

## SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

## INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

## LESSON XLVII.

Nov. 23. 1879. THE GLORIFIED SAVIOUR

Rev. 1. 10-20.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."—Rev. i. 8.

## HOME STUDIES.

- M. Rev. i. 1-9. John to the seven churches.  
T. Rev. i. 10-20. The glorified Saviour.  
W. Dan. vii. 9-18. The Ancient of Days and the Son of Man.  
Th. Rev. ii. 1-11. . . . Ephesus—Smyrna.  
F. Rev. ii. 12-29. Pergamos—Thyatira.  
S. Isa. xli. 1-14. The Holy One of Israel.  
Sab. Isa. xlix. 9-19. The First and the Last.

## HELPS TO STUDY.

As stated in a former lesson, the fourth Gospel, the three epistles of John, and the Book of Revelation, were written by one person—the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee and brother of James.

The last mentioned book, which contains our present lesson, is also called the Apocalypse (the Greek word used by the writer in the first verse). Both names mean *unfolding*, or *making known*.

The disclosures which the book contains—chiefly relating to the history of the Church of Christ—were made to John in the rocky islet of Patmos in the Egean Sea (the Archipelago) to which he had been banished by the Roman emperor Domitian; and the book was written either there or at Ephesus, after the apostle had been released from banishment by the emperor Nerva.

The fact that this book is not only prophetic but highly figurative renders its interpretation peculiarly difficult; and various opinions have been given by commentators as to the particular events foreshadowed in it; but independently of its prophetic character, it contains very much that is calculated to instruct and support and comfort the Christian; preparing the individual believer and the Church at large for trial and persecution, and at the same time revealing the ever active care and watchfulness of the glorified Saviour, and giving repeated assurance of final triumph. Many a Christian martyr has gone to the stake with the poetic words of this book upon his lips, his imagination filled with its grand imagery, and his desire raised by its teachings to "the things which are above, where Christ dwelleth."

Our lesson contains a description of the opening scene of the wonderful vision, symbolizing the glorified Saviour in His relation to the Church; with the apostle's commission to write an account of the things revealed to him. The children will readily take hold of the following division: (1) *What John Heard*, (2) *What John Saw*, (3) *What John was to Do*.

I. WHAT JOHN HEARD.—VERS. 10, 11. It sometimes happens that the remote and lonely settler, if careless and godless, loses his reckoning of the days of the week and knows not when the Sabbath comes; but the true Christian is always careful to observe "the Lord's day," and it is no burden to him to do so, for he delights in it. John, even in his solitary exile, did not neglect the command, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy;" and it was while thus following the path of duty that this precious revelation from God for himself and others was given to him.

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day. The words "in the Spirit" probably indicate not only that John was under the ordinary influence of the Holy Spirit, as all Christians are, but that he was inspired, and endowed for the time with supernatural perception. The word translated "was" really indicates transition and might be literally rendered *became*. For examples of inspiration see Ezek. ii. 2; 2 Peter i. 21; 2 Cor. xii. 2. For "Lord's day" see John xx. 19, 26.

I . . . . . heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet: The voice of the Son of God (John v. 25); the voice shall raise the dead (John v. 28). See also 1st Sam. xxix. 3-9; 1st Sam. 33; Dan. x. 6. For "trumpet" see Matt. xxiv. 31; 1st Thess. iv. 16.

Saying that I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. It is Christ that speaks, for in the 13th verse the speaker is called the "Son of Man," and in the 18th verse the speaker says "I am He that liveth and was dead." Here then, under the figure of *alpha* and *omega*—the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet—Christ proclaims His eternal existence, both past and future.

Unto the seven churches: Directly to the seven churches of Asia (Ephesus, etc.), with which John was previously and afterwards closely identified; and through them to the whole Christian Church in all ages—the number seven denoting completeness, perfection, or universality. The second and third chapters contain a message to each one of these churches, suited to its condition, and instructive not only to them but to other branches of the Church of Christ.

## II. WHAT JOHN SAW.—VERS. 12-16.

To see the voice: Elipsis for the source of the voice—the speaker. John's example of attention ought to be followed. An attentive listener generally looks at the speaker. Seven golden candlesticks: Like the one candlestick with the seven lamps in the tabernacle, symbolizing the entire Church. Gold—purity and value. What is a candlestick for? What is the Church for?

Son of Man: The prophetic name of Christ (Dan. vii. 13), adopted by Himself (Matt. xvi. 13).

The garment down to the foot indicates the priestly office, and the golden girdle the office of king. Head and hairs white like wool . . . . . as snow, is said to denote purity, dignity, and glory; eyes as a flame of fire—searching power, holiness, omniscience; feet like unto fine brass, etc.—perhaps freedom from all grossness, fervid activity, and power to tread down enemies; voice as the sound of many

waters—the strength of the comparison is in its indefiniteness; John does not say *how* many waters; and when a modern orator substitutes for this expression "deep-toned as Niagara," he belittles the voice. It would be well to compare this entire description with the description given in Daniel vii. 9; x. 5, 6.

