

## SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

## INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

## LESSON XII.

Mar. 24. } MANASSEH BROUGHT TO RE- { 2 Chron. xxxiii.  
1878. } PENTANCE: 9-16.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent."—Rev. iii. 19.

## HOME STUDIES.

- M. 2 Kings xx. 1-11. . . . . Hezekiah's sickness.  
T. Isa. xxxviii. 1-22. . . . . His song of thanksgiving.  
W. { Isa. xxxix. 1-8. . . . . Rebuked for his pride.  
      2 Kings xx. 12-21 }  
Th. 2 Kings xxi. 1-17. . . . . Manasseh's wicked reign.  
F. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 9-17. . . . . Manasseh's repentance.  
S. Ps. lxxxix. 30-37. . . . . Transgression visited.  
S. Rev. iii. 14-22. . . . . Golden Text and connection.

## HELPS TO STUDY.

When Hezekiah was apparently "sick unto death," he was filled with exceeding bitterness of grief. (Isa. xxxviii. 2, 3, 10-17.)

One reason of this great sadness seems to have been that he had no son to succeed him on the throne; for when he actually died fifteen years later, Manasseh was only twelve years old. The boy's mother was named Hephzibah, (2 Kings xxi. 1,) and it is very likely that Isaiah wrote the prophecy in the sixty-second chapter at the time of her marriage with Hezekiah. He pictures the happiness of restored Judah as that of a bride rejoiced over by a bridegroom, and gives to Zion the very name of the new queen, Hephzibah, (that is, delightful,) "for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married."

Significant, also, is the name given to the child born to the royal pair. Hezekiah, as we saw before, had been trying to win back the remnant of the desolated ten tribes to their allegiance to Jehovah, and among those who joined him at his great Passover were men of Manasseh. (2 Chron. xxx. 11, 18.) How natural for him to name his son after that once great and powerful northern tribe, as a token of his forgiveness of the old secession! It was like Edward I., of England, after the conquest of the Welsh, giving to his son born at Carnarvon the new title of "Prince of Wales." Besides, the name had the significant meaning of "causing to forget." He hoped that this son, so named, might cause the Israelites to forget their unhappy estrangement.

These circumstances are not only interesting in themselves, but will really help the lesson. They enable us to picture the boyhood of Manasseh. With a godly father and (as Isaiah's allusion must imply) a godly mother, with the aged prophet watching over them all, with a name suggestive of good-will and the union of the nation as Jehovah's people, what advantages the young prince had! and how much all this adds to the sadness of the sequel!

## I. SIN AND ITS CHASTISEMENT: Verses 9-11.

As Hezekiah was the good son of a bad father, Manasseh was the bad son of a good father. His reign was the longest in the annals of Judah, and the most calamitous. It has been likened to that of Queen Mary of England. He deliberately set himself to undo his father's reformation. He made Judah to err, and to do worse than the heathen. No doubt the idolatrous party, which, (like the Romish party under Edward VI.) had been subdued but not changed, sprang into power and led the boy-king astray. The foul Baal-worship and horrible Moloch sacrifices, verses 3, 6,) which Ahaz had introduced, were resumed; and the Chaldean idolatry of sun, moon, and stars, (probably the result of Hezekiah's unhappy alliance with Merodach-Baladan) was also brought in. Worst of all, a graven image (probably the most shocking of ancient idols, for the word "grove" in 2 Kings xxi. 7 is literally *Asherah*;) was set up in the very temple itself—an outrage even Ahaz had not been guilty of; the altar of Jehovah and the ark being removed. (See verse 16; chap. xxxv. 3.)

This great apostasy was not consummated without warnings.

