

The Sabbath School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

THE TRULY RIGHTEOUS.

FEBRUARY 8th.]

[MATT. V. 17-26.]

CHRISt intimates that he has not come to head a revolutionary movement, but to explain the true meaning of the Old Testament. *To fulfil*—to embody the principles of the Law in his own person and to secure for them the reverence of men. In Him was all righteousness fulfilled—pre-eminently in His love to mankind. Gal. 5:14. V. 18. *Till heaven and earth*—These shall indeed pass away, Luke 21:33 and 2 Pet. 3:10, but this refers to the popular belief in their stability sanctioned by Scripture usage, Ps. 119:90. Eccles. 1:4. *One jot or tittle*—jot, the smallest of the Hebrew letters; tittle, a stroke or point still smaller, distinguishing some of the letters from others like them—as much as to say that the Law was not to lose its authority in even the minutest degree. V. 19. *Therefore*—the perpetual obligation of obedience, even to those that are accounted of secondary importance. The same idea in Rev. 22:19. *And teach men so*—by putting a wrong interpretation on the Law as the Pharisees did who made light of certain portions of it. *The least in the kingdom*—Those who thus dishonour God's Law degrade themselves. James 2:10. *Whosoever shall do and teach*—These shall be correspondingly honoured in proportion as they maintain every part of the Law in its integrity. V. 20. *Except your righteousness*—It is the kind of righteousness, not the degree, that is referred to, inward, spiritual—not the formal righteousness of the Scribes, Luke 18:11, 12. *In no case*—without the former we cannot belong to the kingdom at all, Rom. 2:28, 29. Vs. 21, 22. *By them of old time*—rather to them. Christ is speaking to those who had Moses read to them every Sabbath in the Synagogue, who were familiar with the Law. Under the old, murder was punishable with death, Gen. 9:6. Christ does not abrogate that Law. He gives it a wider scope and a new interpretation. *The judgment*—see Exo. 20:13. Lev. 24:21. *Whosoever is angry, shall, &c.*—The Gospel discloses the principle of future punishments. Anger is to be avoided as it may be, and often is, incipient murder. *Raca—fool*—all such language is unchristian. The fundamental error of the Jewish teachers was that the Law prohibited only the sinful act; Christ shews that it included the sinful thought. Vs. 23-26. *Therefore, &c.*—We are to remove from ourselves every cause of offence to our brother. *Reconciled*—This implies an offer to make reparation for injury done. *The altar*—This term is never applied to the Lord's Table in the New Testament, but the principle of reconciliation should have full force when Christians meet there.

LEARN that there is no warrant in these words of our Lord for setting aside the Old Testament as without present significance, or inconsistent with the New. Here is also a solemn caution to all teachers, ministers or others, to be faithful to the whole truth of God, Acts 20:27.

The Tongue and the Temper.

FEBRUARY 15th.]

[MATT. V:33-48.]

JESUS continues to illustrate the spirituality of true righteousness by an exposition of the third commandment which was to impart a new life, very different from the routine of observances hitherto regarded as the highest type of religion. Frivolous, rash, and unnecessary swearing was henceforth to be classed with perjury. The law of retaliation was superseded by that of self-denial, and the love due to our neighbour extended also to our enemies. Vs. 33-37. *Shall not forswear*, see Lev. 19:12. To remove all doubt as to the scope of the third commandment, it is added, *swear not at all*—compare with James 5:12. Not judicial oaths, but swearing in common intercourse is here forbidden. Jehovah is said to have sworn by Himself, Gen. 22:16. Heb. 6:13. Jesus answered upon oath to the High Priest, Matt. 26:63. Paul thus invoked the name of God, 2 Cor. 1:23; and Heb. 6:16 teaches that an oath, properly administered, is admissible. But, even the use of legal oaths is a reflection upon Christians, who should be of such acknowledged fidelity that their word should be as sacred as their bond or oath. *Neither by heaven nor earth*—For these are the Lord's. *Nor by Jerusalem*—the most sacred spot on earth. God's name is really profaned by the irreverent mention of His "throne," His "footstool," and His "city," as much as by that of His name. *Neither by thy head*—thy life. That is beyond your control and useless as a guarantee, see James 4:14. Let a simple yes or no suffice. *Cameth of evil*, from a depraved nature, instigated by the evil one. Vs. 38, 39. *An eye for an eye*. The law of retaliation in the Old Testament—Exo. 21:24. Lev. 24:20. Deut. 19:21—not of binding necessity. The spirit of that law was that in all cases punishment should be proportioned to the crime—e.g. a life should not be taken for an eye, &c. *But I say unto you*—Our Lord's own meek yet dignified bearing when smitten rudely on the cheek, John 18:22, 23 and not literally presenting the other, is the best comment on these words. Vs. 40, 41. *Thy coat*—the inner garment, see Exo. 22:26, 27. *Thy cloak*—The overcoat of an Israelite was not allowed to be kept overnight as a pledge because it was used for a bed-covering. Better surrender even that than stand a law-suit. *Go with him twain*—Better to comply with an unreasonable demand, if it is not sinful, than to quarrel. Vs. 43-45. *Hate thine enemy*—This was said by their corrupt teachers; never by God. The Jewish law was expressly opposite, Exo. 23:45. Lev. 19:18. *Love your enemies*—As Christ did, Rom. 5:8. 1 John 3:16. Shew yourselves His children by resembling Him in this respect. V. 46. *The publicans*—tax-gatherers, men of this world, actuated by worldly motives. There is no merit in resembling them. Associated in v. 47 with brethren, the true reading seems to be, do not even "heathens" the same? see ch. 18:17. *Be ye perfect*—complete in your love of others.

LEARN to avoid even in appearance the foolish and offensive habit of swearing. By Heaven! By my life! and other common expressions are no less profane than a frivolous use of the name of God.