

4. It should be read as a whole, in continuous sections, a book at a time. The best view of Washington is from the dome of the capitol; of Boston, from Bunker Hill monument; so we need to take a landscape view of Bible truth.

5. It should be read distinctly, and carefully, and reverently, as God's message. When a Japanese officer sees the signature of the Mikado, he falls prostrate before it. We should treat with reverence a message from our King.

6. It should be read with careful study and explanation, to give the sense, and not to interject a meaning into it. We need not the opinions of men, but the mind of the Spirit.

### An English Teacher's Notes on the Lessons.

BY SARAH GERALDINA STOCK.

This is a lesson on the Bible. We shall find the Bible possessed by the Jews at the time of which this passage speaks, or at least the first five books of it, mentioned ten times in the fifteen verses, four times as the "book," or "book of the law," five times as the "law," and once as the "words." It is not, however, the Bible in its authorship, its character, or its claims, that is the subject of the passage, but the Bible in its use; and the lesson we are to learn from it is what to do with the Bible.

The returned Jewish exiles who had left their homes in the foreign land, and come back to settle in their own country, in spite of its desolation and degradation from its former position, had undergone a long period of affliction and reproach from the enemies who surrounded them. Until the coming of Nehemiah, Jerusalem had lain waste. But now the work begun in that quiet chamber in "Shushan the palace," the work begun in prayer and carried on with prayer, was completed, and in the seventh month the people gathered together as usual to keep the feast of that month on a larger and more imposing scale than they had previously done. And the chief feature of this gathering as related in the passage was the use of the Book.

A series of graphic pictures may be drawn from the passage—the large concourse by the "water gates," the worship, the attention, the weeping, the comforting; then the festivities at home (ver. 12); the second assembly; the crowds going forth to the Mount of Olives, coming back laden with green boughs; and, woven in with these, the teacher will find a sevenfold pattern to set before the class.

1. *The Jews blessed God for the Book.* This was because they recognized whence they got it. We buy our Bibles cheap, or we get them given to us, and know there are plenty more to be had. But what if the Bible had never been written? We might have had histories and essays and tales and poems; but without the inspiration of God there could have been no book of God, no sure word from him. Those Bibles in the hands of the class are God's gift to each one. Has God been thanked for them? When Ezra opened the book and all the people stood up and said "Amen," with uplifted hands to his words of praise, and then worshiped

God with their faces to the ground, the sight and the sound must have been truly imposing. But God looks at the heart. He is as well pleased with the true and earnest thanks of the Sunday scholar as with the grand chorus of praise. If each one thanked God for the book, there would be a greater blessing on it.

2. *They read it.* From morning to midday the reading went on, the Levites probably taking it by turn; and so the next day and during the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles. Verse 18. If you make a valuable present to a friend, you do not want empty thanks for it; you want to see it used, not put away and forgotten. The Bibles that never come out except on Sundays or when the lesson has to be looked up, can their owners really care much about them?

3. *They explained it.* It is supposed that the Jews, who since the captivity spoke a mixed language, their own and that of their conquerors blended into one, were not familiar with the original Hebrew, in which the law was written, and needed, therefore, to have it interpreted by those who were more learned. Our classes have the Bible in their own tongue, yet many of the expressions are strange to them, many of its references to history, geography, ancient custom, etc., are unintelligible without explanation. The teacher is endeavoring to do what Ezra and the Levites did, to give the sense, and make the reading plain and easy.

4. *They listened attentively to it.* In such a large assembly, gathered together in the open air, there might be much to attract the roving eye, and we know very well that when the eye is wandering the ear is not taking in much. But the Jews had come to hear; and instead of looking about them, and observing and commenting upon their neighbors, "the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law." What a difference it would make could this be said of the class!

5. *They wept over what they heard.* The law that was read contained the record of God's mercies to them as a nation and of their own unfaithfulness. It showed them how they had sinned. It was as a looking-glass giving a true picture of themselves. The Bible does this now for every one of us. It would be a happy thing if each one in the class were to look into this mirror and read his own heart and life in it. It would cause mourning indeed. But let us remind our classes of the Lord's word: "Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh." Luke vi, 21. To discover that you are a lost sinner may seem very wretched, but it is the beginning of true joy. So it was with the Jews.

6. *They rejoiced that they had understood the words.* There were comfort and hope for them as well as condemnation in the book of the law. Such promises as those in Deut. 30, and at the end of the Song of Moses (Deut. 32, 43), might well cause rejoicing. The Bible is the book of good news. But the reason so few rejoice in it is because

so few we rejoiced, words."

7. *They concerning set to work very gr the ultin Scripture,*

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