

The Sunday-School.

SECOND QUARTER,
LESSON II.—April 10.

PETER CONFESSES THE CHRIST.

Mark 8: 27-38.

THE LESSON includes also the parables, Matt. 16: 13-28; and Luke 9: 18-27.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* Matt. 16: 16.

LEARN BY HEART.—Vs. 34-37; Rom. 5: 7.

HISTORICAL SETTING.—*Time.*—The autumn of A. D. 29. Directly following the last lesson.

Place.—The region around Caesarea Philippi at the base of Mt. Hermon.

Place in the Life of Christ.—In the last half of the third year of his ministry.

The apostles reach the stage in their training when they are assured that Jesus is the expected Messiah. Followed by a new revelation as to the Messiah's way to his kingdom.

We now come, seven or eight months before his crucifixion and resurrection, to a very marked epoch or stage in the teaching of Jesus, in three parts.

THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD.—Vs. 27-30. *And Jesus went out from Bethsaida and the vicinity of the Sea of Galilee. He went north with his disciples along the road east of the Jordan till he came into the towns of Caesarea Philippi. An important city among the foothills of Mt. Hermon. And by the way (somewhere on the journey) he asked his disciples, when they came to him after a season of prayer apart from them. Whom do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist, returned to life. But some say, Elias the Greek form of Elijah, the forerunner of the Messiah. And others, One of the prophets. They thought that one of the old prophets had risen from the dead. But whom say ye that I am? What have you learned about me and my work during the time you have known me? And Peter answereth, as the spokesman for all. Thou art the Christ. The Messiah for whom the people were looking and hoping. And he charged them that they should tell no man. Why not proclaim this glorious truth from the house-tops? Because the time had not come. (1) They, themselves, did not sufficiently understand the full import of this truth, and, therefore, were not fitted to teach it. (2) Much more were the people unprepared to understand it. They would expect a temporal instead of a spiritual kingdom. Needed the death and resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit, before the fact that Jesus was the Messiah could be safely or successfully proclaimed. (3) The announcement that Jesus was the Messiah would be likely to excite tumult and rebellion against the Roman government. This would interfere with his plan of a spiritual kingdom.*

Practical Suggestions.—1. What think ye of Christ? is the crucial question of our religious life. Christ as a prophet, as a great teacher, as a noble example, is of great value to us. But Christ as the atoning Redeemer, as the infinite Son of God, with all power to save and help, everywhere present,—such a Christ

is vastly more helpful and comforting. As Dr. Holland says, "The mightier the Christ of a church is, the mightier the church as an influence for good in the world."

2. The discussion concerning Christ and his claims, by the people, was a great advantage. It awakened thought; it prepared people to receive the truth; it made widely known the claims of Jesus, and the proofs he gave for his claims.

ON THE NATURE OF THE MESSIAH'S MISSION.—Vs. 31-33. From that time he began to teach them. The disciples were now strong enough in their conviction that Jesus was the Messiah, to have their errors concerning his nature and kingdom corrected. They must be shown that the kingdom was spiritual. That the Son of Man must suffer many things. Opposition, ridicule, condemnation by the rulers. And be rejected of (by) the elders. The people as a whole, through their leaders, rejected Jesus as the Messiah. All this would stagger the faith of the disciples. Hence Jesus forewarned them, and prepared them for what was to come.

The Son of Man Must Suffer These Things.—Why? Because they were foretold concerning the Messiah. Because they were the natural result of the antagonism of men to the teachings and principles of Jesus. Because his death was necessary to the redemption of the world, and to the coming of the kingdom of heaven. Nothing less than the atonement on the cross could move the hearts of men to repentance and express the marvelous love of God. The crucified Saviour is the central fact of the Gospel, the living power of the church. But Jesus expressly stated in connection with his prophecy of his death that he should after three days rise again. The joy, the hope, the power, the glory of the gospel depended on the resurrection of Jesus, and that he is the ever-living, ever-present Saviour. And he spake that saying openly, without reserve. Peter took him one side to speak to him privately. And began to rebuke him, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord." His was a mingled motive of love for Christ, and self-assurance that he was right. The plan of redemption outlined by Jesus was so contrary to all Peter's expectations and hopes, that it seemed inconceivable to Peter. Turned about and looked on his disciples. Looking at all, he singles out Peter for special warning. Rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan. He did not mean that Peter was Satan, but Peter was voicing the views of Satan in his temptation in the wilderness, that Jesus might gain his kingdom without the cross. For thou savourest not (does not side with) the things that be of God. God's wise plan for his kingdom. But things that be of men. The natural, human view of the Messiah, a worldly kingdom.

