tobacco or coffee or some one kind of food that we like, or doing some task that we think shameful, or walking when we might take a tram or omnibus, giving the money secretly to our Heavenly Father. Most strong servants of Christ have found it a help to go without food sometimes for the mastery of the body.

[*N.B.*—When Jesus teaches the secretness of fasting He does not mean that we should give up sharing in any joint fasts which His family, the Church, may decide on, any more than He means us to give up a share in any joint almsgiving or any public services of prayer. What He warns us against is doing any of these things for show. The majority of Christians throughout the world like to make some sort of fast on Friday, the day when Jesus Christ suffered for them. But if this is done for show instead of for love to Him it is worthless. Other days of fasting have been settled on by the Church, and of these you will hear later.]

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **Matt. 5. 7, 8.** The character which Jesus came to make in us.

FOR PRAYER.

(1) Think very carefully over your money. Your Heavenly Father, your Father which seeth in secret, knows all your difficulties, and He will be glad to have His child seek His guidance. Tell Him all that is in your heart about your money matters.

If you are in debt, ask His help in paying back what you owe.

If you have money to spend on clothes, food, rent, travel, ask His guidance that it may be spent according to His fatherly will.

Tell Him, as a secret between Him and you, what you hope to be able to give in alms.

If you are able, say this prayer :

Here I offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, myself and my money, to be controlled by Thee and spent according to Thy fatherly will.

(2) Think very carefully over your fasting. Have you a secret fast known of none but your Heavenly Father and yourself ? Can you say to Him :

Here I offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, myself, my soul and body, and this secret fast which I shall try to make in order to keep under my body, that I may be more strong and ready to serve Thee.

LESSON XX

MORE ABOUT THE NEW WAY OF PRAYER

Passages for Study : St. Luke 11. 1-4, 11-13; St. Matt. 6. 5-15.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

We read one of today's passages (Matt. 6. 5-15) at our last lesson, and we learnt from it that the important part of prayer was the part that men could neither see nor hear: not the bodily position nor the words said, but the hidden transaction in the heart between the soul and its Heavenly Father. Jesus gave a pattern of the sort of prayers that His people might pray, and this we must study most carefully today.

LESSON.

Luke 11. 1 : (1) *The Request for a Way of Prayer.*—Here we see how the pattern came to be given. Jesus' disciples often saw Him withdraw from the multitude to pray. They believed that He had a secret of prayer to impart to them. In that day, as in this, different sheikhs would teach different systems of spiritual discipline (*turuq*) in prayer. Jesus' disciples probably thought that He would pass on to them some forms of words, His set prayers (*namaz*), with the times at which they should be said.

(2) *The Spiritual Pattern of all Christian Prayer.*—Jesus responded by giving very, very few words. His pattern of prayer is so short that no one could think those words were all that a man would say to his God. They are a perfect pattern, not for all the words we are to say, but for the spirit in which we are to pray.

Begin by reading them through in their entirety.

Luke 11. 2-4 ; Matt. 6. 9-13 : We are given the prayer twice in the New Testament, and God has allowed it to be passed on to us in His book with slight verbal differences (as our Lord Jesus may have said it with slight differences on various occasions), so that we may never be the slave of the form of words, but may enter deeply into the life-giving spirit of the prayer.

Notice the pronouns in the prayer. It begins with three petitions about the things of God :

Thy name.
Thy kingdom.
Thy will.

The things of God come before our personal affairs. There is an ancient saying, "Ask for heavenly things, and the earthly things will be given you."

The prayer goes on to four petitions about the things of men :

Give *us*.
 Forgive *us*.
 Lead *us* not into temptation.
 Deliver *us*.

This prayer was meant to be used not only by Christ's disciples when they meet together in the house of God, but also by those who go apart alone with their Father who sees in secret. (See **Matt. 6. 6.**) Yet the petitions are none of them in the singular, for every disciple of Christ is a member of a family and fellowship, and even in his secret closet, or even in a solitary hiding-place from persecution, he will not pray for himself alone, but for the whole fellowship and family of believers.

Matt. 6. 9, 10 ; Luke 11. 2 : (3) *The Prayer of Surrender (Taslim)*.—At the beginning of the prayer the soul makes her complete surrender to God's holiness, God's will, God's rule.

Our Father. The surrender which Jesus taught is that of loving children to the most loving and wise of Fathers.

Which art in heaven. This we say not because He is far off, but because He is raised above our sin and wilfulness and ignorance, "as the heaven is higher than the earth." These words place us in a reverent way at His feet.

Hallowed be Thy name. His name is that by which we know Him, His revelation of Himself. It is in itself holy, whether we say so or not. But in the hearts, thoughts, words, and ways of men it is often profaned and treated as not holy. A man may even be heard swearing untruths by the holy name. To pray that His name may be hallowed is to pray that His revelation of Himself may be accepted reverently by men, and His religion professed openly and secretly.

Jesus put this prayer in a position of more importance than prayers for our own needs. And He gave it the first place in His own life; for when He knew that His Cross and Passion were before Him, He said that instead of praying, "Father, save Me from this hour," His prayer should be, "Father, glorify Thy name." (See **John 12. 27, 28.**)

Thy kingdom come. God is the eternal King, but not all men are willingly obeying Him. It was to call men as willing subjects of the kingdom that Jesus gave His life. When we pray for His kingdom to come in men's hearts, we pray for the spread of all love, truth, humility, righteousness, beauty, and all that can find its place in the city of God.

Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. This is a prayer of *taslīm*. "Thy will, not mine, be done," as Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane when He surrendered Himself to die for us. But it is also a prayer against idleness, a prayer that we all may actively carry out God's will, as those blessed angels and spirits in heaven rejoice to do His will, mighty in strength, fulfilling His word. Christians are to be people who live to do God's will with the same happy activity.

Matt. 6. 11-13; Luke 11. 3, 4: (4) *The Children's Requests.*—We now pass to the second part of the prayer

when we begin to ask our Heavenly Father for our own needs. And we do this in the same spirit of surrender.

Give us this day our daily bread (or our loaf). We ask not for luxuries or wealth, but for enough to enable us to do the work of God. And we do not ask for any more for ourselves than for His other children.

Matt. 6. 14, 15: *And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.* The spirit of *taslim* is here also. We are not dictating to God, but say to Him that we accept His conditions. In a later lesson you will study a story which Jesus told to explain these conditions which the Heavenly Father lays down for all who want His forgiveness.

And bring us not into temptation. How shall we understand this prayer when we know that only through trial can a man become strong in character? A saint who was Bishop in Jerusalem, 1600 years ago, thus explained it to his people. He said, "The entering into temptation means being overwhelmed by it." We must experience temptation, as a traveller must cross over rivers. But we hope to be as men who wade through currents not too strong for them, rather than as men overwhelmed and rolled about in the waters.

But deliver us from evil (and this word means from the Evil One, Satan). This last petition remembers our weakness and frailty, and need of the protecting Spirit of God to strengthen us against the Evil One. And if you read **Luke 11. 11-13** you will find that Jesus gives us a beautiful reminder that we are coming to a Father who will never refuse us this good gift.

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **Matt. 6. 6 ; Luke 11. 13.**

FOR THOUGHT.—Take a piece of paper and write down the things for which you most want to pray. See how many of them belong to the first section of the Lord's Prayer (prayers about God's glory) and how many to the

second (prayers about our own needs). Think whether you are making these requests in the spirit of surrender that Jesus taught us in this prayer.

FOR PRAYER.—This great pattern of prayer is called, as you know, the Lord's Prayer. It is also sometimes called "the Family Prayer," because it is the prayer of every Christian soul. When you come to church you will rejoice to say it with your brothers and sisters, and to note at what great moments it is used. All your life you will be learning to pray after this pattern. Here is an example to show you one way in which this pattern of prayer may be used. You will use it continually in fresh ways.

EXAMPLE.

A father prays after this pattern for his little son:

Our Father which art in heaven—my Father and the Father of my little son.

Hallowed be Thy name—in the life and thought of my child. May he reverence Thee, keep Thy name holy, and learn to worship Thee with awe and love.

Thy kingdom come—through the life of my little son may men learn to make Thee King.

Thy will be done, as in heaven so on earth—by my little son in all his thoughts and words, his play and his work, may Thy will be done as gladly and perfectly as by Thy holy angels.

Give us this day our daily bread—grant to my little son bread for body, mind, and spirit, suitable for his age and strength and growth. (Here pray for his teachers who supply bread for his mind.)

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors—forgive us for any mistakes we have made in training our little son for Thee. Help his mother and me to forgive any who have done our family wrong, and to teach our little son to forgive

those who wrong him in play or work, and not to wear an injured face, but to forgive gladly and generously. Help us to teach him to come to Thee for forgiveness.

And bring us (our whole family and especially my little son) not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.

LESSON XXI

SIGNS OF HIS POWER AND HIS MERCY

*Passages for Study: St. Luke 7. 1-10, 11-17; 8. 22-25;
7. 36-50.*

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

You remember (Lesson XVII.) about the twelve whom Jesus chose to be His Apostles? For what reason do you think He chose them? It is briefly stated in **Mark 3. 14, 15.**

(a) to be with Him (for training);

(b) that He might send them forth (hence their name—apostles [*rusul*])—

to preach,

to have authority to cast out devils (to make war on evil in body and soul).

Their training was “to be with Him.” Sometimes, when He taught the crowds, they sat among the multitudes and were just a few amongst the many members of His great class. Sometimes, at night or in a lonely valley away from crowds, they had Him all to themselves, and were the only members of the class. Your last three lessons have given you part of the teaching that they had from His lips.

But another part of their training was to watch Him meeting the need of different persons in body, mind, or soul, and so to learn that they might trust in Him to meet every need of man. Today we shall look at some of the things He allowed them to see Him do.

LESSON.

Luke 7. 1-10: *Jesus, the Conqueror of Distance and of Disease.*—The centurion was a foreigner, a Roman soldier, and the Jews came, as it were, apologizing for asking help for a foreigner, and pointing out how worthy and good the man was. As you saw in your lesson about the woman of Samaria, Jesus showed that difference of nation was nothing to His love. What He cared about was the inward spiritual relationship, and in this respect the foreigner was greater and more worthy than the men who came to intercede for him: "I have not found so great faith, *no, not in Israel.*" The man's faith linked with Jesus' power conquered distance so that the cure could be wrought without Jesus entering the house.

Luke 7. 11-17: *Jesus, the Conqueror of Death.*

Luke 8. 22-25: *Jesus, the Conqueror of Winds and Water.*
—Verse 25 shows how He was watching His twelve friends to see whether their confidence in Him was growing strong as that of the centurion.

Luke 7. 36-50: *Jesus, the Conqueror of Human Sin.*—At a feast in a rich man's house in those days the guests reclined on couches round the table, leaning on one elbow. It was thus possible to come behind the couch to reach the feet of Jesus. It was part of the host's duty, with his kiss of greeting, to provide for the washing of his guests' feet, and to pour perfumed oil upon their heads. It seems that the Pharisee had regarded Jesus as a poor and humble guest who was honoured by an invitation, and had not thought it necessary to treat Him with the courtesy of a host.

The Pharisee was in his own eyes and in the eyes of the world a religious man and keeper of the law. On this occasion he showed discourtesy to a guest, scorn to the woman, criticism of Jesus, and lack of discernment of His spiritual power.

The woman was in her own eyes and in the eyes of the world grossly sinful. On this occasion she showed

grief for sin and belief that Jesus could and would cleanse it, and humble, reverent love for her Saviour.

Jesus pierced through to the reality—underneath appearances. The host was left, no doubt, offended and cross. The woman went away “in peace.”

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **Matt. 5. 9, 10.** The character that Jesus came to make in us.

FOR PRAYER.

Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.

Lord, let me not be high-minded like the Pharisee.

Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin, for I acknowledge my transgressions (*here confess to God any sins that come to your memory*), and my sin is ever before me.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me;

And make me, like the woman in the Gospel, one who loves Thee much because Thou hast forgiven me much.

LESSON XXII
PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

Passage for Study : St. Matt. 13. 1-52.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

Read again Luke 4. 17-19—the words which Jesus chose to describe His work. When He chose twelve Apostles to be with Him and learn His way of life and work, these were the things that they would learn of Him. The first mentioned is to “preach good tidings to the poor.” Daily the twelve would hear Him preach good tidings. Today we are to study a chapter filled with their memories of His preaching.

Jesus always threw His teaching into the form of word-pictures or stories. The chapter we are to study today gives seven of His story-pictures with explanations of three of them. You cannot hope in this one lesson to know these seven parables well, with their meaning. You should get and read at home (Arabic) “Parables of the True Story-Teller” (S.P.C.K., Cairo and Jerusalem, price 4 piastres). But to help you to get a first general idea of this chapter, take your Bible and fill in beside the list given below the verses in which the different parables occur, and the verses in which the explanation of each is given.

	Found in Verses	Found in Verses
The Parable of the Sower		Explanation
The Parable of the Enemy who sowed Tares ..		”
The Parable of the Grain of Mustard Seed ..		”
The Parable of the Leaven		”

	Found in Verses	Explanation	Found in Verses
5. The Parable of the Treasure hid in the Field			
6. The Parable of the Merchant seeking Pearls		„	
7. The Parable of the Net . .		„	

LESSON.

Matt. 13. 34-36: *The Nature of Jesus' Stories.*

(a) *Their outward and inward meaning*: It is clear that the great multitude heard and enjoyed the teaching that was all made of word-pictures, but only those who cared to think or to ask found out an inward meaning to every picture.

(b) *“Parables of the Kingdom”*: Look at the first words of the parables in this chapter (read verses 18, 19). Six different word-pictures begin with the same phrase because they are built up round one general subject. The first story does not begin in this way, but when He is explaining it Jesus says that it is about “the word of the Kingdom,” so it, too, is connected with the same great subject of Jesus' teaching, “the Kingdom of Heaven.” (Sometimes He calls it the Kingdom of God.)

This was not only the subject of His teaching. He said it was also to be the subject of prayer:

Thy kingdom come	}	as in heaven, so on earth.
Thy will be done		

In heaven God reigns, and His will is carried out with perfect love and joy. On earth men had failed to live according to His will. Jesus came that men might learn to live, even here on earth, as a part of the Kingdom of Heaven. Later you must study very closely all that he has to tell about it.

Why did Jesus choose the Method of the Parable?

Why did He not sit like the rabbis of the Jews or the sheikhs of the Azhar expounding some word or sentence in the law?

(a) *Truth best remembered in story form* : If you go to a village and preach a sermon about God, the people may say it is very fine, and then perhaps a week or so later they will not be able to repeat your sermon without many a muddle and much forgetfulness. If you go to a village and tell a story that holds the people's interest, next week several of them will be able to tell the whole story. Jesus was going to entrust His teaching to His disciples to remember and pass on. He knew they would remember it better in story and word-picture.

(b) *The parable calls for the activity of the hearer's mind* (verses 2, 3, 9, 10-13): Jesus knew that many of the crowds, then as today, would listen to His teaching and be too lazy to think about it. Now your body is not fed by swallowing lumps of food, but by biting your food and swallowing it well bitten. The food you bite well feeds you well. So with your mind and soul. They are not fed by lumps of teaching swallowed whole, but by teaching that you have "bitten" and worked at and made your very own. So Jesus told stories that everyone could remember, and yet they were stories that called for work and thought, and that fed the soul more and more as the mind worked at them and the spirit pondered them more and more deeply.

Verses 16, 17: He gave His stories to all, even to the people who "seeing, see not, and hearing, hear not." Perhaps some day their eyes would open to the inner truth. But these verses show that Jesus gave His special blessing and joy to those who tried to understand and see.

