

The Sunday-School.

FIRST QUARTER.
LESSON V.—Jan. 29.

JESUS AND NICODEMUS.

John 3: 1-15.

Commit verses 14, 15. Read John 2: 12-3: 21.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*—John 3: 16.

HISTORICAL SETTING.—*Time.*—April A. D. 27, about the time of the Passover, which was April 9-16. Jesus had been preaching about two months, since he began his mission with five or six followers, and the miracle at Cana.

Place.—Jerusalem; the upper chamber of the house where Jesus was the guest, which could be reached by the outside stairway.

John still preaching in the wilderness of Judea.

SECULAR RULERS.—Tiberius Caesar was emperor of Rome, 16th year. Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea, 2nd year. Herod Antipas, governor of Galilee and Perea.

PLACE IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST.—In the first quarter of his first year, the Year of Beginnings. The Judean Ministry. His first recorded discourse.

Christ came to bring the kingdom of heaven to earth, to transform the people into members of that kingdom.

Jesus went up to Jerusalem early in April. Here his reforms made a great commotion and proclaimed his mission. He cleansed the temple from the money-changers and the merchandise. He revealed his mission still more by working miracles of mercy in Jerusalem. Two effects followed. Many believed on him, many were angry and aroused opposition. Both of these effects called attention to Jesus and his gospel.

Among those awakened to a knowledge of Jesus was a man of the Pharisees, among whose numbers were the most of the prominent persons who were waiting for the coming of the Messiah, named Nicodemus. All we know of him is recorded here and in John 7: 50, and in 19: 39, which implies that at last he became a disciple. A ruler of the Jews. A member of the Sanhedrin.

Came to Jesus by night. So as not to be observed. That he came at all to Jesus was a sign of quiet courage.

Thou art a teacher come from God. One with a divine message. *For no man can do these miracles,* etc. This was proof that Jesus came from God.

Jesus answered. Told him the great truth he most needed to know. Nicodemus probably felt that being a Jew and a leader of the Jews he was, therefore, in the kingdom. *Except a man (any one) be born again, "anew, as in R. V., and "from above."* He cannot see the kingdom of God. The change may be called a new birth because it gives a man entrance into a new world, and imparts new life to live in it. *How can a man be born when he is old?* He asks for more light. *Except a man be born of water and the Spirit.* The Lord declares there are two elements in the new birth, putting away the old life, and receiving the new. Water was the familiar symbol of cleansing from sin, of putting away the sinful past. This act the Pharisees were not inclined to believe as applied to themselves. There-

fore to this Pharisee our Lord declares that an honest dying to the past is as needful as new life for the future. The same idea is found in Tit. 3: 3-5, where Paul describes the previous sinful state from which "His mercy saved us, through the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit."

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, etc., By the word *flesh* he signifies the appetites, desires, faculties, which animate and govern the body, as well as the body itself. *That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* To belong to the spiritual kingdom it is essential to be born of the Spirit, as to be born of the flesh is essential to entering upon life in this world. *Marvel not.* Natural life is full of mysteries as spiritual life. *The wind.* The same word in the Greek as *spirit* in the previous verses. It occurs about three hundred and seventy times in the New Testament, and never means wind except once in a quotation from the Old Testament. *The wind bloweth where it listeth,* according to its own laws, absolutely beyond human knowledge and control. *Thou hearest the sound thereof,* etc., You see the results, but you cannot tell the causes. *So is everyone that is born of the Spirit.* The Spirit's method's we cannot know, but the facts of the new life are as plain and certain as that the strong wind bends the forest trees. We may not know the day nor the hour when we are born again, but we may know the fact by the fruit.

The new birth comes not from ourselves but from God. Its manifestations may be so gradual, beginning so early in life, under Christian influences, that no one can tell the day nor the hour or the year when the Christian life began. A great blessing is this work of the Spirit, implanting new life. Whether alone, or amid great revival experiences, this power within us brings us help, salvation and new life. The one test is the expression of the inner life in outward fruit. The fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5: 22, 23) are proof of the fact of being born of the Spirit of God. The new birth is but the beginning of the new life. The birth of a child is but the beginning of its life. It is to grow, develop, unfold its powers, be disciplined and trained almost without limit or end.

