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Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS.

SCRIPTURES FROM WRITINGS OF JOHN.

Fourth Quarter.

Lesson X. Dec. 5. Rev. 5: 1-14.

WORSHIPPING GOD AND THE LAMB.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever.—Rev. 5: 13.

I. VISION OF THE OPENED HEAVENS. The scene of this chapter is the same with that in chap. 4. The door of heaven was opened, a voice called him to come, and in the Spirit he went, and looked within.

VISION OF THE BOOK WITH SEVEN SEALS. 1. In the right hand of him that sat on the throne, i. e., God (chap. 4: 2, 3). The lying on the open hand imports that the book's part there was no withholding of his future purposes as contained in the book.

2. And I saw a strong (a mighty) angel. One of the highest rank. Who is worthy to open the book? In the sense of omnipotent, capable, coupled perhaps with the idea of being honored of God to make this revelation, and unfold the divine will and work.

3. And no man (no one) in heaven, etc. The whole universe is designated by the three divisions mentioned. Was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. Or therein, in which case the thought is, none could open, still less read, the roll.

4. And I wept much. It had been promised to him (chap. 4: 1) that he should be shown future events; and now it seemed as if this promise were about to be frustrated by the lack of one worthy to open the book.

THE LION OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH. 5. One of the elders saith unto me (see chap. 4: 4). The twenty-four elders spoken of there are understood to be, not angels, but representatives of the Church. The Lion, undoubtedly, refers to Christ. Of the tribe of Judah. Because Christ sprung from the tribe of Judah (Heb. 7: 14). The Root of David. Not as the root out of which David sprang, but as the sucker which, springing from David as a root, grows up to be the true apostle. Zion, promised to open the book. Conquered the victor. Not merely was he able to open the book, but he had acquired this power by a victorious struggle.

6. In the midst of the throne, i. e., not on the throne (cf. ver. 7), but in the midst of the company (chap. 4: 4), which was "round about the throne." And of the four beasts, rather, living beings, described in chap. 4: 6-9. These four living beings are in part identical with the cherubim of the Old Testament (compare Ezek. 1: 5-10; 10: 20), and in part with the seraphim of Isa. 6: 2. They are probably representatives of the Church triumphant—the great body of the saved who have the characteristics of the cherubim. And this view is confirmed by the fact that they join in the new song, saying, "Thou hast redeemed us by thy blood." The elders, then, would be the leaders; the living creatures, the great body of the Church. Of the elders. Various reasons have been suggested why they should be described as 24 in number; they are the twelve tribes doubled, to signify the union of the Gentile with the Jewish Church; they are the two sets of twelve, to represent the two Testaments; they are the twelve patriarchs combined with the twelve apostles. Stood as if he had been slain. A little lamb, giving emphasis to the idea of meekness, purity, innocence. The Lion of the tribe of Judah now appears as a lamb. Both symbols are appropriate to Christ.

When we read of the lion, we think of power and majesty, and are right; all power in heaven and earth is Christ's, but it is power manifested in seeming weakness. Righteousness and purity, meekness and gentleness are greater than carnal weapons. As it had been slain. Bearing marks of his past death-wounds. He was standing, though bearing the marks of one slain. In the midst of heavenly glory, Christ crucified is still the prominent object. Having seven horns. Symbols of power, the seven signifying that his power is full and perfect. He is omnipotent. And seven eyes (symbols of intelligence and insight) which are the eyes of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit in all his manifold gifts and works, which Jesus had promised to send to his disciples.

7. And he came and took the book. In order to open it. The New Song. 8. The four beasts. Living creatures (see under ver. 6). Fall down before the Lamb. In adoring worship. Having every one of them says. The harp is property of a citizen or of a guild, played either with the hand or with a plectrum or quill. Full of odors, i. e., incense, which was composed of gums and spices which produced a perfume when burned. These odors are the prayers of the saints, which arise as sweet odors to God, but only when burning on the altar of the heart.

9. And they sing a new song. They sing, not merely a new song, but a new song which was never sung before. The song was new. In its substance, because it celebrates what no imagination of man could before have conceived, and no tongue uttered—the glory of a complete redemption. This art worthy, i. e., for their sweet savior. Thus art worthy to reveal, and to

guide and control the history of the Church, for he did make the sacrifice through which the Church exists, and by the power of which it is to conquer in the great conflict.

10. And hast made us kings and priests (see Lesson 9, ver. 6). And we shall reign on the earth, rather, they reign, as in Rev. Ver. They reign with and in Christ, but they also reign on the earth. Christ gives them a kingship, even sovereignty, over themselves—the first, best, and most philanthropic of all kingships. He gives them, too, a kingship on the earth among men, for they are exerting those influences, promoting those principles, and dispensing those laws of righteousness, holiness, and peace, which in reality rule all the best developments of life and history.

THE WASHINGTONS. 11. And I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders, i. e., surrounding on all sides, in the most distant and smallest circle hither and thither. The Church, as the vehicle of the work of redemption, of which creation is but a part, is the central and crowning manifestation of God's power and love and wisdom. And the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand. Simply instrumentality.

12. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain (see ver. 9). The idea here is that the fact that he was slain, or was made a sacrifice for sin, was the ground or reason for that which is here ascribed to him. To receive power, etc. Power, authority to rule all things, which he brought each morning, not limited to spiritual riches. All that is necessary for supplying the wants of his people. Wisdom. The work of redemption required special wisdom; to save men is the height of wisdom. Strength. Ability to accomplish his purposes. Honor. The esteem or reverence due or paid to worth. Glory. That quality or character which deserves praise and honor. Blessing. Ascribed praise, the will on the creature's part, though unaccompanied by the power, to return blessing for blessing conferred.

