

The Sunday-School.

FIRST QUARTER.
LESSON III.—Jan. 15.

JESUS WINS HIS FIRST DISCIPLES.

John 1: 35-51.

COMMIT VS. 40, 41.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.*—John 1: 49.

LEARN BY HEART—Vs. 41, 46; Rev. 22: 17.

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—The two days following our last lesson. February, A. D. 27.

Place.—Bethabara and its vicinity, probably at the Albarah ford of the Jordan, fourteen miles south of the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus.—About thirty years old.

John the Baptist.—After preaching 8 or 9 months.

Disciples.—Jesus began his ministry with five or six followers: John, Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathanael (Bartholomew), and perhaps James.

Place in the Life of Christ.—The beginnings of his public ministry. Entrance upon his first year. The Year of Beginnings.

THE FIRST TWO DISCIPLES OF JESUS.—

ANDREW AND JOHN. *Through the Witness of John the Baptist.*—Vs. 35-40. The next day after. John had pointed out Jesus to the people as he Lamb of God. Two of John's disciples, Andrew and, doubtless, John the writer. And looking. Gazing steadfastly upon Jesus as he walked. Walking by. Behold the Lamb of God! See last lesson. And they followed Jesus. Walked after him till they caught up with him. Then Jesus (hearing steps) turned and saw them. *Saith, What seek ye?* We'll come further conversation. Rabbi, Jewish title of honor applied to the learned. *Where dwellest thou?* Implying that they would like to talk with him when he was at leisure. *Come and see.* R. V., "Come, and ye shall see." Abode with him that day. The rest of the day from the tenth hour. According to Jewish reckoning, four o'clock in the afternoon. One of the two. Andrew. We infer that the unnamed was John himself.

TWO MORE DISCIPLES.—PETER AND PROBABLY JAMES. *Through the Invitation of Others.*—Vs. 41, 42. He first findeth. Both went forth to find each his brother, and Andrew found his brother Peter before John found his brother James. *We have found the Messiah.* . . . the Christ. Messiah is the Greek spelling of the Hebrew word "Messiah," which is the same as the Greek "Christ," both meaning anointed, the anointed one, for whom the Jews were eagerly looking. Jesus beheld him. As if looking into his soul. *Thou art Simon. Your present name. Son of Jona. John. Thou shalt be called Cephas, by interpretation, A stone.* This was a prophecy of Peter's future life and career. Whatever thou art now, thou shalt win the name Peter.

ANOTHER DISCIPLE, PHILIP. *Through the Personal Call of Jesus.*—Vs. 43, 44. The day following. The previous events of this lesson took place on the Jewish Sabbath. Jesus would go forth into Galilee. Galilee was his own home and that of his followers. Here they

could reach their friends and acquaintances. The Galileans were less prejudiced. *And findeth Philip.* He must have seen that Philip was ready for his invitation. Was at Bethsaida. "House of hunting or fishing," near the mouth of the upper Jordan. The city of Andrew and Peter. Hence, probably, they were acquaintances.

NATHANAEL GOES AND SEES FOR HIMSELF.—Vs. 45-51. *Philip findeth Nathanael, of Cana in Galilee.* He was probably on his way home, and an acquaintance. *We have found him (the Messiah) of whom Moses in the law. The Pentateuch, the five books of Moses. And the prophets, did write. Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.* This is the language of Philip. Joseph was the reputed father of Jesus, and Philip supposed this was true. It was the common and necessary designation of the relation between Jesus and Joseph. *Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?* Nathanael, living in Cana, four miles away, knew Nazareth well. It was a surprise to Nathanael that the great Deliverer could come out of that little village. *Philip saith unto him (a wise answer to Nathanael's question) Come and see.* There is always danger of looking without seeing. This is the true way to treat the claims of Christ.

1. See what Christ has done for others. Compare Christian lands with all others. Take two maps; color one according to the morals, the happiness, the blessings of the different peoples, making the best white, and darkening the shades as the picture grows darker. Then take another map, and color it according to the prevalence and purity of its Christianity, and the two maps will agree. Where the most Christianity, there the most of every good to man. Look at the effect of conversion to Christ on your friends and neighbors.