In His right hand seven stars: The faithful ministers of Christ. Their position, "in His right hand," indicates His peculiar care over them and also His intention to use or wield them for the doing of His work. Sharp, two-edged sword: His Word, by which He conquers. Countenance as the sun shining in his strength: dazzling in brightness and majesty. In the days of the Saviour's suffering and sorrow on earth "His visage was marred more than the sons of men," but in His glorified state it is so resplendent that the seer selects the brightest object in nature to compare it with, and if he could have found a brighter object, he would, doubtless, have taken it.

## III. WHAT JOHN WAS TO DO.—VERS. 17-20.

After being overpowered by this Divine vision, so that he fell at His feet as dead, and afterwards revived by the touch of the Saviour's right hand, and re-assured by the gracious words, fear not; I am . . . . . He that liveth and was dead—the very Jesus who loved him and whom he loved—John receives his commission: Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and things which shall be hereafter. In the opening scene of the vision, already described, John had "seen" a representation of the glory, and power, and majesty, of Christ in His state of exaltation; of the position and use of the Church in the world; and of the Saviour's intimate relation to it and care over it. This he is authorized to write for the instruction of believers.

He is also directed to write "the things which are"—the condition of the churches existing at that time, their merits and their failings, their dangers and their duty.

And, finally, he is to write "the things which shall be hereafter"—the (then) future history of the Church; her struggles against the world and the flesh and the devil; her reverses, successes, straits, deliverances, and ultimate triumph over every enemy.

Those who have Him for their friend who has the keys of hell and of death are surely safe. He "openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth and no man openeth." To Him belong "the issues from death," and in this fact His people have often found refuge in their last extremity.

## YESTERDAY, TO-DAY, AND FOREVER.

Blue, dim, and solitary, in the wide offing, as one sails over the Egean Sea, rises the isle of Patmos suddenly, out in the distance. There is no reason specially for a visit. Little or nothing remains to be seen ashore.

But the Christian tourist sits thoughtfully on the deck, and recalls from his familiar reading that here John, the last of the apostolic band, and the loneliest, was once worshipping, and heard a trumpet; he looked, and saw a vision; he listened, and received an encouragement; he was obedient, and wrote the Apocalypse.

## What did the trumpet articulate?

For it uttered words. Its blast rang out in terms and tones of human speech. On that solemn Sunday morning, while this spiritually minded man was in the act of communion with God, the heavens overhead became vocal. He tells the story in his own simple way:

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord which is and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

There is, so scientific people tell us, one point, even in a whirling wheel, which is at rest. One line of atoms at the axis, around which all the others revolve, is still. When we conceive of providence, intricate and confused as it is, well typed by the prophet as "a wheel in the middle of a wheel," we are always to remember that God Himself is sitting unmoved at the centre of the universe, the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift, and with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. And there is relief and comfort in this.

Shocked and shifted as we are in this life, our minds become impressed with a sense of insecurity. We are agitated with a thousand disquiet. No lot in the world is safe. Affairs fluctuate. Individual experience fits and plays with the phases of the moon. Institutions are not fixed. Even the perpetual hills do bow, and the eternal seas do change their bounds. Stability seems but an empty fiction or a dream. Versatilities mock our expectation; vicissitude is the rule of earthly existence.

Over all sits God calmly. His throne never moves. His eye never sleeps. His patience never wears. He wills and waits at His own pleasure. We look up and find Him watching; we know were to find Him always. And the beauty and glory and welcome of this thought is centred in upon the one revelation that the God whom we see is the Saviour whom we love; "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever."

The idea of our divine Lord as a person is to many minds exceedingly indefinite. He seems a mere historic character, born, living, dying, like any other being among the generations of men. We accept His deity as a mysterious doctrine of revelation, essential, of course, to His office and work; but our understanding of the ineffable meaning it bears is very vague and irrelevant. And that strange life, which began at the manger in Bethlehem, ran through some sorrowful years in Galilee, and then ended on the cross at Jerusalem, has no real significance as a mission of Immanuel, "God with us." We hardly know how to deal with it. Really the weakness of many believers is owing to their absolute inability to make this personal career of our Redeemer available in their experience.

