

The Sunday School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON XVII.

April 27 } THE COMING SAVIOUR { Isa. xli.
1879. } 1-18.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."—Matt. iii. 17.

HOME STUDIES.

M. Isa. xl. 1-11.....The forerunner's cry.
T. Isa. xxxv. 1-10.....Blind eyes opened.
W. Isa. lxi. 1-11.....Liberty to the captives.
Th. Isa. xlii. 1-10.....The coming Saviour.
F. Matt. xii. 10-21.....The Scripture fulfilled.
S. Isa. xlii. 11-25.....The Lord well pleased.
S. Matt. iii. 1-17.....My beloved Son.

HELPS TO STUDY.

Isaiah lived in the 8th century before Christ, and prophesied from the reign of Uzziah to that of Manasseh, a period of sixty years; a period, notwithstanding the temporary reformation under Hezekiah, of decline both in the moral character and in the worldly prosperity of the nation. The worship of God was neglected, idolatry increased, luxury and worldliness prevailed, the kingdom was corrupt and tending rapidly to the same destination which overwhelmed Israel.

Throughout those dark days Isaiah stood forth with unflinching faith, expostulating, reproving and comforting. As from a superhuman elevation, and with wonderful, God-given insight into the future, he beholds down all the coming centuries the long-lesired Messiah, and cheers and encourages the desponding children of God with glorious pictures of Christ's person and kingdom. These fill up especially the second part of his prophesies, chapters xl. to lxiv.

The prophet here describes—

I. THE SERVANT OF JEHOVAH—Vers. 1-4.

Behold 700 years before His coming, yet by faith already clearly discerned) my Servant. It is Jesus, as St. Matthew (xii. 17) expressly tells us. "The Son of God is on earth as one that serveth"—Luke xxii. 27; John xiii. 4, 5. He took on Him the form of a servant—Phil. ii. 5-7. He set us thus an example of humility. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister—Matt. xx. 28. This is God's way to honour. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted. The world's way is to exalt self, but it leads to abasement.

God Himself upholds His servant, has Him under His special care and protection. He is God's elect, His chosen One. He must, therefore, be suited and sufficient for the work to which he is set apart, the work of saving men—a reason this why we should trust Him—1 Pet. ii. 6. God delighteth in Him, is well-pleased with Him—Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5; John iii. 35. To Him is given the Spirit, not by measure—John iii. 34; the very fullness of the Godhead—Col. ii. 9. It was this gift fitted Him for His work, and it is promised to us in measure. He shall bring forth judgment. This word bears, in the Scriptures, a wider sense than is now commonly given to it. It means the law of right, and especially religion as the true rule of life. Messiah's righteous government is to be established over all nations, all are to honour and obey Him. He shall not cry; His life and ministry shall be quiet and unostentatious. He did, we know, shun notoriety and applause; all his works were done quietly. He refused the homage of the multitude. He was meek and lowly in heart—Matt. xi. 29. A bruised reed is frailty itself. The feeblest, the most broken down under the sense of sin and unworthiness, He comes not to crush, but to comfort.

The smoking flax, the flickering wick, almost expiring, represents the timid and discouraged souls, whose longings and resolves Christ will not quench, but quicken—John viii. 11; xx. 27; Mk. i. 41; Isa. lvii. 15; lxi. 1. The weakest Christian has no reason to be discouraged. He shall bring forth judgment unto truth, that is, in truth, or according to truth, God's truth and faithfulness—Micah vii. 20; Matthew xii. 20; has "unto victory," a victory achieved by force of truth, not by force of arms. Nothing shall interrupt Messiah's progress. No violence or opposition shall cause him to fail or be discouraged (Note 1), till he establishes His righteous rule in all the earth. The isles, the lands beyond the seas, shall wait for his law. The heathen, dissatisfied and longing for better things, sick of sin, weary of their idols, shall gladly welcome the Gospel. All falsehoods and idolatries are to be overcome. No religion can satisfy except Christ's. No failure is possible to Christ; His triumph is sure. In His name every knee shall bow—Gen. xlii. 10; Ps. xv. 27; Phil. ii. 10.

II. THE WORK OF JEHOVAH'S SERVANT: Vers. 5-7.

It is God's work, the fulfilment of His promise and covenant. The prophet, therefore, first sets forth the greatness of Him who appoints the work which His servant is to do. He created the heavens and the earth and all therein. His power and wisdom are thus manifested. He gives life, breath and spirit. He can quicken dead souls, and make men new creatures in Christ Jesus—John v. 21.

God called His servant in righteousness. The whole work of salvation is righteous. It originates in a righteous hatred of sin and a righteous love of sinners; and its purpose is to make men righteous by means of God's own righteousness. Hence the Messiah is the Lord our Righteousness—Jer. xxiii. 6. I will hold thine hand, guard and keep and lead thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people. Christ is the messenger of the covenant—Matt. iii. 1;

sent to be the mediator of the covenant between God and man—Heb. viii. 8; xii. 24; Matt. xxvi. 28. A covenant is a coming together, from the Latin *convenire*. God and man meet in Christ—He reconciles, brings together. In order to this, He must also be a light to show man his sin and need and to show him God, who loves and can satisfy and save him. Sin has shut out light from the soul, blinded and deluded men. Christ opens the blind eyes—Isa. ix. 2; Luke ii. 32; Matt. xi. 5; Eph. v. 8. Sin enslaves; the sinner is a slave. Christ comes to set free—John viii. 34. Light and liberty are the two great blessings of the Gospels. To bring these to the soul is the work which Jesus came to do.

