

Martha or Mary?

I cannot choose, I should have liked so much To sit at Jesus' feet,—to feel the touch Of his kind, gentle hand upon my head

While drinking in the gracious words he said. And yet to serve him, oh divine employ!— To minister and give the Master joy,— To bathe in coolest springs his weary feet,

And wait upon him while he sat at meat! Worship or service, which? Ah that is best.

To which he calls me, be it toil or rest,— To labor for him in life's busy stir, Or seek his feet, a silent worshiper.

So let him choose for us: we are not strong To make the choice. Perhaps we should go wrong,

Mistaking zeal for service and sinful sloth For loving worship, and so fail of both.

The Sunday-School.

June 20.—Jesus and Abraham.—John 8: 31-38, 44-59.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.—John 8: 56.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—God honors his Son.

EXPLANATIONS.

I. 31. Jews . . . believed: perhaps they only believed Jesus to be a great teacher, as Ryle suggests, though the next sentence seems to imply saving belief begun. 32. Know the truth: know Jesus the truth, or know his doctrine (John 7: 17). Make you free: from the bondage of sin. 33. Abraham's seed: children of Abraham (see Matt. 3: 9). Never in bondage: this was hardly true, the Jews had been in bondage in Egypt, to Assyria, and were then under Roman dominion. 34. Servant of sin: Jesus referred to spiritual bondage to sin. 35. Servant . . . son: the seed of Abraham was of two kinds: the bond as Ishmael, and the free as Isaac (Gal. 4: 30). 36. Free indeed: truly, permanently free (Gal. 5: 1). Ye seek to kill me: showing that you are not true children of Abraham. 38. My Father . . . your father: referring to God and to the devil (see v. 44).

II. 44. Your father the devil: your spiritual father. 45. Tell you the truth: Jesus telling them the truth caused them to hate him. 46. Of sin: Jesus challenges them to convict him of sin. 47. God's words: which I have told you, and ye would believe if ye were Abraham's true children. 48. A Samaritan . . . a devil: the Jews lost their temper, for they could not answer Jesus, so they call him bad names, a common way "to slander good men, when evil men can't deny what they say."

III. 49. Honor my father: God my father is honored by the truth I speak. 50. One seeketh: Jesus means God searcheth and judgeth all hearts. 51. Never see death: this truth is repeated over and over again in this gospel; eternal life through Jesus. 52. Abraham is dead: the Jews were sure now that Jesus was a demoniac, for even Abraham was dead, and believing in Jesus' word could not make a man live for ever here. 54. Honor myself: this is to answer their implied charge of glorifying himself. 55. Ye have not known him: you may know Abraham, but you do not know God.

IV. 57. Seen Abraham: giving a natural worldly meaning to Jesus' words, they were now sure they had caught him in a falsehood. 58. Before Abraham . . . I am: as the Word (see John 1: 1-3). 56. Stone him: without trial; they regarded it a blasphemy, but even then he was not to be stoned without trial. Hid himself: this is not necessarily a miraculous hiding and escape, he may have passed quickly aside, as men often have done in a crowd, and escaped.

QUESTIONS.

I. Where did the events in this lesson take place? When? How long after those of the last lesson? How did Jesus say that some Jews might become true disciples? What would the truth do for them? How must they understand the truth? Whose children did the Jews claim to be? What freedom did they claim? Was that true? To whom had they been in bondage? Under whose rule were they then? What would make one a servant of sin? What is the difference between the servant and the son? (v. 35.) To what Old Testament history does this refer? (see Gen. 21: 9-20.) Who can make us truly free? Why were they not true children of Abraham?

II. What did the Jews seek to do? Who was their spiritual father? How did they show that they were of the devil? What would they do if God was their father? Why did they not understand Jesus? Why not believe him? What did they say Jesus had? Whom did Jesus honor?

III. Whom did Jesus dishonor? Whose glory did Jesus seek? Who judged men? What would he have who kept Jesus' word? How did the Jews receive that saying? Why?

