

SCHOLARS' NOTES.

(From the International Lessons for 1881, by Edwin W. Rice, as issued by American Sunday School Union.)

JAN. 16.] LESSON III. [B. C. 4. THE PROPHECY OF ZACHARIAS. Luke 1: 67-79.

67. And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, 68. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, 69. And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; 70. As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: 71. That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; 72. To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant: 73. The oath which he swore to our father Abraham, 74. That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies might serve him without fear, 75. In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. 76. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; 77. To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins. 78. Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us. 79. To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide their feet into the way of peace.

GOLDEN TEXT.

The dayspring from on high hath visited us.—Luke 1: 79.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

In Christ shall all nations be blessed.

REVIEW QUESTIONS.—Title of last lesson?—Golden Text?—What is the song of Mary called?—Why?—Where was Mary?—What woman in the days of Moses sang a song?—What woman in time of Eli magnified the Lord?

NOTES.—DAVID, son of Jesse, succeeded Saul as king of Israel, was the father of Solomon, the wisest of kings and of men. ABRAHAM, see Lesson 2. "The song of praise now uttered by Zacharias had so gradually and completely ripened in his soul, that he could never forget it in future; it is the expression of the gospel as his heart had received it; the coming of Christ appears to him the true altar of salvation for his people, who henceforth, delivered from their enemies, shall perform real, true worship, celebrating the service of God in perpetual freedom. It is this that delights his heart as a priest. His heart's delight as a father is, that his son John shall be the herald of the Lord."—Lange. Thus singing he passes out of history.

EXPLANATIONS.

LESSON TOPICS.—(I.) PROPHECY CONCERNING JESUS. (II.) PREDICTION CONCERNING JOHN.

I. PROPHECY CONCERNING JESUS.—(67-75) FATHER, of John; FILLED, Holy Ghost was in his heart; PROPHESED, spoke prophetic words concerning the future of Jesus as John HATH VISITED, gave his only son; REDEEMED, provided salvation; HIS PEOPLE, who accept the benefits of redemption; HORN, symbol of power; HOUSE OF, family of, a lineal descendant of David; MOUTH OF, PROPHETS, all his holy prophets since the world began; Acts 3: 1; WE, the true church of God, also individual Christians; ENEMIES, whoever or whatever opposes Christ and his gospel; TO PERFORM, Obey shall do this; OUR FATHERS, Old Testament saints; HOLY COVENANT, made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses; GRANT US, give us power to serve God aright.

II. PREDICTION CONCERNING JOHN.—(75-79.) THOU, CHILD, Zacharias' son, John the Baptist; PROPHET, one who foretells; THE HIGHEST, the Messiah; GO BEFORE, see Mal. 3: 1; PREPARE, announce, proclaim as the herald of a prince, preach; GIVE KNOWLEDGE, John preached repentance and faith in an approaching Messiah, see Matt. 3; REMISSION, pardon; DAYS-PRING, an allusion to Christ as the fountain of light, John 1: 6-9; THEM THAT SIT IN DARKNESS, without Christ, in their sins; DEATH, separation from God; WAY OF PEACE, Jesus says, "I am the way," John 14: 6.

POINTS TO NOTICE.—Where in this lesson are we taught: 1. That the Holy Ghost in the heart fills the mouth with praise? 2. That God's promises never fail? 3. That true service is without fear? 4. That there is no salvation without forgiveness of sins? 5. That Christ is our guide from darkness into light?

JAN. 23.] LESSON IV. [B. C. 4. THE BIRTH OF JESUS. Luke 2: 8-20. COMMIT TO MEMORY vs. 10-14.

8. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. 10. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will toward men.

15. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

16. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

17. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

18. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

19. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.

20. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men.—Luke 2: 14.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

A Saviour comes to redeem his people.