Art thou a master (teacher) and and knowest not these things? You will find this truth in the Scriptures you teach (Ezek. 11: 19: 18: 31: 36: 26; Jer. 24: 7; 31: 33). *We speak.* The Father who sends the message, and I who bring it, speak this truth. *If I (now he speaks for himself) have told you earthly things.* Things written and experienced in the earthly existence which any one can put to the test. *How shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?* Those truths which could not be learned without a revelation from heaven; divine forgiveness, the perfect, free, universal love of God, the divine nature of Christ, the atonement, the reality of life beyond the grave, the way to obtain it, the blessedness of heaven, the glories of the Messiah's kingdom on earth. *No man hath ascended up to heaven,* and brought back the testimony of an eye-witness, *but he that came down from heaven.* The sentence may be paraphrased thus: No one has gone up to heaven, and by dwelling there

has gained a knowledge of heavenly things. One, only, has dwelt there and is able to communicate that knowledge. He, namely, who has come down from heaven. *Even the Son of man.* The true representative of humanity. Not only God, but a real man, with all the feelings, hopes, temptations, possibilities of man. *Which is in heaven.* His home is in heaven and he maintains a vital connection with heaven.

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. Jesus now uses an illustration which makes clear some of the heavenly things he came to reveal. Study the story in Num. 21: 4-9. *Even so must the Son of man be lifted up.* By his whole life and character and teaching. *That whosoever believeth on him.* Accepts him as Saviour and Lord. *Should not perish.* From the effects of sin. *But have eternal life.* It is a present possession of the Christian. It is more than mere endless existence. It is goodness, fulness of life, joy, peace, love.

We cannot transform ourselves, but we can put ourselves under transforming influences. Faith is so accepting Christ that we trust him for the forgiveness of sins; we trust him so as to put ourselves under his personal influence and teaching as disciples; we trust him so as to do what he says and to follow his directions. He brings promises from God and we accept them as true. Faith is the act of choosing God as our God, of devoting ourselves to him, opening our hearts to his influences.

THE HEART OF THE LESSON.

The one great essential is a new life in the soul that supremely loves the good and hates the evil. This is the one way to the best life here and hereafter.

Thn follows the central verse of the Bible:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Luther calls this verse "The Little Gospel," or "The Little Bible." For the whole gospel, yea, the whole Bible, is condensed in these few words.

A solid fame is better than a sound one.

The measure of love is sacrifice. The test of it is not in the enthusiasm with which it is expressed, not in its demonstrativeness. It is measured by blood drops.—A. Z. Conrad.

Just a word of caution: Where the skin is destroyed by burns or scalds, apply Weaver's Cerate, reduced with sweet oil or lard. Otherwise the Cerate in full strength should be used; the sooner the better.

The noblest question in the world is, What good may I do in it?—Benjamin Franklin.

It Reaches the Spot.—There are few remedies before the public to-day as efficacious in removing pain and in allaying and preventing pulmonary disorders as Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil. It has demonstrated its powers in thousands of instances, and a large number of testimonials as to its great value as a medicine could be got were there occasion for it. It is for sale everywhere.

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Ayer's Cherry Pectoral quiets tickling throats, hacking coughs, pain in the lungs. It relieves congestion, sub-

Cherry Pectoral

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Ayer's Pills greatly aid recovery. Purely vegetable, gently laxative.

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A Recognized Regulator.—To bring the digestive organs into symmetrical working is the aim of physicians when they find a patient suffering from stomachic irregularities, and for this purpose they can prescribe nothing better than Par-melee's Vegetable Pills, which will be found a pleasant medicine of surprising virtue in bringing the refractory organs into subjection and restoring them to normal action, in which condition only can they perform their duties properly.

About costly gifts to Christ what can be said? Is he worthy of our choicest and best? What really gives value to what we give to Christ? Should we follow the impulses of love for Christ? Should we give expression to them? What would men think of it and ought we to care? What does Christ think of it? Does love glorify our gifts and deeds? Are they peculiarly opportune times in which to honor Christ? What are they? Need the Christian hesitate when love inspires a deed? Is love inventive in Christian service? Must all service be in the prescribed ways? Does your soul honor Christ? Do your deeds honor him? Will you stand by him when men are about to crucify him?—Selected.

Sincerity is the one secret of success in the search for God.

Relieve those Inflamed Eyes!

Pond's Extract

Reduced one-half with pure soft water, applied frequently with dropper or eye cup, the congestion will be removed and the pain and inflammation instantly relieved.

CAUTION!—Avoid dangerous, irritating Witch Hazel preparations represented to be "the same as" Pond's Extract which easily sour and generally contain "wood alcohol," a deadly poison.