

Subbath School Lessons.

ESTHER BEFORE THE KING.

Mar. 12.

B. C. 473.

Lesson, Esther 4:10-5:3.

Golden Text, Prov. 31:9.

Memory vs. 5:1-3.

Catechism Q., 51.

Keep in mind a few facts. Nebuchednezzar, king of Babylon, the greatest kingdom of its time, carried the Jews captive in three wars, 606-598, 586 B. C. Then came the 70 years captivity; 606-536 B. C. Two years before it ended the great city and kingdom was overthrown by Cyrus, and the Medo-Persian kingdom established, 533 B. C. Then, 536 B. C., the Jews are permitted to return. Fifty thousand of them came back, but most of them, perhaps two or three millions, born and reared in Babylon, prefer remaining.

Near 50 years pass away. The Medo-Persian kingdom has grown, and is the greatest of its time. Ahasuerus, or, as he is called in Greek, Xerxes (the great), ascends the throne. Three years later, his queen Vashti displeases him because she will not appear unveiled at a drunken revel. He divorces her, undertakes his great expedition to Greece, is defeated, returns home, gives up war for the harem, and marries a Jewish maiden called Esther.

Haman, an officer of high degree is offended at Mordecai, a Jew. He scorns to meddle with him alone, but plans to kill all the Jews in the empire. Esther is persuaded by her uncle Mordecai to plead with the king for the safety of her people.

The place of the book of Esther in history is between the 6th and 7th chapters of the book of Ezra. The author is unknown, but it was some one very familiar with the scenes recorded. The name of God, and prayer to Him, are not once mentioned, but dependence upon Him and looking to Him pervade the book.

I. Esther's message to Mordecai, vs. 10-12. *Put to death*—This law was intended to save the king from annoyance, also from danger, but with all his care this tyrant was slain in his bed. *Except*—The king had reserved to himself the right to save if he chose. *Thirty days*—The king's "first love" had cooled. This rendered the undertaking of Esther the more dangerous, especially in view of the fickle, cruel character of Eastern despots.

II. Mordecai's answer, vs. 13-14. Four motives he appeals to in his answer: (1) her own personal safety; (2) that deliverance will come from elsewhere, and she will lose the opportunity of saving her people; (3) assurance of success, "shall arise"; (4) God's providence in bringing her to the throne.

III. Esther's resolve, vs. 15-17. *Fast*—This includes humiliation, confession, prayer to God, trust in Him, and consecration to Him. *Three days*—From the end of one day, through the second to the beginning of the third, perhaps a little over 30 hours. *Perish*—She can but die, and resolves to dare.

IV. Esther goes before the king, vs. 1-3. *Royal apparel*—She did not dress in sackcloth, but with woman's wit made herself as attractive as possible. *Stood*—Where the king could see her. What a critical position. Shall she live or die? *Obtained favor*—Her beauty and grace again asserted its sway, but behind it all was God's power. "The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord." *Request*—He knew from the fact of her braving the law that she had some important request. *Half of my kingdom*—Eastern extravagance of promise, like Herod to the daughter of Herodias.

Mar. 19. A TEMPERANCE LESSON.

Prov. 23:15-23.

Golden Text, Eph. 5:18.

Memory vs. 19-21.

Catechism Q., 52.

THE WISE YOUNG MAN.

I. Makes glad parents, vs. 15-16. *Wise*—Young men pride themselves on their wisdom; wide-awake, far-seeing, knowing, they like to be. Remember "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." *Rejoice*—Young people, you cannot know the anguish you cause your parents when you go astray, or the joy they have in your well-doing. "A wise son maketh a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother."

II. Look beyond appearances to results, vs. 17-19. *Envy not*—All may seem well with the wicked, but think of their end. *Thine expectation*—Shall not be cut off. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. The prosperity of the wicked seems at times very attractive. The "good times" of the fast liver seem good indeed, but how soon the sweetness of his joy turns to bitterness. "Surely there is an end." O forget not that end, and remember that the "end" is determined by the road you take.

III.—Keep out of bad company, vs. 20-23. *Winebibbers*—The only safety is in keeping clear of them. "On the moors of Yorkshire, England, is a stream which at its source is quite clear. Suddenly it becomes a dark, muddy yellow. The reason is that it has passed through a bed of ochre, after which it flows for miles, useless and unpleasant. Sinful companions are like beds of ochre." One sinner destroyeth much good. *Riotous eaters*—Gluttony has its myriads of victims as well as drunkenness. The sin is a little more respectable, but more widespread and the source of much evil. *Poverty*—How often this is exemplified. *Drowsiness*—The lack of life that follows a long course of revelry. Drunkenness is usually followed by it.

IV. Listens to his parents, v. 22. *Hearken*—It is a blessed thing that so many, even when they have come to think and act for themselves, keep up the habits of youth in giving dutiful heed to aged parents. *Despise not*—Pitiful to hear men and women talk with ill-concealed slight of "the old man," "the old woman." Let the precious name "father," "mother," live as long as you live, and let them be ever symbols of respectful love.

V. Seeks truth, v. 23. *Buy*—Sometimes it costs something to speak the truth, out it is always worth more than the price paid. "Wisdom, instruction, understanding." Let these, and not self-indulgence, mark thee in life.

WATCH AND PRAY.

Mar. 26.

REVIEW. Gol. Text, Ps., 119:105.

The lessons for the quarter extend from the first return of the exiles, under Zerubabel, to Nehemiah's second visit, 427 B. C., more than a century, and centre chiefly around three great cities, Babylon, Jerusalem and Susa. We see the overthrow of the kingdom of Babylon, which made possible the return of Israel. We see the coming of the exiles to their own land and the building of the temple, and at length the wall of the city, through long years of opposition and persecution. The only true review is a thorough re-study of the various lessons and a summing up of the teachings of the whole. Remember, too, that the great laws of God's moral government are the same now as then, that sin, even now as in the case of Israel, brings sorrow, while the way of holiness is the way of peace.