

Sunday School Lesson

January 12, 1947

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THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS

Lesson: John 2:1-16

Golden Text: Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.—John 2:5

In this lesson Jesus begins his public ministry. He has chosen a number of his disciples and they, together with the mother of Jesus are invited to the wedding at Cana. Cana was in the vicinity of Nazareth and it is probable that Mary was either a close friend or relative of the family.

I. JESUS ATTENDED A WEDDING—

The family is the foundation of civilization and consequently Jesus is concerned about weddings. He was not an ascetic, but mingled among men and joined in their social occasions. Jesus ought to be at every wedding, and if he is not present, the prospect of future happiness is very poor indeed.

II. JESUS PERFORMS A MIRACLE—

"Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." Our lesson consists of two episodes, both showing the authority of Jesus. The above scripture was spoken by Mary and reveals the confidence she had in her Son. It also had a wider application than she realized. Indeed it can be applied in our own lives. If we will do that which Jesus tells us to do, then we can trust Him to do for us that which we are unable to do for ourselves. The servants did as commanded with the result that the water they poured out was turned into wine. Likewise will Jesus do for us in the ordinary things of life if we but trust and obey Him. Miracles demonstrate (1) Divine authority of Jesus. (2) Love and tenderness of God; His care for His children in every need. (3) Jesus is here in the person of His Spirit and is doing through His people the same kind of work with the same object and value.

III. JESUS CLEANSSES THE TEMPLE—

"He drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables." The animals were not in the heart of the temple, but in the court of the Gentiles. Because of circumstances at the Passover, a market of some sort was necessary, but should not have been within the sacred enclosure of the temple. The people professed to worship the one true God, but actually they worshipped the gold and money in the temple. Jesus made a scourge of cords and drove them all out. One man could not ordinarily have driven the people out; but Jesus was not only man, but equally God and Man. They all fled before his supernatural power. Thus the authority of Jesus is seen in both Cana and Jerusalem. This act of Jesus teaches us what reverence and care we should have for the house of God. Irreverence is literally unbelief. Two truths are enforced: (1) The supremacy of the Eternal God; (2) The exacting character of his love. Though the traffic seemed to have a semi-religious purpose, it was actually irreligious. It was the substitution within those walls of another interest, for that interest of which the temple was a symbol. So also do the sins of drunkenness, lust, selfishness, pride, etc., defile the body, God's temple.

QUESTIONS AND PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

1. State reasons for seeking divine guidance in marriage.
2. State the use of miracles.
3. The cleansing of the temple illustrates what truth?
4. Explain: The world keeps the worst until the last, while the Christ way grows better and better. Verse 10.
5. No doubt the money changers had troubled consciences when first they invaded the

temple; what afterward made them insensible to their sin?

January 19, 1947

JESUS INTERVIEWED BY NICODEMUS

Lesson: John 3:1-11; 16-17

Golden Text: Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. John 3:3

The interview of Nicodemus with Jesus took place while Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover. The discussion of the lesson is one of the most important themes of the Gospels.

I. NECESSITY OF THE NEW BIRTH—

Perhaps we can best realize the necessity of the new birth by discovering what it is not. (1) Education; Nicodemus recognized Jesus as a teacher, but not the Messiah or Saviour. He evidently had heard of the miracles of Jesus and recognized him as an unusual teacher. Teachers can educate, train, culture, discipline and many other things that are excellent, but are powerless to create a new nature. God alone can do that. Many, many teachers accept the new birth as merely the training of the old nature, but such is not the case. (2) Natural birth; while it is true we inherit good and evil tendencies from our parents, yet we cannot inherit enough good tendencies to substitute for the new birth. Children of the best parents are born totally depraved. (3) Church membership; Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews and yet he did not understand spiritual things. Joining a church is a fine thing providing we have found Christ as our Saviour or been "born again." (4) Baptism: It is a Christian ordinance, but contrary to the teaching of some: it has no saving power. Let us first be born again and then be baptized and join a spiritual church.

II. NATURE OF THE NEW BIRTH—

It is a new nature wrought within a person by the Almighty Spirit of God. There is an element of mystery connected with everything that is supernatural, as indeed there is in much of nature that is around us. The fact that we cannot understand much about electricity is no reason why we should not enjoy its benefits. Likewise ought we to enjoy the blessing of being raised from spiritual death to spiritual life. The first birth which is of the flesh gives fleshy characteristics; if we want spiritual characteristics then we must be born of the Spirit. Like breeds like. Nothing belonging to one sphere of being can of itself be changed to another sphere. For example a plant cannot in itself change into an animal. It can be lifted out, however. An ox eats grass and the plant is changed into animal. God comes down out of the Heavenly sphere, into the sphere of humanity and imparts his own spiritual life. Thus nature is turned into grace.

III. METHOD OF ATTAINING THE NEW BIRTH—

"Whosoever believeth on him should not perish but should have everlasting life." Faith is the condition for obtaining the new birth, indeed it is the very life of the Christian. It is impossible for an impenitent man to trust Christ for salvation. Faith comes easily and naturally when we confess our sins with a determination to turn from them.

QUESTIONS AND PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

1. Why is the new birth necessary?
2. What is the new birth? Have you been born again?
3. How would you instruct a sinner to find Christ as Saviour?
4. Which is better to ask: are you a Christian or, have you been born again?

INTERCESSION

"He ever liveth to make intercession for them."—Heb. 7:25. If we are to have fellowship with Jesus Christ in His present work,

we must spend much time in prayer. We must give ourselves to earnest, persistent, sleepless, over-coming prayer. I know of nothing that has so impressed me with a sense of the importance of praying at all seasons, being much and constantly in prayer, as the thought that it is the principal occupation at present of the risen Lord.

I want to have fellowship with Him, and to that end I have asked the Father that whatever else He makes me, to make me above all an intercessor, to make me a man who spends much time in prayer.

This ministry of intercession is a glorious and mighty ministry and we all can have a part in it. But we must, if we maintain this spirit of constant prayer, take time—and take plenty of it—when we have shut ourselves up in the secret place with or for nothing but prayer.

—R. A. Torrey.

BELIEVE GOD

He Has Never Failed the Soul that has Trusted Him for Deliverance

Christ had His good reason for delaying His journey to the house of Mary, Martha and sick Lazarus, and when he did arrive—apparently too late—it was hardly with surprise that He heard the agonized cry of Martha, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

To this Christ gave reply: "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?" And thus it was.

Abraham could not understand why God should ask the sacrifice of his boy; but he trusted and saw the glory of God. Moses could not understand why God should keep him forty years in the wilderness; but he trusted and saw, when God led Israel forth from their bondage. Joseph could not understand the cruelty of his circumstances and unjust imprisonment; but he trusted and saw God's glory in the reversal of those circumstances.

TOMORROW

He was going to be all he wanted to be, tomorrow; no one should be kinder or braver than he, tomorrow. A friend who was troubled and weary, he knew, who'd be glad of a lift—and who needed it, too—on him he would call and see what he could do, tomorrow.

Each morning he stacked up the letters he'd write, tomorrow; and thought of the folks he would fill with delight, tomorrow. It was too bad, indeed, he was so busy today, and hadn't one minute to stop on his way. "More time will I have to give others," he'd say, "tomorrow."

The greatest of workers this man would have been, tomorrow; the world would have known him had he ever seen "tomorrow;" but, in fact, he passed on, and he faded from view, and all that he left here when living was through was a mountain of things he intended to do—tomorrow.—Anonymous.

"Fear thou not, for I am with thee, be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."