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The Sabbath School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Second Quarter Lesson 5, April 29, 1900

JESUS AND JOHN THE BAPTIST.—Luke 7 : 18-28.

Read Luke 7 : 11 34.

Commit Verses 22, 23.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*He hath done all things well.*—Mark 7 : 37.

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—Summer of A. D 28 following soon af er our last lesson

Place.—Jesus was somewhere in Galilee. According to Andrews, it was on the same preaching tour in Galilee (Luke 8: 1 3) of which the giving life to the widow's son at Nain was the first recorded event (Luke 7: 11-17)

John was in prison at Castle Macherus, beyond the Jordan

TWO SCENES. Jesus in Galilee. It was summer. Peace and plenty were everywhere Jesus was moving about the country, healing the sick, teaching the people, accompanied by the twelve apostles, making many disciples. Vs. 21 and 22 give a sketch of this picture The career of Jesus at this time was that of a popular and successful prophet.

John in Prison. About one hundred miles to the southeast of Galilee, in the strong fortress of Macherus John the Baptist had been lying in a dungeon for several months. John had reproved Herod for his unnatural crimes, not for the sake of reproving, but because Herod's crimes were bringing ruin upon the nation. On account of his faithfulness, John was compelled to cease from his work and languish in prison.

THE DISCOURAGED PROPHET — Vs. 18 20. *And the disciples of John.* They clung to their teacher, and visited him in prison in spite of all dangers. They came even from Galilee, where the air was full of the miracles and teachings of Jesus, and *shewed or all these things*, his miraculous power, his loving teachings, his growing popularity The sending of a delegation of his disciples to ask whether Jesus was indeed the expected Messiah shows that the brave and true prophet and martyr was in the shadow of a great doubt. Almost all active, earnest, enthusiastic reformers, men of great and stirring deeds, have had their seasons of discouragement and depression. Moses, when the people complained in the desert, himself complained to God, "I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me" (Num. 11: 10 15). So David said, "O Lord, why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?" (Psa. 10: 1). Elijah, after his mighty deeds on Carmel, lay down under the "juniper" tree, and wished to die. Almost every worker for God has at some time been with Bunyan's Christian in Doubting Castle of Giant Despair. No wonder, then, that John the Baptist, had for a brief time this bitter experience.

The Causes of His Discouragement. 1. Physical weakness and ill health, caused by the reaction from his intense labors and confinement in a damp unhealthy dungeon. It takes more religion to make a dyspeptic smile than a perfectly healthy person to rejoice in Pisgah glories.

2. The apparent failure of his plans and hopes, no doubt increased his depression. His life was ending after only two years of labor for his Lord. It was the nobility of the Baptist—to efface himself and find significance in that which is to come after him.... He and his work are to pass away and to be forgotten ....but the better that is to come is to come only because he has done his best. John's success was in the success of Jesus, in the redemption of the world. But there come times to such a ministry when the future success is hidden in a mist, and the present seems a dismal failure.

3. Jesus in Galilee, with his twelve working men, presented so different a picture from John's ideal of the Messiah. Where was the great conqueror, breaking the chain of a nation, overturning the evils of the day, revolutionizing the world, bringing in the promised glories?

4. Another cause was the depression caused by the reaction after a long-continued nervous strain in his exalted labors. The Valley of Humiliation and of the Shadow of Death is often but a brief journey from the Land of Beulah as almost every preacher has found.

5. The narrow outlook. It was dark for John. His dungeon walls were close by, however bright the sun might shine beyond his ken. In his own seeming failure, he might not see signs of success elsewhere.

JOHN SEEKING HELP FROM THE RIGHT SOURCE.—Vs. 19, 20. John unable to solve his doubts does not give himself up to hopeless despair, but takes the only right, reasonable, and hopeful plan. *Calling unto him two of his disciples he sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come?* The Messiah of whom John had preached, whom the prophets had foretold. If so, tell me so; do not leave me in a mistake in this dungeon.

Observe three things:—

First, he put his doubt in words. Doubt is most dangerous when it is vague; condense it into definite questions and immediately the light begins to break.

Second. John sent directly to Christ.

Third. John never thought of withdrawing his condemnation of the conduct of Herod and Herodias. He who though perplexed in faith, remains pure in deeds, will ultimately fight his way through doubt and come safely out on the other side.