The prophet adds,

I. ASSURANCES that the work shall be accomplished: vers. 8-10. These are from God's *unchangeableness*. I am the Lord, Jehovah. It is that name of God which denotes His self-existent and changeless being. He is the same yesterday, to-day and forever. There is with Him no variability, neither shadow of turning—Isa. i. 17.

God's regard for His glory which He will not give to another. Idolatry and superstition dishonour God; they misrepresent Him, and substitute for Him that which is false and degrading. He cannot permit this, He therefore reveals His glory in Jesus Christ, who glorifies and will bring all to glorify God.

God's *faithfulness*. The former things, which God before announced and promised, are come to pass. Not one has failed. Every prophecy fulfilled is an evidence of the Divine truthfulness and fidelity—Josh. xvii. 14. The fact that they never have failed is a guarantee that they never will.

God's *foreknowledge*. New things, not yet in existence, He declares even before they spring forth. By the prophet, He foretells events far in the future; things which uninspired man could never have guessed or discovered—Deut. xxix. 29; Acts xv. 18; 2 Pet. i. 19. What Isaiah foretold, was 700 years afterwards fulfilled in Christ.

Here the prophetic assurance of victory breaks forth in a benediction. He calls upon all men, and the most distant lands, to join in a new song—Ps. xl. 3; xcvi. 1; Rev. v. 9. It is a universal song of praise inspired by a new theme, the salvation of the Lord. It will always be a new song, so ample is the theme and so full the hearts that sing. The Saviour is come. Have we received the light and liberty which he gives? Thus only shall we be ready to welcome Him when He comes again, no longer the Servant in His humiliation, but the King in His glory.

EXPLANATORY NOTE.

He shall not fail nor be discouraged. The two Hebrew verbs translated "fail," and "be discouraged," are the same which appear in v. 3 in their participles or derived adjectives, qualifying "flax" and "reed," expressing the failing, dying out of the burnt "flax," and the bruising of the "reed." This circumstance determines their meaning here with great precision and certainty. As the Messiah would not use violence upon others, so neither will He falter before violence inflicted or attempted upon himself. He will not languish, nor will his light be put out as one might quench burnt tow; neither will he be crushed or broken as a reed. Though apparently sure to be suppressed by the violence of his enemies, yet such means, however extreme, will fail to arrest his progress, not only during his personal life on earth, but evermore thereafter, until he shall have established pure religion in all the earth.

Children's Corner.

ROOM AT THE TOP.

Never you mind the crowd, lad,
Or fancy your life won't tell;
The work is the work, for a' that,
To him that doeth it well.
Fancy the world a hill, lad;
Look where the millions stop,
You'll find the crowd at the base, lad,
There's plenty of room at the top.

Courage, and faith, and patience,
There's space in the old world yet;
The better the chance you stand, lad,
The further along you get.
Keep your eye on the goal, lad;
Never despair or drop;
Be sure that your path leads upward;
There's always room at the top.

ONE DROP OF INK.

"I DON'T see why you won't let me play with Will Hunt," pouted Walter Kirk. "I know he does not always mind his mother, and smokes cigars, and once in a while swears just a little; but I have been brought up better than that. He won't hurt me, and I should think you would trust me. Perhaps I can do him some good."

"Walter," said his mother, "take this glass

of pure, cold water, and put just one drop of ink into it."

"O mother, who would have thought one drop would blacken a glass so?"

"Yes, it has changed the colour of the whole, has it not? It is a shame to do that. Just put one drop of clear water in, and restore its purity," said Mrs. Kirk.

"Why, mother, you are laughing at me. One drop, nor a dozen, nor fifty, won't do that."

"No, my son, and therefore I cannot allow one drop of Will Hunt's evil nature to mingle with your careful training—many drops of which will make no impressions on him."

"NOT STRICTLY."

TWO little boys were invited to a birthday party some time ago, and on their return home the elder of the boys said to his mamma, "Mamma! Tommy took cherries preserved in brandy at the tea, this evening."

"How was that?" asked the mamma.

"Well," replied the little boy, "Mrs. B. said to us after she had helped us to peaches, 'Now, children, I have some cherries here, but they have been preserved in brandy, and I suppose you are all temperance boys and girls;' and she said to me, 'How is it with you, James? Are you a temperance boy?' and I said, 'Yes, I am, I will not take any cherries; thanks.' And then she said, 'Tommy, are you temperance, too?' and he replied, 'Not strictly,' and so he took the cherries."

Shall I tell you what that mother did? She did not laugh and think it was very funny that her little boy had replied to the lady's question, "Not strictly." She took Tommy alone in her room and told him that he might thus lead other little boys in the path of ruin, and how all intemperance had its beginnings in being "not strictly" decided against all appearances of the evil. And I am sure you will be glad when I tell you that the little fellow promised that if he was asked the question again, he would leave off the "not" and say "Strictly."

Let me tell you, children, that is a very nice word when it is used in the right place—"strictly." This is what we want, these days—boys and girls "strictly" truthful, "strictly" honest, "strictly" temperate; then we shall have just the kind of men and women that are needed for the times.

A LITTLE girl was on the train recently, when a fearful collision took place, demolishing both engines and ruining several cars. Wonderful to relate, no lives were lost and no person seriously injured. People were expressing their wonder that not even a bone was broken when this child said, "Mamma, you prayed this morning, before we started, that God would take care of us, and I knew he would. He has, hasn't He, mamma?" Tears came to the eyes of several who listened, and one said, "Give me the faith of a child, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven."