

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

LESSON III, SECOND QUARTER, INTERNATIONAL SERIES, APRIL 17.

Text of the Lesson, Mark ix, 2-13. Memory Verses, 2-4—Golden Text, Mark ix, 7—Commentary Prepared by Rev. D. M. Stearns.

[Copyright, 1904, by American Press Association.] This lesson seems to follow immediately upon the last in the regular order of events and, like the last, is recorded both by Matthew and Luke. The first verse of this chapter should certainly be included in our lesson, as it is the key to the lesson, and the transfiguration is the unfolding and fulfillment of His saying in that verse. The fact that each of the evangelists records the transfiguration immediately after that saying concerning the kingdom of God is sufficient evidence that they so understood it. Peter also, speaking of this event, calls it "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Pet. i, 10-12). The favored three who were with Him when He raised to life the ruler's daughter, and afterward in His agony in Gethsemane, were privileged on this occasion to be eyewitnesses of His majesty. Why these three instead of the others and why John should come nearer than James or Peter we may not perhaps know, but we do know that few seem willing to be His choice ones. His Nazarites, although, as in redemption, it seems to be for "whosoever will." The old question still stands, "Who, then, is willing?" (I Chron. xxix, 5).

Luke says that He went up into a mountain to pray, and as He prayed the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening. Our lesson says "shining, exceeding white as snow," and Matthew says "white as the light" and that His face did shine as the sun. Some-what thus He appeared to Daniel long before He came in the flesh and many years after His ascension to John in Patmos (Dan. x, 6; Rev. i, 10). The miracle was not so much that He was thus transfigured, but rather that such glory could thus be veiled those thirty-three years in a mortal body. What an inspiration to look forward to the time when these bodies in which we now live shall be immortal, incorruptible, fashioned like unto His glorious body; when the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father! (Phil. iii, 21; Matt. xiii, 43). The transfiguration took place on a high mountain apart by themselves, and so we must have our seasons apart with Him in prayer if we would see and know anything of His glory.

Our Lord always lived in the realities of the unseen. God the Father, the holy angels, the redeemed from the earth, were all more real to Him than the people and things which our natural eyes see, and now here are two men, Moses and Elijah, who had been absent from the earth at least 1,400 and 500 years respectively, and they are, alive and well and talking with Jesus of that most important of all events up to that time, "His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke ix, 31). Although the disciples were heavy with sleep, they kept awake and saw His glory and the two men that stood with Him. We are not told how they recognized Moses and Elijah nor if the Lord Jesus introduced them, but it is probable that in the glory one shall know another without any introduction, and we may see a new meaning in the words, "Then shall I know even as also I am known" (I Cor. xiii, 12). If the atoning sacrifice of Christ was to Moses and Elijah and Christ so all important a theme, how can anything else be more important to us?

Peter, overcome by what he saw and not knowing what to say, suggested that they make tabernacles and abide there, and so we, too, would fain abide, at some conference or convention or in some happy frame of mind on some mountain top of spiritual experience. But the kingdom is not yet, and there are many on the lower level of the world, oppressed by the devil, and few even among the disciples seem able to bring relief because there is so little prayer and fasting (verse 29), so little whole heartedness for God, so little value seemingly attached to the precious blood, which alone can cleanse from all sin.

As Peter spoke a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him" (Matt. xvii, 5). This is still God's word to each of us, and there is no way by which we can be pleasing to God except through Jesus Christ and no other way by which we can have fellowship with God. When we hear the words of Christ, we hear the words of God the Father, for the Father told Him what to say (John xii, 49; xiv, 10), and when we have ears for Jesus Christ we will certainly have none for any who dishonor Him or His word. And now here is a great word for our hearts. "They saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves." It reminds us of other words such as these: "The Lord alone shall be exalted" ("Cease ye from man," "Behold the Lord," "The Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day there shall be one Lord, and His name one" (Isa. li, 11, 14, 23; Ii, i, 2; Zech. xiv, 9). We may participate in our daily life and experience the kingdom when God shall be all in all, but it must be by finding in Christ now our all in all and by seeing no one but Jesus only (I Cor. xv, 23; Col. iii, 11). If they had simply believed His word, they need not have questioned what He meant by His rising from the dead, for had they not just looked upon a representative of those who die and rise from the dead and also of those who shall be changed without dying? May we see Jesus only and simply believe His every word.

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