REVIEW QUESTIONS.—What was the immediate occasion of Zacharias' prophecy?—Why does he call the Lord blessed?—What terms did he apply to Christ?—What high title did he give to his son John?—How many lessons thus far in Luke?—Titles?—Golden Texts?

NOTES.—SAME COUNTRY, in the neighborhood of Bethlehem, about a mile from the town. CITY OF DAVID, Bethlehem was the birthplace of David; hence "the city of David"; it has existed over 4,000 years, its present name being Beit-Lahm; it stands about six miles south of Jerusalem, and although never a very important place, its associations and history make it one of the most interesting. It now contains about 3,000 inhabitants. It is often mentioned in the Bible. The precise place of our Lord's birth has been left in obscurity. A church, known as the Church of the Nativity, which is over 1,500 years old, is built over a grotto which, according to tradition, is the site of that great event, but his claim as the true locality rests wholly on tradition, covered with much superstition, which renders the identification of small value. The grotto is in the solid limestone rock, and affixed to it is a marble slab on which a silver star marks the supposed spot. It is sufficient for us to know that Jesus was born, and that he died and rose again, and is now at God's right hand our Friend and Saviour. MARY AND JOSEPH, Mary is usually mentioned first when both are given in the same connection. JOSEPH, the son of Heli and the reputed father of Jesus. He was a just man and of the house and lineage of David; by trade a carpenter. When Jesus was 12 years of age Joseph went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the passover, and thereafter his name is not mentioned in sacred history. It is supposed that he died before he attained his thirtieth year.

EXPLANATIONS.

LESSON TOPICS.—(I.) GLAD TIDINGS BROUGHT. (II.) GLAD TIDINGS RECEIVED. (III.) GLAD TIDINGS PROCLAIMED.

I. GLAD TIDINGS BROUGHT.—(8-14) ABIDING, shepherds in the East stay with their flocks through the night; KEEPING WATCH, by turns; CAME UPON, suddenly; GLORY OF THE LORD, divine light; SORE AFRAID, so were the disciples at the transfiguration; TO ALL PEOPLE, the gospel for all without distinction; A SAVIOUR, his mission announced, SIGN, a triple one—a babe, swaddling clothes and manger; by these the shepherds would know him; A MULTITUDE, "an angel choir in the gallery of the firmament."—Whedon. "LORD, PEACE, GOOD-WILL," "God is praised in heaven, and peace is proclaimed on earth, because he has shown his good-will to men, by sending the Messiah, who is the Prince of Peace, and has reconciled heaven and earth, God and man."—Schaff.

II. GLAD TIDINGS RECEIVED.—(15-16) ANGELS GONE, from whence they came; LET US GO, anxious to see the wonderful child; NOW, no delay in discussion; THIS THING, what the angels had told them; LORD MADE KNOWN, angels only messengers from the Lord; WITH HASTE, eager, not doubtful; IN A MANGER, Jesus is found sometimes in unexpected places. He is always with his people; and his presence comforts the humble heart.

III. GLAD TIDINGS PROCLAIMED.—(17-20) SEEN IT, wonderful sight; MADE KNOWN, first preachers of Christ; ABROAD, to all whom they met; Herod at Jerusalem did not hear of it until the Magi's visit; THOSE THINGS, the angels, the glory, the song, the message, the babe; MARY KEPT, all the train of events from the announcement on; PONDERED, thought over, often and anxiously; RETURNED, to the care of their flocks; PRAISING, glimpses of Jesus fill the soul with joy and thills with praise.

POINTS TO NOTICE.—What in this lesson teaches us: 1. That God honors the lowly? 2. That Jesus is the Saviour of men? 3. That those who find Jesus should proclaim him to others?

JAN. 30.] LESSON V. [B. C. 4. SIMEON AND THE CHILD JESUS. Luke 2: 25-36. COMMIT TO MEMORY vs. 29-32.

25. And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

26. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

27. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,

28. Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

29. Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

30. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

31. Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

32. A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

33. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.

34. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against

35. (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also); that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

GOLDEN TEXT.

