

same depth of conviction and unwearied zeal he carried into the service of Christ. It was he who, divinely guided, conceived and executed the stupendous scheme of planting the Gospel at every strategic point between Jerusalem, the religious capital of the world, and Rome, its political centre. He was the great thinker of the church, the one imperatively needed to interpret the saving significance of the life and death of Jesus the Christ. It was his mission on the one hand to deliver the church from the yoke of Judaism, and on the other to exhibit those fundamental truths concerning the place of Christ in the universe that were needed to counteract heathen heresies which, even before his death, were threatening the existence of the church.

John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was less fitted by instinct and temperament for the initiative work done by the other two. The tender charge committed to him by Jesus on the cross doubtless kept him in Jerusalem for many years. If Mary survived to the age of eighty years, John could not have entered on his life-work much before Peter and Paul had completed theirs. His contemplative, mystical mind could not really find its appropriate sphere of action until historical Christianity had become thoroughly established. His interpretation of the theanthropic life of Christ naturally supplemented the more outward narratives of the other evangelists, since it contemplated this life not so much in its earthly aspect as in its divine relations and eternal significance. Thus each of the Three Great Apostles was called to do a distinctive work that none other could have done, and all together helped to continue and complete the work that Christ Himself could not do except through human agents.

THEIR COMBINED INFLUENCE.

Detach from the New Testament writings those which were composed directly by Peter, Paul and John, together with those which were composed under their influence by their close companions, such as the writings of Mark, Luke, and the unknown author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the residuum consists of Matthew's Gospel, and the Epistles of James and Jude. Blot out from our knowledge of the apostolic age the deeds and words of these three, and the rest is a virtual blank. Without them, humanly speaking, Christianity would have been strangled in its infancy. Next to the Master whom they served, and whose mission they continued, their teachings lead to-day the world's highest and purest religious thought, and quicken its spiritual life. This has been their exalted privilege in every age subsequent to their own, and must so continue as long as Christianity remains the supreme revelation of God's love and purposes of grace toward a fallen and sinful humanity.

FOR THE SABBATH SCHOOL

International S. S. Lesson.

LESSON XIII.—GOD'S LOVE IN THE GIFT OF HIS SON.—DEC. 26.

A CHRISTMAS LESSON.

(1 John iv. 9-16.)

GOLDEN TEXT—"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—John iii. 16.

INTRODUCTION—Instead of selecting as our Christmas lesson the story of Christ's birth, we have the story of the wonderful love of God the Father in sending His Son Jesus Christ into the world that men might have life in Him.

VERSE BY VERSE 9. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. John iii. 16; Rom. viii. 32; 1 John v. 11.)

10. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (Rom. v. 8-10; Tit. iii. 4; 1 John ii. 2.)

11. Beloved if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. (Matt. xviii. 33; John xv. 12, 13; 1 John iii. 16.)

12. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us. (1 John v. 20; John i. 18; 1 John ii. 5.)

13. Hereby we know that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit. (John xv. 20; 1 John iii. 24.)

14. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. (John i. 14; 1 John i. 1, 2; John iii. 17.)

15. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. (Rom. x. 9; 1 John v. 1, 5.)

16. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. (1 John iv. 8; iii. 24.)

The attainment of John's ideal is not easy. If we pause and look at our imperfect selves, the idea of fellowship with a pure and holy God seems almost sacrilegious. But Paul teaches us that by faith we can lay hold of the promises, and being purified by the Blood, be presented spotless before the throne. With this joyful truth in mind, we can surrender ourselves to the love which sought us before we even knew of its existence, and be filled with the fullness of the Godhead.

God's Christmas gift! how this conception of it uplifts, and fills with grand harmonies this festival time of the year! The angel's song on the plains of Bethlehem swells on our listening ears with new and overwhelming meaning: "On earth peace, good-will to men!"

CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR.

DAILY READINGS.

First Day—God's Love is the Gift of His Son.—1 John iv. 1-21.

Second Day—"The only begotten of the Father."—John i. 1-18.

Third Day—The Promise of His Coming.—Isa. ix. 1-7.

Fourth Day—The Story of His Birth.—Luke ii. 1-20.

Fifth Day—God's Great Love for the World.—John iii. 1-21.

Sixth Day—"I came . . . to save the world."—John xii. 44-50.

PRAYER MEETING TOPIC, Dec. 26.—"What message did Christmas bring you?"—Isa. liii. 1-12. (A Christmas song service suggested.)

THE COMING OF THE KING.

META E. B. THORNE.

Good tidings! The Saviour is coming to dwell
With men! Hear the glad angels singing.
"Good tidings of joy!" In harmonious swell
The angelic chorus comes ringing.
"Peace—peace and good-will from your Saviour and Lord!
With songs of rejoicing His name be adored!"

Long ages have vanished, and yet the refrain
Rings sweetly again the glad story—
"Rejoice! Christ the Saviour is coming to reign,
Illuming the world with His glory.
The King in his beauty will dwell among men;
Thine eyes shall behold Him—He cometh again!"

In hearts where He dwelleth no evil can hide,
No sin and no heart-breaking sorrow,
But "peace like a river" and love shall abide,
And faith that no trouble will borrow.
O King, in thy beauty come reign in my heart,
And bid every image unlike Thee depart!

Come, King, in thy beauty, my whole being fill,
To Thee all my powers I surrender;—
My mind, soul and spirit, my heart and my will,
Subdue with Thine influence tender.
Possessed by Thee wholly, O Christ, Thou shalt see
The kingdom of heaven beginning in me.

A PROMISE.

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulders: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."—Isaiah ix. 6.

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE.

"On earth peace and good will." The first notes of the angelic strain should always be first in our hearts and on our tongues. "Glory to God in the Highest" for He is the Author of all things and He only is the Author of the New Creation, The Father of the Son given, the Prince of Peace, "Thauks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

Prince of Peace, words of promise and prophecy, words increasing in interest every year. How thrilling they are to the thoughtful to-day. Ever since the carol was heard by the shepherds on the hills of Bethlehem. The eye of faith has been looking for peace on earth, long ago it had been promised under a King, who should rule in righteousness, and "of whose government there should be no end," now it was thought it had come. But the King sent, the Son given was not received. He was rejected, killed, rose again and went away promising that he would return.

Nineteen hundred Christmas days have come and gone and yet the world is not at peace. Never will man cease to learn war against his fellow while there is war in the heart. Not until the law is written on their hearts will men be law-abiding, never will they be reconciled to each other until they have been reconciled to God, and this can only be accomplished by the preaching of Him who is "Our Peace." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." These new forces are all to be hailed as helpful to the grand result as were the external blessings in the world's condition when Christ was born.