HOW JESUS CURED DISCOURAGEMENT AND DOUBT.—Vs 21 23. *And in that same hour* Before the eyes of John's disciples. *He cured many.* Not merely to show this proof to John, but because they needed curing. Jesus kept on doing his work. *Infirmities.* Diseases. *Plagues.* Strokes, blows of a scourge. *Evil spirits* As distinct from diseases. *Blind he gave sight.* He gave as a free, gracious gift. *The lame walk,* etc. There was nothing too hard for his power. Each disease was typical of some corresponding moral healing. All of them were expressions of his goodness and love. *To the poor the gospel is preached.* This is one of the strongest proofs of the truth of the gospel one of the surest marks of the true Messiah, and the true church. *And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.* Shall find no occasion of stumbling in me, shall see how my work and method of founding the kingdom, however differing from preconceived opinions, is the true way for the Messiah, the only one in which his mission could be fulfilled, and the only one foretold by the prophets.

Jesus relieved his despondency, and will relieve ours.

1 He did not condemn him for having these questionings and doubts.

2 The very realization of his doubts, and the pain it caused, was a hopeful sign.

3 The good deeds which Jesus did were the proofs of his Messiahship. And what the gospel has done during the past ages, and is doing now, is the invincible proof that it is the true religion Its transforming power, its miracles of grace, the blessings it confers upon every nation which receives it—these things remove doubt.

4. What religion does for the poor is one of the surest tests of its origin. Compare the advantages of the poor in Christian lands with their condition in all others.

5. Jesus has proved himself able and willing to help, by having bestowed upon others the blessings we need. He is a tried and proved Saviour.

6. The proofs that Jesus was the Messiah showed John that his life was not a failure. He had accomplished the great object of his life. So we may be sure that, whatever our seeming failures in life, every sincere worker for Jesus shall win the crown of success. No life lived for Jesus is a failure.

THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS TO JOHN. — Vs. 24-28 *When the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people,* in answer to their thought and secret questionings. They might imagine from John's message that the Baptist wavered in his faith, and that his imprisonment had shaken his constancy. Our Lord, therefore, reminds them of what John was. *What went ye out into the wilderness,* where John had preached. *A reed shaken with the wind.* The reed of Egypt and Palestine is a very tall cane, growing twelve feet high, and so slender and yielding that it will lie perfectly flat under a gust of wind, and immediatly resume its upright position. Did you go to see a fickle, undecided man *A man clothed in soft raiment.* Luxurious or gorgeous clothing—a sign of an effeminate and voluptuous nature, or a sycophant, who would flatter for the hope of gain. *Behold,* etc. No such man as this was the wilderness prophet. If you wished to find such men, you would go to the palace of Herod. *A prophet? Yea....and much more than a prophet.* Because himself the object of prophecy; becaused he pointed out the Messiah, whom others only foretold, and, chiefest of all, because his position was nearest the threshold of the kingdom and helped to usher it in *This is he, of whom it is written.* (In Mal. 3: 1). *Behold, I send my messenger before thy face,* etc. An allusion to one who went before an Eastern monarch to remove all obstacles out of his way. *There is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist,* in character, in work, in nearness to God, in position, in privilege, in success. *He that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.* The least of the greatest is greater than the greatest of the least. It does not mean greater in personal character, nor eternal condition, but in present privilege. as the least child is greater than the highest servant. He belongs to higher dispensation, with larger influences of the Spirit.

A Call to Service.

Doctor Barnardo, who has done so much for the street waifs of London, came to devote his life to this work as the result of the following incident, related by an exchange:

He was closing the rooms of a city mission one night after the children had gone, when down by the stove he saw one poor, little, ragged urchin standing without hat or shoes or stockings. He said to the boy: Boy, it is time for you to go home.

The boy never moved

Doctor Barnardo went on closing things up, and by and bye he said, My boy, why don't you go home?

The boy said: I ain't got no home

Dr. Barnardo did not believe it, but asked the boy to come to his house, and, after giving him something to eat, heard his story. He was an outcast, without father or mother, without place to sleep.

Are there more like you? asked Doctor Barnardo.

Lots of 'em said the boy.

Will you show me some of them?

Yes, I can show you, said the boy.

So about midnight he went out with that boy, and they threaded their way down some of the streets of London, and then into a close, and the boy pointed to a kind of coal bin in this area and he said: There's lot of 'em in there.

The doctor stooped down and lit a match, and there wasn't a boy in there. He thought the boy had been swindling him. But the boy wasn't at all abashed. He said, Cops have been after 'em; they're up on the roof

And with that the boy went up a brick wall on to a tin covered roof, pulling the doctor up after him

There, on that winter night—it happened to be a starlight night—the doctor saw thirteen boys huddled up, and one little boy hugged close to his brother to keep warm; nothing under them but a tin roof; nothing over them but the starlit sky.

