

and cleansing and sanctifying him. The natural man may be admirable, splendid, lovely—but we must look at the end, and when God sets these men before you He sets the whole of their life before you from the beginning to the end. That seems to me to be the striking difference between Esau and Jacob.

Some of you like to hear people praise you for your physical gifts; for your long reach, for your good stroke, for your capital mark, and for various signs of a strong physical nature. And that is certainly a very fine thing. I like to see a straight and well-built supple figure. But, mark you, all that will get stiff. A very few years indeed and your youth will be behind you, and you will have to mourn that it has passed away from you; for it is with sorrow and regret that we pass away from these times. There is a kind of satire about, a kind of irony in this growing older. But there is a spirit which will never grow older: there is a life which will only grow more steadily, stronger, swifter, and more perfect every day. You may go on and develop only the lower nature, and you will die an animal—a splendid brute. You may go on and develop the spiritual nature, and you will die—die did I say? No, you will live a glorified spirit, a redeemed man, the noblest being short of God—a sanctified, glorified son of human kind. There is a choice for you! The old Greek Legend put before Hercules these two things—virtue and vice. I do not put before you virtue and vice. I scorn to offer you that; but I put before you the growth that is only upon the natural platform, and the progress that is upon the spiritual platform. Choose ye, my brethren—men and women, for it is for all of you—choose ye to-night which shall be your history, the history of Esau, or the history of Israel, the Prince of God!

GOLDEN TRUTHS.

SCRIPTURE LESSONS FOR THE SUNDAYS OF 1877.

BY REV. THORNTON SMITH.

MAY 6. Morning. CHRIST'S LAST PASSOVER. Matt. xxvi. 17–30. The feast of unleavened bread lasted for seven days, and was first instituted in Egypt in connection with that of the Passover (Ex. xii. 15). The first day of the feast was the 14th of the month, Tisi or Nisan, when all leaven, a type of evil, was put out of the houses. On this day our Lord's disciples came to Him with the question, ver. 17, for the Passover began on the next day. Its preparation consisted in slaying the paschal lamb, presenting it in the temple, and then roasting it whole, its blood having been taken by the priest and sprinkled on the altar, instead of the doorposts as at the first. Jesus sent them to some friend of His; but what meant He by the expression, "My time is at hand?"

Some have supposed that He anticipated the day, others rather that He meant the time of His sufferings. They went and found the room ready, and they placed upon the table, the lamb, unleavened bread, and wine (ver. 18, 19). He reclined at the table, and as they were eating He foretold the betrayal by one of them. "Lord, is it I?" said one, and another, and yet another, in deep sorrow; and according to John xii. 23, Peter beckoned to the beloved disciple who was next to Jesus to ask Him, as in a whisper. The answer was given by a sign (Matt. xxvi. 23, 24). Judas said with daring effrontery, "Master, is it I?" He knew that it was, and he left the room bent on his dreadful work. The *sop* (ver. 23) was the *charoseth*, a kind of sauce made of dates, figs, and bitter herbs, etc. Jesus then gave them the bread as the symbol of His body; and after supper, the cup, or the wine as the symbol of His blood, thus turning the Jewish into the Christian Passover, and instituting that feast which is observed to this day. In the expression, *This is my body*, etc., the Church of Rome finds the doctrine of transubstantiation; but it bears no such meaning, and the doctrine was never heard of until centuries after Christ's death. From ver. 29, we learn that there will be a new celebration of this feast in the Kingdom of Heaven (Rev. iii. 20; xix. 9). The hymn they sang (ver. 30) was part of the great Hallel (Ps. cxv.–cxviii.), which is full of praise and joy, and after it they went to Gethsemane at the foot of the Mount of Olives. Learn 1 Cor. xi. 23, 24.