2. Inquire. Learn the experience of others. Hear their testimony as to what Christ has done for their souls.

3. Experience. Only by going to Christ, and experiencing for ourselves, is it possible to understand the fullness of blessing. This test never fails.

Illustration.—Hawthorne compares Christianity to a grand cathedral with divinely pictured windows. Viewed from without, it is impossible to gain the slightest conception. *Jesus saith of him.* To those gathered around him. *Behold, an Israelite indeed.* One answering to the true idea of an Israelite, as contrasted with the prevalent formalism and hypocrisy; a true, prayerful servant of God. *In whom is no guile.* No deceit, a truly sincere man, seeking the truth. *When thou wast under the fig tree.* The fig tree, on account of its luxuriance of leaves, was a favorite resort for meditation and rest. *I saw thee.* Outwardly or by prophetic vision. *Thou art the Son of God. . . the King of Israel.* The fact that Jesus recognized the secret struggle and the victory, showed that he had divine insight. *Thou shalt see greater things than these.* To him that faith shall be given. *Verily, verily. That is, Amen, amen. I say unto you. Heaven open, etc.* He should realize what Jacob dreamed, and see full and free communication between heaven and earth.

THE HEART OF THE LESSON.

We find encouragement from the small beginnings of Jesus' wonderful work in the world. We see in what different ways men came to Christ. We learn the method by which the gospel extends its benign influence. It is by the personal influence of one individual over another, expressed not only by words, but by example, by what the gospel has done for us. Often an ordinary Andrew may bring to Christ a Peter who has influenced the world.

The Parable of the Leaven is the best illustration. Each particle changes the particles nearest to it into a likeness to itself, if it is placed in a material suited to its working. The whole secret of the spread of Christianity over the world is in this figure of the leaven.

John and Andrew went to seek their brothers at four o'clock in the afternoon, after a day spent with Jesus. They went full of the knowledge and love and enthusiasm they gained from him. "The best preparation for such a task is a whole day spent in the company of Jesus Christ."

Make No Unconditional Promises.

Many parents teach their children untruth by threatening to punish them and failing to carry out their threats, or by making some promises which they fail to fulfill. Their word once given should not be broken. This is a point where parents need especially to watch and train themselves. With well-meaning purpose they promise a child some privilege or pleasure which, through forgetfulness on their part or unavoidable or unexpected changes in their plans, he fails to receive. How else shall the child designate such dealings, except that the parent has told him a falsehood? A teacher of little children who had among her number one who gave her much concern on account of the habit of untruthfulness, relates the following incident illustrative of the thought in hand: "Calling her to me one day, and thinking to touch her in that tenderest spot of childhood's heart,—love for mother,—I said: 'Do you think, Alice, that mamma could be happy if she knew her little girl was untruthful? Imagine my surprise when the answer fell clear and unhesitatingly from those baby lips: 'O, that is nothing. Everybody lies to me.' Standing there in the presence of my little judge, for I was a part of that little world which she designated as 'everybody,' I questioned her. 'Have I ever told you a falsehood, Alice?' 'Yes.' The answer came slowly this time. During the singing lesson the day before, she asked that we sing a favorite song. The time for the lesson had elapsed, and I answered: 'Not today, Alice; we will sing it tomorrow.' Tomorrow had come and gone; but the song was still unsung. It was crowded out of my mind by the work and worry, the duties and pleasures of a new day; but her little heart had waited for a fulfillment of the promise, and she said, with a child's true reason, 'It is a lie.' So it was,—that sort of lies which we tell to children over and over again, day after day. It is an easy way to put them off, but there must come a harvest after such a sowing."

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Gratitude is life's sweet pleasure.—Martin Luther.

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Extraordinary afflictions are not always the punishment of extraordinary sins, but sometimes the trial of extraordinary graces.—Matthew Henry.

Our grand business in life is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies chiefly at hand.—Carlyle.

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