

For the Sabbath School.

International S. S. Lesson.

LESSON II.—JANUARY 14.—GEN. III. 1-15.

ADAM'S SIN AND GOD'S GRACE.

GOLDEN TEXT.—For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

No account of the Fall can be imagined so beautiful, so natural, so honorable to man and God as the simple, straightforward, literal story as given in the Bible. "Let us recall to mind," says Prof. Swing, "what a large part of this story must be true, even if it made no pretence to be an inspired narrative. It is not, certainly, a myth that there is a human race, and there must have been a first pair, and this pair must have had a home and a Creator at hand; and must have made their first move in virtue or sin; and from what sin we now see in the world, that they early left the paradise of virtue, is the verdict of history." Confirmation from the early traditions of ancient nations. Almost every nation, except the African, of which too little is known to be certain, has early traditions of a golden age, Edenic blessedness and innocence, of the serpent, the tree and degeneracy. There are Chinese, Thibetan, Mongolian, and Hindu traditions, the Zoroastrian story of Mashya and Meshyana, the Egyptian tradition of the reign of Ra, the Greek Pandora, the Scandinavian, Asgard, the sacred plant guarded by Celestial genii on the Assyrian bas-reliefs. These traditions must have come from some common source before the dispersion of men, and point to some actual fact in the early history of the race. And since it is acknowledged that the Bible account is the simplest, most natural, most instructive, free from all that is grotesque, there is every reason for believing that the Bible story is the true history of early man from which the others diverged.

HOW OLD IS THE HUMAN RACE?—The exact date is unknown. No one now would attempt to fix the time "with as cheerful confidence as the great chronologer determined by his system that the world was created on a certain day in September, at six o'clock in the afternoon." The most conservative scholars, are inclined to lengthen the dates given on the margins of our Bibles. On the other hand science is greatly shortening the time since the first appearance of man in the glacial period, from the wild calculations of many former geologists.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN, MAN'S FIRST HOME.—(1) The garden of Eden was but a small portion of the region called Eden. The garden or paradise is a place fenced round; hence a park, a pleasure-ground with trees, streams, flowers, and fruits. (2) It is impossible to tell precisely where Eden was situated. Delitzsch says that "Paradise is lost." We only know that it must be somewhere on the Euphrates. (3) The most probable site is on the lower Euphrates, near where the Tigris (Hiddekel) unites with it. Into the united stream flows the Kerkha (Gihon), and the Karun (Pison).

In Paradise, man was simply perfect as a man complete with all the possibilities of manhood. He was innocent but inexperienced. He was happy, at peace, and living in communion with God.

THE ASSAULT.—And he, Satan, through the serpent. Said unto the woman. Apparently in the absence of Adam (1 Tim. 2:14). (1) He would be much more likely to succeed with either one alone; a hint to "the children of light." (2) The woman was less experienced than Adam. (3) The very qualities which made her perfect as a woman made her more susceptible to this form of temptation, as manly qualities are to other forms. Yea, hath God said,—Or, as the Hebrew strictly implies: *Really is it true that God has said.* "Could the good God lay such a restriction on his children? Surely there must be a mistake." Ye shall not eat of every (R.V. any) tree. Either Satan's exaggeration, "You live in Paradise and cannot enjoy it," or, "Is there any tree from which you cannot eat? Are you restricted and narrowed in your range?" "The implication is that it is unreasonable to debar them from what was so innocent and so natural." Note how Satan persistently points to

the few restrictions, and not to the wide range of privileges. Millions of trees and countless varieties of fruit were free to Eve, but Satan led her to dwell on the one forbidden thing. This is still a specimen of his tactics.

EVE LOSES THE BATTLE.—*Saw that the tree was good.* So it appeared. So Satan had said. He had thrown an aureole of glory around the promised delights. The temptation shone in a borrowed light. So ever Satan presents the attractions of evil. *Good for food.* Tempting the senses,—*"the lust of the flesh."* *Pleasant, a delight, to the eyes.* Appealing to the higher sense of beauty,—*"the lust of the eye."* *To be desired to make one wise.* Some unknown glorious good that would lift her into a higher position like that of God,—*"the pride of life"* (1 John 2:16) "The confluence of all these streams made such a current as swept the feeble will clean away; and blind, dazed, deafened by the rush of the stream, Eve was carried over the falls, as a man might be over Niagara." *She took of the fruit thereof.* She yielded to the temptation and fell. *She gave also unto her husband, and he did eat.* He believed Satan all the more easily because the threatened death did not seem to fall upon Eve. According to Paul, Adam was not deceived (1 Tim. 2:14). He disobeyed God with open eyes. Eve acted against a plain, direct command of God. It was open and flagrant disobedience. "She was free from all those natural and inherited constitutional propensities to sin which are so powerful in us." She had all helps at hand; all strength was at her command. She was not driven by necessity, by hunger or thirst or deprivation of any good, but she had in unlimited abundance the supplies for every need, and satisfaction for every sense.

There has been perpetual warfare between Satan and man ever since the fall. He has been the greatest enemy of man. *It shall bruise thy head,* etc. An allusion to the serpent's habit of hiding itself in a path and attacking the feet of the passer-by, who then stamps him to death. The prophecy is, that in the conflict man shall be wounded, but the serpent shall be destroyed. Satan can injure men; he can arouse persecution; he can bring calamity, as to Job; he can bruise the heel of Christians,—their lower and human nature; but they can wholly conquer him by the victory which Jesus Christ gives them. Satan bruised Christ's heel in Gethsemane and on the cross; but Jesus Christ gained the victory over Satan and will utterly defeat him. "This verse has been called 'the first gospel.' The gospel, to be a genuine gospel, must come in the form of a curse upon sin. Love is the fulfilling of the law; but hatred of sin is the only portal to true and pure and holy love."

Another effect was thus spiritual death. They lost their likeness to God, their innocence, their condition of righteous living, which was life. They lost the joy and delight, the healthful activity of their whole nature, which is life. The divine life was gone from them. Then came the death of the body. Pain, sorrow, trouble, and anxiety foreboding it. Eve was to suffer in her sphere as mother and wife. Adam was to suffer in his sphere. His *dominion* was to rebel against him as he had rebelled against his king. Loss of paradise. They were driven from Eden. The misery entailed upon their children.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS:—God has done all possible for the happiness of man; he gave him a paradise full of all that could minister to his joy and good. God still gives us the best possible world for such beings as we are. Man perished in Eden even while it had a tree of life in it. So men perish now within sight of the Redeemer's cross, because they will not believe and obey. No place or character or employment can free us from the assaults of temptation. The innocent Adam was assailed in Paradise, and the holy Jesus in the wilderness.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS:—*Man in Paradise.* Picture out this home with the newly created and newly wedded pair in it. We may dwell with delight on Milton's pictures of unfallen man. What a wide range to their life and enjoyment, the blessedness of communion with God,