For mine eyes have seen thy salvation.—Luke 2: 30.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.

REVIEW QUESTIONS.—Title of Lesson IV.?—Class of persons mentioned?—Hour?—Near what place?—Who appeared to the shepherds?—Message?—What is Bethlehem called?—Titles of Jesus in ver. 11?—Sign given to the shepherds?—Song of the angels?—Conduct of shepherds?—What is said of Mary?—Unto whom was a Saviour born?

NOTES.—JERUSALEM, the largest city in Palestine and the capital of the Israelitish nation; eighteen miles from the Jordan valley opposite the northern end of the Dead Sea, and thirty-two miles from the Mediterranean. Many important Bible events are connected with this famous city, it being mentioned in the Scriptures over 800 times, beginning probably with Salem in Gen 14: 18. SIMEON, Luke alone mentions this devout man; our knowledge of him is very meagre, some suppose that he was the father of Gamaliel, Paul's teacher.—HOLY GHOST, "the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Holy Trinity, of one essence or nature with the Father and the Son, yet distinct from them. He is the author of regeneration and sanctification. He applies the work of redemption to us, and makes us partakers of all the benefits of Christ, of his righteousness, life and death. He is our advocate who pleads our cause, who strengthens and comforts us and prepares us for glory in heaven. Our English version uses, in most passages, the term Holy Ghost; in four passages Holy Spirit, which is better."—Schaff's Bible Dictionary. JESUS, at this time forty days old. GENTILES, "this was the name by which the Jews designated all men but themselves, i.e., all pagan nations who were ignorant of the true God and idolaters (Acts 28: 17-20; Rom. 2: 9; 9: 24). In opposition to the Gentiles the Hebrews regarded themselves, and were in fact the chosen people of God."—Schaff's Bible Dictionary. JOSEPH, MARY, ISRAEL, see previous lessons.

EXPLANATIONS.

LESSON TOPICS.—(I.) SIMEON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. (II.) SIMEON AND THE CHILD JESUS. (III.) SIMEON AND THE CHILD'S PARENTS.

I. SIMEON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.—(25-27.) BEHOLD, introduces something of importance; JUST, honest with man; DEVOUT, toward God; WAITING, daily and anxiously looking for; CONSOLATION OF ISRAEL, expected in the coming Messiah, who was to relieve his people from all their distresses; HOLY GHOST, see Notes; UPON HIM, filled with; REVEALED, made known; SEE DEATH, "Simeon is in the noblest sense the eternal Jew of the Old Covenant who cannot die before he has seen the promised Messiah"—Lange. LORD'S CHRIST, Jehovah's anointed One, the Messiah; CUSTOM OF THE LAW, see Lev. 12: 6-8.

II. SIMEON AND THE CHILD JESUS.—(28-32.) BLESSED, praised; NOW LETTEST, ready and willing to go, being God's time; ACCORDING TO THY WORD, referring to the previous revelation; THY SALVATION, in the infant Jesus Simeon recognized the appointed Saviour of the world; ALL PEOPLE, all nations, verse 32. See Isa. 49: 6, 7.

III. SIMEON AND THE CHILD'S PARENTS.—(32-35.) MARVELLED, wondered at the glorious career predicted of their child; SAID UNTO MARY, blest both, but addresses the mother; IS SET, is appointed; A SIGN, an easily seen object, made more so by being SPOKEN AGAINST, despised, rejected, dying on the cross; A SWORD SHALL PIERCE, Mary would feel in the death of Jesus as if she had died by the sword; THOUGHTS REVEALED, Christ's appearing brings to light good and evil.

POINTS TO NOTICE.—Where are we taught in this lesson: 1. That a just and devout man is filled with the Holy Ghost? 2. That the Spirit leads good men? 3. That the Holy Spirit is a Revealer? 4. That Christ is a discernor of the thoughts of the heart? 5. That we are not ready to die until we seek the Lord?

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