Verses 51, 52: Those friends of His who tried to understand, He said, would have hearts and minds stored with old and new treasures; old laws, old stories, old pictures would for them glow with new meanings. Jesus is the best of teachers who says to His pupils, "Behold, I make all things new."

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Revise **Matt. 5. 3-10.** The picture of the character that Jesus came to make in us. And after *each verse* say this little prayer:

“ Let this mind be in us that was also in Christ Jesus.”

A prayer that we may learn to understand the stories and teaching of Jesus, to be written in the notebook :

O Lord, open Thou our ears, that we may hear with understanding and humility and love.

O Lord, open Thou our eyes, that we may behold wondrous things out of Thy teaching.

O Lord, open Thou our hearts, that they may be good ground where Thy truth can bring forth good fruit.

LESSON XXIII
THE CRISIS OF THE GALILEAN MINISTRY

Passage for Study : St. John 6. 1-69.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

Revise carefully the following verses, and see what impression they give you of Jesus' life:

Luke 5. 1, 15, 16, 17.

Luke 6. 17-19.

Luke 7. 9, 11.

Matt. 13. 1, 2.

What is the picture that these verses give you? That whether out-of-doors on the mountain or seashore, or sometimes even indoors, Jesus in these days in Galilee was followed about by crowds.

You remember that Jesus had chosen the twelve to be with Him, that He might train them to carry on His work. He knew well that the way of suffering and death lay before Him, and He must devote Himself now to the training of these twelve. He must withdraw from the crowds, not because He had ceased to love the people, but because for their sakes He must train His friends to serve them. This chapter shows the time of crisis. At its opening the crowds are more enthusiastic than ever. They are on their way to the Feast of the Passover at Jerusalem. And they are indignant because a wicked king has slain their prophet, John the Baptist. Why should not five thousand of them make Jesus, the strong, gracious Healer and Prophet, into a true King of Israel, then march through the land with Him in their midst, calling on all the pilgrims of their nation to join them, till, like a great army, they would bring Him to Jerusalem

and enthrone Him there? This was in the people's minds, and Jesus' disciples would have liked it too. But the thoughts of Jesus are different. He wants no marching army, but a kingdom of hearts perfectly surrendered to God. This chapter shows how He quietly made tests which drove away from Him all except those who would trust Him to the uttermost.

You cannot hope in this lesson to plumb the depths of the teaching which Jesus now gave: all your life you will learn more of that. In our next lesson we will seek a little further into the meaning *behind* His words. Today we will learn the *story* of that great chapter.

LESSON.

John 6. 1-5: *The Crowd of Pilgrims assembles.*

Verses 6-9: *The Host's Question.*—Jesus' question is one of gracious concern for the crowd who had listened to His teaching in a place far from shops and were short of food. But it was also a question for the training of the twelve. Soon He would have to teach them to believe in Him even if He went to death. Could they yet believe that He had power to meet every need?

Verses 10-13: *Jesus feeds His Guests.*—In the first miracle that Jesus did, you saw His power over the stuff of which this world was made (John 2), and in all His successive miracles this has been clear. In this multiplying of the bread and fish, He did in one evening something akin to what God does every time that you sow a grain of wheat, and by God's power it brings forth thirty grains.

Verses 14-15: *Jesus refuses to be made King.*—The excited people would have made Him King, and even His disciples would have joined with them, for we read in **Matt. 14. 22, 23** (another account of this time of crisis), that Jesus was obliged to "constrain" the twelve to go away in the boat, while He alone, by His majestic, quiet authority, sent away five thousand excited people.

Verses 16-21: *Lord of the Sea.*—Though He had not allowed them to make Him an earthly King, He now allows them one more assurance that all power is His. He is training them to trust Him through everything.

Verses 22-40: *The Testing Words.*—Next day, back come the excited crowds, and Jesus deliberately makes a hard test for them. He tells them to their faces that He will not be followed for bread, and then He demands of them such belief in Himself as only the few will give. His words will drive away all who have not spiritual eyes to see spiritual truths.

Verses 41-51: *The Murmuring Crowd.*—With a low muttering the crowd begins to question His hard sayings. Jesus repeats His difficult testing, saying, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven."

Verses 52-59: *The Angry Controversy.*—His hearers are now divided sharply into two groups—one which says that He is talking nonsense and making preposterous claims; one which still believes and follows.

Verses 60-65: *The Test reaches the Inner Circle and Disciples leave Him.*—Instead of making matters easy, Jesus continues His test till many who had seemed His disciples and followers go back from Him.

Verses 66-69: *The Test reaches the Innermost Circle.*—And now He asks the twelve, His innermost circle, for their decision. The multitude have been tested and have gone. The disciples have been tested, and many are gone away. The very twelve are tested. They show that the hard sayings have only rooted them in their faith. Henceforth He will expend Himself upon the training of these few.

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **John 6. 51.**

(The closing prayer of the following meditation, or one like it that you have made yourself, should be written in your notebook.)

FOR MEDITATION.

Think that you are one of the disciples listening to Jesus on the testing day.

You remember that yesterday evening five thousand people around Him were weak and tired for want of food. He fed them there on the green grass, and they went away strong and happy. And I, His disciple, know that He then showed His lordship over the fabric of this earth.

The people are pressing round Him again today. They want Him to give them more loaves. They say, "Moses gave our fathers bread out of heaven when they were hungry in the wilderness. Show us that you can do what Moses did." "It was not Moses," Jesus says quietly, "it was My Father. He fed your people in the wilderness long ago. He is feeding you now with true bread out of heaven."

What does He mean? Is He speaking of yesterday's supper on the grass? No, for His voice goes on, "The bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven and giveth life to the world. I am the bread of life."

I do not know all that He means when He says that He is bread. But I know that in Him is life. I know that His touch is life-giving. I know that He has the words of eternal life. I have watched Him bring life to men's bodies and to their souls. And now He speaks of giving His flesh for the life of the world. I do not understand all that He is saying, but if He is the bread of life, with that bread I would be fed.

Lord, evermore give us this bread.

Lord, we have believed and know that Thou art the Holy One of God.

O Living Bread which came down out of heaven, feed us and save us, we humbly beseech Thee,
O Lord.

O Thou who wilt give Thy flesh for the life of the world, grant us Thy life.

LESSON XXIV

THE ETERNAL WORD OF GOD

Passage for Study : St. John 1. 1-18.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

Jesus has led His disciples up to the mystery of His own Person. Who is He ? The Carpenter of Nazareth they know, and they have seen His Mother. John has pointed out Jesus as " the Lamb of God "—the innocent Victim at a sacrifice. The Friend they know, the Teacher they know. They know the life-giving power of the Healer. They have seen with amazement His control over matter, over the world of creation. The water at Cana turned to wine, the five loaves fed five thousand, the winds and the waves obeyed Him. They have seen Him control the ragings of wild spirits. They have seen even death obey Him. Who is He ?

You have found mysterious hints. Read again **John 3. 13, 6. 33**, and the puzzled, indignant words of the people in **John 6. 42**.

There are still stranger words in **John 6. 44** and **50**. Who is it who makes such promises as these ? Who will raise men up at the last day ? Who will cause those who " eat " the living bread to live for ever ? What is the meaning of **verse 62**, where, using His human title, He yet speaks of " ascending up where He was before " ?

To yourself also similar questionings must come. You are learning of the life of Jesus for thirty-three years on earth. But you already know that that is not all of His life. If it were all, we Christians would be the saddest of people, loving and adoring a Prophet who died ere the middle of the span of life. But we are not so. Every day we hear, see, and experience that Jesus is alive and

working in the hearts of men today, so that He who lived and died in the tiny country of Palestine now has 682½ million people who call themselves by His name, and are found in all parts of the world. You come to church, and you find Him the living centre of all that is done there, still at work in the lives of His people.

You will find that the secret of our joy and hope and our fight against evil lies in our belief that this Prophet, whose earthly life of thirty-three years you are about to study, came to us from the heavenlies and lives now in the heavenlies.

The verses which we are to read today explain the belief of the Christian Church throughout all the world and all the centuries. No less belief than this would account for the marvellous living and saving power of Jesus today and always.

LESSON.

John 1. 1, 2: *The Eternal Word.**—These verses take us back behind history, when as yet there was no heaven and no earth, into the eternal life of God.

Verse 3: *The Creative Word.*—Here the history of the universe begins. This verse corresponds to the first verse of the Bible (**Gen. 1. 1**). Compare the words. There you read that God created. Here you read that He created by the eternal *Kalima*.

Verses 4, 5: *The Word in Human History.*—You know that the Bible is divided into two parts—the Old Testament, written before the Coming of Christ, and the New Testament, written after His coming. The verses that you have now read give you a summary of the subject matter of the Old Testament, which in its many books tells the story of the Life and Light of God shining upon the darkness of men since their creation and about man's

* When used in this special and deep meaning the word *Kalima* is treated as masculine.

failure to respond.* One new fact of very great importance is here given—namely, that the light shewn to men of old, to prophets and saints, was a revelation from and by the eternal *Kalima*.

Verses 6-18: *The Incarnate Word*.—In these verses we reach the stupendous truth of the Gospel, that the human race having failed to respond to the earlier revelations of God, at last He revealed Himself intimately in a Person whom they could see and know, when the Eternal Word took flesh and dwelt among us. **Verse 18** is the climax of this lesson.

What, then, was the purpose of God in the Incarnation of the *Kalima*? A purpose of making Himself known to men. A purpose of pure love, for it is of the nature of love to make itself known to the beloved.

[*N.B.*—If any special difficulty is still felt by the pupil over the phrase “the only begotten Son,” let him take away and read “God as Triune” (Gairdner), pp. 2-8 and 39-51 in the English edition published by the Christian Literature Society for India; or the slightly simpler exposition in Takle’s “*Siratu-’l-Mustaqim*,” pp. 13-20 and 62-86, English edition, published by C.L.S.I., Madras.

Arabic edition of the first published by S.P.C.K., Boulac, Cairo, and St. George’s, Jerusalem, of the second by the Nile Mission Press, Sharia Manakh, Cairo, which also has a very useful simpler exposition in “Jesus the Only Son,” by S. A. Morrison, published in Arabic only.]

PUPIL’S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **John 1. 18.**

A prayer to be written in the notebook :

O God, whose blessed Son was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil and make us the

* If the Old Testament story is known, some examples may be referred to, e.g. Isa. 1. 2-4; Ps. 78. 40-43; Jer. 2. 5, 9, etc. But in most cases this study must be left till later.

sons of God, and heirs of eternal life: grant us, we beseech Thee, that having this hope, we may purify ourselves, even as He is pure; that when He shall appear again with power and great glory, we may be made like unto Him in His eternal and glorious Kingdom. Amen.

LESSON XXV

THE CONFESSION OF THE TWELVE AND THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE PASSION

Passage for Study : St. Matt. 16. 13-28.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

Now the multitudes have gone. Only a few of Jesus' disciples have accepted His hard sayings and have followed Him because they know that He has the words of eternal life (**John 6. 68**). Before those few are yet harder tests. They have followed Him when the crowds were thronging round to listen and be healed. They are ready to follow Him when He is alone. Can they learn also to follow Him when the crowds only throng round to mock? Jesus takes them away to the North Country, near the roots of the great mountain of Hermon. The Gospel of St. Luke says that He had been praying alone (as He prayed alone before He called the twelve), when He came to them with a great test question to see what their thoughts of Him were. Did they think of Him as dearest and best of Friends and Teachers? Was He for them a prophet? Or was He absolute, sole Lord?

LESSON.

Matt. 16. 13-16: *The Great Test Question and its Answer.*

Verses 17-20: *The Solemn Reply of Jesus.*—The great solemnity of these words shows the importance that Jesus had attached to the question. Simon Peter, the quick and impulsive, after his habit, had answered for the rest. Jesus speaks to him now in words that must have carried Peter back to their first meeting. On that day Jesus had looked upon him for the first time, and had told the warm, impulsive Simon that he should have the name of Peter,

the Man of Rock (revise **John 1. 42**). Now Jesus looks on him again, and the disciple knows today that his Lord is "the Christ, the Son of the living God." Again Jesus gives the warm, quick, impulsive man the strange title of the man of rock. Yes, and He says, "On you, Peter—Rock, and the friends for whom you speak, on you the first of all men to believe in Me utterly, I am laying the foundation of My Church, of the Society I am making which shall be the blessed company of all believing people, who coming after you shall have the same faith in Me."

You, Peter, would like me to have a kingdom of this earth, and you would be my loving, faithful vezir. That I cannot give you, but I can give you something better. Often I speak to you about the Kingdom of Heaven. That kingdom is entered by absolute surrender to God. And I see by your love and faith that your surrender has begun. In that kingdom which you are entering by way of surrender you (and your brethren for whom you now speak) shall be faithful and wise stewards who have the keys and give the household their meat in due season. And what is this meat? It is the teaching that you have from Me, and that you are to pass on. It is not yours, but Mine. And just as the doctors of the law "pronounce forbidden" or "pronounce lawful," so you will interpret by My teaching and My Spirit questions of right and wrong. And your judgment will be right, because you seek not your own will but God's, and God Himself in heaven will pronounce the same judgment.

Verse 21: *The Prediction of the Passion.*—"From that time"—from the time when His disciples had learnt to say, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God"—Jesus began to tell them the staggering news of the death that lay before Him.

What was the meaning of the strange word "must" (*yanbaghi*)? Was the suffering not voluntary? Yes, voluntary, it was not enforced from without. (It was not *malzûm*.) But the word "must" points to the divine purpose of which we have glimpses in the Scriptures

(as in **Ps. 22** and **Isa. 53**). Because Jesus *chose* to make that purpose His, because He made it "His meat" to do God's will, He could say that He "*must*" suffer. He *had chosen the obligation*.

Verse 22: Again it is St. Peter who speaks the thoughts of all the twelve.

It seems that they could not believe that His words were literally true. To this day the whole Moslem world believes it unworthy and degrading that a prophet should die that death of shame. How could the disciples understand this? Here was their beloved Master whom they had just recognized as Divine, their Master who had come to win the world for His Kingdom of God. And now at the very beginning He talks of being killed. Surely He must intend some hidden mystical meaning. He cannot mean that He in His divine greatness can undergo the shame of a criminal.

Verse 23: Return again in thought to the temptation in the wilderness (**Matt. 4. 1-11**) and to the second and third temptations in which Satan had suggested that Jesus should take easier ways than the way of love and suffering to make men enter His kingdom. Now the same temptation comes to Him through the mistaken love of a disciple. See the vigour of Jesus' reply. Peter, in spite of all his love, is now voicing the thoughts of the tempter, Satan.

Verses 24-28: *The Principle of the Cross*.—Now comes the announcement that the way of the Cross is not to be the way for Jesus only, but for every disciple of His. They must deny themselves, but not deny Christ. They might have to appear before men as condemned criminals marching out to execution, carrying (as criminals in those days carried) the cross on which they were to die in shame.

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **Matt. 16. 24, 25**, and write this in your notebook as one of Jesus' words to *you*.

FOR MEDITATION.

Jesus said: He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

What does this mean to me ?

Whose love may I have to lose for Jesus' sake ?

Lord, Thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that I love Thee.

Jesus said: If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

What does this mean to me ?

Clearly Jesus foresaw public disgrace and a hard life for those who followed Him. A criminal carrying his cross could not also carry his purse or the honours of this world.

Lord, help me to account Thy reproach greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt.

Jesus said: He that doth not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

What does this mean to me ?

Jesus said that secret followers who would not bear open shame for Him were not worthy of Him. To whom ought I to confess that I am His ?

Lord, make me to know Thee, and not to shrink from the fellowship of Thy sufferings.

Jesus said: Whosoever would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake shall find it.

Lord, teach me to endure the cross, despising the shame for the joy of knowing that I am thine indeed.

