

SANTA CLAUS'S CHIEF CLERK.

Never will the children give up the orthodox Santa Claus, the jolly, fat old saint with a pack on his back and his reindeer team. But which of them does not take note of the large army of assistants whom the clever old general stations all over the land. Which of them is not delighted, as the season comes round, to take his or her turn as one of these assistants, or even as the assistant's lieutenant. Our reproduction of the painting 'Santa Claus,' by Mr. John R. Reid, will touch a responsive chord in the hearts of all.

NOTICE.

With this number of the 'Messenger,' we enclose for the convenience of our workers an addressed envelope and a blank list for subscribers' names, which we hope will soon be returned to us well filled. Those subscribers whose subscription expires with this year will also find enclosed a notice to that effect.

THE MATCHLESS CHILD.

By Rev. Herrick Johnson, D.D.

Births have been signal. Yet angels never but once sang when a child was born. Rare gifts have been brought in honor of infant babes. Yet never but once did wise men from the far East follow a star westward, seeking a new-born King. Children have worn great names. But no child was ever named like the one born in Bethlehem of Judea 1900 years ago. Isaiah, one of the prophets of Israel, saw this child in prophetic vision, and as if the gift of God were already given, shouted triumphantly, 'Unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given. And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.' Was there ever a babe borne on a mother's bosom, like this child? The wonder is that it ever nestled there, and slept and prattled and said, 'Mother.' The Creator held in hands created! Mary worshipping her very own child! Eastern Magi, seeing his star in the East, coming far to crown the child King! A multitude of angels leaving heaven that they might fly to earth and sing 'Glory to God in the highest' over the new-born babe! Good old Simeon in the temple taking the infant Jesus in his arms, and then praying that he might die, having seen the salvation of God! Herod, stirred by the tidings of this new-born babe and trembling for his throne!

About all we know of this child for thirty years of his life is, that he grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. That the world's God should have been veiled in human flesh thirty years, giving no sign, is one of the profoundest of marvels. But the glory broke through at last, and this Jesus of Nazareth spake the thought of God, he worked the works of God, he claimed equality with God, he established the kingdom of heaven, he promised the conquest of the world, he claimed power to lay down his own life and to take it again, and proved the claim by his death and resurrection. Ever since, this child born in Bethlehem, has had more thought and stirred more feeling and revolutionized more custom and made more history than any score or hundred of the world's mightiest men. Millions now hang on him their dearest hopes for the life that now is and for that which is to come. Millions take up the chorus of the Messiah and echo it to-day around the world; Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and his name is Wonderful.

Wonderful indeed is this gift of God, this matchless child, commanding the world's attention, baffling the world's wisdom, defeating the world's power, to outlast the world's ages, and to still at last the world's tumult. 'Joy to the world, the Lord is come.' God's unspeakable gift is offered to every heart. And it is this gift that gives to Christmas all its significance.

Some have loved him long and well,

have celebrated Christmas with Christ so often, as to have learned by a deep and blessed experience how wonderful he is, how wise in counsel, how divine and enduring in love and grace and power, and how potent in calming the troubled heart and bidding its tumult be still. This coming Christmas day will bring a new joy to these old friends of Christ to sweeten and sanctify the mellow evening of their life.

Others will celebrate Christmas carols, but, alas! with no real Christ in their song: What an anomaly! A shell without a kernel. A body without a soul. A temple without a God.

And what a gift for parents does Christmas furnish, in its carol of this matchless child! Mothers, give over anxious thought about your precious babes. God was manifest in infant flesh. Can he ever forget a mother's love and kiss!

OUR FAITH'S SURE FOUNDATION.

'Now, the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise.' Christmas ought to bring us back to the sure foundation that our faith is not in a philosophy merely, but in a historic fact. The corner stone of the church is not a syllogism but a life. We do not rest upon an abstraction but a person. Our text book is not a volume of ratiocination but a gospel. Following our Lord, we do not tread the hollow clouds but the holy fields. Our religion is of heaven, but our Redeemer was 'born of the Virgin Mary.' The feast of the Incarnation reminds us that we did not learn the attributes of the Father from some metaphysical deduction as to what the Great First Cause must be, but from one who was so fully His 'express image,' that whosoever hath seen Him 'hath seen the Father.' Our creed does not date back to a council of bishops at Nicea, but to a birth at Bethlehem.

REMEMBER ERRORS OF THE PASSING YEAR.

