



LESSON V.—FEBRUARY 3, 1907.

Noah Saved in the Ark.

Genesis viii., 1-16.

Golden Text.

The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.—Psalm xxxvii., 39.

Home Readings.

Monday, Jan. 28.—Gen. vi., 1-22.

Tuesday, Jan. 29.—Gen. vii., 1-24.

Wednesday, Jan. 30.—Gen. viii., 1-22.

Thursday, Jan. 31.—Gen. ix., 1-19.

Friday, Feb. 1.—Isa. liv., 1-17.

Saturday, Feb. 2.—Matt. xxiv., 29-44.

Sunday, Feb. 3.—I. Pet. iii., 8-22.

(By Davis W. Clark.)

In the incomparable picture-gallery of the Scriptures there is no canvas like that which presents the ark and the Flood. It is too bold and tragic to be passed. It arrests and stirs the most indolent mind. Once caught upon the sensitive plate of a child's memory, it will never fade. Its unspeakable horror is mercifully mitigated by such gentle incidents as the door shut by God's own hand, the dove with olive branch, and the rainbow spanning all.

The Noachian Deluge only precipitated the inevitable. It was an act of Divine mercy as well as justice. In the great conflict foretold in Eden between the serpent seed and the seed of God, the former were ascendant. The conditions were aggravated by intermarriage. The sons of God, the descendants of Seth, were lured by the siren daughters of Cain, so that they chose their wives irrespective of the Divine will. All the proverbial sin and sorrow of misalliance followed. The very physical hardihood of the offspring made their moral obliquity more deadly. Every conceivable rust was rampant. The seed of God was reduced to a paltry contingent. It was on the verge of extinction. The whole race, in fact, was committing suicide. It was destroying itself. Earth would have soon been like a desolate island whose sanguinary population had consumed itself through lust, murder, and cannibalism.

The Flood was a great mercy. It shortened the irretrievable misery of the race then living. It kept the seed of God alive. It was an object-lesson the world has never forgotten.

God's election to salvation is based upon the moral qualities of those whom He chooses. There is striking illustration of this in the character of Noah. He found grace in the eyes of the Lord, not through caprice and favoritism, but because in a wicked and adulterous generation he shone like a light, and lovingly held forth to a dying race the word which, if received, would have proved life to them. He was a just man and upright, and walked with God. He was fit to be the second Adam, the progenitor of a new and hopeful race. And to this end God spared him.

Noah's faith shines resplendent upon the rayless irreligion of his day. He showed his faith by his stupendous work. On dry land and far from the sea he built his colossal ship. He preached righteousness to the gaping and gibing crowd which curiosity brought from afar to his shipyard. He was persistent. He kept right on building and preaching for one hundred and twenty years. He built precisely according to the model shown him. He gathered in the supply of food for man and beast requisite for his long voyage. He selected and admitted the beasts and fowl as God directed.

With seven souls he entered his strange prison, had its door shut to behind him by the Invisible Hand, and tarried in his weird environment undaunted, though seven days passed before the first raindrop pattered upon the roof. Sublime faith, that!

The 'log-book' of that unparalleled voyage is very brief. It takes only twenty-seven verses to narrate the novel and thrilling experience of three hundred and sixty-five days. Much riches are in little room. Imagination must be trusted to uncover them.

As Noah at length emerged from the ark, an inexpressibly sad and orphaned feeling must have affected his generous heart. Earth's desolation, how utter! In vain he listens for the sound of a human footfall. Not even a footprint is left. He finds relief in worship. He builds an altar on the dripping rocks of Ararat. Again his faith exemplifies itself. He had saved only a few specimens of clean animals; but he prepares to offer some of them, with the full assurance that God would supply their places, and see that the species did not become extinct. When the fragrance of that whole burnt offering came up before the Lord, He knew that Noah intended it should signify the complete devotion of himself, his descendants, and the renewed earth to God.

As a pitying Father, God graciously responded to the suppliant patriarch, allaying his fears with the assurance that the cataclysm just passed should never be repeated; the beneficent regularity of the seasons should know no interruption; human life should have a safeguard. God delegates His judicial power to man to this end. The first principle of human government is here irradiated in the statute, 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.'

The Noachian covenant was now ready for its seal. God took the very substance which had destroyed the earth, and transmuted it into a royal signet to attest His promise never again to overwhelm the race. There it stood in all the dazzling splendor of its prismatic colors—an arrowless bow, bent toward heaven, the very vastness of its sweep signifying the 'wideness of God's mercy.' To all generations the ineffable and assuring words which first fell upon Noah's ears have resounded, 'This is the token of the covenant.'