13. And every creature. Every created thing. This is the third chorus, joining with the redeemed and the angels. Unto him that sitteth on the throne. The Father, God. And the Lamb. Jesus Christ. A creature is better, happier, richer, on account of what Christ's redeeming work has done.

Emperor and Prisoner.

In the grey of an early morning, during the reign of the good Joseph II., of Austria, a strange scene occurred in one of the streets of the old city of Presburg.

The nearly silent street, flanked by its two rows of tall houses, most of the blinds and shutters still closing the windows at that early hour, was being swept by a gang of collectors, each carrying a long through the prison gates for the purpose.

In the line of prisoners was an old man whose hair and beard were white as silver, and whose ugly uniform did not wholly hide a certain staleness of bearing, which he, however, did not allow to hinder his work. But in spite of his pronounced look and manner, it was to be noticed that he of all his wretched companions dragged, at his leg, a chain weighted by a heavy bullet. Yet it seemed impossible to believe that he had excelled in crime the repulsive-looking wretches about him.

As the work of cleaning the streets progressed, the thoroughfare, in spite of the early hour, came at last to have one passer by. A tall, elderly man, very plainly dressed, but wearing a kind of uniform, advanced along one of the pavements, and as he looked at the gang of sweepers, his eye quickly singled out the old prisoner. This observer seemed soon to notice that although the white-haired, aged man, in spite of having the chain and ball to drag, managed by sheer exertion to keep up with the others in his work, he overtook was nearly as fast as he himself in an eye quickly singled out the old prisoner. This observer seemed soon to notice that although the white-haired, aged man, in spite of having the chain and ball to drag, managed by sheer exertion to keep up with the others in his work, he overtook was nearly as fast as he himself in an eye quickly singled out the old prisoner.

"What," he asked, "is your crime, that you are treated in this way?" "I had property, and the character of a voice which had in it a tone of pity, looked up and stood still, resting his broom upon the stones. It was a terrible story of persecution and cruelty he had to tell. He belonged to a distant province, and his position there answered to the class in England called 'peasants.' He had been owner of a small property of his own. But, most unfortunately for him, the farm lay on the skirts of the great estate of Count—, and this nobleman had fixed an envious eye upon his scanty fields, as King Abdiel did long before on Naboth's vineyard. Their owner, perceiving the specter as having been the home of his forefathers, refused to sell to the Count. From that hour began his persecution. One legal process was served upon him after another, costs being run up at every stage. In the end he was fairly ruined, and was forced to agree to sell the farm to the rapacious nobleman; but he bargained that he was to remain in the house for one year more. One day soon after this he was standing at his gate, deep in grief at his prospect. A wounded hare unexpectedly ran by, and, without thinking what he was doing, he instinctively raised his stick and put the poor creature out of his pain. At that moment the Count's servant came up and arrested him on the spot, and although he had not laid a finger upon the hare he was taken to prison. There he lay for six months before he was tried; and when it was placed before the judge the influence of the wicked Count secured his being sentenced to two years' imprisonment. In the meantime his wife and children were turned out of the house and plunged into utter poverty.

"That," he concluded the aged prisoner, "is my story." "But can this persecution be possible?" asked his sympathizing listener. "Why is your Emperor not informed of it?" "Oh," sighed the old man, getting his feet again in motion. "The Emperor is too busy; and besides, in a quarrel with a nobleman a poor man like myself must be in the wrong."

"I will see the governor of your prison," was the next remark. "Yes, my sir," the prisoner hastened to say, in a trembling voice, "pray do not try to interfere in my favor. A poor man like me, who has been so long in prison, and who has had to drag this heavy chain, do not speak for me, or I shall have to suffer for it."

"Another voice now broke in, speaking in loud harsh tones. "There you are again, you lazy fellow,

chattering away your time instead of working. Have you found another soft-hearted fellow to listen to your whining? Do you wish another fifty lashes, and a chain and bullet for your other leg?"

The brutal speaker was the overseer, and he raised his stick to strike the old man. But the gentleman parried the blow with his walking cane, sending the truncheon flying. "Sirrah," exclaimed the furious overseer, "I will arrest you for daring to interfere with an official. You are a prisoner sirrah!"

Leisurely the stranger unbuttoned his surtout, disclosing to view a glittering star upon his breast. It was the Emperor Joseph himself. He was accustomed, when travelling, to walk out alone, early and late, seeing things with his own eye. "Mercy! mercy!" cried the terror-stricken overseer, falling upon his knees. "Away!" replied the emperor. "Lead me this moment to the governor!"

The governor sank into a panic still worse than that of the overseer on hearing that the Emperor had entered the goal. He, however, stammered out that the flame rested upon the judge, who was a great friend of the Count. "O great God above, what villainy!" exclaimed the Emperor. "But were to him who now injures a hair of that old man." Hurrying back to his castle, the Emperor ordered the judge to be summoned before him. The result was that the judge was put into prison, where he fasted for all received fifty lashes, answering to those he had, by his unjust sentence, inflicted on the old man; next the chain and iron-ball were transferred from the innocent prisoner's leg to his own, after which he was made to clean the streets of Presburg like other convicts. And among his companions in his task he soon found out the ex-governor and the ex-overseer, the latter of whom now found the stick he had so mercilessly ill-used often coming down upon his own back.

Nor did the good Emperor stop here in doing justice; he sent for the liberated old man for whom he had addressed him; and "I will make you governor of the goal, believing that you, who have suffered the barbarous cruelties of persecution, will show humanity to the prisoners under you. Farewell! Collect your family around you, and may God bless you."

Before the amazed old man could thank the just, God-fearing Emperor, the door of the apartment had closed upon him.—Day and Rest.

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