There has been just one stainless, perfect life on the earth and no other. True, through a blessed possession of a calm and even temperament, there have been those who have possessed their souls in great peace and without the turmoil and trial that sooner or later overtake the great majority of men and women. In the busiest world there is bound to be emulation and unrest. It is of the family we think chiefly now. Let all the mistakes and shortcomings of the fading year help toward greater faithfulness and fidelity in the untrodden paths that be just ahead. Glorify the old familiar duties by meeting each and every one not as some mere happening or accident floating to us for attention, but as a direct appointment sent into our lives from God. Remember errors of the passing year merely to profit by them. Unwholesome brooding never yet mended a fault, never built a sound stair on which to ascend to better things. Be strong; be of good courage. Take leave stanchly of the old year, thankful for its blessings, thankful, too, for its griefs and burdens, thankful for the swift forgiveness its mistakes may find, thankful we can leave its every day and hour trustfully in the hands of God.—'Christian World.'

SCHOLARS' NOTES.

(From Westminster Question Book.)

LESSON XIII, DECEMBER 30, 1894.

REVIEW.—The Four Gospels.

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF OUR LORD.

Golden Text.—'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.'—Heb. 13: 8.

HOME READINGS.

T. Mark 1: 24-34; 2: 1-12.—Lessons III, M. Luke 4: 16-30; 5: 1-11.—Lesson I, II, IV.

W. Mark 2: 23-3: 19.—Lessons V., VI. Th. Luke 6: 20-49.—Lesson VII.

F. Mark 3: 22-35; Luke 7: 24-35.—Lessons VIII., IX.

S. Luke 8: 4-15; Matt. 10: 5-16.—Lessons X., XI.

S. Isa. 9: 2-7; Eph. 5: 1-20.—Lesson XII.

REVIEW EXERCISE.

Superintendent.—To what place did Jesus come?

School.—He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up.

Supt.—How were the people affected by his preaching?

School.—They wondered at his words and said, Is not this Joseph's son?

Supt.—What did they do in their wrath against him?

School.—They rose up and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

Supt.—What did Jesus do?

School.—But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way.

Supt.—Whom did Jesus find by the Lake of Gennesaret?

School.—Simon and Andrew his brother, and James and John, whom he had before called to be his disciples.

Supt.—What did Jesus say to Simon after the draught of fishes?

School.—Fear not: from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

Supt.—What did Jesus do on the Sabbath day in Capernaum?

School.—He entered into the synagogue and taught.

Supt.—What effect had his teaching?

School.—They were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

Supt.—What miracles did he perform?

School.—He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils.

Supt.—What did Jesus say to one sick of the palsy?

School.—Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

Supt.—How did he prove his power on earth to forgive sins?

School.—He saith to the sick of the palsy, I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way unto thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all.

Supt.—What did Jesus say about the Sabbath?

School.—The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore, the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath.

Supt.—What choice did Jesus make among his disciples?

School.—He ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.

Supt.—What is Christ's Golden Rule?

School.—As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

Supt.—Who did Jesus say were his nearest relatives?

School.—Whosoever shall do the will of my Father, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

Supt.—What was Christ's testimony to John?

School.—This is he of whom it is written, Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

Supt.—How did Jesus close the parable of the Sower?

School.—He that hath ears to hear let him hear.

Supt.—To whom did Jesus send his apostles?

School.—To the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Supt.—What did he command them to do?

School.—As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Supt.—What further did he command them to do?

School.—Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils.

Supt.—What does Isaiah predict concerning the Prince of Peace?

School.—Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Supt.—What does he predict concerning his kingdom?

School.—Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it; and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.

Supt.—What warning against drunkenness does the apostle give?

School.—Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.

Review-drill on titles, Golden Texts, Lesson Plans, Review Questions, and Catechism Questions.

FIRST QUARTER.

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF OUR LORD.

LESSON I, JANUARY 6, 1895.

JOHN THE BAPTIST BEHEADED, Mark 6: 17-29.

Commit to memory vs. 26-28.

GOLDEN TEXT.

'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.'—Matt. 10: 28.

THE LESSON STORY

Perhaps you have seen a signboard, with a hand on it, pointing out the way.

We may think of John the Baptist as a hand pointing to Jesus. He was a good and fearless man; quick to rebuke sin wherever he saw it.

When King Herod took his own brother's wife away and married her, John did not fear to rebuke the king. This made Herodias, the queen, very angry. She wanted to kill John, but Herod would only put him in prison. Herod feared John, knowing that he was a holy man.