IV. What question did the Jews ask about Abraham (v. 53.)? What about Jesus? What was the first part of Jesus' answer? What did he say about their knowing God? Whose day had Abraham seen? Why did the Jews not believe this? How long was it after Abraham had lived on the earth when Jesus said this? To what did Jesus refer? (see John 1: 1-3.) What did the Jews try to do? How did Jesus escape?

June 27.—Review.

GOLDEN TEXT.—It is my Father that honoreth me.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—Jesus creates and heals his people.

Plans of Review.—A good review cannot be made without a definite plan for it, is formed in advance. The plan should be simple, clear, and adapted to impress the chief facts and teachings of the lessons upon the mind. If the plan is so complex and intricate that much effort of the mind is required to keep it in view, the review will be poor, no matter how ingenious the method of it may seem.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW.

Who was the Word? Who was he with? Of what the life? Who bare witness of him? What say of him? Which of John's disciples followed Jesus? Whom did Jesus call to be his disciples? Where was Nathanael seen? By whom? What did it lead him to say to Jesus?

Where did Jesus attend a wedding? What miracle perform there? At whose suggestion? What effect had the miracle on his disciples?

Who visited Jesus by night? For what? What startling truth did he learn? Who ought to have known it? At what well did Jesus rest? Of whom ask a drink? How show the woman her sin? With what result? Who believed her word? How were they afterward confirmed in their belief in Christ?

Whose son did Jesus heal? Where did the man live? Where was Jesus when he healed the son? Where was the son? How did the man know it was Christ that healed his son?

What man was healed at a pool? By what pool? In what city? How long had he been sick? Who found fault with this? Why?

How many did Jesus feed by the Sea of Galilee? With how many loaves and fishes? How did his disciples cross the sea that night? What did they see at night walking on the sea?

Who gave the Israelites the manna in the wilderness? Who is the true bread from heaven?

What did the officers say of Jesus? What did the Pharisees answer? Who tried to defend Jesus before them? How did they rebuke him?

Whose children did the Jews claim to be? Whose children did Jesus say some of them were? Why? Whom did Jesus seek to honor? Who honored him?

Do you honor and obey Jesus?

THIRD QUARTER.

July 4.—Jesus and the blind man.—John 9: 1-17.

GOLDEN TEXT.—One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.—John 9: 25.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—Jesus can give spiritual sight.

EXPLANATIONS.

I. 1. And . . . passed: or "was passing by" the place. 2. Who did sin: the prevalent belief was that all such afflictions were the direct punishment of sins committed either by the sufferer himself or by his parents (Ex. 20: 5). 3. Neither . . . sinned: does not mean that they were holy, but that this blindness was not the special punishment of any particular sin. Made manifest: by his restoration to sight. 4. I must: "We must" Revised Version, the disciples then are included with Christ as sent by God to do God's work. The night: that is death. 5. The light: in a spiritual sense (see 1: 1-18), but also with reference to the physical darkness of the blind man. 6. Made clay . . . anointed the eyes: there was no natural virtue in the spittle or clay, but Christ chose to use them, perhaps to help the faith of the poor blind man. 7. Wash: as a symbol of your cleaning.

II. 8. Before: up to that time they had known him only as blind. 9. Like him: they could not believe that he was the same man, so quickly and wonderfully changed from blindness to seeing. 10. How, &c.: they were curious to know of the wonderful change. 11. He answered: Jesus had told him to do something; he had trusted and obeyed; and lo, he was cured! Know not: he did not know where Jesus by this time might be.

III. 14. It was, &c.: this verse gives the reason why he was brought to the Pharisees, viz.: because the healing was on the Sabbath. 15. Also asked: as his neighbors had done (v. 10); his answer is the same substantially as before. 16. This man: Jesus. Not of God: not one sent by God, for then he would be holy, sinless; but his having broken the Sabbath-law shows that he is not such. How can a man, &c.: these reasoned from the opposite standpoint: no sinner can do a miracle; he did a miracle; therefore he is no sinner. Thus the difference of opinion involved the question whether breaking the Sabbath-law were a sin or not, a question serious enough to cause a division or "schism" among them.