LESSON XXVI
THE TRANSFIGURATION

Passage for Study : St. Luke 9. 28-43.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

Return to **Matt. 16. 21.** In the training of the twelve Jesus had entered upon what seemed to the Apostles the impossibly hard lesson that He whom they loved had come to suffer shame and violent death. What self-mastery was His, who could not only face and accept this way of suffering for Himself, but day after day teach His unwilling friends to accept it too? He knew that it was hard for them who had always expected the Christ to rule in earthly glory. And to help them to accept and bear it, He now let three of them have a glimpse of the heavenly glory that went with the earthly pain and shame of His passion.

LESSON.

Luke 9. 28: *The Revelation to the Innermost Circle.*—“After these sayings”—i.e., after He had begun to tell them of the way of the Cross.

“Peter and John and James,” the innermost circle of His friends, and the leaders in the group. Jesus’ way was never to grant signs of His glory to unbelievers who would thereby be forced to believe, but He used them to strengthen the faith and love of believers.

Verse 29: *The Transfiguration.*—The heavenly glory of Jesus, the Incarnate Word, for our sake was hidden by the veil of His flesh while He dwelt among us. Now for His disciples’ sake the glory is allowed to shine through; for a brief space the veil is transparent. The story is told for us in three of the four accounts of Jesus’ life,

and always in words that express a great heavenly shining, "His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as the light."

Verse 30: *The Heavenly Visitors.*—These were among the greatest of the servants of God. By Moses God gave the law to Beni Israel; Elijah was at the head of the line of prophets whom God had later sent to teach the nation, and whose books are bound up with the law of Moses in the *Taurat*.

To see these two great ones actually attending upon their Master's prayers must strengthen the faith of the disciples. They now see that not only the world of matter, but the heavenly world of spirits is at His service.

Verse 31: *The Theme of Heavenly Discourse.*—Of what high theme did the shining heavenly visitors discourse? Here was amazement for Peter, James, and John. The very subject that they would try to thrust out of their minds as too shameful is the chosen subject in the heavenly glory. They speak of the coming suffering and death of Jesus. It has the heavenly seal and the heavenly glory upon it.

Verses 32, 33: *The Bewildered Disciples.*—Perhaps it was about the time of the Feast of Tabernacles when Israel dwelt in little booths. This may have suggested the thought to Peter's bewildered mind. He sees the heavenly visitors about to go. He would like to remain longer in that world of light, and so, half-childishly, he offers to make little shelters where they may abide.

Verse 34: *The Cloud.*—They feared because the cloud was no ordinary mist of the mountains, but the shining cloud of revelation in which God had revealed Himself again and again to Israel, as you read in the Old Testament. The cloud of God's presence was called the *Shekinah* (see **Exod. 24, 15, 16**).

Verses 35, 36: *The Voice.*—The voice that had spoken to Jesus at His baptism now speaks to the three disciples. Perhaps up to this moment they had thought of their Master as one with the great teachers of their race—as

when Peter spoke of "three tabernacles, one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias." Now they learn that He is alone in the Majesty of the Son, of the Incarnate, Eternal Word. Read the words in which long afterwards St. Peter wrote of the experience of that great hour (2 Pet. 1. 16-18).

Verses 37-40: *The Sequel.*—From the scene of quiet glory to the shouting crowd and the battered epileptic youth, prisoner of Satan. Jesus always sees in disease the work of man's enemy, and no discovery of microbes and other causes of disease can make the primary *spiritual* cause less real.

Verse 41: O faithless generation! The words are addressed to the disciples who had had to own that they "could not" cure this case. Jesus is training in them a faith in Himself that will work when He is absent at prayer on a mountain, or, later on, when He is invisible in the heavenly world.

Verses 42-43: The Majesty of God—was there some lingering trace in Jesus' face of the glory that had rested there at the transfiguration?

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **John 1. 14:** words written by one of the three who were with Jesus on the mountain. This lesson has helped you to understand their meaning.

FOR PRAISE (*to be written in the notebook*):

O Incarnate Word, Thou didst deck Thyself with light as with a garment. There on the mountain we beheld Thy glory. Before Thy crucifixion, O Christ, the Mount became like unto the heavens, and a cloud was outspread like a canopy, while Thou wast transfigured, and while the Father bore witness unto Thee. There was Peter, together with James and John, that having beheld Thy glory they might not lose faith at Thy sufferings.

Thou didst show Thy glory to Thy disciples as much as they could bear, that when they should see Thee crucified

they might understand Thy voluntary passion, and preach to the world that Thou art verily the Light of the Father.

O, may Thine everlasting light shine also upon me, a sinner. O, send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me.

O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance shall we go forth, and in Thy name rejoice for ever. Alleluia.

LESSON XXVII
JESUS TEACHES HUMILITY, FORGIVENESS,
AND BROTHERHOOD

Passages for Study : St. Matt. 18; 19. 13-15.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

You have seen how Jesus separated Himself from the multitudes (**John 6. 60, 66**), and led the twelve away into the North Country, there to break to them the terrible news of the Way of the Cross. He now led them back to their own country of Galilee for His last sojourn there before He set off on the journey to Jerusalem, where He would "give His life a ransom for many." During all this time the training of the twelve was His chosen task, and today we shall share some of the teaching which He gave to them: it is teaching about the inner life of the new society He was founding through the twelve—the society of believers, the Church of Christ.

LESSON.

Matt. 18. 1-4: *Who is the Greatest?*—Three of the twelve had been chosen to be with Jesus on the mount of Transfiguration. Peter had been prominent of late (refer to Lesson XXV.). Perhaps this led to a feeling of resentment on the part of the rest. Was Jesus making one disciple more important than another?

Jesus' reply is strange and hard to us, and has hardly yet been learnt by His society. Perhaps *you* will learn this lesson better than any pupil He has had before. Jesus called a little child and set him "in the midst"—i.e., in the *teacher's place*. He says in effect, "I do not decide which of you is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, in the realm of God. You decide for yourselves. He is greatest who

is most like a little child in humble readiness to learn and accept and believe. The highest honour in that heavenly realm is reserved for the humblest of you." A lesson easy to read, but very hard to live!

Verse 5, and Matt. 19. 13-15: *The New Honour of Children.*—It was then the idea of religious teachers that little children were unimportant. A Jewish boy joined the community of his nation when he was about twelve years old. Jesus taught that in *His* community little children should be welcomed, and He identified Himself with them—in receiving and serving a little child we receive and serve Himself.

He showed His own practice and example in the matter when His disciples were for sending away some little children brought to Him. (Perhaps He was weary with teaching grown-up people all day long.) St. Mark's Gospel says that He not only "laid His hands on them," but "took them up in His arms." This teaching and behaviour of Jesus is one of the great reasons why in the Christian society the little children of members are themselves brought to Jesus and made members of His community.

Matt. 18. 6-13: *The Value of "these Little Ones."*—"These little ones which believe in Me" are not only little children, but those who are in the position of children through their simplicity or their weakness or their humble position. These Jesus receives, though no one else may want them. Because of their relation with Jesus, and because in heaven in the eyes of God these little and weak people are important (**verse 10**) there must be no fancied superiority on the part of those cleverer, stronger, in better earthly positions. Jesus is moved with emotion at the thought of the crime of making the way of God harder for these "little ones," and causing them to stumble. He describes the love of God for them as like the shepherd's impulse that would drive a man away into the mountains ever seeking till he find one lost sheep. This is one of the peculiarities of Jesus' society. There is no other society

in the world that so seeks and loves the little, the weak, the stupid, and the despised. Have you begun to follow Jesus in this way ?

Verses 15-20: *Forgiveness and Unity among Brothers.*—In Luke 6 you had Jesus' teaching for His disciples about the manner of meeting with insults and injuries (verses 27-30) from people outside the Christian family. They were to be met with no resentful resistance, but with a readiness to help and serve even those who are unreasonable in their demands. Here we have Jesus' teaching for what is to happen within the Christian family.

When a discord occurs between brothers linked by the close bond that Jesus makes, it must be harmonized, or else that deep fellowship is spoiled. A Christian who has been injured by his fellow-Christian must not only bear it patiently (as he would bear the injuries of a pagan), but must set his whole heart to "gain his brother."

If all efforts of love fail he has "lost his brother." The brother has become like one "outside the fellowship" (a heathen man or a publican), to be treated with courtesy and kindness, but with no longer the same close religious bond.

Verses 18-20: *Jesus in the Midst.*—These three verses hang very closely together, and the last explains the first two. Why is it that the Church on earth can make decisions which are the same as the decisions of heaven ? Why is it that she can pray and be sure that her prayers are answered ? Only because she is gathered together *in Jesus' Name* (which means *in accordance with His will and character*), and is guided by His living, real, spiritual presence in the midst.

Verses 21-35: *A Lesson on Forgiveness of the Brethren.*—The disciple who does not forgive causes grief to the community (see verse 31), and brings down the wrath of the Heavenly Father. Peter's question implies that his duty to forgive is limited—even though the limit is a wide one. Jesus' story-answer places Peter and every other disciple in the position of a man with no rights. God,

He says, has forgiven us infinitely more than we can ever be asked to forgive. Peter was not a bad man, but Jesus' view of the seriousness of human sin, even in good men, makes it like a debt of two million pounds (10,000 talents), while the injuries that others do us can only be compared, in proportion, to a debt of some four pounds (100 pence).

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart Matt. 18. 4 ; 19. 14.

FOR PRAYER AND MEDITATION.

The pure eyes of Jesus saw the sins, even of good men like His closest disciples, as a great, unpayable debt.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

But Jesus tells me that there is a condition to this forgiveness. I have not only to confess my own sin, but to forgive what others have done against me.

Jesus said: When ye pray say, *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.*

I recall now the things that others have said and done against me. (Write them down if you like.) They make me sore and angry. Yet Jesus says that I cannot have peace and forgiveness from God and also keep resentment and revenge in my heart. One or other must go.

“So also” (He says) “shall My heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.” The forgiveness of the Heavenly Father means that we are really made at one with Him. How can we be at one with Him and also plan revenge against His other children?

I must take God's forgiveness for my past on the only conditions under which He offers it to me. I must tear up before Him the paper on which I have written down

my injuries. And I must try to say to Him, not only for myself, but for those who have injured me:

Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.

This prayer will only be real, and God's forgiveness of me will only be real, if I carry this out into practical life, and show when I meet those injurers, or speak of them, that I no longer bear resentment, but "forgive my brother from my heart."

Then, like the sick man carried to Jesus, I may truly hear His voice say, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee."

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His
benefits;

Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy
diseases.

LESSON XXVIII

JESUS TEACHES GOD'S LOVE FOR SOULS

Passage for Study : St. Luke 15.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

How many *individual* souls can you think of whom Jesus cared for and helped? Mention those you can remember of whom we have already read, and we will jot them down and make a list. Is it not clear that even though multitudes thronged round Him, Jesus thought of single persons, and loved and taught men as individual persons rather than as members of a crowd? This was one of the great lessons that He had to teach the twelve during His training of them. One of the fundamental teachings of Jesus was that God Himself cared not only for the movements of nations, but for every single human soul.

Today we are to study the way in which Jesus taught this great truth about God. The teaching was put into the form of parables. Recall again the reasons for parable-teaching—the truth so taught was easy to carry away and remember. And it called for the co-operation of men's thinking before its meaning was fully grasped.

LESSON.

Luke 15. 1, 2: Here is the starting-point for the three stories about God. *Publicans* were men who had hired themselves out to the foreign (Roman) government to collect taxes from their own nation. They were very much despised as those who were traitors to the nation, having taken sides with the heathen; and being thus despised they went on to earn further scorn by extorting more than their due and growing rich on the proceeds.

Strange it is that while the respectable 'ulema and men of religion could not endure the presence of the despised and sinful, these people from the low quarters of the city liked to gather round Jesus. Not His worst enemy suggested that He was *like* these fallen people in impurity and love of money. But the religious people complained that He welcomed them, and that He would accept their invitations and eat with them. Jesus' reply, in the three parables of this chapter, means this: You are not complaining of My ways only, you are complaining of God's ways; for in the heart of God each one of these people has a place, and He longs for them to come back to the fellowship of good people. My actions show you what God is like, for I came to reveal God to you.

Verses 3-7: *The Stupid, Ignorant Sinner.*—The parable is not so much the story of the lost sheep as of the Seeking Shepherd. And that Seeking Shepherd, Jesus says, is a picture of God the Heavenly Father. Jesus Himself is the Seeking Shepherd, and every time He seeks and saves a lost soul, He is revealing God to us.

Verses 8, 10: *The Unconscious Sinner.*—The parable is the story of the Seeking Woman rather than of the unconscious coin. It is another picture of Jesus Himself seeking for souls, and He tells us that it is a picture of God's yearning over any unawakened soul, and His joy over any that awakens with the wakening of repentance.

Verses 11-24: *The Wilful, Ungrateful Sinner.*—The despised publicans must have heard this story with special joy, for they had "joined themselves" for money to the citizens of a far country.

This picture, the fullest of the three, gives the part to be played by the returning sinner. We have to arise, turn our backs on our sin, turn our faces to our Father, and confess our sin to Him. It also gives a yet fuller picture of the Heavenly Father. He does not merely accept our confession. He runs to meet us, and lavishes on us the welcome of the family.

The three parables give a quite new idea of the im-

portance of every soul. In the heavenly world the stupidest, the most unfeeling, the most wilful of human souls can bring joy to all the court of the Heavenly King. Think of the people in your street as all having this value in the eyes of God, this power to thrill all heaven with joy.

Verses 25-32: *The Elder Brother.*—The three parables have taught that each soul is loved and sought for by Christ for its own sake, not because it is good, but because it is needy. It alone, as though there were no other, is to be sought and saved. But there is another side to the story.

The lost sheep is brought back alone, but not that it may live alone; it comes back to a fold with ninety-nine others. The piece of silver is swept up to be sewn on the woman's head-dress with nine others. The spendthrift son comes back not only to a father, but to an elder brother and a family life. And the purpose of the Heavenly Father is the perfect family life.

The heavenly family rejoice at the return of the sinner, but sometimes to the earthly family this rejoicing is harder. Jesus was teaching this hard lesson, and His dear ones learnt it, for we find that Mary Magdalene, "out of whom Jesus had cast seven devils," had her place beside Jesus' holy Mother. We have to watch ourselves that we do not play the grudging elder brother to any soul. And we must always remember the Heavenly Father's desire for the *complete* family life. How gently the Father pleads with the elder brother. Sometimes those who have once been Muslims form among themselves a little group or society within the Christian Church, not feeling sure that those who have been longer Christians really welcome them. You should always discourage such a separate group if your brothers propose it. Those who return to the home from a far country, and those who always remained in the Father's house have to learn to be brothers together. From the beginning make up your mind that every child of your Heavenly Father is your brother, and work for a united family on earth as it is united in heaven.

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **Luke 15. 18, 19** (the prayer of the returning son).

FOR MEDITATION.

I, a mortal man, could bring joy to the whole heavenly world if I brought one sinner to repentance.

Have I myself arisen and come to my Heavenly Father with the story of my sin ?

Am I ready to welcome any despised person who comes to the Heavenly Father ?

Am I ready to bring joy to the heart of the Seeking Shepherd by seeking with Him for lost sheep ? How can I do this ? What soul can I help Him to seek for ?

This is the way of suffering. Seeking shepherds have rough ground to travel over and darkness and thorny paths. But it is the way that brings me close to the heart of Jesus, and it is the way that brings joy and singing in heaven.

I resolve that I will pray daily for X. (here insert the name of the one you choose), and with God's help will call him from his sin to the welcome of the Heavenly Father; and will not be discouraged if I have to seek him long and wearily, and to suffer in seeking him.

A PRAYER FOR X.