The boy said: Shall I wake 'em?

It occurred to the doctor that he had one boy there, and this boy was going to waken thirteen more, and he didn't know what to do with one, so he said: No. But that night on that tin roof, he stood and promised God that he would devote his life to the outcast boys and children of London.

That was Doctor Barnardo's night. That night he received his peculiar call for that peculiar service, and last night, in or near London, there slept under friendly Christian roofs nearly five thousand boys and girls, gathered by him, in course of training by him, for lives of purity and usefulness.

Mind has no Power over Sin.

I suppose it was wrong, said a well-known member of the Detroit bar, with a grin, but I couldn't afford to let the opportunity pass. My wife has become a convert to the mind cure fad, and for the last month I have heard nothing but the power of mind over matter. I said little, hoping that she would soon tire of it and drop it. But I was doomed to disappointment, for the longer she harped on it the worse she became.

This morning she discovered that a water pipe was leaking, and she went at it with that universal woman's tool, a hairpin, with the result that she only made the hole larger and caused a small jet of water to be shot into the room. Clapping a finger over the hole to stop the flow of water, she called loudly for me, and when I appeared on the scene I took the situation in at a glance.

What is the matter, my dear? I asked.

There is a hole in the pipe, she gasped, get a plug while I hold the water back.

There is no leak there if you will only think so, said I, smoothingly. Put your mind on it and remove your finger.

John Henry——she began, but at that moment her finger slipped and a jet of water hit her in the eye, and the valuable remarks that she was about to make were lost for all time.

John, she snapped, can't you see that the wall paper will be ruined if I let go?

Well, my dear, said I, ignoring her question, it is time I was going downtown, besides I am afraid that if I remain here I may interfere with the calm, reposeful working of your mind. Convince yourself, my dear, that there is no leak and remove your finger. With that I left her. I took the precaution, however, to send up a plumber, but from what I heard when I left I am afraid that her mind was far from being in a reposeful mood.—Detroit Free Press.

Mark Twain On The Bible.

The following incident relating to the great humorist is told in a recent number of The Ladies' Home Journal:

He sat in his little library at Chelsea, London, when a friend called who noted an open Bible on his table, and inquired if he had taken to the study of the Holy Book.

That's a great book, said Twain. That's about the most interesting book I can read Joe Twitchell, a parson over in Connecticut, recommended it to me, and I have been more interested in it than any book I have read for a long time. You better read it yourself It beats any novel or history or word of science that I ever tackled. It is full of good stories and philosophy It suggests lots of ideas, and there's news in it. I find things that I never heard of before. Did you ever know that the English people were mentioned in the Bible?

Why, yes, there is a theory that the lost ten tribes of Israel migrated over this way, and settled the British Islands.

Oh, I don't mean that, I discovered to-day that Christ spoke of British people in the Sermon on the Mount. And reaching over for the book he read: Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

The Nobility of Labor

Dr Silcox, speaking of the nobility of labor, after quoting, "Let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good," well says: "That means, be employed in some useful form of service. The Christian religion honors labor. The nobility of manual labor needs to be preached I believe that the pew is as honorable as the pulpit. Service in the kitchen is as royal in the sight of God as service in the palace or on the throne. The nurse, in faithfully caring for the little child committed to her care is doing as divine a work as the missionary. The blacksmith at the forge, the carpenter at his bench, the factory girl at the spindle, are as worthy of honor in God's sight as the editor at his desk or the professor before his class. In the republic of God, there are no graduations of rank or service. 'One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.'" God's blessing is always on the men and the women who patiently "labor, working with with their hands the thing that is good."—Telescope.

"Put Out Your Tongue."

Mr. Gill, the commentator, wore a gown, and one of the sisters complained of the excessive length of the white bands. The doctor said:

Clip them to suit yourself.

This the lady did.

Now, said the doctor, you have something about you which is a deal too long, also. It causes me no end of trouble.

Well, said she, thinking one good turn deserves another, here are the scissors; use them as you please.

Come, then, said he, put out your tongue.

The result is not known, but an abbreviation of this sort would save many a church squabble, and the surgical operation wouldn't be confined altogether to the sisters.—Pacific Ensign.

Christ has a kingdom among men. Just as there is a Gulf Stream in the ocean, which has its own current apart from the sea, so there is a kingdom of God established among the kingdoms and nations of earth

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