QUESTIONS.

I. In what month of what year did the event in this lesson probably take place? After what great festival? In what city? From what place was Jesus coming when he met the blind man? What causes so many people to be blind in the East? How long had the man been blind? What did Jesus' disciples ask him? Why did they think he or his parents had sinned? What was Jesus' reply? What did this mean? Why was the man blind? Whose work must Jesus and his disciples do? When? When can man do no more work? In what double sense was Jesus the light of the world so long as he was on earth? What means did he use to heal the blind man? How did he make the clay? How anoint the man's eyes? Where did he tell him to go? Where was this? What was it? What did the man do? What was the result? Where did he then go?

II. What did his neighbors ask? Why? What did some say? What did others say? What did he say? What did they ask him? Did he try to explain how it was done? What only did he say? What did he call Jesus? Why did they ask where Jesus was? What was the man's answer?

III. Who were the Pharisees? Why was the man brought to them? On what day had he been restored? Was this unlawful? What did the Pharisees ask him? What did he answer? What did some conclude from this about Jesus? To what did their difference of opinion lead? What did they ask the blind man? Why did they ask him? What did he say? What did he probably mean by this?

July 11.—Jesus the good shepherd.—John 10: 1-18.

GOLDEN TEXT.—I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.—John 10: 11.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—Jesus is the true Shepherd.

EXPLANATIONS.

I. 1. Verily, verily: with these words of solemn earnestness Jesus calls special attention to what follows. You: the Pharisees whom he is still addressing. Door: the gate in the wall of the sheepfold. Other way: "elsewhere," over the top of the wall. Thief . . . robber: they were common in the East. Here they stand for the Pharisees. 3. Hear: recognize. His own: those of his own particular flock; several flocks are supposed to be in the fold. Leadeth them out: to pasture; shepherds did not drive, but go before their flocks, calling them. So Jesus bids us, "Follow me, (Matt. 4: 19; 16: 24; Jno. 12: 26). Sheep: (see Notes). 5. Stranger, &c.: they recognize him as a stranger, one who has never fed nor cared for them. 6. Parable: or "proverb," truth expressed indirectly in the form of a fable, or allegory. A common mode of teaching in the East. Understood not: the Pharisees did not recognize the reference to them, nor its full meaning (see 9: 39, and 10: 20).

II. 7. Then: "therefore," because they had not understood, he now explains his meaning. Door of the sheep: that gives access to them; whoever would lead men to truth must through him as "the Truth," get the power and authority. 8. Came before: not absolutely all, but all who, like the Pharisees, presumed to be leaders of the people without the spirit of Christ. Thieves, &c.: see 1. 9. saved: "delivered" by going in the door. Go in and out: as the rightful shepherd and sheep. 10. The thief: the opposite of him who entered by Christ the door. Life: in contrast to the destruction aimed at by the thief. Abundantly: overflowing, fullness of life can be had only in Christ. 11. Giveth his life: or "layeth down his life," to save his sheep. This Christ did. 12. Hireling: (see Notes), selfish leaders and teachers. Wolf: (see Notes), the enemy of Christ's own followers. 13. Careth not: has no love for the sheep, but only for self.

III. 14. Know my sheep: "know mine own," Revised Version, omits sheep. Christ knows us better than we know ourselves. Am known: or "mine own know me," Revised Version reads. The Christians knowledge in the assurance of faith. 15. As the Father, &c.: the relationship between the Christian and Christ is as intimate as between God and Christ (see 17: 21-23). Lay down: willingly for the sake of the sheep. 16. Other sheep . . . not of this fold: Gentiles, not of the Jewish fold, shall become believers (see 17: 20). Bring: as their shepherd. Hear: recognize and obey. One fold: better "one flock," Jew and heathen united under one lord and shepherd. 17. Take it again: in the resurrection, and so forever be our shepherd, (Matt. 28: 20). 18. No man &c.: Christ's sacrifice was voluntary, and not against his will. This commandment: the death and resurrection were in accordance with God's plan and will.