O merciful God, who wouldst not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live, so fetch home X. to Thy flock, that we may be made one fold under one Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord.

LESSON XXIX

JESUS TEACHES HIS LOVE FOR SOULS

Passage for Study : St. John 10. 1-18.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

Look again at **Matt. 18. 12-14, Luke 15. 4-7**, and you will find one of Jesus' thoughts about God. This thought had been given before to the Psalmists and Prophets of Beni Israel. You will learn one beautiful Psalm which says, "The Lord is my Shepherd." Jesus made this idea more full and wonderful, showing us that God's care for us was not only that of the shepherd who feeds his whole flock, but that of the shepherd who follows one lost sheep through the wilderness.

In the chapter before that which we are to read today, we have the story of a man born blind whom Jesus healed in Jerusalem. The enemies of Jesus—the 'ulema of the Jews who were jealous of His power to heal and teach—cast the poor man out from their synagogue because he spoke boldly in Jesus' honour. This "casting out" was a terrible disgrace, and often the shopkeepers would not sell to those cast out. That once blind man was the first of many who since his day have been cast out of synagogue, temple, or mosque for Jesus' sake.

When our lesson for today opens, Jesus is thinking of the poor, cast-out man, like a sheep turned out of the sheep-fold by those who should have been his shepherds. It was during a winter visit to Jerusalem (read **John 10. 22**), the time when the shepherds have their flocks safely in the sheepfold, because nights are long and wind and snow are cruel on the mountains, and wild beasts are hungry. Jesus thinks of the poor man, and He begins to tell of a new flock, with a new fold and a new Shepherd who will welcome such as he.

LESSON.

John 10. 1-6: *The False Shepherds and the True.*—Each shepherd in Jesus' country has a call of his own which his own sheep know. When he makes this call they will follow him over the hillsides to the place where he has found pasture for them, or back into their own sheepfold.

The fold was a shelter with high walls and one door, to which the flock could be brought at night-time or during storms, to be safe from wild weather or wild beasts. Only the shepherd who owned the fold had the right to open the door. And often the shepherd will himself lie down across the doorway, so that no thieves can pass through the door. He is himself the living door.

Verses 7-10: *The Door of the Sheep.*—Jesus now makes clearer the meaning of His talk about sheepfolds and robbers who climb over the walls. He says that it is only *through Him* (as through the door of the fold) that a man can enter on a shepherd's work—the work of a shepherd of souls. He speaks of the religious leaders of Beni Israel as thieves and robbers, people who climbed over walls and did not enter by God's door. And, indeed, you have read before how they had turned God's house of prayer into "a den of thieves" (**Mark 11. 17**). The true shepherds entering in by God's door, by Jesus Himself, will themselves be saved by Him and will go in and out and find food for the flock to eat. That is still true today. It is only through the call and sanction and enabling of Jesus that the pastor of our church can feed our souls. The one class comes to the fold to steal, the other to feed and bring life.

Verses 11-15: *The Good Shepherd.*—The shepherd who lies across the doorway to protect the flock at night will give his life for them against prowling wild beasts in the open pastures also. His people love to think of Him as the owner-shepherd whose voice they know, and who calls them all by name, and goes before them on the path of life. You will find many hymns and praises to the Good Shepherd, and many lovely pictures to remind us

of Him. But best of all we love to think of Him under His own picture of the shepherd who, to save his sheep from wolves, gives his own life.

Here we are allowed to hear Jesus' own explanation of His coming death. He would die to bring life to His people. We have had hints of this all along. You remember that strange name "the Lamb of God" which pointed Him out as being "One who saves, but saves by the sacrifice of His own life." Now you have His own words upon the matter. "Why, Master, must you, our Prophet and King, die?" say the disciples; "that be far from Thee." And Jesus says, "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

Verse 16: *One Fold.*—He will bring into His fold not only Jewish disciples, cast out of the Jewish fold for love of Him (like the man whose story is found in the previous chapter), but many of all nations, and all must be united. In Jesus' fold (or society or church) we must forget that we are of different nations, because we are all His, bought with the life-blood of the Good Shepherd. Have you begun to be friends with a disciple of Jesus who belongs to another nation or city or community?

Verses 17, 18: *The Good Shepherd Dies of His own Free Will.*—Was the death of Jesus voluntary? He gives you His own answer.

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn **John 10, 14-16.** The Good Shepherd and the one fold.

A prayer to be written in the notebook:

O Good Shepherd, whose sheep hear Thy voice and who callest Thine own sheep by name, make me to hear Thy call to me, and to follow where Thou callest me.

O Good Shepherd, who ledest out Thy sheep and goest before them, make me to follow the blessed foot-prints of Thy most holy life.

O Good Shepherd, who dost lay down Thy life for the sheep, Thee would I follow, Thee would I love, as Thou hast loved me even unto death.

O Good Shepherd, who hast laid down Thy life also for other sheep, bring them also, and make of us all one flock, one Shepherd.

LESSON XXX
JESUS TEACHES THAT WE ALSO MUST
LOVE SOULS

*Passages for Study : St. Luke 10. 30-37; St. Matt. 25.
31-46.*

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

You are following some of the teaching that Jesus gave to the twelve whom He was training to carry on His work. You have heard Him teaching them the great principle of the accepted cross in His life and theirs (end of Lesson XXV.). You have heard Him teaching the great principle of God's forgiving love and individual care for every soul (Lesson XXVIII.); and you have heard Him describing His own care for the souls of men, as the shepherd who feeds them, gives them life, and lays down his own life that they may live (Lesson XXIX.). Jesus teaches what love really is. For His pictures of love He does not choose the bulbul languishing in song, or the young lover yearning for bright eyes, but something nobler—the shepherd staggering through the wilderness for a lost sheep—the shepherd losing his own life in the struggle to defend his flock from wild beasts—the insulted father running to welcome the rebel and calling the whole house to activity to make that welcome complete. For Jesus, love is so deep and selfless that it only asks for the reward of helping and serving the loved one. And for Jesus, love is not manifested by emotions, but by service. He had no scorn for emotions: He could weep with His friends; He could pick up and embrace little children. But emotions and caresses were not the *test* of love: that lay in self-sacrificing service. This is the lesson that Jesus has taught the world.

We have learned Jesus' descriptions of the love of God. Now we are to learn His teaching to His disciples of the love He expected from *them*.

LESSON.

No Limits to the Law of Love.

Luke 10. 25, 26 : *The Lawyer's Question.*—This ecclesiastical lawyer (*fighi*) thought his question was a test of Jesus. Perhaps he looked forward to an argument concerning the law in which he was learned, and an opportunity of showing up the ignorance of a teacher who had been a working carpenter. But whatever the lawyer's intentions, he had asked a question which gave Jesus an opportunity for some of His most fundamental teaching. He first turns back the lawyer's question on himself as much as to say, "Your question is one of the most important that a man can ask. Your own special training in the law enables you to supply the groundwork of an answer. Tell us your answer, and I will help you to see what it means."

Verses 27-29 : Because the law had been given to Beni Israel for their training by God, Jesus, who had brought a fuller, deeper revelation of the same God, did not need to contradict the law, but to show its inner, deeper meaning. The *fighi* had known the words he now said since he was a baby. It was disappointing when he had hoped for a learned discussion to have Jesus tell him to keep commandments that everybody knew. Had he not kept them ?

You remember how Peter wanted to make a limit to the law of forgiveness : "If I have forgiven seven times, have I not then kept your command to forgive my brother ?" (**Matt. 18. 21**). And Jesus in reply swept away limits, and told a story which showed that a man never had the right to refuse forgiveness. So now the lawyer would like to know exactly who was the neighbour he was to love. It was not, he supposed, only the man in the next house.

Did it mean all his fellow townsmen? But if some of them were foreigners or of another religion, strangers in nation and thought, could *they* be called neighbours?

As with Peter when he wanted a limit to the law of forgiveness, so with the lawyer when he wanted a limit to the law of love, Jesus told a story in which He swept away limits. "The laws of God are not *letter* only," He says, "they are *spirit*." God makes no limit to the spirit of love and forgiveness.

Verses 30-37: *Jesus' Answer.*—Remember that a Samaritan was for the Jew the most despised and disliked of all men, with a religion which he regarded as the perversion of the truth; and similarly the Samaritan hated the Jew. Jesus could not have chosen a stronger way of saying, "God's command to love has no exceptions of religion or race. And God expects love to be expressed in personal service."

How can *we* obey the command to "go and do likewise"?

(Here the teacher may explain to the pupil those loving activities of his own congregation's life which come nearest to the command of Jesus; showing that a Christian congregation must love and care not only for its own members, but for those outside its society and for those of other nations and religions, especially the helpless and oppressed.)

By the Law of Love in Action Men will be Judged.

Jesus had been telling His disciples in these last months many strange things. He showed them a picture of Himself suffering shame and death; He showed them a picture of themselves sent out by Him into the world defenceless, "like sheep in the midst of wolves." No wonder if their spirits quailed at such a plan—a plan which was so unlike the ordinary plans of men that it must either be of God or be the work of a madman.

In one of His parables Jesus (perhaps to strengthen

them) showed them a glimpse of the end, of the final judgment of mankind. And there were two notes of marvellous cheer for them in what He then said. He told them that when they came to that great day they would find that He, and no other, He, their Master and Friend, was on the throne of judgment. And again, He told them that they would find on that great day that not a sorrow had come near them but it was His own; that He knew and felt every woe of theirs. We will now read Jesus' description of His final judgment of the world of men.

Matt. 25. 31-33: *The Judgment is Set for All Nations.*—By what test does the judge separate sheep from goats? By the test of what religion they belonged to? No, for many of them had no opportunity of learning the true religion.

Verses 34-40: *The Test of Love in Action.*—Those souls are rewarded whose love has shown itself in service, and especially in the service of such as could do nothing in return. It was not service done for the sake of merit and reward at the last day, for "the righteous" did not know that it mattered to the judge (**verse 37**). It was service of pure compassion and love.

Which is the more wonderful, that every little kindly act is thus remembered, or that Jesus, King and Judge, should so identify Himself with His suffering "brethren"?

Verses 41-46: *Failure to Pass the Test.*—What is the sin that in the last judgment of all separates men from God and makes them take rank with and share the fate of the spirits of evil (**verse 41**)?

It is not murder, unbelief (*kufir*), or blasphemy, but merely the absence of love that works by service. Those who were judged had been content to know that men and women were in prison or cold or hungry or sick, and to leave others to care for them. There was no outgoing of active, personal service.

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **Matt. 25. 40.**

Discuss with your teacher what service of love you can undertake for any of “the least of these His brethren.”

A prayer to be written in the notebook :

When you do a kind act for one who cannot reward you, say in your heart :

“O Lord, accept my loving service for X., whom Thou dost call one of Thy brethren, and strengthen my love for him day by day.”

LESSON XXXI

JESUS AND THE FRIENDS AT BETHANY

Passages for Study : St. Luke 10. 38-42; St. John 11.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

(Study this review with particular care in order to understand the following lessons.)

Return once more to **Matt. 16. 21**, and look closely at what Jesus told His disciples about His coming death. Whom did He mention as the enemies who would be the means of His suffering and death? Why were these people, the 'ulema of the nation, hostile to Him? Refer again to the first fracas (**John 2**), the jealous watching of **Luke 5. 17, 21**, and the open break of **John 6. 41, 52, 64**. It is clear that Jesus had many enemies, jealous of His power with the people, angry at His fearless speech and His mercy to the sinful, and His claims to spiritual lordship. (Look again at His fearless words to Simon the Pharisee, **Luke 7. 44, 45**.) These religious leaders would be glad enough to see Jesus put out of the way. And the centre of danger for Him would be Jerusalem and its neighbourhood, where they gathered round the Temple as the 'ulema of Palestine today gather round the great Mosque.

You remember Jesus' love for Jerusalem and His boyish name for the Temple, "My Father's house." It saddens us to think that He who so loved that city should be beset by enemies whenever He went there. We are thankful then to know that within a few miles of Jerusalem was one quiet home of faithful friendship where He could be at rest. You will find the names of the little family that loved and received Him in **John 11. 1**.

LESSON.

Luke 10. 38-42: *A Picture of Jesus among His Friends.*—Jesus showed the way, and His people have learned from Him, to have pure and spiritual friendships between men and women. If you have a Christian home your wife and daughters will learn with perfect modesty and perfect freedom to take their part in the conversation and friendship of your Christian men friends; and you will learn with perfect respect and purity to speak with Christian women. Men and women have different work to do in the world, but Jesus showed that in *spiritual* things they were perfectly equal.

Of these two sisters Martha shows us the beautiful Eastern virtue of hospitality; but her hospitality is not quite perfect. She wishes to set much on the table in honour of their Friend, and therefore she wants the help of her sister in preparations. But there is something which Jesus values more than this generous desire to offer the best food—it is the friendship of a heart that gives itself to listen and understand. How much of His life He spoke to people who heard and understood not! It was rest to Him to have Mary quiet and listening with all her soul, as it was life and joy to Mary to hear His words of life. Martha will take from Him this quiet joy in order to have Mary put more dishes on the table. Jesus says only one dish is needful, and Mary has chosen a better way to make Him welcome and to enrich her own soul.

If you have a Christian home you will remember this thought of Jesus about hospitality, and when your pastor or some Christian friend visits you, the women of the house will not spend all the time bringing the best of food, but you will be content to offer what is simple, and to have the women sit down with you and share in the spiritual friendship of the visit.

John 11. 1-3: *The Sisters' Message.*—Bethany was only a few miles from Jerusalem, over the shoulder of the Mount of Olives.

[*N.B.*—We have not yet studied the incident referred to in **verse 2**. It is not to be confused with the story of the woman that was a sinner in **Luke 7**.]

The message of the sisters shows their perfect confidence in their Teacher-Friend. This sickness happened at a time when the enemies of Jesus in Jerusalem were seeking His life. He was far from Jerusalem in the wilderness beyond the Jordan, giving His last teachings to the twelve.

Verse 4: *Jesus' Message.*—Jesus' message sent back to the sisters is most strange. It was to ring in their ears while they watched their brother die. He was asking of these two sisters who loved Him a stupendous venture of faith—that they should believe these words while their eyes saw the still, dead form of their brother.

Verses 5-16: *The Delayed Departure.*—Knowing that Lazarus was dying, Jesus yet delayed, quietly teaching His disciples. They thought, no doubt, that He would not venture Himself so near His enemies in Jerusalem.

When at last He suggested going, they pointed out the madness of it. He said that a man's life was an appointed day of twelve hours for work; till that day's work was done death could not touch Him.

Jesus is now testing the faithfulness of the twelve—and they are ready to go into danger with Him. But the key to the whole chapter is found in His words in **verse 15**, "to the intent that ye may believe." He has to teach Martha and Mary and the twelve whom He is training to believe in Him even through death. That is the great test. Like the Transfiguration, it is a preparation for the still greater test of watching Him die upon the Cross.

Verses 17-27: *The Test of Martha.*—The house is full of visitors of condolence, but the active Martha, hearing that Jesus has come, leaves Mary with their guests and rushes out to meet Him. She keeps her old faith in Jesus—the faith that made her send for Him when Lazarus was ill.

He now asks something new of her. Lazarus is not

dead to Jesus. He lives on in the world of spirits, and Jesus will recall him to show that He is Lord of Life, that He *is* Life. It is too hard for Martha's sorrowful mind to grasp: what she can do is to give to Jesus the highest trust she knows (**verse 27**), and He is content with that.

Verses 28-38: *With Mary to the Grave.*—Mary, sitting heavily among the visitors from Jerusalem, is told that Jesus wants her. She gives Him the same greeting as Martha. No doubt, through the agonizing days of watching Lazarus die, they had said to one another, "If only our Lord Jesus comes, our brother will not die." And through the funeral and the heavy days of mourning their hearts would say again and again, "If Jesus had only come our brother would not have died." To say this showed faith in Him, but He is asking for still greater faith—faith that will believe in Him even if He seems to let death triumph.