THAT THE PRINCIPLE UNDERLYING THE WORK OF THE MESSIAH APPEALS TO ALL HIS DISCIPLES.—Vs. 34-38. The third lesson based on the other two was still harder to learn—that those who belong to the Messiah's kingdom must bear the cross. When he had called the people unto him. The previous instructions were only for the disciples; the teaching that follows was for all. Whosoever will (wills to) come after me, to be one of my followers, to be partakers of my

work, my life, my rewards, let him deny himself. Renounce self as master and choose Christ as master. Take up his cross. Daily. Each one must take up his own cross. And follow me. That is, obey him, live according to his principles, uphold his cause. Will save his life. The Greek word for life here is the same as "soul" in v. 36—an emphatic designation of the man himself. Shall lose it. Shall lose even the earthly rewards he seeks, and his eternal blessedness. Shall lose his life. The things that make life worth living. For my sake and the gospel's. The giving up the life for the sake of Christ. Shall save it. Shall have a blessedness which will compensate for every loss. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, as Satan offered to Jesus in the temptation, and lose his own soul, or life. Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? There is no compensation for the loss of the soul. Ashamed of me . . . in this adulterous (unfaithful to God) and sinful generation, of him . . . shall the Son of man be ashamed. Because they are unworthy of their Master. When he cometh in the glory of his Father. The day of judgment, when Christ shall be exalted above all principalities and powers, and all men shall be brought before him to be judged according to their deeds.

HIS MOTHER'S TRANSLATION.

In a Bible class recently the teacher was telling of the various translations of the Bible and their different excellences. He spoke of Jerome's Vulgate, of Luther's German Bible, of our own King James' Version, and of the Revised Version and how it was made. The class was much interested, and one of the young men, that evening was telling a friend about it.

"I think I prefer the King James' Version for my part," he said; "though of course the revised is more scholarly."

His friend smiled. "I prefer my mother's translation of the Bible myself to any other version," he said.

"Your mother's?" cried the first young man, thinking his companion had suddenly gone crazy. "What do you mean, Fred?"

"I mean that my mother has translated the Bible into the language of daily life for me ever since I was old enough to understand it," said Fred. "She translates it straight, too, and gives it full meaning. There has never been any obscurity about her version. Her every-day life is a translation of God's Word that a child can read, and that Saint Jerome could not better. Whatever printed version of the Bible I may study, my mother's is always the one that clears up my difficulties."

It was a true tribute and a beautiful one, and it starts a vital train of reflection. It should rouse not only all Christian mothers, but all Christians, young and old, to consider what kind of version of the Bible they are making out of their every-day lives. Will the world learn what God's Word really means through our translation of it into daily deeds or will we we obscure and falsify it? The Bible has been translated into every language on the globe; what the world needs now is that it should be translated into every individual life, and translated right.—Forward.

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Tribulation is God's threshing—not to destroy us, but to get what is good, heavenly, and spiritual in us separated from what is wrong, earthly and fleshly. Nothing less than blows of pain will do this. The evil clings so to the good, the golden wheat of goodness in us is so wrapped up in the strong chaff of the old life that only the heavy flail of suffering can produce the separation.—J. R. Miller.

How to Cleanse the System.—Parmelee's Vegetable pills are the result of scientific study of the effects of extracts of certain roots and herbs upon the digestive organs. Their use has demonstrated in many instances that they regulate the action of the liver and the kidneys, purify the blood, and carry off all morbid accumulations from the system. They are easy to take, and their action is mild and beneficial.

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God wins great fights with small bands.

Religion is not a little fenced-off enclosure, within which all is sacred and outside of which all is secular and profane. There is no such distinction to be drawn. Religion is life, character, conduct; it reaches up to God and down into the smallest details of daily duty; it covers everything.—Selected.

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