

Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS.

Lesson 1.—April 3.

Luke 9: 51-62.

FOLLOWING JESUS.

GOLDEN TEXT.

And Jesus said unto him, no man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.—Luke 9: 62.

TOPIC.—A Lesson of Service.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Luke 9: 51-62. Tuesday, Gen. 18: 23-33; Wednesday, Matt. 18: 23-35. Thursday, Matt. 16: 21-26. Friday, Matt. 19: 21-30. Saturday, Luke 18: 1-8. Sunday, Eph. 6: 10-18.

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

With this lesson begins an extended account, peculiar to the gospel of Luke, of Christ's final journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. With Luke here apparently ends the Lord's Galilean ministry, and the following miracles, discourses, parables, etc., embracing the remainder of the Gospel until the Lord's arrival in Jerusalem (in chapter 19), are interwoven into this slow, extended, and perhaps somewhat circuitous, journey, whether precisely, or pretty nearly, in their actual order, it is difficult to say. For intimations of the journey being continuous, though doubtless very leisurely, see 9: 51; 13: 22; 17: 11; 19: 1, 28. There are, indeed, difficulties in this view, especially as some scenes like that in 10: 38-42, must be then inserted out of their proper connection. Also the passage 17: 11 ("It came to pass, as he was going to Jerusalem, he passed along the confines of Samaria and Galilee") might easily be referred to another and distinct journey. Still, on the whole, the evidence looks to one prolonged, though doubtless often interrupted, journey, from this point on, till the Lord's final coming to Jerusalem, (19: 29).

Vs. 51.—THE DAYS WERE BEING ACCOMPLISHED: or were fulfilling: namely, the days that were yet to intervene before HIS RECEIVING UP, his ascension into heaven, which, of course, follows, and presupposes, the crucifixion and resurrection. But because these facts accompany, it does not follow (as Godet supposes) that the word itself includes them. It refers only to his BEING TAKEN OR RECEIVED UP into heaven, as recorded Acts 1: 9.—SET HIS FACE: Fixed it steadfastly, fixed it with firm resolution, as aware of the dreadfulness of the goal toward which he was about to advance, and in spite of all his natural impulses to shrink from it. The cross was now continually before him, with its physical agony, its public shame, and, still more, the terrible spiritual conflicts with the powers of evil which awaited him.—TO GO TO JERUSALEM. Jerusalem was the local goal, as his death and resurrection were the destined end, of his journey. It could not be that a prophet should perish out of Jerusalem. Of this the sacred city possessed a sad monopoly.

Vs. 52.—SENT FORTH MESSENGERS: On account of his numerous train of followers, that would require accommodation.—ENTERED INTO A CITY OF THE SAMARITANS. Whether he intended to pass through Samaria to Judea (as he had in coming from Judea, and as the Galileans, according to Josephus, commonly did on their journeys to Jerusalem) or whether he only intended to perform some messianic work in its northern sections, before finally leaving that region, is uncertain. At all events, he now sought the hospitalities of a Samaritan city. He might well recall his former reception among the Samaritans, (John 4: 39), and desire and anticipate another spiritual harvest.

Vs. 53.—DID NOT RECEIVE HIM BECAUSE HIS FACE, etc. Jesus was travelling with a large retinue, and as Messiah, was proceeding to Jerusalem. They would, perhaps, have offered no opposition to his passing through their territory, but they would not entertain him, especially, when, as the Jewish Messiah, he would naturally awaken their Samaritan prejudices and jealousy, (John 4: 20, 25).

Vs. 54.—JAMES AND JOHN: "Sons of Thunder," a name which seems befitting their conduct here. The transfiguration on the mount, with the wondrous glorification of their Lord, was still fresh in their minds, and the remembrance of that scene may have sharpened their indignation at this rejection. Possibly the appearance of Elijah at that time may have suggested this proposal "to call down fire,"—a proposal so out of harmony with the general New Testament spirit. (The words "as Elijah did" are probably a comment by some reader, taken into the text from the margin. They are not in the oldest manuscripts.) The Old Testament incident, at all events, referred to, is 2 Kings 1: 10-12.