It is never recorded that Jesus wept for Himself. He wept for love of them.

The natural, critical words of **verse 37** must have found their echo in His heart. He had imposed on them these days of woe in order to bring forth very costly fruit of perfect faith "for the glory of God," and for their joy and strengthening for evermore. But not light-heartedly or without suffering could He let them suffer.

Verses 39-42: *The Supreme Test of Faith.*—"Take ye away the stone." This was the test. It was the act of madmen to the onlookers. It was only sane to those who had utter faith in Jesus. **Verse 40** shows how well He knew that here was the test of faith, and on this test depends the revealing of God's glory to all those sad hearts. Jesus never works His miracles unless there is a co-operating faith in those for whom the deed is done. The rolling away of the stone after four days was a sign that they had given up the guidance of common sense for the guidance of Jesus.

Jesus thanked His Heavenly Father publicly for hearing

Him. What had been His request? Not, I think, for power to recall the dead—that power He never doubted—but rather that His intercessions for His friends had been heard, and *they* had been granted faith to go all lengths.

Verses 43-44: “*Though he die, yet shall he live.*”

Verses 45, 46: *The Double Result.*—More believers, more hostility.

Verses 47-57: *One Man shall die for the Nation.*—No longer in secret groups, but in full council (*maglis us shuyikkh*), His enemies decide upon His death. And the people are under orders to give Him up to His enemies.

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart Christ's words to Martha:
John 11. 25, 26.

To write in the notebook and offer in your heart to the Living Christ, Conqueror of the grave.

Thou hast shown Thyself, O Lord, the loving Friend and Guest of the home of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus:

O, help me to make a home where Thou canst find welcoming hearts.

Thou hast shown Thyself glad, O Lord, to have Mary a quiet sharer of Thy thoughts:

O, teach me to listen in quiet to Thy words, and to share Thy holy thoughts.

Thou hast wept, O Lord, at the sorrow of Thy friends:

O, teach me to believe in Thy love.

Thou hast said, O Lord: I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live:

Lord, I believe Thy words, help Thou mine unbelief.

Thou hast said, O Lord: "I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore. I have the keys of death and of hell":

Lord, I believe Thy words, help Thou mine unbelief.

Thou only, O Christ, art the Conqueror of Death.

Thou only, O Christ, art Most High in the glory of God the Father.

Thou art the Resurrection and the Life.

O Holy Strong One, Holy Immortal, Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ.

LESSON XXXII

GOING UP TO JERUSALEM: THE COST OF FOLLOWING

Passages for Study: St. Mark 10. 17-31; St. Luke 14. 25-35.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

Read again the last part of **John 11. 47-57**, to see how concentrated was the hostility to Jesus. All men were asking (**verses 55, 56**) whether He would come up to the Passover that year. If He did choose to come, it would be an offering of Himself to those who sought to kill.

Jesus is again in the North Country where His enemies are not so active. But He *does* choose to go southwards to Jerusalem. Begin by reading **Mark 10, 32**. Those who followed Him now followed at the risk of their lives. And He would have them know it. Our lesson today tells of the conversations and the events of the last journey to Jerusalem, when Jesus was on His way to give His life for men. He was again among the multitudes, because the roads to Jerusalem at that season were crowded with pilgrims. Yet how truly was He alone, facing the reality of the Cross which to His unrealizing disciples was only a dreadful figure of speech from which they would gladly turn their minds.

LESSON.

Mark 10. 17, 18: *The Rich Man who would follow.*—“As He was going forth into the way”—*i.e.*, as He was starting on the day's march.

The eagerness of the one who came to Jesus is shown by the fact that, without a thought of rich clothes or *sharaf*, he kneeled down in the road.

The adjective "good" is used in the Psalms of God. Our Lord, as so often, seeks to awaken the man by a question: "What do you *really mean* by giving to me the word that the Taurat keeps for God?" Perhaps He thought of His own disciples standing by, and wished to make them too find out for themselves that He had in truth a right to the term "good," because of His Sonship of the One who alone was in the full sense "good."

Verses 19, 20: Jesus will say to the man, "God has given you guides in His commandments for living according to His will. Till you have done all this, you need no other advice." And the man, perhaps not knowing the full, deep sense which Jesus had shown these commandments to have (**Matt. 5.**), has honestly tried to keep them.

Verses 21-22: Jesus, looking fixedly at him, loved him for his real, honest effort. Perhaps He kissed him as the teachers of the Jews often kissed a pupil with whom they were pleased. He now gave him the same call that He had given to Simon and Andrew, James and John and Levi (see **Mark 1. 17, 18, 20; 2. 14.**) They had left all and followed Him. But the test was too hard for this aspirant.

Verses 23-27: *The Difficulty of following Jesus.*—Saddened by the departure of one who could not face His heroic call, Jesus looks round on the faces of His disciples and tells them how hard His call is to the rich—and not only to the rich, but to them that trust in riches, those who lean on rich men or want to be perfectly secure of a salary and position, however small. To follow Jesus a man must be ready to lose all this.

Verses 28-31: *The Reward of following Jesus.*—"House" does not mean only a building, but the life of the building, the family life, which many are called to leave for Jesus' sake (**verse 27.**) This call may come to those who come to Jesus from another religion. Often they must leave all this. Or it may come to those within His circle whom He calls to leave the family life in order to serve Him in

some distant place or in some special task. Every disciple must be ready for it.

The reward in the present life is to be the wonderful mutual love of Christians. Our Lord intended all Christians to be brethren, and therefore a disciple should find "mothers" in every Christian matron, and "children" in every Christian family, and "homes" in every Christian household. If you are a Christian *you must make this true*, not by asking for the love and welcome of others, but by giving your love and welcome to everyone in Christ's family. But our Lord said that with this common love would be common sufferings, persecutions to be suffered. And the compensation for these is not of this life, but of "the age to come."

Luke 14. 25-35: *More Words of Christ about the Demand for Absolute Renunciation.*—It is as though He would warn the multitudes that following Him is a matter of life and death.

The word "hateth" has sometimes been misunderstood. Jesus was the One who more than any other taught us to love others deeply and unselfishly. In Jesus' community you find the most loving family life that the world has ever seen. *But it all exists on the condition that the claim of Jesus, of the Kingdom of God, comes first.* Thus when God called a very gifted man from his home to be an evangelist, his family was disappointed that he should leave all possibility of a career great in the eyes of the world, and he wrote to his mother, "I now see the meaning of Christ's words about 'hating.' In obeying this call I am behaving as though I 'hated' you, my dearest." If Jesus calls He must be obeyed, even if obedience leads to action that looks like "hating" the dearly loved family.

He will not have anyone follow Him who has not counted the cost. Salt is cleansing and preservative, sharply different from everything else. Jesus' society is to be like salt. Half-hearted service is as worthless as salt that is mixed with sand.

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **Luke 14. 27, 33.**

A prayer to be written in the notebook :

We thank Thee, O Lord, for all Thy disciples who have heard Thy call, and leaving all have followed Thee without delay.

Grant that we, hearing Thy call, may forthwith give ourselves up obediently.

Grant that we may be ready to bear our own crosses and follow after Thee.

Grant that we may be ready to renounce all that we have and to be Thy disciples.

[*N.B.*—You may need to pray this prayer for yourself alone, using “I” instead of “we.” Or you may wish to pray it for yourself together with all others to whom the call of Jesus comes.]

LESSON XXXIII

GOING UP TO JERUSALEM: THREE ENCOUNTERS

*Passages for Study: St. Mark 10. 32-52;
St. Luke 19. 1-10.*

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

You heard in our last lesson the stern words of Jesus saying that none could follow Him who were not ready to suffer loss of all things, even of life. The two verses you learnt by heart summarize this teaching. (Repeat **Luke 14. 27, 33.**)

Today we follow Jesus on His path up to Jerusalem. He is walking on alone, ahead of the twelve. It is with a great effort of will that He treads that path (read **Luke 9. 51**). The whole scene of what will happen in Jerusalem unfolds itself before His mind.

LESSON.

Mark 10. 32-34: *The Full Picture of the Coming Doom.*—Why were they amazed and afraid? Partly because they had a true sense that they were following Him into danger, and partly, no doubt, from the sorrowful majesty and courage of Him who walked on ahead of them, conscious of every outward detail of the Passion before Him. Never before has He told them in such detail of what lies ahead of Him.

Verses 35-37: *Chief Seats in the Coming Kingdom.*—That the twelve still did not or would not understand what Jesus had just said is shown in the request of James and John. Most likely they thought that there were some dark days to be passed through, and then He would shine out as King and Saviour of the nation, ruling in Jerusalem. They would not take literally the thought of His death.

But they wanted to be faithful to Him, and then have the two places of honour at His kingly banquet.

Verses 38-40: Jesus does not rebuke them. Part of their request is selfish, but there is also in it a true love of Himself. They want to be vezirs in the palace, but *His* vezirs. He takes this love and will not give it the low, selfish reward for which it seeks, but asks if it is ready to grow into something nobler. "Are you ready to drink My cup—the bitter cup that is before Me, and to be baptized, overwhelmed, with Me when I have to pass through the deep waters of sorrow?"

Verses 41-45: *Servants of All.*—The others were indignant with James and John because they wanted the chief places. Perhaps their very indignation showed that they too would have liked those places. Jesus says, "He who really gets the chief place in My Kingdom will be he who seeks not to be first, but to be servant of all." That is a hard saying. But it brings a man into the coveted place closest to Jesus, for it was what He did (**verse 45**). Only there is one thing that none but He can do. We can give our lives for Him, but only He can give His life a ransom for many. Into that great and deep thought we must enter in the coming lessons.

Verses 46-52: *Blind Bartimæus.*—The multitude was the throng of fellow pilgrims on their way up to Jerusalem, chiefly the people of His own Galilee who always passed that way. Jesus had just been speaking of Himself as servant of all. Now He shows how true that word is.

If ever man might reasonably be excused from the troubling of outsiders, it would be in the hours when he was facing a heroic death. But though Jesus' thoughts are full of the suffering which He has set before Himself, yet He is ready to serve the beggar.

Now the multitude as it passes on in the spring weather is a joyful one (read **Luke 18. 43**). Bartimæus in his new joy is walking with them to the Feast. Jesus, the Prophet of Galilee, is in their midst, and they feel as if the old days are coming back again, when He walked amongst

them as the Healer and they planned to make Him King.

Luke 19. 1-10: *The Change in Zacchæus.*—Here is another soul in Jericho who needs Jesus' service. You remember who the publicans were, and what people thought of them (see Lesson XXVIII.). Zacchæus, having become rich in tax-gathering for the Romans, would be detested by his townspeople. The last thing that he expected was that a prophet or religious teacher of his own nation would choose *his* house for a visit. And it was the last thing that the crowd of pilgrims expected, for they grumbled at Jesus for stopping the procession. (They had tried to rebuke Bartimæus half an hour earlier for trying to stop Jesus: **Mark 10. 48.**)

Jesus' pure and loving presence is so welcome to Zacchæus that, even before He enters the house, His host, standing at the door, makes the great surrender of his past sin, his love of money. He would be a poor man henceforth. But he is rich in the blessing of Jesus. "A son of Abraham," was the Jewish way of saying, "one of God's chosen people to whom His promises of blessing belong." The common way of speaking about publicans was that they were no true members of their nation, but had made themselves traitors, and were no longer of the seed of Abraham. So Jesus chooses the blessing that will most cheer the heart of Zacchæus. The old stigma is gone from him.

Compare **verse 10** with Jesus' own picture of the shepherd seeking one sheep. Although He might have been absorbed with the great sacrifice of His life that He is on His way to make at Jerusalem, He is ready to stop and give His understanding friendship to *one* soul that wants Him. He is always like that. But His friendship involves the giving up of sin. When you invite Him into your heart you must stand like Zacchæus at the door, and say, "This must go that Thou mayest enter."

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **Mark 10. 44, 45.**

FOR PRAYER AND MEDITATION.

Jesus was going up to Jerusalem to give His life a ransom for many.

Yet He could pause to think of one sinful man in Jericho who needed His holy friendship more than aught else in the world.

Without being asked, He offered His friendship to Zacchæus.

He is always like that.

He offers it to you. But His friendship involves the giving up of sin.

When you invite Him into your heart, you must stand like Zacchæus at the door and say:

Lord, this and this shall go.

Lord, I will try to make restitution for this and this in the past.

Lord, I will be poor henceforth, if only Thou wilt come in.

(Here think quietly what you must tell Jesus that you will give up to win His presence.)

And Jesus as He comes in says, "This day is salvation come to this house. This my son was dead, and is alive again, and was lost and is found."

LESSON XXXIV
THE SUPPER AT BETHANY AND THE ENTRY
INTO JERUSALEM

*Passages for Study: St. John 12. 1-13, 16;
St. Luke 19. 29-44.*

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

In this lesson we shall follow Jesus to the very end of His journey to Jerusalem. What reception is waiting for Him there? Read again **John 11. 57.**

He is climbing the steep road from Jericho to Jerusalem with the crowd of pilgrims. At the head of the road and quite close to Jerusalem He will find the little village of Bethany. What can you remember about this village? (Lesson XXXI.) He probably spent there the last Sabbath day before He died. Surely no one in *that* village would tell the enemies who were waiting to catch Him. We think with relief that the home at Bethany was a resting-place for Him on His way to die; that He could leave the crowds and be for a few hours among those who loved Him.

LESSON.

John 12: *The Understanding Worshipper.*

Verses 1, 2: These verses give a picture of welcome.

Verse 3: We saw before how Mary (**Luke 10. 39**) had given herself to understand the thoughts of Jesus, and now we watch her as the one who shows the most understanding of what is before Him. She knows how His enemies watch for Him in the city. She knows how He has said that He must be put to death: and she takes a silent way of saying to Him that she is pouring out all that is most precious in her of holy love and worship, as

she pours out her treasure of precious ointment. But her silent deed cannot be hid for the rare fragrance that fills all the house.

Verses 4-6: Jesus knew what was hidden from others: that He had not only deadly foes without, but one among His friends was turning into a traitor.

Verses 7, 8: Jesus' words show that He understood the inner meaning and fitness of Mary's act. Read and compare **Matt. 26. 12, 13**, and the Master's prophecy which you and I are helping to fulfil even as you learn this lesson!

Verses 9-11: *The Gathering Crowds.*—In these verses we turn away from the homage of the understanding heart and come back to the crowds. The brief rest from crowds was over, they are all around Him once more. We notice, too, an intensifying of the wicked purpose of Jesus' enemies. They are ready to put out of the way an innocent man, Lazarus, solely because they are jealous.

Verses 12, 13: While Jesus paused at Bethany the pilgrims who had come up the Jericho road with Him, and perhaps among them Bartimæus, lately blind, went on into the city, and their excited talk soon spread the news that Jesus was on His way. Many started out to meet Him.

Luke 19. 29-35: *The Royal Procession.*—While the crowd from Jerusalem started out to meet Him, Jesus from Bethany made His preparations to enter the city openly as a King.

But what a King!

True to the whole course of His life on earth this King makes no use of force. There is no stirring of these crowds to defend Him from the arrest which He knows awaits Him. Nor does He make use of any pomp other than the welcome of simple people.

John 12. 14-16: Afterwards this simple procession of Jesus recalled to the minds of His disciples that thus it was written that Jerusalem's true King should come.

Read the words of one of the old prophets of Israel in **Zech. 9. 9:** "Just, and having salvation; lowly, and

riding upon an ass." The word "lowly" had never before entered into man's idea of true kingliness.