QUESTIONS.

I. In what connection did the teaching in this lesson take place? Describe an eastern sheepfold? What distinguishes the shepherd from a robber? What was the relation between a shepherd and his sheep in the East? How did he lead them? What sheep know his voice? Who are meant by the shepherd, and who by the robbers? Did the Pharisees understand it?

II. To what did Jesus compare himself? Who that had come before him had been robbers? Why? For what does the thief come? For what did Jesus come? How did he prove that he is the good shepherd? How would a hireling act? Why? What would become of the sheep?

III. How do we as sheep "know" Christ? How does he know us? For whose sake did he lay down his life?

Who are meant by his other sheep? What will become of them? What will be the blessed result? When did Christ take his life up again? Why? What made his death a sacrifice? What was the "commandment" or plan of the Father?

July 18.—The death of Lazarus.—John 11: 1-16.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.—John 11: 11.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—Jesus sympathizes with the bereaved.

EXPLANATIONS.

I. 1. Lazarus, Bethany (see Notes.) The town of Mary, &c.: so described because the two sisters were well known in evangelical history, and to distinguish it from another Bethany in Perea, mentioned in 1: 28, where our version has Bethabara. Probably Jesus now was at Bethany in Perea (see 10: 40). Mary, Martha (see Notes). 2. Which anointed, &c.: not before but after the events of this lesson (12: 3). Another woman had similarly anointed him some time before (Luke 7: 37, &c.), with whom Mary is not to be confounded. Ointment: various perfumed ointments were used. Myrrh and spike-nard were used in anointing the dead. This was the kind Mary used (12: 3), anointing not only his head, but his feet also. Wiped . . . with her hair: an act of humble affection. 4. Not unto death: meaning that the ultimate result would be life through the Son of God.

II. 5. Loved, &c.: the intimate friendship between them and Jesus explains why they sent word to him. 6. Abode two days still, &c.: the meaning is that "though he heard, &c., he yet, then, remained two days longer." 7. Then, &c.: afterwards, after two days, when knowing all things he was aware that Lazarus was dead. Judea (see Notes), Jesus was yet in Perea. 8. Sought to stone (see 10: 31, 39). Goest thou, &c.: in spite of the danger. 9. Are there not &c.: the meaning of Jesus' answer seems to be: "My working time is not yet past, therefore I will not stumble into the enemies' hands. But when once my time is over, and it is night for me, then I shall fall into their hands."

III. 11. Sleepeth: "is fallen asleep." The disciples did not know that Lazarus was dead; Christ had become aware of it, calling his death a sleep because he knew that he should awake him: raise him to life again. 12. Well: or "will recover," they took his words literally; if Lazarus was sleeping it would be a good sign that he would get well. 14. Plainly: not figuratively as in v. 11. 15. Glad: not at the death in itself, but to the intent, &c., in as far as it will increase your faith. 16. May die with him: he takes for granted that Jesus will be killed, but in the ardor of his love proposes to share the danger and death with him.

QUESTIONS.

I. Where was Jesus at the time of this lesson? Who was sick? Where was his home? Who were his sisters? How had they treated Jesus? What other events in Jesus' life took place at this Bethany? How is Mary further described? With what kind of ointment did Mary anoint him? What message did the sisters send to Jesus? Why? What did he say the sickness was not? What explains why they had sent the message to him?

II. Did Jesus at once go to Bethany? How long did he yet remain where he was? What did he afterwards say? When was this probably? What remonstrance did the disciples make? What had the Jews tried to do? What did Jesus answer? What did he mean by walking in the night and stumbling?

III. What did he afterwards again say? Why did he call Lazarus' death a sleep? What did he mean by awakening him out of his sleep? What was the disciples' reply? What did he then tell them plainly? Of what was he glad? Why? What did he nevertheless decide to do? What did Thomas say? Who was he? Why is he called Didymus? What trait of character do his words reveal? How did he show his brave love?

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