After a while Herod made a great birthday party. Herodias had a daughter who came and danced before the king and his company. The king was so much pleased that he promised to give her anything she should ask.

Her cruel mother told her what to say, and she asked for the head of John the Baptist on a charger, or platter. The king was very sorry, but he thought he must keep his word. So John's head was cut off and given to these two wicked women! Do you think, then, that God forgot his brave servant? Oh, no! he had a better home for him than in a dungeon, and the martyr John found a happy rest there.

—Berean Lesson Book.

HOME READINGS

M. Luke 1: 5-23, John's Birth Predicted.
T. Luke 1: 57-80, The Prediction Fulfilled.
W. Luke 3: 1-13, John's Preaching.
Th. John 1: 15-37, John's Testimony to Jesus.
F. Matt. 11: 1-15, Jesus's Testimony to John.
S. Mark 6: 14-29, John Beheaded.
S. Rev. 7: 9-17, Out of great tribulation.

Time.—John the Baptist was imprisoned in March or April, A.D. 28, after a ministry of two years. He was beheaded a year later, in March or April, A.D. 29.

Place.—John was imprisoned and beheaded at Machaerus, a fortress and castle at the southern extremity of Perea, on the borders of Arabia, nine miles east of the northern end of the Dead Sea. Herod's birthday feast was probably held in this castle.

Rulers.—Tiberius Caesar, Emperor of Rome; Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea; Herod Antipas, governor of Galilee and Perea. Herod Antipas was a son of Herod the Great, who, at his death, shortly after our Lord's birth, left his kingdom to his three sons—one-half to Archelaus, and one-fourth each to Antipas and to Philip II. Herod Antipas married, first, a daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia, and, afterwards, his first wife still living, he married Herodias, wife of his half-brother Philip.

Between the Lessons.—Our last year's studies in the life of Our Lord ended with the sending forth of the twelve. In their absence he continued his own personal ministry. Matt. 11: 1. John the Baptist's death occurred at this time, and John's disciples 'went and told Jesus.' Herod, conscience-stricken, hearing of Jesus's wonderful works, thought he was John risen from the dead. Parallel accounts, Matt. 14: 1-12; Luke 3: 19, 20; 9: 7-9.

HELPS IN STUDYING.

17. In prison—at Machaerus, where Herod had a castle and a prison under one roof, as was common in the East. For Herodias's sake—partly to please her, and partly to protect John from her plots. 18. John had said—reproved him to his face. Not lawful—Herod's wife and Herodias's husband were still living. 19. Had a quarrel—set herself against him. 20. Herod feared John—as a man of God whose death would be avenged. Observed him—'kept him safe,' protected him from the malice of Herodias. Did many things—'was much perplexed.' Hearing him gladly—with some inclination toward the right. 21. A convenient day—suitable for her designs. 22. Daughter—Salome. Danced—alone, like the dancing girls of the time, an indelicate and disgraceful act. 23. He swore unto her—a foolish and wicked oath. 25. By and by—'forthwith.' Charger—large dish. 26. Exceeding sorry—because he feared the people (Matt. 14: 5) and conscience reproached him. Ver. 20. For his oath's sake—a wicked oath to make, but more wicked to keep. For their sakes—for fear of taunts and sneers. 29. His disciples—John's. (See Matt. 14: 12.)

QUESTIONS.

Between the Lessons.—To whom were the twelve sent? What did Jesus command them to do? What did he do in their absence? What is the title of this lesson? Golden text? Time? Place? Memory verses?

I. The Faithful Preacher. vs. 17-20.—For what had John reproved Herod? What had Herod done to him? Where was he imprisoned? What did Herodias want to do? How did Herod regard John? Why did he not do as John told him?

II. The Rash King. vs. 21-25.—What occasion proved favorable for Herodias's designs? How did her daughter help her? What was the character of her dance? What was its effect on Herod and his company? What foolish promise did he make? What did the girl ask for? By whose advice?

III. The Cowardly Murder. vs. 26-29.—How did this affect the king? What should one do who has made a sinful promise? Why did Herod not break his promise? Did he most fear man or God? How did he keep his oath? Who buried John's body? What did his disciples then do?

LIFE TEACHINGS.

1. We should break a promise that requires us to commit a sin in keeping it. 2. Fear of reproach or ridicule should never keep us from doing right. 3. Better die in a dungeon for the right than live wickedly in a palace. 4. When in trouble, go and tell Jesus, as John's disciples did.