

SCHOLARS' NOTES.

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

JAN. 2.] LESSON I. [B. C. 5. ZACHARIAS AND ELIZABETH. Luke 1:5-17.

COMMIT TO MEMORY vs. 11-14.

5. There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

6. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

7. And they had no child, because that Elizabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.

8. And it came to pass that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,

9. And according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

10. And the whole multitude of the people were praying at the time of incense.

11. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

12. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled and fear fell upon him.

13. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

14. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

15. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

16. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

17. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

GOLDEN TEXT.

And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.— Luke 1: 6.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

The prayer of the upright is God's delight.

CONNECTED HISTORY.—Luke's Preface, vs. 1-4.

REVIEW QUESTIONS.—What important event do you remember in the life of Abraham?—In the life of Isaac?—In the life of Jacob?—In the life of Joseph?—How was Isaac a type of Christ?—Joseph?

NOTES.—HEROD, surnamed the GREAT, son of Antipater an Idumean general, a wicked tyrannical ruler, reigned in Judea about 37 years and died B. C. 4.—JUDEA, the southern portion of Palestine. It included one-half of the entire territory of the Holy Land.—ZACHARIAS, a priest officiating in the temple.—ABIA, the Abijah of 1 Chron. 24: 10, and a descendant of Aaron.—AARON, brother of Moses, and the first high priest.—ELIZABETH, a pious and devoted woman, mother of John the Baptist.—PRIESTS, descendants of Aaron and his sons, and set apart to minister in the temple.—ALTAR OF INCENSE, see "Daily Readings."—TEMPLE, rebuilt by Herod the Great, and occupied a portion of the Haram area, which is about 500 cubits of 16 inches, or 670 feet square.

TO THE SCHOLAR.—Find out all you can about Luke, the author of this Gospel. Read about the building and dedication of the temple by Solomon, and the second temple by Zerubbabel. Study carefully and prayerfully.

EXPLANATIONS.

LESSON TOPICS.—(I.) A RIGHTEOUS HOME. (II.) A SON PROMISED. (III.) HIS GREATNESS FORETOLD.

I. A RIGHTEOUS MAN AND WIFE.—(5-10.) DAYS OF HEROD, in the closing years of his reign; KING OF JUDEA, subject to Caesar; PRIEST, a man set apart for service in the temple; COURSE OF ABIA, one of the twenty-four courses, into which the house of priests was divided; DAUGHTERS, descendants; WALKING, obeying; ORDINANCES, laws; WELL STRICKEN, aged; EXECUTED, performed his priestly duties; ORDER, "the priests for each day of the week were selected from the 'course' by lot."—Whedon: see 1 Chron. 24: 1-19; INCENSE, see Exod. 30: 34-38; TEMPLE, Herod's temple, see "Notes"; MULTITUDE, probably on the Sabbath when the people had assembled for worship; WITHOUT, in the court.

II. A SON PROMISED.—(11-14.) APPEARED, Zacharias saw the angel; ANGEL, Gabriel, v. 19, see also Dan. 8: 16; 9: 21; Luke 1: 26, 27; RIGHT SIDE, place of honor; TROUBLED, filled with awe; FEAR FELL, Gideon, Jud. 6: 11-24, and Manoah, Jud. 13: 1-25, gave themselves up for dead at the appearance of angels; FEAR NOT, "blameless" men need not fear, though confronted by angels; A SON, for which Zacharias had prayed; JOHN, the Baptist; MANY SHALL REJOICE, fulfilled in ver. 58.

III. HIS GREATNESS FORETOLD.—(15-17.) GREAT, see "Daily Readings"; NEITHER, NOR, John was to be a Nazarite, see Num. 6, and compare with Rom. 12: 6; STRONG DRINK, all exhilarating drinks besides wine; EVEN FROM, children may be consecrated to God before their birth, 1 Sam. 1: 11; MANY SHALL HE TURN, see Matt. 3: 5, 6; GO BEFORE, see "Daily Readings"; ELIAS, Elijah the Tishbite; FATHERS, CHILDREN, "a reconciliation shall take place between the holy olden time and the present."—Whedon.

POINTS TO NOTICE.—1. Why are the blameless people honored of God? 2. How does God meet his people in the sanctuary? 3. Why is old age made happy by a life of faith? 4. Give proofs that God hears and answers prayers? 5. Give

proof texts showing that angels are the friends of God's friends.

