

Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS.

Lesson 6. —Feb. 6.

Luke 2: 40-52.

THE BOYHOOD OF JESUS.

GOLDEN TEXT.

And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him. —Luke 2: 40.

TOPIC.—Jesus the true Son of Man.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Jan. 31: Luke 2: 40-52. Tuesday, Feb. 1: Acts 8: 26-38. Wednesday, Feb. 2: Luke 24: 13-32. Thursday, Feb. 3: Luke 4: 14-20. Friday, Feb. 4: Acts 19: 1-10. Saturday, Feb. 5: Matt. 2: 1-8. Sunday, Feb. 6: Luke 7: 80-50.

NOTES, BY A. C. KENDRICK, D.D., L.L.D.

The charming incident here recorded alone breaks the silence of the evangelical record regarding our Lord for nearly thirty years—between his infancy and his baptism. It is, in a variety of respects, very deeply interesting. Its simple and unostentatious character guarantees its historical truth. No legend would have stumbled upon it; no fabricator would have imagined it. Its only explanation is its truth. Yet it beautifully reveals the awakening consciousness of the divine child, his yearning toward his father's house, and the eager interest with which he was already grappling with those great problems of sacred truth and prophecy which had to break gradually upon him, as upon the ordinary, youthful understanding, and were even now dimly dawning upon the mind of the temporary exile from the skies. Heaven lay about him in his infancy, most emphatically. The narrative shows, too, how beautifully balanced and harmonized were the relations and duties of the earthly and the heavenly child—of the Son of Mary and the Son of God.

Vs. 40.—Grew, like other children. Waxing strong, internally, in mind and character; defined by the words, BECOMING FULL OF WISDOM. (The words, "in spirit" of the English version, are not in the best manuscripts.)—The grace of God; not as MERCY, which he did not need; but gracious influences, favor. God delighted in him, and bestowed on him the tokens of his delight. The development of the divine child, thus pregnantly described, corresponds to his divine origin and mission.

Vs. 41, 42.—USED TO GO. The feast of the Passover lasted seven days from the fifteenth of Nisan, requiring the attendance of all male Israelites; that of women was less imperative. When Jesus was twelve years old, he became a "son of the law," and was henceforth bound to attend. His parents may have taken him to it previously, though without, perhaps, any such stirrings of his higher nature as he now experienced. The Spirit waited for the proper time. THE CUSTOM OF THE FEAST: Belonging to, required by, the feast.

Vs. 43, 44.—They finished the celebration of the festival, and commented their return. REMAINED BEHIND. Not from any neglect on the part of the parents, or in subordination on the part of the child. The divine Spirit guided his action. An irresistible impulse led the heavenly child to the house of his heavenly Father, and to the spiritual teachings and discussions which belonged to it. For the moment it was not Joseph and Mary, and his home in Nazareth, but God, his divine Father, and his home in Jerusalem, that absorbed his spirit, and merged the earthly in the heavenly relation. There was fault neither in parents nor child. They reposed in him the implicit confidence which his unswervingly obedient and conscientious childhood had inspired. He acted under the same divine impulse which afterwards sent him to the Jordan, to the wilderness, and to the cross. His exceptional conduct grew out of his twofold nature. His PARENTS DID NOT KNOW IT. The company was large, and they might easily suppose him with some of their friends, until, when they gathered for the night, they made inquiry for him in vain.

Vs. 45-47.—Not finding their son, they returned to Jerusalem to seek him. AFTER THREE DAYS. Reckoning either from the time of their missing him, or of their search in Jerusalem. If it seems strange that they should be so late in going to the temple, we must remember that the temple, and a concourse of rabbis, was the very last place in which they would look for a lad of twelve years. They had not thought of associating their son especially with the temple. IN THE TEMPLE. Perhaps one of the porches of the court of the women, where the rabbis held their schools. HEARING AND ASKING QUESTIONS. Not as a teacher, which would have been unnatural and unbecoming to his age, but as a docile and humble child. Though he probably did teach, and opened depths of meaning unknown to those trained exponents of the law. He listened with eager docility, and asked and answered questions with the simplicity of a child, and the half-unconscious wisdom of the sage. In this house of his Father, the Spirit that had drawn him thither was opening unwonted glimpses of truth; and alike his questions and answers astonished all who heard.

Vs. 48.—STRUCK WITH ASTONISHMENT. At finding him in such a place, so employed, and exhibiting such intelligence. His MOTHER. As more closely allied to him, and whose maternal heart had been most deeply anxious. SON, OR CHILD. Neither English word exactly reproduces the original. WHY DIDST THOU THUS DEAL WITH

(do to) us? The language of tender and affectionate reproach. THY FATHER. The natural mode of speaking, considering Joseph's ostensible relation to him. Perhaps his mother had never yet spoken to him of his true parentage. If so, she might be surprised when his answer revealed his knowledge of a higher paternity. IN ANGUISH. A stronger term than merely "sorrowing." It shows Mary's bitter distress in the fear that, through her lack of care, some harm should have befallen the sacred child.