The Lord spoke to Manasseh and to his people. He will not give them up until every means to induce them to turn and repent has been exhausted. But they would not harken, but slew his messengers. In 2 Kings xxi. 10-15 we see unnamed prophets denouncing the apostasy and threatening judgment in most striking language. These verses are immediately followed by the statement that Manasseh "shed innocent blood very much, and filled Jerusalem from one end to the other." Was not this a bitter persecution against the prophets and others who stood faithful? Does not Jeremiah refer to it when he says, (Jer. ii. 30,) "Your own sword hath devoured your prophets like a destroying lion?" Was it not then that Isaiah (according to Jewish tradition, and see Heb. xi. 37,) was sawn asunder? No wonder it is said of these very murders, (2 Kings xxiv. 3, 4,) "Which the Lord would not pardon."

Now therefore that these sinners will not hear God's voice they must suffer the sting of his rod: Isa. lxiii. 10; Jer. xix. 15. Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of Assyria. These were God's instruments. He often uses the ambition of one king to punish the crimes of another.

The prophecy of Isaiah which he spake to Hezekiah was now fulfilled: 2 Kings xx. 16-18. Ezer-haddon carried the King of Judah in fetters to Babylon. (Note 1.)

The great lesson of this history to every Christian parent is that they should be intensely earnest to have their children thoroughly and entirely Christians in their very earliest years. How appalling the very possibility of leaving a godless child of twelve years to run such a career as that of Manasseh. One of the most terrible fruits of sin is that it does not remain alone. The sinner leads others into sin.

II. REPENTANCE AND FRUITS WORTHY OF IT: Verses 12-15.

When Manasseh was in affliction he besought the Lord. The uses of adversity are blessed when it leads the prodigal back to his Heavenly Father. But it is only sanctified affliction which profits. King Ahaz, like clay, was hardened, while Manasseh, like wax, was softened in the fires. In the day of his trouble he called upon God: Ps. 1. 15; Dan. ix. 3. And God heard his supplications: Ps. xxii. 24; xxxi. 22. If God will listen when even a blood-stained Manasseh prays, who may not hope for mercy? Brought him again: Ps. xxx. 11. Not every one who has thus failed in the use of opportunities has the privilege of their possession again. He was, perhaps, released and reinstated as a subject king, on the death of Ezer-haddon. It was the Lord's work, for he controlled the events which led to it. Manasseh knew. He realized, as never before, the hand of God, his power, mercy, and loving kindness. Let us be able to see God in our mercies as well as in our trials.

Answered prayer is one of the most convincing proofs that "the Lord, He is God."

The king, now by God's mercy restored, showed the sincerity of his repentance by immediately going to work to correct his errors. He strengthened the fortifications of his capital (Note 2,) he removed the pollutions of idolatry from the temple and from the city; and as he had been a leader in sin, he strives with all the greater zeal to be a leader in the way of righteousness.

The Golden Text gives us the key to Manasseh's misfortunes. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." God loved the son of Hezekiah and Hephzibah, and by means of heavy trials brought him back from his sinful ways. God afflicts not willingly, but to bring us back to Himself: Heb. xii. 5-11.

This story magnifies the mercy of God, and His willingness to forgive the very chief of sinners. None need despair. The foulest sin can be cleansed by the blood of Jesus. Isa. i. 18; 1 John i. 7.

But let none presume upon this mercy. Remember both the thieves. Besides even although God is willing to forgive, would it not be better to be spared the suffering which may be needed to bring back the wanderer. Besides, can you ever undo the consequences of your wrong-doing? What of others whom your influence has led astray; for it is much easier to lead people astray than it is to lead them back again. Manasseh found this out. The king's command could remove the offences from off the land, but it could not remove them from the hearts of the people. So soon as that restraint was removed, the idols were brought back, and, in a short time, the temple was again filled with them. Manasseh saved himself, but could not save the people whom he had corrupted. His sad experience should arrest many a young man on the threshold of an evil career. For one may come to the time when he will sorrow most for the ruin that he has brought to those who have fallen under his influence, and who have followed his example.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES.

