

honors, pleasures, friends, but could only reckon up fourteen days in which he was really happy. Selfishness, however gilded and honored, has attached to it the curse of discontent, envy and insatiable greed.

The whole tithe (Rev. Ver.), v. 10. A tenth seems a great deal to give to God. There are so many things on which we could expend it with advantage to ourselves.

Our Sacrifice and Christ's It does not look as if we could afford it very easily. "I cannot afford to give it, but I can afford to sacrifice it," were the noble words of Sarah Martin, the poor needlewoman, when asked how she could give so much of her time to visiting the sick and needy; and a tenth is at least not too much to sacrifice for Him who sacrificed His life for us.

Prove me, v. 10. "Try" and "trust" are two little words, but they take us to the very

heart of our religion. God makes on us no more exacting demands than we should make on our friends. He asks us simply to put Him to the test. Dean Swift, in making an appeal for charities, quoted the text, "He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord." "Now," he said, "if you are satisfied with the security, down with the money." It is the experience of all liberal givers, that God does not fail to redeem His promises.

A delightful land, v. 12. There is little promise to the eye, of the splendid cathedral in the confused pile of stones laying in the quarry. But we trust the genius of the architect to bring order and beauty out of the confusion.

The New Paradise

And there is power with God to transform this world so full now of sin and strife into a paradise of purity and peace.

TEACHING HINTS

This section embraces teaching material for the various grades in the school.

For Teachers of the Older Scholars

Nothing is known about Malachi; but the social and religious life of the people is faithfully reflected in his writings and in Nehemiah. The land was suffering, ch. 3:11. Their new home had not fulfilled their expectations. Morally their condition was very unsatisfactory. Religion had become a show and farce. The priests had become careless (ch. 1:13), the people were stinting the sacrifices (ch. 1:14), offering poor things—lame and sick animals, refusing to pay tithes and demanding money for any service given to the temple. There were many foreign marriages, ch. 2:10-16. Malachi faces these facts. The cause is sin, the remedy a return to God, who will come and restore His kingdom.

1. Consider the promise of a forerunner before Messiah comes, v.1. (Compare Isa. 40:3-5; ch. 4:5, 6 for light on this, and note Matt. 11:13, 14; 17:12, 13, Mark 9:13; Luke 1:76-79 for the New Testament view of its fulfillment.)

2. The mission of Messiah is judgment and purification, vs. 2-5. This begins at the priesthood. Note the graphic figures used, and study their meaning. It also extends to the

people. What light this casts upon the life of the people! Note the strong moral force which runs through this visit to Zion. What is its bearing?

3. The invitation to prepare for His coming, vs. 7-10. They must abandon the old for the new. Especially consider the emphasis on moral dealing with God in tithing (compare Lev. 27:30-33; Deut. 14:28, 29).

4. The blessing Messiah brings, vs. 10, 11. This is expressed in many forms. (a) Abundance of spiritual blessing (see Gen. 7:11; 2 Kgs. 7:2 for imagery). (b) Abundance of material success. (c) Abundance of happiness and peace. Thus throughout this Lesson there run two ideas: (1) There must be righteousness, and with righteousness comes happiness and success. (2) The announcement of His coming is an invitation to prepare to meet Him.

In advanced classes it will be well to note the historical fulfilment of this promise and its power in the whole Christian world. The practical application is found in its bearing on character. What can the individual members of the class do to prepare for Christ's coming? The forerunner has come, the Messiah has come. What is the relation to Him now? If not yet Christian, what can be done to fulfil the conditions of life? (a)