Vs. 55.—HE TURNED. Perhaps as walking at their head, though more probably it marks the movement of stern and rebuking attention drawn toward them by this extraordinary ebullition of misguided zeal. REBUKED THEM: Uttered words of strong reprobation of their language. ["Ye know not, etc."] These words are wanting in many of the best manuscripts, but many contain it, along with some of the oldest versions. I think its genuineness (on the ground also of intrinsic evidence) is probable. It may mean either "Ye know not the nature of the Spirit to whose dispensation (the New Testament dispensation, that of peace and good-will) ye belong; or "Ye know not to what alien and hostile spirit ye belong, when ye make such a proposition." Or when either of these meanings it may be read interrogatively, "Know ye not to what spirit ye belong?"

Vs. 56.—ANOTHER VILLAGE. Whether Samaritan or Jewish we are not told: probably the latter. The words of the received text and version, "For the Son of man came not," etc., are of even more questionable authenticity than those in verse 55, and the critical editions omit them. They are easily explained as a gloss taken by some copyist into the text from the margin (19: 10).

Vs. 57-60.—These two incidents are found in Matthew 8: 19-22 in a different connection. That of Luke is more likely to be the true one, as he sought greater historical exactness, and as these incidents are especially befitting the commencement of our Lord's great and final journey to his death.

Vs. 57-58.—ON THE WAY. As he was commencing or prosecuting his journey: near its outset.—I WILL FOLLOW THEE. Indicating zeal and devotion, not necessarily either blind or presumptuous. The Lord's reply, "THE FOXES HAVE HOLES," etc., does not require any such supposition. The Saviour, as usual, puts the darkest features of discipleship in the foreground. He that will follow him must come with his cross on his shoulders,—devoting him self to death (Matt. 16: 24). So here, if he will follow Christ, he must be prepared to renounce home and dwelling-place.—LODGING-PLACES. Not strictly "nests;" "places of shelter under foliage, as opposed to holes in the earth."—THE SON OF MAN. Christ's favorite messianic title, and contrasting the creation's Lord with his irrational creatures. That Jesus suffered from absolute want of food and shelter we need not suppose; but he was more eminently a "pilgrim on the earth" than the great majority of men; his food and lodging were, in a pre-eminent sense, the constant gift of his heavenly Father.

Vs. 59, 60.—HE SAID TO ANOTHER. Here the proposition for discipleship comes from him probably to one already of known attachment. The requisition is now for immediate and personal following.—PERMIT ME FIRST. He makes no objection; but has first a duty of sacred filial affection to discharge, TO BURY HIS FATHER. The Lord relieves him from, and overrides, the obligation. He has a higher and more imperative service for him.—LET THE DEAD, the spiritually dead, who have no eye and soul for high spiritual duty, BURY THEIR OWN DEAD: Perform the service which they will not neglect, and for which they are entirely competent. The disciple's immediate duty was determined by the Lord's presence and command. Without that command, his duty would have lain in the other and ordinary direction. Jesus taught him—and through him his people through all time—that when the two obligations clash, the lower must yield to the higher. Christ's command, and spiritual obligations, first and uppermost. At his command the rich young man was bound to go and sell all that he had. Here the disciple must leave to others the ordinary duty of caring for the dead.—"DO THOU GO AND PUBLISH ABROAD." Very likely this disciple was one of the seventy appointed immediately after; it may be that the Lord simply put to the test his obedience and earnestness. ("Let the dead bury their own dead" may be equivalent to "let the dead bury themselves;" that is, let the dead remain unburied rather than that the kingdom of God be unproclaimed. Let men's bodies perish, rather than their souls.)

Vs. 61, 62.—This incident is peculiar to Luke. It is very appropriate here as the Lord is setting out on his final journey to his martyrdom.—I WILL FOLLOW THEE, LORD. Apparently uttered in obedient reply to a command or request of Jesus, expressing a willingness to comply, yet possibly some lingering reluctance which the Lord discerned. The request (PERMIT ME TO GO AND BID FAREWELL, etc.) was proper enough in itself, but to be set aside by the command of Christ, or more urgent duty. It might, however, have involved difficulties and temptations which Jesus foresaw, and the young man did not, or an inadequate sense of the imperative character of the new duty.—NO ONE HAVING PUT HIS HAND TO THE PLOUGH, AND LOOKING BACK (behind, or backward). The figure is that of one who has commenced his plowing; his oxen are in the furrow, but he keeps his eye turned backward upon some object behind him. The purpose seems directed forward; the eye is directed backward. The position is one of half-heartedness and irresolution; his labor will be halting and inefficient. To this description answers the disciple who is not ready "to forsake father and mother" for his sake. HE IS NOT FITTED FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD: either in character, to be a member of it; or in zeal, to labor for it.

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