Luke 19. 36-38 : Two crowds mingle in the joyous shout—those coming over the hill from Bethany with Jesus, and those starting out from Jerusalem and climbing the hill path to meet Him.

Verse 38 is like an earthly echo of a song sung in the heavenly places (compare **Luke 2. 14**).

Verses 39, 40 : The Pharisees, His enemies, unable to control the enthusiasm of the mob, hope to get Jesus to do it for them. He will not stop the people's spontaneous praise and worship any more than He will use the mob as an army to defend Himself or hurt His enemies. Neither of these points can the enemies of Jesus understand. In a similar position they would have used the violence of the crowd for their own purposes.

Verses 41-44 : *The King of Pity*.—In the midst of the shouting the King was in tears! For Himself? Nay, but His royal heart was moved for the people of the city now spread below Him in the sunshine as He rode down the hill.

His prophecy was terribly fulfilled in the year 70 A.D. by the armies of Rome.

What was hidden from the eyes of Jerusalem (**verse 42**) ?

What is the meaning of "Thou knewest not the days of thy visitation" (**verse 44**) ?

Read again **John 1. 9-12**, and seek in it the answer to these questions.

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **John 1. 11, 12**.

FOR PRAYER AND PRAISE.

Write in your notebook these words, and any other words of your own in which you yourself will add your praise to the praises of those who welcomed Jesus as King when He came to die for man:

Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord.

O Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world,
have mercy upon us.

O Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world,
grant us Thy peace.

Blessed is the King that cometh in the Name of the
Lord! Hosanna in the Highest! Blessed art Thou, O
King, who comest bringing salvation, meek and riding
upon an ass.

Blessed art Thou who camest of old to Thine own city,
and her rulers received Thee not. In Thy coming to
this city let me and mine be of those that receive Thee.

Let our house be to Thee a house of solace like the
house of them that received Thee in Bethany, and give
us grace to pour out before Thee all that is to us most
precious, an offering of love like the sweet ointment of
Mary Thy worshipper, to the glory of Thy holy Name.
Amen.

(You may also like to write in your book, and to learn
and sing often in your heart, this hymn of praise to the
King who came to give His life for men.)

Ride on! ride on in majesty!
Hark! all the tribes Hosanna cry;
O Saviour meek, pursue Thy road
With palms and scatter'd garments strow'd.

Ride on! ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die;
O Christ, Thy triumphs now begin
O'er captive death and conquer'd sin.

Ride on! ride on in majesty!
The angel armies of the sky
Look down with sad and wondering eyes
To see the approaching sacrifice.

Ride on! ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die;
Bow Thy meek head to mortal pain,
Then take, O God, Thy power, and reign.

(Translation in Arabic Hymnal, No. 135.)

LESSON XXXV
THE LAST SUPPER

Passages for Study : *St. John* 13. 1-30; *St. Matt.* 26. 26-29.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

Although, as you remember, His enemies had long ago decided to arrest and kill Jesus, they failed to carry out their will for some days after His public entry into Jerusalem. That entry took place on Sunday. The story of our lesson for today took place on the following Thursday. We will now, as introduction to it, learn very briefly what took place between those two dates.

Read **Luke 19. 47, 48.** Jesus was all the while moving about openly and teaching. The reason why His enemies failed to take Him was that they feared to rouse the indignation of the crowds (compare **Matt. 26. 4, 5**).

Failing to understand this, they set themselves to destroy Him subtilly. They tried again and again by cunning questions asked before the crowd to catch Him in His words and destroy His power with the people. In this they failed again and again, as you will read for yourself later on. Their last satanic plan was to find a traitor among His near friends, who for money would guide them to some lonely spot where they could arrest Him when He retired from the crowds for rest or prayer.

So had passed the time between His entering the city on Sunday afternoon and the Thursday evening of which we now read.

LESSON.

John 13. 1, 2 : These two verses give a picture of two hearts.

Verses 3-5 : *The Feet-Washing.*—The lowest servants of all in those days met visitors at the door with water for

their feet. In the room lent to Jesus for this last supper water and towel were ready, but none of the disciples had cared to take the part of the slave and wash the feet of his brethren. This is what Jesus did as a lesson that His disciples never forgot.

Verses 6-11: "Thou shalt understand hereafter" (verse 7). Peter is still proud and anxious to be first. Later he too will learn the lesson of humility. Years afterwards he who had seen his Master gird Himself with a towel to wash his feet wrote in a letter to his fellow-Christians, "All of you gird yourselves with humility to serve one another: for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5. 5).

"He that is bathed" (verse 10). Jesus pointed back to the day when John had baptized them in the waters of the river as a sign that they had repented and were cleansed from their old sins. Their great repentance and change of life was made long ago, but they needed constant cleansing from the new soiling of every day, and this Jesus Himself would give to them and to all His own who ask it.

Jesus then had washed the feet of the one who was turning traitor (verse 11). Perhaps that last act of love and service was a last effort to win back the soul from its sin against love.

Verses 12-20: *Jesus explains the Lesson of the Feet-Washing.*—We do not often wash one another's feet today (verse 14). What acts of humble service can you think of that are of the same nature? Have you seen acts of humility like this?

Could not your house and mine win this great honour (verse 20)?

Verses 21-30: *The Treachery Completed.*—The handing of the morsel was a mark of special friendship (verse 27). It might have brought the traitor in a rush of shame and love to repent and confess to the Master who still loved him. Since he refused this last appeal of love to his conscience it was natural that Satan's hold over him was

redoubled. And his Master quickly dismissed him from that company of friends.

Matt. 26. 26-28 : The traitor had gone. Alone with His friends, Jesus gave a sign and bond of love between Him and them, continued by them to this day.

Broken bread, He said, was His body, so soon to be broken for them.

Poured-out wine, He said, was His blood, so soon to be shed for many for remission of sins.

He said it was the "blood of the covenant." And they knew what that meant. When of old God gave His law to Beni Israel and chose them to be His people, a sacrifice had been made and all the people had been sprinkled with the blood, to show that they made a covenant to be God's people (**Exod. 24. 1-16**). Jesus says that He will give Himself for a sacrifice, and His shed blood shall make a new covenant between God and man.

You will be taught further about this bond of love and union, this feast of death and life, still kept between Jesus and His friends under the title of Holy Communion. It is enough now to see how He offered His friends His life, Himself, and how He Himself knew that in this offering He was bringing them remission of sins. This death of His, then, was not only the death of a martyr, He knew it to be a saving death. Refer again to His words in **John 10. 11 ; Mark 10. 45**.

Verse 29 : You have seen too much of Jesus to misunderstand, as some have wilfully and wickedly done, these words as though Jesus pointed to a heavenly kingdom which would be a place of wine-bibbing. You could not think that after what you have read of Jesus. We will give you below an explanation over which you may reverently meditate.

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **John 13. 14, 15**.

As you learn these verses think quietly what act of

humble service you might do this day that would be following the example of Jesus the Servant of all.

FOR MEDITATION.

Jesus said, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new with you in My Father's Kingdom."

It is Jesus' last meal on earth. He is giving Himself to be crushed and broken, so that His life may become available for men, even as a cluster of grapes is crushed and so its juice becomes the refreshment of men. His broken life shall call forth the response of other broken lives, sacrifice in answer to His sacrifice, and whenever this happens He drinks new wine in the Kingdom of God. As His life was poured out so that we might drink, so when men pour out their lives in loving grateful response, He drinks new wine today in the Kingdom.

The meaning of this will come to you little by little in prayer and love and life.

A prayer to be written in the notebook :

O God, give me that mind which was in Christ Jesus.

Who took upon Him the form of a servant.

Who humbled Himself.

Who became obedient unto death, yea, the death of the Cross.

Teach me today to follow the example of His great humility, to the glory of His Name which is above every name. Amen.

LESSON XXXVI

A SYNOPSIS OF THE LAST CONVERSATION

Passage for Study : St. John 13. 31 to ch. 17.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

We have read together of the last supper of Jesus with His disciples, and specially of three deeds of His.

1. The feet-washing.
2. The sending out of the traitor.
3. The giving of the Bread and Wine of the Holy Communion.

You will dwell on these scenes and read of them more and more.

Today we are to pass on to the conversation that took place in the Upper Room where the last supper was held: the conversation of the last evening before Jesus died for His people. Little by little you will learn to know all the recorded words of that evening. It will suffice now to know several chief points in the conversation.

LESSON.

John 13. 31-35 : *A Last Commandment.*—Jesus did not say an easy commandment. He said a *new* commandment.

In what way *new* ? Had not Beni Israel been commanded to love one another before ? (Revise **Luke 10. 26, 27.**)

The newness was in the phrase “ even as I have loved you.”

Think what this means. It was said just after serving them as a slave, just after passing them the broken bread and the poured-out wine that meant His body broken and His life poured out for them. This was the new measure He set for love of one another.

It is a new commandment to every soul that comes under subjection to Jesus, for it is not in unaided human nature to give such love to the brethren. Human nature may rise to it in moments of exaltation. But to give it, not to one supreme beloved alone, but to the whole company of fellow disciples, is very far from unaided human nature. It is only possible to human nature enriched with Christ nature.

John 14. 15-20, 26, 27 : *The Promise of the Spirit.*—And the next point that you shall note is that Christ told His disciples of a way in which their human nature should be so enriched.

He told them that though He was leaving them, a spiritual presence would come to them. Collect what He says in these verses about the Coming One:

The Comforter (verse 16).

The Spirit of Truth (verse 17).

I will come (verse 18).

I in you (verse 20).

The Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name (verse 26).

Here is a revelation which touches on mysteries too deep for us. Yet it is plain that that spiritual presence that was promised was to be the personal presence of Christ Himself. And this is the only explanation of the experience of those first disciples and of all disciples since, when they find that they are not left alone to try to follow their Master's example, but there is an imparting of His spirit to those who surrender to Him. You read of this experience in Lesson XXIV., when one of His disciples wrote, "Of His fulness have we all received." You will have further lessons on this great and sacred truth (Lessons XIX. and XX. in "Christian Faith and Life").

This is for you, as it was for the disciples who heard the same words in the Upper Room, a beginning of thought and of expectation, for the experience is to come to you too if you are to be His disciple.

[*N.B.*—After carefully reading the verses indicated above, you will be quite unable to hold, as some have held, that Jesus was referring to the coming of Mohammed. There is nothing to defend this theory except a misunderstanding of the Greek word for “Comforter” (**John 14, 16**). If you want to be able to explain this to others, get “Muhammad and the Bible,” by Goldsack, published by C.L.S.I., or, in Arabic, “The Paraclete,” by Dr. Spanton, published by the Nile Mission Press, Cairo, $\frac{1}{2}$ P.T. But without any special reading you can see that the promise of Jesus was for a presence to come to the men He addressed, whereas Mohammed was born four centuries later.]

John 15. 1-8: *The Vine and the Branches.*—The next great point which you shall note is that Jesus, having told His disciples of a spiritual presence which was to link Him and them, now tells them that their very life and all the fruit of their living is dependent on keeping unbroken this spiritual connection of the life with life. This He tells them by His parable of the vine and the branches.

John 17. 1-26: *The Prayer of Jesus.*—Here you come to the sacred place, and are allowed for once to be present when Jesus is at prayer for His disciples—and for you if you become one of them. Read the prayer and say to yourself what it is that Jesus in those last hours most desired to see in His disciples as the fruit of His life and death for them. What does Jesus want for *you*? Plainly in the thought of Jesus there was no solitary perfection. It was in *union* that His disciples were to glorify God.

This prayer is in itself the answer to those who think they might be His disciples secretly. See **verses 14, 22-23** (*cf.* chap. **13. 35**). It is sometimes a temptation to those who come into Christ’s Church from Islam to form themselves into a little group apart from the rest of the congregation, owing to their mutual sympathy and understanding. But if such a group in any way shuts them off

from their fellow Christians, it is not after the mind of Christ as revealed in this prayer.

The prayer leads you close to the sacred mystery of the Person of Jesus who can speak of "the glory which I had with Thee before the world was," but at the same time can commit His work and His loved ones to the Father's keeping with the surrender and faith of one who is truly Son of Man. Again it shows this Son of Man wholly occupied in His praying with the hallowing of God's Name and the coming of His Kingdom. Jesus, with the ordeal of His suffering before Him, *prays this prayer first*, even before He comes to the prayer for deliverance from suffering or for strengthening in it.

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **John 13. 34, 35.**

MEDITATION.

Buy the little book called "The Last Supper" (S.P.C.K., C.M.S. Buildings, Boulac, Cairo, or St. George's, Jerusalem, price 5 mm.). Carry it in your pocket and meditate on it often.

FOR PRAYER.

In some quiet place read again the prayers of Jesus in **John 17. 15-20**. Try reverently to hear Him saying these words for you and for His other disciples.

Then ask Him to help you to share in His prayer, and try to make each of these six verses your own prayer for yourself and for any who are His disciples. (His "New Commandment" will lead you to pray for your fellow-disciples with yourself.) You will no doubt want to write these verses among the prayers in your pocket-book.

LESSON XXXVII
AGONY, BETRAYAL, DESERTION, DENIAL

Passages for Study : St. Matt. 26. 36-58, 69-75.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

The last supper took place in an upper room in Jerusalem, and was followed by the great conversation which we read for our last lesson. After His promise of the coming Comforter, Jesus said, " Arise, let us go hence " (**John 14. 31b**). As they went He spoke of the vine and its branches, perhaps as they passed under some trellised vine, but most likely as they passed through the Temple courts (at least times like this Feast of the Passover the Temple gates stood open all night long), and saw gleaming in the moonlight the great golden vine which had been placed for beauty on the front of the Temple. The great prayer which we last read was probably spoken by Jesus standing in the moonlight in these Temple courts with His disciples around Him.

They now left city and Temple behind, dipped into the steep valley of the Kedron, and climbed the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives to a garden where Jesus often used to go for quiet, rest, and prayer. It was called Gethsemane, which means oil press, from the olive-trees which grew there. The next scene that you are to read, then, took place among the black shadows and silver-shining moonlit olive-trees.

LESSON.

Matt. 26. 36-46 : *The Agony in the Garden.*—What was this sorrow unto death and this cup ? Was it the near approaching ill-treatment and death that He had foretold ? (**Matt. 16. 21**, etc.)

Not this alone, for this He had long foreseen and mastered, and had led the way with firm steps to meet it.

Remember that Jesus had spoken of His death as more than a death of a martyr. Read again **John 10. 11, 18; Mark 10. 45; John 11. 51, 52.** In what sense was Jesus about to die for the "sheep," for "the nation," "a ransom for many," for "all the children of God that are scattered abroad" ?

Read the following words: **1 Pet. 2. 24; Gal. 3. 13; Rom. 5. 6-8.**

The "cup," then, was not only the cup of physical sorrow, or the desertion and cruelty of man. That which brought sorrow unto death to Jesus in the garden was taking on Himself as His own the pain and shame of all the vile, dreadful sins of all the sons of men. If He did this He would have to know on the Cross what He had never known, the sense of separation from the love and life of God; for that separation is the true curse of sin, and He was "becoming a curse for us."

Some stumble at this, because their thoughts are full of the ideas of laws and governments, and say, "But it was not *just* that He should take our sins as His." Instead of giving you an answer of the theologians we would remind you that Jesus had shown that there is a higher law at work in the world than the law of strict justice and rewards and punishments. The mother who bears toil and weariness for her child without a thought of reward is showing the world something nobler than the policeman and the judge. The justice of policeman and judge is not *bad*, but the sacrifice of love is better and higher. It is not *just* that the shepherd should give his life to defend a flock of sheep from wolves instead of saving himself; it is not *just* that the father of the wandering, spend-thrift son should welcome him back with kisses and a feast. These are acting by a higher rule than justice—the rule of self-sacrificing love.