LESSON II.

JAN. 9.] THE SONG OF MARY. [B. C. 4.

Luke 1: 46-55.

COMMIT TO MEMORY vs. 46-55.

46. And Mary said,

47. My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

48. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

49. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.

50. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.

51. He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

52. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.

53. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

54. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;

55. As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

GOLDEN TEXT.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.— Luke 1: 46, 47.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

The Lord remembers his covenant.

CONNECTED HISTORY.—Zacharias asks for a sign; is struck dumb; and the annunciation to Mary; she is promised a son whose name should be Jesus; Mary's visit to Elizabeth; the benediction of Elizabeth; the song of Mary, which is the subject of our lesson.

REVIEW QUESTIONS.—When did the events of the last lesson occur?—To whom did the angel appear?—Who was his wife?—What kind of people were they?—What important personage was promised?—How was John described?

NOTES.—The song of Mary has been called the Magnificat, from the first word of the Latin version. "It is divisible into three parts: 1. Recognition of God's grace to her humility; 2. Recognition that God ever exalts the lowly; 3. So God shall exalt his humble Israel."—Whedon. "This most excellent hymn is dictated by a spirit ravished with the most sprightly devotion imaginable; devotion full of ardent love and thankfulness, hearty joy tempered with submissive reverence."—Dr. Barrow. MARY, exalted, the mother of Jesus and wife of Joseph. It is supposed by some that the genealogical table of Luke is the line from which Mary descended. Nothing definite is known of Mary until she is introduced to us as the Virgin of Nazareth to whom the angel Gabriel was sent, (Luke 1: 26-27); after this we see her at the house of Elizabeth; at Bethlehem; in Egypt; Jerusalem; Cana, Capernaum; at the cross; and at the gathering for prayer in Jerusalem (Acts 1: 14). The Bible nowhere exalts her as the object of worship.—ISRAEL, here means God's chosen people.—ABRAHAM, the father of the faithful, the "friend of God"; son of Terah and father of Isaac.

TO THE SCHOLAR.—Read the song of Moses in Exod. 15: 1-19; and the song or prayer of Hannah in 1 Sam. 2: 1-10.

EXPLANATIONS.

LESSON TOPICS.—(I.) GOD'S GOODNESS TO MARY. (II.) GOD'S MERCY TO THE LOWLY. (III.) GOD'S PROMISE TO BE FULFILLED.

I. (46-49).—MARY SAID, see what Deborah, Jud. 5. Hannah, 2 Sam. 2: 1-10, and David, Ps. 103, said; MY SOUL, my heart, my very being; MAGNIFY, exalt, praise; MY SAVIOUR, God was her Saviour, praise for personal benefits comes first; LOW ESTATE, not humility but condition, she was a subject and not a princess in the eyes of the world, God is not a respecter of persons, "he giveth grace unto the lowly"; HENCEFORTH, hereafter; ALL GENERATIONS, all ages; BLESSED, happy but not worshipped.

II. (50-53). HE THAT IS MIGHTY, God; HOLY IS HIS NAME, worthy of and entitled alone to all the praise; HIS MERCY, see Ps. 103: 17; SHEWED STRENGTH, in the overthrow of wrong and the triumph of the right; HATH, has, does and will; SCATTERED, the promised Jesus shall possess the whole earth; IMAGINATION, designs, plans, conspiracies; MIGHTY, literally "rulers from their thrones," a reference primarily perhaps to Herod; LOW DEGREE, the meek shall inherit the earth.

III. PROMISE FULFILLED.—(54, 55.) HOLPEN, helped; SERVANT, people; IN REMEMBRANCE, in proof of his mercy; FATHERS, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc.; SEED, children, descendants.

POINTS TO NOTICE.—I. What in the lesson suggests that the coming of Jesus is; 1. The exaltation of the lowly? 2. The putting down of the mighty? 3. The satisfying of the hungry? 4. The leaving empty of those who regard themselves as spiritually rich?—(Lange.) II. Where in the lessons is it shown that God is gracious, powerful, holy, merciful, just and faithful? III. What reasons have I for praising God? IV. Whose offereth praise glorifieth me."

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