Such confusion is perfectly natural. It is the necessary sequence of a miserable mistake. How childishly inadequate is the conception of an innate Son of God, which limits Him consciously or unconsciously to an earthly history ending in a failure! Now the Scripture insists that Jesus' birth was not

His beginning, nor was His death His end. The thirty-three years of His human existence bear almost no measure or relation to the real duration of His life. He was living for an eternity previous to their commencing; He is living now in an eternity as unbroken and as boundless as ever. The incarnation was an incident in His career; it was only a part of His work of redemption, a necessary part, a noble part, but not the whole. His biography would have to be written with an alphabet, the Alpha of which no human voice ever repeated, the Omega of which no mortal tongue would know how to speak.—Charles S. Robinson, D.D. in *S.S. Times*.

## THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

This book, with which the canon of the New Testament closes, stands in very striking contrast with all that have gone before it. Its glowing and gorgeous imagery, its symbolic visions of the coming history of the world, are, as far as that volume is concerned, absolutely unique. And yet if the method of education which had been begun under the old covenant was to reach its completion in the new, if men were to have stamped with divine authority what their yearning expectations might otherwise fashion for themselves, it was to be expected *a priori*, that it would not close without embracing that aspect of the truth which took the form of an apocalypse. The later prophets of the Old Testament, Ezekiel and Daniel, in some measure even Isaiah and Jeremiah, had seen such visions, shadowing forth the history of the great kingdoms of the world, and the coming of the Messiah. One whose thoughts had been specially turned to their prophetic writings, to the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven (Dan. 7: 13; Matt. 26: 64), to "the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet" (Dan. 9: 27; Matt. 24: 15), would be led, we may well believe, to desire earnestly that he too might be blest with like manifestations of the divine glory, with like foreshadowings of the future triumphs of the divine kingdom. The pentecostal gift itself was connected with seeing visions and dreaming dreams (Acts 2: 17). St. Peter, his friend and companion, had been taught by a vision the great truth that he was to call no man common or unclean. St. Paul, though he wrote no Book of Revelation, had yet been the recipient of "visions and revelations of the Lord" without number, and had been caught up to the third heaven, and to the paradise of God. . . . . It was, if one may so speak, the natural and fitting consummation of these scattered teachings, that one, at least, of the great leaders of the Church should be called to receive and transmit an apocalypse of this nature: and if divine gifts are adapted, according to the wisdom of the Eternal Spirit, to the character and powers of those to whom they are given, we may be bold to say that there was no one on whom this gift was so likely to be bestowed as on the beloved disciple, who had shared the secrets of his Master's heart; who had been able to receive and record the higher teaching, which transcended the power of the earlier evangelists. The idealizing mystic temperament which lives in what to others seem abstract terms, light and darkness, life and death, love and wrath, is also that which is most readily led to clothe its thoughts in symbols, and to shadow forth the future, not in the form of an anticipated chronicle of things to come, but in mysterious visions and things hard to be understood. It was fit that the beloved disciple should be taught in the same way as Daniel, the "man greatly beloved," had been of old, and that he whose sense of the love of God and Christ was clearer and deeper than that of most others, should see that love revealed, both in the clear light of unmingled truth, and in the rainbow hues that encircled the everlasting throne. . . . .

Yet the chief value of the book practically is, after all, independent of its predictive element. It has enriched the devotion and the poetry of Christendom with the most glowing imagery, with symbols of profoundest meaning. All that is noblest and most beautiful in the writings of Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, in the ritual of the tabernacle and Temple, is brought together by the writer into what has well been called a gorgeous "mosaic" of gems, in which all that was most precious sparkles as with a new radiance. No book in the Bible has so helped to raise the thoughts and imaginations of the poor above their common life, and to make them, more or less, unconscious poets. The hymns of Christendom would lose a large portion of their beauty and their powers if we were to strike out from them all that flows directly and indirectly from the Revelation of St. John.—The Rev. Dr. E. H. Plumptre, in *The Bible Educator*.

THE "Baptist Teacher," makes use of the following beautiful and impressive illustrations: "The work of the teacher is not unlike that of the photographer, who employs ten-fold more time to prepare the surface which receives the impression than he takes to secure the impression itself. The impression is the work of a moment. And so with the teacher. A half-hour is allotted in which the impression must be made. Of how much importance, then, is the preparation, when this impression must be made to endure!"

It is a good thing for every teacher to keep a faithful record of every one of his scholars. It is a great satisfaction for a teacher to be able to give one so approximately complete as is the following, which is taken from the private record of a teacher in the St. John's M. E. School, of Newburgh, N. Y., and which was published in the "Sunday School Journal." "I have been a teacher in our school for over twenty-five years. Have taught one hundred and thirty-nine scholars, ninety-one of whom are now Christians, twenty are in the Sunday school work, one in the ministry, four have been called home, and twenty-one have moved away, of whom I can give no account."

HAVE you a club in your congregation for the CANADA PRESBYTERIAN?

THE late elections in the States have gone so much in favour of the Republicans that it is generally conceded their candidate for the Presidential Chair will be tolerably sure, next year, of being elected.