Vs. 49.—WHY DID YE SEEK (were seeking) ME? As Mary had tenderly reproached him for causing their anxiety, he replies with a like gentle reproach for its protracted indulgence. They should not have NEEDED to spend time in SEEKING him. They should have known where to find him, and should have instantly gone there. In Nazareth they would have looked for the earthly child, in the house of his earthly father; in Jerusalem they should have gone straight for the divine child to the house of his divine Father. In Nazareth, his home was the house of Joseph; in Jerusalem, his home was the house of God. MUST BE. Here not a moral, but a logical necessity. You should have known that I must, of course, be at my Father's. IN THE HOUSE OF MY FATHER. This is the rendering demanded, I think, by the connection; though "about my Father's business" is admitted by the Greek. But it is wholly alien to the spirit of the passage, and the common explanation is inconsistent with the fact that he immediately went back to Nazareth, and was in subjection to his parents till he was thirty years old. Our explanation sheds a beautiful light on the child Jesus' conscious filial relation (possibly now first vividly realized), to God, and to the temple as the house of God. With him the temple is his Father's house (John 2: 16).

Vs. 50.—DID NOT UNDERSTAND. His filial reproof for not coming straight to the temple, as his Father's house, was but imperfectly comprehended. There was much in the many-sided relations of the divine child that dawned but slowly even on the thoughtful Mary; to the rest they were a profound enigma.

Vs. 51.—HE WENT DOWN WITH THEM. He had remained behind in the temple, under the bidding of the Spirit. The purpose of that estate season had been accomplished; it was perhaps a grand epoch in his spiritual development; but it passed, and he lived in filial subordination to his parents in Nazareth for the next eighteen years. What occasional similar special gleams of heavenly light may have been vouchsafed him, we know not.

Vs. 52.—ADVANCED WITH EVEN AND STEADY PROGRESS. WISDOM: Primarily divine wisdom, but doubtless manifest also in earthly affairs. He was wise in everything. STATURE, or perhaps AGE, which the word may mean. He advanced in both. IN FAVOR WITH GOD. Not merely ostensibly, but actually, with his unswerving religious fidelity and obedience. WITH MEN. As they saw the loveliness of his growing character, and his readiness for every holy and beneficent work. This favor would continue until he shocked their prejudices by claiming to be the Messiah.

LIGHT FROM BIBLE LANDS.

BY REV. GEORGE E. POST M.D., BERNET, SYRIA.

EARLY MATURITY OF CHILDREN (Luke 2: 40). Children mature earlier in warm climates than in cold. A child of twelve has far more self-consciousness in Syria than one of that age in America. Boys of fifteen or even younger marry; and girls seldom wait beyond that age, while many are married at twelve or even younger. This precocity is not followed by the ultimate attainment of as great power, physical or mental, as that reached by the slower growth of the colder regions.

THE ANNUAL JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM (vs. 41), from the most distant place of their residence, was but a matter of four days. Such gatherings for worship are still characteristics of the Oriental religious life. There are many centres, besides Jerusalem and Mecca, where pilgrims swarm at certain seasons. A native friend told the writer recently that at Tanta, in Egypt, a million pilgrims came to the shrine of a Moslem Wely there in a single year. This, with allowance for Oriental exaggeration, illustrates the annual gatherings at Jerusalem in the time of Christ. There is a tomb of Moses in the Judean desert whither vast crowds of Moslem devotees resort every year. Pilgrimages occupy much the place in the Oriental religious life which revivals and religious assemblies do in that of the West. They give play to the more intense and fervent impulses of the soul, and are accompanied by irregularities and excesses such as sometimes attend camp meetings and revivals, to the occasional extent of epileptic convulsions, and trances, and extravagances, such as the Greek fire in the Church of the Sepulchre. That these gigantic movements of humanity do much evil is plain. They spread disease, and nourish fanaticism, and consume much time and money. The annual Hajj from Damascus to Mecca costs the beggared Ottoman government thousands of pounds which might go to pay its debts, or to feed its starving subjects, or to reform its administration. It is difficult to see any counterbalancing good. That they cultivate piety in the sense of love to God and man cannot be claimed for them. They rather tend to concentrate that intense bigotry which is the curse of the East. A Hajj (one who has gone to Mecca) or a Mukaddiy (one who has gone to Jerusalem) is the most self-sufficient and spiritually proud of mortals. Still, in limit-

ing the growth of local sects and promoting the unity of the grand divisions of the religious world, pilgrimages have done a work among the illiterate and stagnant populations of Asia, which has been done in the West by the enterprising activity of commerce and the diffusion of knowledge by printing and general education. In the Jewish state the pilgrimages were doubtless intended to prevent the growth of a local spirit of nationality in the tribes, and to foster unity of faith and worship as well as piety. When it is remembered that commerce was discouraged, it will be seen that pilgrimages furnished the most ready means of intercommunication and mutual influence among the tribes. Every revival of piety was marked by renewed fervor in these gatherings.

THE DAY'S JOURNEY (44) was about twenty miles. It was not strange that Jesus was not seen during the ride, as the cavalcade goes in single file, and there is no opportunity for riding along side on the narrow roads. People seldom pass from the rear to the front, but content themselves with their first position in the line of march.

BEFORE THE DOCTORS.—Christ would seem (v. 46) to have been in a humble attitude before the doctors, rather seeking than giving instruction. It was incidentally in his replies to the questions of the doctors (v. 47) that he showed the miraculous character of his wisdom.

MARY'S LEADERSHIP.—The position of chief mover in all that related to Christ's early life assumed by Mary, and illustrated by her acting as spokeswoman (v. 48), is in opposition to the Oriental idea of the priority of the father in the family and his absolute right to the children. This undesignated peculiarity in the narrative is a strong confirmation of the truthfulness and genuineness of the story. Had Christ been Joseph's child, in the ordinary sense, Joseph would have taken the prominent place in the whole history. This peculiarity again appears in v. 51, where Mary ponders Jesus' sayings.

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