

LESSON 12.—DEC. 17, 1899.

Fruits of Right and Wrong Doing.(Lesson Text: Mal. 3: 13 to 4: 6. Commit to Memory Verses 16-18.)
(Compare Mal. 3: 1-6, also Matt. 11: 7-15.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."—Gal. 6: 7.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday: Mal. 3: 13 to 4: 6. Tuesday: Psalm 73: 1-20. Wednesday: Job 22: 12-27. Thursday: 2 Tim. 2: 19-26. Friday: Eccles. 8: 1-13. Saturday: Deut. 4: 5-13. Sunday: Gal. 6: 1-10.

TIME AND PLACE.—Same as last lesson.

Between the Lessons.

Our last lesson closed with God's promise, through the prophet Malachi, that if the disobedient, rebellious Jews would turn and obey Him in the matter of tithes and offerings in which they had sadly disobeyed, they would be greatly blessed in the eyes of all nations. In the opening verses of to-day's lesson the prophet takes up the wicked doings of the Jews, and exposes them by reciting their impious language toward God, and contrasting it with the godly conversation of those who remained faithful among them.

How to Prepare this Lesson.

Read carefully the remainder of Malachi from the close of last lesson and study the references. Compare Matt. 11: 7-15.

It is interesting to notice that this is the last book of the Old Testament, and that our lesson to-day contains the last words of this volume. While Malachi is a short book, it has a number of important phrases, some of them very beautiful. Note especially chapters 2: 10; 3: 3; 3: 8; 3: 10; 3: 16, 17; 4: 2.

The Lesson Applied.

(1) It seems strange that those who know of God can fail to honor and love Him. The Jewish people had been taught much about God, and yet they treated Him as if He had been their enemy. They spoke of themselves as if they were saints and as if God had been very unjust toward them. They thought He had demanded too much from them, and even accused Him of not being faithful to His promises. We should always love, reverence, and honor God, and accept all His dealings with us as full of goodness and wisdom. If things go wrong between God and us the fault is ours, not His.

(2) When there are only a few good and faithful people in a place they should be friends, and should meet together to encourage and help each other and to pray for each other. There is a great value in such friendship and fellowship. It is hard to be good alone, but when there are two or more, one inspires and cheers the other, and each works better, and finds it easier to live and work well. In arithmetic one and one make two, but in life, in friendship, one and one are more than two. One singer may give sweet music, but when the different parts are carried the music is rich. One log will not burn well on the hearth, but two or three together burn better.

(3) It is pleasant to think that where two or three come together to talk of good things the Lord comes and listens. Jesus said that when two or three meet together in His name He is there too. It is interesting to think also that God keeps a record of the lives of the good in the evil days. He never forgets their faithfulness. Nothing done for Christ is ever forgotten, but special remembrance is made of all that is said or done when the good are few.

Not only does God keep a record, but these faithful ones will be His particular treasure in the day of final reckoning.

(4) People are not all alike. Even if they live in the same way, in the same kind of houses, doing the same thing outwardly before men, there is a difference which God's eye sees. The line that separates them is not color, nor wealth and poverty, nor learning and ignorance, but the way they treat God. On one side are those who serve Him, and on the other side those who serve Him not. Very small, indeed, and unimportant are the matters of place and rank and money—of the utmost importance is whether we do God's will or not.

(5) Judgment is coming, and we need not think to miss it. We will be there. Not one of us shall be able to escape it. Then all earthly distinctions shall shrivel away into nothing. That day will burn as an oven, and all the wicked will be like stubble to be burned up. But amid the destruction of that day all who fear God and do His will shall be saved. Christ shall be their friend, and in Him shall they find life.

LESSON 13.—DEC. 24, 1899.

Christ's Coming Foretold.(Lesson Text: Isa. 9: 1-7. Commit to Memory Verses 6, 7.)
(Read Isa. 11: 1-10.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."—Luke 2: 11.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday: Isa. 9: 1-7. Tuesday: Isa. 11: 1-10. Wednesday: Jer. 23: 1-6. Thursday: Isa. 40: 1-11. Friday: Psalm 72: 1-17. Saturday: Acts 3: 18-26. Sunday: 1 Peter 1: 11-12.

TIME.—Probably about 740 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

Introductory.

The Book of Isaiah, though not first chronologically among the seventeen prophetic books of the Bible, is placed first because it is the greatest. Isaiah is called the "evangelical prophet" because his writings are full of the glad news of God's goodness, grace, and mightiness to save from sin, and of the coming Saviour of mankind, of which we have an example in to-day's lesson. Isaiah's prophecies were delivered at Jerusalem, probably during the period 750-695 B.C., a spiritually dark and critical time in the history of Judah and Israel. The conquest of Israel by Assyria took place during Isaiah's time (721 B.C.), but that of Judah by Babylon did not begin for more than a hundred years later, 606 B.C.

How to Prepare this Lesson.

The lesson is chosen for the Christmas time, the story being the birth of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom. No better preparation can be made than to read the passages in the gospels, in Matthew and Luke, which tell the story of the birth and infancy of Jesus. The references in the lesson should also be followed out, as they throw light upon the various phrases.

The Lesson Applied.

(1) Sin is darkness and makes darkness in the world. Sin made it very dark in the olden times before Christ came. We have no idea now, living as we do in the light of this nineteenth century of Christianity, in a country where religion has spread so widely, how dark it was in the world in those days. It was just before the captivity, and the country of the Jews was hurrying on to destruction.