1. Among the thorns. Rather, with hooks. The Assyrian used to lead his captive by a cord attached to a hook or ring thrust through the cartilage of his nose, precisely as a ferocious bull is led at the present day: compare 2 Kings xix. 28; Amos iv. 2. The inscriptions give representations of captives so led. Hence the comparison of captives to fish, Jer. xvi. 16. Whether the language here is figurative, or Manasseh was really subjected to such treatment, is not certain; but from the representations of the inscriptions, and from the severity of treatment mentioned in the next verse, it is probable that he was actually led by a hook in his nose.—Fetters. The word thus rendered means chains of brass, either for the feet, fetters, or for the hands, manacles; the latter, or perhaps both, are probably meant here.—Carried him to Babylon. This is an indication of the truth of the narrative. It would have been more natural for the writer to say, carried him to Nineveh; for the kings of Assyria were accustomed to reside in Nineveh, the capital. But contrary to this custom, Ezer-haddon, who had been made king of Babylon before he became king of Assyria, took special delight in that city, and made it his residence most of the time during his entire reign. Babylon was the capital of ancient Chaldea, and of the later empire of Babylon. It was situated on the Euphrates, about 275 miles south from Nineveh.

2. Without the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley. Rather, "he built the outer wall of the city of David on the west of Gihon-in-the-valley." The wall intended seems to have been that towards the north-east, which ran from the vicinity of the modern Damascus gate across the valley of Gihon, to the "fish-gate" at the north-east corner of the "city of David." The captains who took Manasseh prisoner had probably destroyed or greatly damaged this part of the fortifications.

Ophel; meaning, tower. This tower occupied the short mountain-spur projecting southward from the temple-area, and sloping off abruptly into the valley of Kidron, or Jehoshaphat, on the east, the valley of Gihon, or Hinnom, on the south, and the valley of the Tyropæon, or cheese-mongers, on the west. It was thus the south-east corner of the city.

THE DANGERS OF COVETOUSNESS.—When covetousness gains a complete ascendancy, engrossing the whole man, it forms that compound of all that is mean and despicable, that monster of moral deformity, usually called a miser. In our day the tribe is not very numerous, which is a matter of gratitude, for should they multiply they would certainly create a desert around them. I know of no passion which so deeply agitates and degrades, so effectually enslaves and destroys the soul, as covetousness. The man who sets his heart upon riches must necessarily be a stranger to peace and enjoyment. Fear, care, anxiety, suspicion, and jealousy place him on a constant rack. To the toil of getting is added the trouble of keeping his self. Avarice is insatiable as the grave, or rather as a gulf without bottom. The more this passion is supplied with fresh fuel the more vehement is the flame.—*Ruricus*.

## WORDS OF THE WISE.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS.—I think we may assert, that, in a hundred men, there are more than ninety who are what they are, good or bad, useful or pernicious to society, from the instruction they have received. It is on education that depends the great difference observable among them. The least and most imperceptible impressions received in our infancy have consequences very important and of a long duration. It is with these first impressions as with a river, whose waters can be easily turned by different canals in quite opposite courses; so that, from the insensible direction the stream receives at its source, it takes different directions, and at last arrives at places far distant from each other; and with the same facility we may, I think, turn the minds of children to what direction we please.

FULL CONFESSION.—Let us encourage ourselves in the LORD our God; encourage ourselves in His character—encourage ourselves in His compassion. He will not shut up His tender mercies in anger, but will shut up anger in His tender mercies, for His compassions fail not. Let us say of them, This is my hiding-place; here will I nestle from sin, temptations, falls, and ingrattitudes. Feeling His tenderness to be that of a jealous God, we are too apt to go to Him as to a tender friend, jealous friend, keeping back what is likely to grieve him. But no! Our JESUS is not like an earthly friend even in this; there is no loosening His love by suspicion. He knows all our baseness, yet loves unto the end! Therefore let us go tell Him all; even those feelings which we would hide from ourselves, let us drag out before Him, and pour out our complaints of ourselves into the bosom of our Master.—*Lady Powerscourt*.