Afternoon. THE FAMINE IN SAMARIA. 2 Kings vii. 3–20. Learn Luke xviii. 27. Samaria was besieged by Benhadad, in consequence of which there was a dreadful famine (ch. vi. 23). Elisha foretold to the king that the next

day there should be such an abundance of food that a seah or peck of fine flour, should be sold in the market for a shekel, or about two shillings and fourpence, etc. An aide-de-camp of the king said it was incredible. On windows in heaven see Gen. vii. 11. How was it brought about? Four poor lepers, shut out from their fellow-men (Lev. xiii. 45, Num. v. 3), sat, perhaps in a house erected for the purpose (ch. xv. 3), at the gate of the city. On the point of starvation, they resolved to go in the evening twilight into the Syrian camp, and on reaching it they found no man there (ver. 3–5). What had become of the army? The Lord had scattered them. They had been seized with a panic and had fled, leaving behind them all their property (ver. 6, 7). What the noise was, or how it was observed we are not told; but probably it was an extraordinary or miraculous roll of thunder. The lepers satisfied their own hunger, and then, as their consciences dictated, went back and told the news to the watchmen at the city gate, who reported the fact in the king's palace (ver. 9–11). The king thought the Syrians intended it for a ruse to deceive them, and draw them out of the city; but he sent to see, and the messengers returned with the tidings that it was true (ver. 12, 13). Thus Elisha's prophecy was fulfilled. But the man who doubted his word was trod upon at the city gate, and died, as a punishment for his unbelief (ver. 16, 17). With God all things are possible. The meaning of ver. 13 is that there were five horses, or horsemen, in Samaria, and if they were sent and were killed, they would only share the fate of the people generally. Two pairs of them were sent with chariots and men.

May 13. Morning. JESUS IN GETHSEMANE. Matt. xxvi. 31–46. Gethsemane means *the oil press*, for there was a press, and probably a house near. It was a garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives, though now only a few old trees remain there. Eight of Christ's disciples were left at the entrance. Peter, James, and John, who had seen Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, were to be the only witnesses of the agony of His soul. What was that agony? It was a deep and overwhelming pressure of His soul (ver. 37, 38). It was anguish unto death. How was it occasioned? A bitter cup was put into His hands, for now already He was bearing the weight of the world's transgression, see Luke xii. 31–46, who speaks of the bloody sweat which, in consequence of His grief, oozed through the pores of His skin. Hence He prayed that the cup might pass from Him, but in perfect submission to His Father's will. (Ver. 39, 42–44). His three disciples slept, and that after He came and awoke them. For it was the hour and power of darkness, and wicked spirits were near to do their worst. The third time He spoke with a sacred irony, "Sleep on now," &c.; that is, "if you can, for the hour of decision is come" (ver. 40, 43, 49). Learn ver. 42. The lesson is that of entire submission to the will of God. No one ever did, or would bear what our Saviour bore, yet His prayer was—*Thy will be done*.

Afternoon. JEHU THE KING. 2 Kings x. 18–30. Jehu pretended that he was about to serve Baal, the God which Ahab had worshipped. He proclaimed a festal meeting, and the priests, clad in their sacred vestments taken out of the wardrobe of the temple, filled the place mouth to mouth, that is, to its utmost limit (ver. 18–22). But he did it in subtlety, for he intended to slay them. This was right in itself; but his motives were selfish (see ver. 29, 30). He took care that none were in the temple but the priests of Baal, and then he appointed eighty men to watch, and to let none of them escape (ver. 24). When the sacrificing priest (not Jehu) had presented the burnt-offering, the command was given to the guard and captain to slay them all, and they smote the city—that is, the new temple-house of Baal, and burnt the images or columns which were probably made of wood. They then destroyed the whole temple itself, and made it into sinks, as a mark of insult (ver. 25–28). Jehu was commended for his zeal in this matter, but he was right in other respects, and to serve God by halves is never sufficient. God requires an undivided heart. Rom. x. 2 expresses Jehu's character.

May 20. Morning. THE BETRAYAL AND ARREST. Matt. xxvi. 47–58. Judas, the traitor, came. According to John (xviii. 3) the people who came with him had lanterns, and torches, and weapons. It was moonlight, being the time of the Passover, but they thought, perhaps, that Jesus would be hid among the trees. Judas knew the spot, and to make sure of his victim, brought with him a Roman guard from the castle of Antonia, consisting of 500 men (John xviii. 2, 3), and