"Thy will be done" (**verse 42**) marks the answer to Jesus' prayer of agony, and marks His victory. He

knew that the answer was not the passing of the "cup," but the strength to drink it.

From this point see Him going forward calmly, without hesitation and royally thoughtful for others.

Verses 47-55: *The Betrayal and Arrest.*—**Verse 53** shows how complete was the victory of **verse 42**. The cup was not forced upon Jesus. He lifted it to His own lips for our sake (**John 10. 17, 18**).

Verses 56-58: *Desertion.*—After the conscious, calculated betrayal of the traitor came the flight even of those who loved Him.

Verses 69-75: *Denial.*—The flight was followed by the denial, through fear, of one who had been drawn closest in love. Jesus was now surrounded with none but enemy faces.

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **Isa. 53. 6** ; **Eph. 5. 2**.

If you want to think more deeply upon the meaning of this self-giving of Christ, you may read in Arabic "Aspects of the Death of Christ" (S.P.C.K., C.M.S. Building, Boulac, Cairo, or St. George's, Jerusalem); English version from C.L.S.I., Vepery, Madras.

A prayer to be written in your book :

O Lord Jesus Christ, by the sorrow that overtook Thee in the judgment-hall when Thy disciples denied Thee, grant me (us) the grace of courage. When discipleship becomes hard, when all men forsake Thee and flee, help me to follow Thee still; that when at last I meet Thee face to face, I may not be ashamed, but may meet Thy look with gladness. Amen.

A THANKSGIVING.

Read again the verses referred to in this lesson: **1 Pet. 2. 24** ; **Gal. 3. 13** ; **Rom. 5. 6-8** ; **Isa. 53. 6** ; **Eph. 5. 2**. Picture Jesus in the dark garden offering Himself to die for you, and then try to thank Him for His gift of Himself.

If you like you may say:

O Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world,
Thou only art holy; Thou only art the Lord; Thou only,
O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory
of God the Father. Amen.

LESSON XXXVIII
THE CONDEMNATION OF JESUS

Passages for Study : St. Matt. 26. 59-68; 27. 1, 2, 11-26
(cf. *St. John. 18. 33-38*).

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

Who were the enemies of Jesus who had compassed His arrest ? (**Matt. 26. 47** ; cf. Lesson XXXI.) The men who in name were the people of religion, the pillars of religion, and who sincerely believed themselves to be such. They were so blinded by the belief in their own rightness that they could not see what God was revealing to them in Jesus. Calling themselves men of God, they refused God's revelation, and hardened their hearts and would not see what God showed them, until at last they lost their power of spiritual seeing and could see nothing but evil in the Holy One Himself. God save us all from such assurance that we are right, and from such unwillingness to learn new lessons from Him !

Jesus was arrested, then, by the people of religion and taken first to the council of the sheikhs of the Jews (the *mahkama shara'iya*), **Matt. 26. 57**.

LESSON.

Matt. 26. 59-68 : *The Mahkama Shara'iya*.—It was a mock trial, for the judges were all enemies determined to condemn the prisoner. It was, further, an illegal meeting, for the council of sheikhs of Beni Israel might not meet by night.

John 2. 19-21, perhaps, explains what the witnesses were referring to.

Matt. 27. 1, 2 : The midnight meeting, being illegal, was followed by this early morning meeting to endorse and

legalize the request they would make to the Roman governor for a death warrant. For the land was under the Roman protection, and the Jewish religious (shar'i) courts had not the right of issuing a death sentence, which must come from the Roman power.

Verses 11-14: *The Roman Trial.*—The procession arrived in the early morning outside the Roman governor's house—many shouting accusers and one silent prisoner. Generally the trials were held in a room in front of the palace, and then the governor came out and announced his verdict on a platform in the open air, on which the judge's chair was placed. In this trial the Jews all refused to enter the trial room for fear of defiling themselves by entering a heathen place at the beginning of their Passover feast. Yet they saw no defilement in doing to death the Holiest! *Cf. again 1 Sam. 16. 7b.*

In this trial, then, you must picture the crowd of priests and others arriving with their prisoner, and calling out their accusations to the Roman governor on the judgment-seat above them. Then you must see the Temple guards hand over the prisoner to Roman soldiers, to be led in alone to the trial room for examination, while His accusers wait outside impatient for leave to kill Him.

John 18. 33-38: *The Roman Governor alone with Jesus.*—The Roman governor, of course, knew that the crowds had welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem some days before, with shouts that He was a King. It had not seemed, however, that He was dangerous to the government, for He had spent the days quietly teaching in the Temple. But now the Jews are shouting again that He wants to be a King. It is therefore the Roman governor's duty to his emperor that he should find out whether "the kingdom" of which Jesus had constantly taught was likely to be dangerous to the government.

What does Jesus Himself say of His kingdom? Has not His whole life and His whole teaching about the kingdom been in agreement with these words?

Matt. 27. 15-22: *The Choice offered to the Jews.*—In very truth the Roman judge himself was on trial and was being judged. Having learned what **verse 18** tells us he had learned, he was on trial as to whether he had courage to defend the innocent and do justice. He tries to do it by an easy way, but the people will not have it.

Verses 23-26: *Condemnation of Jesus.*—But who is really condemned in the eyes of God and men? The venomous foes, the shrieking mob, the judge who could not find courage to face an angry mob in defence of innocence, these wrote their condemnation.

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **Isa. 53. 7.**

FOR MEDITATION.

The rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed.

Many false witnesses came. . . . And the high priest stood up and said unto Him, Answerest Thou nothing? What is it which these witness against Thee? But Jesus held His peace.

He was oppressed, yet He humbled Himself and opened not His mouth.

He humbled Himself, despising the shame.

Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

A prayer to be written in your book for constant use:

O Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us.

From all blindness of heart; from pride, vainglory, and

hypocrisy; from envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness,

Good Lord, deliver us.

For Thou only art holy; Thou only art the Lord; Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

LESSON XXXIX
THE CRUCIFIXION

*Passages for Study : St. Matt. 27. 32-50; St. Luke 23. 26-49;
St. John 19. 23-30.*

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

We are to read today of the Cross, the Roman form of gallows for criminals who were not Roman citizens.

Why was Jesus going out to die ?

Recall those verses that you have learnt by heart during our lessons, and that link up the whole life and purpose of Jesus with this last act of death: **Matt. 1. 21b**; **John 1. 29b**; **10. 11**; **Mark 10. 45**. Then read slowly and quietly as an introduction to our lesson: **Isa. 53. 4, 5, 6** (a prophet's vision centuries beforehand of the day of which we are now reading); next turn to **Gal. 1. 44**, and that test phrase of **Gal. 2. 20**: "The Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me."

To know all the depth of meaning in the self-giving of Jesus will be too much for a whole lifetime of learning to love. It will be the subject for your thought all your life long, but for thought illumined by love. To naked intellect, unenriched by the spiritual powers of love, the acts of God who is love may seem foolishness. Enough, then, for today to know that in this act you watch "the Son of God who loved you and gave Himself for you." Love submitted Himself to the worst that hatred could do, for love was conquering hate. Had love shirked the worst, hate would have triumphed.

O Love of God, O sin of man,
In that dread act your strength was tried,
And victory remains with Love,
For Love Himself was crucified.

LESSON.

Luke 23. 26-32: *The Procession to the Place of Execution.*
—The prophecy of Jesus was fulfilled at the siege of Jerusalem less than forty years later.

Matt. 27. 33-34: *The Drink Refused.*—This drink, prepared by merciful women for criminals, was lulling to the senses and took away some of the keen edge of the agony. Why would not Jesus take it? He would abate no drop of the "cup" that He was drinking for us.

Luke 23. 33, 34: *The Crucifixion. The Prayer for Forgiveness.*

John 19. 23, 24: *The Division of Garments.*

Matt. 27. 36, 37: *The Title.*

Matt. 27. 38-44; Luke 23. 35-37: *The Mockers.*—Who mocked Him? What did they taunt Him with? Can you see here a repetition of the devil's temptation to use His divine power for Himself? Compare carefully **Matt. 4. 2, 3; 27. 40.** Can you understand why, for Christian people, the taunt "He saved others, Himself He cannot save" has become a word of deepest praise and thanks to Him? It was both true and a great glory. He could not save Himself, because He was held to the Cross not by the nails, but by His will to save men.

Luke 23. 39-43: *He Saves Another.*—Paradise means the blessed rest of redeemed spirits after death, a state of spiritual light and joy. The name itself derived from the paradise of Eden indicates a place of joy and holiness.

John 19. 25-27: *He Cares for His Mother.*

Matt. 27. 45-49: *The Great Cry.*—Jesus is quoting the first verse of **Ps. 22**, one of the Psalms which prophesies the Passion of the Christ. He is identifying Himself with the Suffering Christ of that Psalm, who seems abandoned both by God and man. You shall later read the Psalm for yourself, and see in how many respects it foretold the Cross of Jesus. But the Psalm shows that He who suffered was *not* forsaken (see especially **verses 24**

and 27). Many who know not Jesus have used this quotation of His as a sign of the failure of what He had come to do, or as a sign that He was not the Son of the Heavenly Father. You who know more of Him will see in it the very sign that He has taken upon Himself all that He came to take, even the desolation of the sinner. Read again Isa. 53. 4, 5.

John 19. 28, 29: *The Thirst.*

John 19. 30: *The Completed Task.*

Luke 23. 44-49; Matt. 27. 50: *The Death.*

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Revise what is already known, and learn the rest of the prophecy of Isa. 53. 3-8.

READING.—You will be called upon to meet the arguments of those who, knowing neither Jesus nor His Gospel, seek to prove that He did not die for you. You may have recourse to the following little Arabic books to help you: "Proofs of the Death of Christ," 1 P.T.; "A New Proof of the Death of Christ," 1 P.T. (from S.P.C.K., Boulac, Cairo, and St. George's, Jerusalem).

Again, you will meet those who say that He died, but died only as a saint or martyr, not as Saviour. You may read in English (from C.L.S.I., Vepery, Madras), "How the Death of Christ Differs from the Death of Saints and Martyrs" (very simple), and "Aspects of the Redemptive Act of Christ"—richer in thought (also in Arabic from the address above).

Buy these one by one and study them as an act of service to Him who died for you. And lend them to others.

It is your duty for His sake to know these arguments, but do not think that by arguing well you can bring your brother to love Christ. To do that you must show your brother not only good argument, but the love of Christ, love that conquered all hatred and abuse.

FOR MEDITATION.

Those who have travelled furthest in the spiritual life find that they need from time to time to visit the Cross of Jesus as He hung there *for them*.

At the foot of His Cross they lay their anger, and He takes it away and teaches them to forgive as He forgave those who crucified Him.

At the foot of His Cross they lay the sins that separate them from God, and He forgives them and gives them His Companionship, as He did to the penitent thief.

At the foot of His Cross they lay their anxieties for those they love, and He helps and sympathizes, as He helped His Mother and St. John.

At the foot of His Cross they lay their pain and their loneliness, or fear of death, and they find that He is with them in these things, to help and strengthen.

Will you learn to make these visits to the Cross of Jesus? Make your mind quiet. Read a few verses from the Gospel story of the Cross till your heart can see Him hanging there above you. Then tell Him any of these things. He is the same Jesus today.

A Prayer of the Souls for whom Jesus Died.

In any moment of difficulty, temptation, or pain or weakness, you have the right to cry to Him who loved you and gave Himself for you:

O Saviour of the world, who by Thy Cross and precious blood hast redeemed us, save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord.

LESSON XL
THE BURIAL

Passage for Study : St. Matt. 27. 50-66.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

When Jesus on the Cross said, "It is finished," *what* was finished? The physical torments of an innocent, holy sufferer? Revise Lesson XXXVII. on this point, and tell of anything in the New Testament or in the pamphlets recommended in Lesson XXXIX. that brought you new insight on the work of the Cross.

Should we not expect that some sign would mark a death so different in value from the death of one who was *only* a saint or a martyr? Ponder God's ways from first to last in the story of the Saviour's life, and you will be led to expect a sign for those who were ready to understand, not a sign to force men to believe. Remember how quietly, how silently, God sent the Saviour into the world, with no public disturbance yet with signs enough—of virgin birth, of angel songs and messages, of guiding stars, of aged prophets—for those who were believing an attentive to watch His working.

Remember, too, how Jesus all His earthly days *refused* any sign that would force His nation to believe that He was Son of God, though among believing hearts He gave radiant signs at the Cana wedding and the grave of Lazarus. It would seem that what God seeks is no forced belief, but voluntary love and trust.

At the Death of Jesus all this continued. To the unbelieving nothing more happened than the death of a prophet at the hands of the Roman soldiery through the machinations of Jewish priests; just as at His birth nothing more happened to the careless eye than the birth

of a Jewish baby in a Bethlehem stable at census time. Yet there were at both times signs in plenty for believing hearts. You have read some: the strange fulfilment of prophecy in the details of the Passion, the words of Majesty and Love from the very Cross, the darkness at midday. Today you shall read more.

LESSON.

Matt. 27. 50-53: *The Rent Veil.*—What was this veil of the Temple, and what did its rending mean ?

In front of the innermost sanctuary of the holy house among the Jews hung a great heavy curtain, behind which no mortal might pass save the High Priest, and he only once a year on the day of Atonement, when special sacrifices had been made for his sins and the sins of the people. This was to teach men that God was so holy that none could come to Him except his sins had been done away first.

When Jesus died this tremendous curtain was torn in two from above, as though to make it plain that God had by the death of Jesus opened a way for man to approach Him.

Verse 54: The signs read by the believing heart. The centurion, a Roman officer, was a heathen. That morning he had not known Jesus from any criminal he had to execute. He had been by the Cross all day—and see his testimony.

Verses 55, 56: All who love Jesus must be grateful to those women, for they alone (except His Mother and John the disciple) through all that day refused to let Him die with no friend near (read again **John 19. 25**).

Verses 57-61: *The Burial.*—This Joseph had been only secretly a disciple (so says St. John) for fear of the Jews. Now his heart reproached him that he had not stood openly beside his Lord. And though (except St. John and the brave women) the other disciples would not be seen by the Cross, he now took courage to let the Roman governor himself know that he belonged to Jesus by

begging for His dear Body. And then, not caring how many hostile Jews saw him there, he went to the Cross to do his last services. And with him (St. John says) was another timid one, suddenly ashamed of his cowardice, that Nicodemus who had visited Jesus by night (**John 3. 1**).

Verses 62-66: *The Sealing of the Tomb.*—Jesus died on Friday afternoon, and the burial took place before sunset. When the sun set the Sabbath of the Jews began, during which the city was filled with joyful and triumphant psalms and the gay dresses of the great feast; the hidden disciples of Jesus wept in secret; the Body of Jesus lay in silence in the garden tomb; His enemies, even on the holy Sabbath of the feast, were active and busy, and brought soldiers to guard the grave.

And what does the rest of Jesus in the tomb mean to His people?

The soul of Jesus was with God in Paradise, where He had promised to receive the robber who turned to Him at the last.

Jesus had perfected His human experience to the very end, by passing through death and the separation of soul and body that seems hard to us men. Just as He endured with and for us helpless childhood, hunger, thirst, pain, fatigue, misunderstanding, loneliness, contradiction; so like us and for us He endured passing into the unknown. He did this that He might deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **Isa. 53. 9; Heb. 2. 9.**

FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER.

Jesus, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man.

Yea, Lord, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.

Jesus said: If a man keep My saying he shall never see death (the death of the body will be only a passing

into life). He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.

Believest thou this ?

Lord, I believe. Help Thou mine unbelief. Suffer me not at my last hour through any pains of death to fall from Thee.

To depart and to be with Christ is far better.