ANALYSIS AND KEY.

1. The Flood: bold and tragic picture.
2. Mercy as well as justice of it.
Race exterminating itself through sin.
Flood save the seed of God.
3. Ground of Noah's election to life.
His moral qualities.
4. His resplendent faith.
Preparations for the Flood.
5. The log-book of the Ark.
6. Noah's sacrifice: God's promise.
7. The token of the Covenant.

THE TEACHER'S LANTERN.

Rivet fidgety scholars this paragraph certainly will; it is so scenic. It fairly teaches itself. The natural method is to describe the condition of the race before the Flood; the superlative wickedness which made that wholesale destruction an act of mercy as well as of justice; how the irretrievable misery of the human family, which had doomed itself, was cut short, and a chance given to begin anew under happier auspices.

Noah's upright character can be made to shine against the universal degeneracy of his times. It proves one can be good in spite of one's environment. A boy can keep his lips unsullied, though the air around him is blue with profanity. He need not lie, nor cheat, nor gamble, though those with whom he is thrown in school, shop, or store all do. If he keep upright, he will prove God's instrument of good to his fellows.

Implicit and persistent was Noah's obedience. He showed his faith by his works. He never grew weary in well-doing under circumstances calculated to try him to the uttermost. So his name richly deserves to be engraven on that tall obelisk, Hebrews xi., reared to the

heroes of faith. His very character and course was in itself an indictment and condemnation of the world before the Flood.

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Heir to two worlds, Noah stepped out of the ark sole monarch and proprietor of all he surveyed with the natural eye, and beyond that the better inheritance, even the heavenly. So God rewards—a hundred-fold in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting.

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A bone of contention has ever been the question whether the Flood was universal or not. The arguments pro: (1) Natural conclusion from language of Scripture. (2) No evidence to prove that the population of earth was confined to a limited locality. (3) Impossibility of piling the waters up in such manner as to cover the mountains. (4) No need of taking birds into the ark, if Deluge was only local. Arguments Contra: (1) Universal Deluge unnecessary to accomplish the end designed. (2) Ark could not have given room for every species. (3) To cover highest mountains, water must needs be five miles deep. Ten miles added to the diameter of earth would destroy the equipoise of the system. (4) Universal prevalence would have produced change of climate. (5) Overflowing of salt water would destroy plant life, and fresh water animal life.

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Still pending is the case, with the drift of the best modern comment however decidedly in favor of a local Deluge. The rocks bear the incontrovertible testimony to the possibility and reality of such a Flood as Genesis describes. Huxley, in his Lay Sermon, No. IX., graphically describes such a cataclysm. M. Figuier affirms that the Asiatic Deluge occurred after the appearance of man. A vulgar infidelity has had its laugh at Noah and his ark; but he laughs best who laughs last.

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Corresponding to the testimony of the rock is the testimony of tradition. Humbolt says that ancient traditions of the Flood are dispersed over the whole surface of the globe.

C. E. Topic.

Sunday, Feb. 3.—Topic—What Christian Endeavor means, to me and to the world. Phil. ii., 1-18. Christian Endeavor Day. (Consecration meeting.)

Helping the Pupil in His Home

Few scholars have home help in lesson study. The Christian home neglects to help; the non-Christian one cares little about it. The scholar is urged in the class to 'study at home,' tries to do it, does not know clearly what is meant by it, or what the teacher's standard of 'study' may be, and, after a few discouraging efforts, ceases to try. Here is the teacher's opportunity. A few minutes of this week-day time spent by the scholar's side in his home, as friend with friend showing him how to study his lesson, how to use the lesson leaf with his Bible, and to make the most of both, will give the scholar the needed clew, and possibly form within him the beginning of a habit of home study. The trouble with most boys and girls is not so much an indisposition to study the Bible as it is in not knowing how and to what extent it should be studied. The requirement of the day school for home study is easily submitted to, but the day school teacher wisely sets a definite task, and trains in methods of study. One by one, by the expenditure of a little effort, the scholars of a Sunday school class may thus be reached and started upon a better way. It is the personal visit and help of the teacher that counts, and such visitation is worth all the copyrighted study schemes on the market.—From Dr. Hamill's 'Sunday School Teacher.'

One should attempt to teach only what he can teach. A lesson is not made by teacher and pupils entering together in the lesson hour upon an investigation in which both are groping in the dark. To try to explain the thing that is not understood is a dangerous experiment.—Axtell.