EVENTIDE.—In the hour which of all the twenty-four is most emblematic of heaven, and suggestive of repose, the eventide, in which instinctively Jacob went into the fields to meditate,—when the work of the day is done, when the mind has ceased its tensions, when the passions are lulled to rest, in spite of themselves, by the spell of the quiet, star-lit sky,—it is then, amidst the silence of the lull of all the lower parts of our nature, that the soul comes forth to do its work. Then the peculiar, strange work of the soul, which the intellect cannot do—mediation—begins. Awe, and worship, and wonder, are in full exercise; and love begins in its purest form of mystic adoration, and pervasive and undefined tenderness—separate from all that is coarse and earthly—swelling as if it would embrace all in its desire to bless and lose itself in the sea of the love of God. This is the rest of the soul—the exercise and play of all the nobler powers.

THE PERSUASION OF SONG.—The mother singing over the cradle—is there any other saintliness more beautiful to be thought of than that? The old bird sits on the tree, and coaxes the young bird to fly to her. She sings to it, and teaches it to sing. And the mother sits at the cradle as it were, to call the little children up to the Christian life. The children sing in the family, and in the utterance of song they are all one. There is but one sound, but one hymn, and to a large extent, so far as there is feeling at all, it is one feeling. And persons are never brought into such communion as when they are gathered together, and their feelings express themselves in song. It is the hymn that persons sing together that unite them. I think I love those that I have sung with better than any others. And when we come into heavenly places in CHRIST JESUS—into the lecture-room and the church proper, and all join in singing, is there any other ministration in the sanctuary that opens the gate of heavenly light and makes the battlements shine so brightly?—*Butcher*.

"God loves the deeds for the man's sake which doeth them, rather than the man for the good works that he doeth. As God looked first at Abel and then at his gifts, but to Cain and his offerings He looked not; because Abel was a chosen vessel of God, therefore God received his offering; and Cain's were not received, because he was not of that number. For as a schoolmaster will take in good part the diligence that his scholars can do; and if he see them put their good wills thereto, he will bear with their faults, and teach them their lessons; but to the stubborn and froward he will show no gentleness, but cast them off; so God with those whom he hath chosen in Christ before the world was made, will bear with their infirmities, and wink at their little faults, teach them to do better, and praise the well-doings, and gently correct their faults; but his enemies and outcasts, because whatsoever they do is hypocrisy, He loves them not, but even their prayer is turned to sin, and whatsoever they do is defiled, because they be not grafted and chosen in Christ Jesus.—*Pilkington*.

## MEETINGS OF PRESBYTERY.

WHITBY.—In Whitby, on the third Tuesday of March at 11 o'clock a.m.

LONDON.—Next regular meeting in 1st Presbyterian Church, London, on the third Tuesday in March, 1878.

CHATHAM.—In St. Andrew's Church, Chatham, on Tuesday, 19th March, at 11 a.m.

GLENGARRY.—In St. John's Church, Cornwall, on Tuesday, 19th March, at the usual hour.

MONTREAL.—In St. Paul's Church, Montreal, on Tuesday, 2nd April, at 11 a.m.

KINGSTON.—In Chalmers' Church, Kingston, on Tuesday, 26th March, at 3 p.m.

STRATFORD.—In St. Andrew's Church, Stratford, on Tuesday, 19th March, at 10 a.m.

BARRIE.—At Barrie, on 26th March, at 11 a.m.

QUEBEC.—At Scotstown, on 20th March, at 10 a.m.

HURON.—At Seaford, on 19th March, at 11 a.m.

OWEN SOUND.—In Division Street Church, Owen Sound, on Tuesday the 19th inst., at 10 a.m.

HAMILTON.—The next stated meeting will be held in Central Church, Hamilton, on Tuesday the 19th inst., at 11 o'clock. The State of Religion will be considered in the evening.