For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

LESSON XLI
EASTER MORNING

Passages for Study : St. John 20. 1-18; St. Matt. 28. 11-15.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

Read **John 19. 25** and **Matt. 27. 61**, which tell how Mary Magdalene had been one of the few who was near the Cross of Jesus when others had forsaken Him and fled, and how she had marked the place of the tomb and no doubt longed to take her part in those last services rendered to the Body of Jesus. Through the strictly-kept rest day of the Jews, from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, she, like other faithful disciples of Jesus, must have wept in secret, with a sense that all the power and love and beauty of God which they had seen in Jesus had now passed from the empty-seeming earth.

LESSON.

John 20. 1, 2: *Mary Magdalene at the Tomb.*—See with the first light of the first working day this faithful soul is first at the sepulchre of her Lord.

Verses 3-7: *Peter and John at the Tomb.*—The great stone was rolled away. The tomb was empty.

But this was not the work of robbers, for the grave-clothes and bandages are still in place, as though the sacred Body, fine as air, had slipped through them without disturbing them.

Verse 8: It was this sight of the undisturbed grave-clothes that convinced John that his Lord had risen.

Verses 11-13: *Mary Magdalene and the Angels.*—The tomb that had been guarded by soldiers is now guarded by angels.

Verses 14-18: *Mary Magdalene and the Risen Lord.*—The negative command has in it a promise (**verse 17**): “Don’t cling to Me (yet). The days are coming when My presence shall cleave close to you, closer to you than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.”

Matt. 28. 11-15: *The Military Guard and the Angel Guard.*—You have read what happened to the guard. What they told the chief priests you may read in **Matt. 28. 2-4**. The angel guard had descended with what seemed to the soldiers a terrible shaking like an earthquake. At their head was one called “The Angel of the Lord,” their dread Commander. He rolled back the sealed stone and sat on it as though taking charge. The terrified men were at first like those dead, then slunk away as you read in **verse 11**, to tell how their guard had been relieved.

What frustration for the chief priests after toil piled on toil, and hate on hate, to destroy the Holy One!

John 20. 1: “*The First Day of the Week.*”—Now you know why the first day of the week is our day of holy joy and remembrance of our Lord. Up to that time the seventh day had been kept, as it still is by those Jews who have not become disciples of Jesus. Men do not change the habits of their lives without strong reasons, and the fact that all Jesus’ followers kept “the first day of the week” as their day of worship shows that their Master’s resurrection was the greatest happening they had ever known. After that, even the Sabbath day, when all their brethren worshipped God, was not so great a day as the day of resurrection.

PUPIL’S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **Rom. 6. 9-11**.

FOR PRAISE AND PRAYER.

Almighty God, we thank Thee that Thy Son Jesus Christ has overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life.

We thank Thee that He could not be holden of death, and that death has no more dominion over Him.

We thank Thee that He is the Prince of Life by whom death is swallowed up in victory.

Grant that we may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings.

Prepare us in baptism to die to sin, that thenceforth we may not serve sin.

Prepare us, too, to rise again to newness of life, alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

LESSON XLII

THE AFTERNOON AND EVENING OF EASTER DAY

Passages for Study : St. Luke 24. 13-35; St. John 20. 19-23.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

It is the afternoon of the day on which Jesus rose. The Resurrection angels have been seen by the soldiers on guard and by some of the faithful women, who, with Peter and John, have also seen the empty tomb.

The Risen Lord Himself has been seen by Mary Magdalene. But as yet most of the disciples are in the same dull despair because one whom they had trusted to redeem the nation had let Himself be arrested like any bandit and put to death like a criminal. They felt that there was nothing to live for after the smashing of these hopes. The story which we are now to study of the afternoon of this day gives you a picture of their minds.

LESSON.

Luke 24. 13, 14 : *The Walk to Emmaus.*—Emmaus was seven miles from Jerusalem. No doubt they were leaving the city because in that state of grief they would find Jerusalem, full then of the triumphant psalms and gay dresses of the Jewish feast, no place for their sorrow.

Verses 15-18 : Neither Mary Magdalene nor these two recognized the Lord at once. Remember, the strongest thought in their minds was that He was dead. He was the last person they expected to meet. Again, remember the dulled perceptions of one half blind with weeping. And again remember that with the Resurrection there passed

into the human body of Jesus something of the glory and power of an endless life, which might change His aspect.

Verses 18-24: Cleopas gives a perfect picture of the minds of Jesus' disciples at that moment.

Verse 21: Note this verse as containing the hope that failed. Strangely enough their hope failed because His disciples hoped for too *little* from Jesus.

They hoped that He would redeem Israel from the power of the Romans, and set up an Israelitish kingdom of righteousness and joy. But He came to earth to redeem, not one nation from political troubles, but rather all mankind from the power of the Evil One—to redeem every sinful soul that turned to Him for rescue from evil, and to set up a kingdom with no frontiers.

The disciples had decided in what way they would expect God to act, instead of learning from Jesus what God's way was.

Verses 25-27: Jesus Himself explained to them the way of God from the book of God. He began at the point where they were most in error, "Ought not Christ to suffer?" From the books of Moses He would show them the law of sacrifice for sin. From the Prophets and Psalms a servant of God who would suffer, as well as a king who would reign in righteousness. You yourself know of the prophecies in **Ps. 22** and **Isa. 53**.

Verses 28-32: At last they recognize Him in His own action. He takes the place of the host instead of the guest.

Verses 33-35: In their joy they set out again on the seven-mile walk to carry joy to others.

John 20. 19-23: *The Same Day at Evening.*—Here is the story of the same evening, taking place when the happy two had stumbled along the darkling hill paths to the city, and were telling their story to the rest. The passing of Jesus through the closed doors shows some of the new powers of the resurrection Body.

Verse 21: *How* was Jesus sending His people?

Even as He had been sent, to love, to work, to serve, to

suffer, to teach, to seek and save. He had done all this in the power of God Himself (Luke 4. 18). Now He gives the same power (power to love, to work, to serve, to suffer, to lead, to seek, to save) to His people, that all their acts may be through no authority of their own. The breathing on them signifies the passing into them of His Spirit.

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart Isa. 53. 10, 11. (You have now learned the greater part of this passage, which you may be sure was one that Jesus opened to the two disciples on the Emmaus walk.)

A Prayer.—O Risen Lord, open to me in all the Scriptures the things concerning Thyself, that my heart may burn within me at Thy presence and Thy teaching.

(This prayer, or one like it, may be said by you whenever you read your Bible.)

Note on Reading the Scriptures.

The Scriptures which Jesus made to live to His disciples that day were the Old Testament books. If you have not had much teaching on those books you will do well to read in Arabic "Ninety-Three Readings in the Old Testament" as an introduction. If you study the leaflet called "Pass-over Night" you will be able to see how in *one* of the Old Testament Scriptures it was foreshadowed that Christ must suffer for His people. (Both of these from S.P.C.K., Boulac, Cairo, and St. George's, Jerusalem.)

If you are already familiar with the Old Testament you may read also in Arabic "Christ in all the Scriptures" and "Christ in the Psalms" (published by Nile Mission Press, Cairo).

When your present course of instruction is finished you will make a point of joining some union for the daily reading of the Scriptures. Your teacher will tell you how to do this.

LESSON XLIII

THE GOSPEL MISSION AND ASCENSION

Passages for Study : St. Matt. 28. 16-20; Acts 1. 1-14.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

You saw in the last lesson how the Living Jesus said that He was sending His people into the world as the Father had sent Him (**John 20. 21**). How was that ?

Today we read more fully of the orders that their Master gave them for carrying on His work, and of their preparation for it.

LESSON.

Matt. 28. 16-20: *The Gospel Mission.*—So, then, baptism is necessary for those who would be Christ's people.

And teaching is necessary too.

And, again, disciples of Christ have no choice but to evangelize in His Name in all the world. There is no place here for concealed Christianity.

And, again, He promised to be with them to the end of time, and His people will tell you that He *keeps* His promise.

Acts 1. 1-3: The special training from Jesus after the Resurrection lasted forty days. He was not with them all the time, but He came and taught them some of the things they had failed to understand before about Himself and His Kingdom. Read again **Luke 24. 45-48**. His bodily presence was not always with them, for He was training them to know Him present not to their bodily eyes, but to the eyes of their souls—present through His Spirit in their inmost lives.

Verses 4, 5: He leads them to expect the special coming

of that Spirit of whom He had spoken on the night before He died (**John 14. 16-18**).

He calls this special coming their "baptism" with the Spirit, for baptism means the beginning of a new life, and it was a new life that would come to them when their dear Lord returned to them through His Spirit with inward living power.

Verses 6-8: How slowly their old thought of the Israelitish kingdom dies! Once again we learn that Jesus' Kingdom is a Kingdom of the spirit and for the whole world.

Verses 9-11: *The Ascension.*—Compare the story of the Transfiguration for the cloud, which is the mark of God's presence. He went "into heaven." For the full triumph of it read **Eph. 1. 20-23**. There the story is told from the heavenly point of view; here in the Acts from the point of view of the earthly witnesses.

Heaven is where God is, and God is close to us, nearer than anyone else. So Jesus, instead of going away from His friends, had only taught them by this act of Ascension not to depend on His bodily presence. Instead He would be close to them, as God is, all the time, to the end of the world.

Verses 12-14: They were much together waiting for the "baptism" of the Holy Spirit that would begin their new life of power and witness. They were in the upper chamber, probably that same room of many memories where Jesus had first promised them the coming of the Spirit (**John 14. 16-27**). How they would go over His words in their minds and hearts!

Who were those who waited so? The eleven, the women whom we have seen faithful at the Cross, Mary, and for the first time in the group of humble believers, His brethren. Their names are written in **Matt. 13. 55**. We have hitherto seen them among those who criticized Jesus (see **John 7. 5**), but we are told that Jesus in His tender love specially visited one of them, James, after His resurrection—and we shall find them henceforth among

His disciples. Two of them had the honour to write two of the books of the New Testament—James and Jude. How glad His Mother must have been that the rest of the family now believed on their Great Brother, Jesus.

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **Matt. 28. 18-20.**

FOR MEDITATION.

I return to the opening words of St. John's Gospel. I think again of the Eternal Word of God made flesh and dwelling among us.

And now after His tabernacling He has returned into the eternal life of the heavenly places. But here is the wonder—He has taken with Him, into the life of God, into the heart of being, a glorified, sinless human body and perfect human nature.

There at the heart of all things is a Brother on the Throne. He ever liveth to make intercession for us. He is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God; not one who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the heavenly Throne, for our Brother has shown us that the throne above all thrones is a throne of grace. Let us come that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

FOR PRAYER.

Teach me, O Lord, to lay my thoughts and needs at Thy heavenly Throne, since Jesus is there enthroned to help and receive me.

Teach me, O Lord, to bear witness on earth to Jesus, my Ascended Master, since He is with me to empower me.

Teach me to bow before Him whom I have loved as the lowly Son of Man, and to say with all the saints in

the heavenly places, O King of Endless Glory, praise be to Thee for evermore!

Grant that we may also in heart and mind ascend into the heaven whither our Sayiour Christ is gone before, and with Him continually dwell. Amen.

LESSON XLIV

PENTECOST

Passage for Study : Acts 2.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.

Read again **Acts 1. 5**. Consider what Jesus had taught His people to expect when the Spirit came to them:

Comfort (**John 14. 16**).

Power (**Acts 1. 8**). [*N.B.*—Not for their own inner life alone, but for witnessing.]

Teaching in the things of God (**John 14. 26**).

The spiritual presence of Jesus and the Divine indwelling in their hearts (**John 14. 16-23**).

We now turn to read of the fulfilment of the promise. Where was the company of Jesus waiting for its fulfilment? (**Acts 1. 13, 14.**)

LESSON.

Acts 2. 1: *The Day of Pentecost.*—You have heard of the Passover, one of the three great feasts when the Jews made pilgrimage to the Temple at Jerusalem. It was, as you know, at the Passover that Jesus died. Fifty days later was another great feast, at the end of harvest, when the first two loaves made from the new corn, the first of the year's food supply, were solemnly offered to God in the Temple. This feast, called Pentecost, was at a good season of the year for travel, and many Jews living in foreign lands who could not attend all feasts would be there for Pentecost.

Verse 2: *Wind.*—Does this carry you back to words of Jesus when He compared the Spirit of God in a man with the unseen, mysterious working of the wind (**John 3. 8**) ?

Verse 3: *Fire.*—In Lesson VII. we promised that you should learn the meaning of the prophecy of John the Baptist (**Matt. 3. 11**). This verse gives it to you. This outward sign must have brought them comfort and assurance. It was no mere exaltation of their own spirits that they felt, for God gave them this sign of a coming from above.

Verse 4: *Filled.*—In God's dealings with the saints in the centuries before, of which we read in the Old Testament, we often find that His Spirit came upon them from time to time, inspiring some special word or work. But Jesus told His people that the Spirit should now abide with and in them (**John 14. 17**), and this word "filled" with the Holy Ghost you will find again and again in the story of Christ's people.

Verses 5-13: They had learned from Jesus that the Holy Spirit would bring them power for *witnessing* (**Acts 1. 8**), and now see how the power is sent to them when Jerusalem is full of men from many lands, to whom they may bear witness. It is as though their Master is reminding them that His message is not for one country alone.

Verses 14-40: *St. Peter's First Witnessing.*—(1) Already there is a fulfilment of the promise of power. He who had been by fear driven to deny his Lord, now stands forth fearlessly in the same city, still full of the enemies of Jesus. Note the fearlessness of **verse 23**.

(2) Already there is a fulfilment of the promise of guidance and teaching. A few weeks ago Peter would not have seen the meaning of Old Testament passages which now for him are full of Christ.

(3) Read with great care Peter's testimony to his Lord (**verses 22-24, 32, 33, 36**). Compare it carefully with the testimony of Cleopas before he knew of the Resurrection (**Luke 24. 19-21**). See the difference between a dead prophet and a Living Lord! No wonder that Peter says the main work of Jesus' disciples is to witness to the Resurrection (**verse 32**).

(4) Notice lastly what St. Peter says about that Holy Spirit in whose power he is speaking:

(a) It is the risen and ascended Lord who has sent this Spirit (**verse 33**).

(b) This gift of His is not only to Peter and his company, but to all who take on them the Name and Lordship of Jesus Christ (**verses 38, 39**).

Verses 41, 42: *The Result of First Witnessing.*—Notice how the disciples carry out the directions of Christ.

Christ's Directions.

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1. "Were baptized" | Matt. 28. 19. |
| 2. "Teaching" | Matt. 28. 20. |
| 3. "Breaking bread" | { Matt. 26. 26 ;
1 Cor. 11. 23, 24. |

All this His disciples have continued from that day to our day.

Verses 43-47: *The Early Days of Christ's Church.*

PUPIL'S WORK.

MEMORY.—Learn by heart **John 14. 26, 27.**

FOR PRAYER.

Now you can understand something of that prayer of Christ's people: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with us all."

Can you make it your prayer? If you can, you can further lift your heart in humble praise and say with all the saints, "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost." Amen.

CONCLUSION.

Your lessons have brought you to the point at which, having seen the beginning of Christ's society on earth, you need to know more about the truths taught by the

Holy Spirit to that society, and about its life in Christ, unbroken from that day to this. You need, too, to know more about this gift of the Holy Ghost. You will go on, then, to a course of lessons about the fundamental beliefs and rules of the society of Jesus Christ. You will come to church and find Christ in the midst of His people. You will ask your teacher whether there is not some little service that is permitted to you to do for the love of Christ even now. And you will seek to learn the life of prayer in which Christ gives Himself to souls. All of these things need a lifetime of learning. You can but enter on the path in a few months of instruction. The way is long, but the reward is great. Arise, be of good cheer, He calleth thee !