

occasion, in the affairs of men. Of course all that happened happened in his providence, but some of his acts were particularly arresting and impressive. He came down and burnt up the cities of the plain; he came down and divided the Red Sea; he came down in fire and smoke and spake the thunderous words of the Law from Mount Sinai. The people believed that he would again intervene if great need should call him. If their enemies pressed them hard, they looked for God to come and overwhelm their enemies. For was he not their mightiest champion,—“a man of war” from of old? (Ex. 14 : 14 ; 15 : 3.) He fought as no human warrior could fight; for he wielded the most terrible weapons. He had all the terrible forces of

nature at his disposal. He was the scorching east wind, the wind of death; his the fire that swept over the dry grass, the very vipers fleeing before it (Matt. 3 : 7); his was the terror of earthquake and volcano; his the storm and the thunder and lightning. Many a time he came to his own on the storm-cloud, “on the wings of the wind,” Ps. 18 : 10. In times of disappointment and cruel oppression they cried to God to come,—to come with all these demons of nature and confound their enemies and his; to confound his enemies even if they were in Israel itself. And prophet after prophet assured the people that the “day of his coming” was just at hand, that deliverance was near. In this confident hope John and Jesus joined hands with Malachi, Mal. 3 : 1; Matt. 3 : 2 ; 4 : 17.

### THE LESSON APPLIED

*Preparation for the Messiah, Mal. 3 : 1-12:*

(1) As the monarch of an Oriental country was preceded by an outrider who clears the street for the royal procession, so the coming of the great king was to be announced by a forerunner. There is a sense in which Jesus is still to come. Will we go forth and prepare the way before him? He has given us the divine orders. “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” Let us go before his face and enlighten the peoples.

(2) “Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts.” It is not enough to proclaim a message. There must be repentance. There must be a turning away from the irreligion and social injustice and want of liberality which were the chief characteristics of the Jewish people in the dark age between the Old Testament and the New. If we would hasten that coming of Jesus Christ which is now beginning through the redeemed life of humanity, we must know what it is to say contritely, “I have sinned.” At that point all hopeful progress takes its rise.

*The law is come, Matt. 2 : 1.* It is related of a celebrated musician that, when asked to compose a national anthem for the people of another country, he went and lived among them, studied them from within, shared their poverty, became one with them that he might become one of them and was thus, and only

thus, enabled to express their feelings in music. That was what the Son of God did at the incarnation. He qualified himself from the human standpoint to know our frames and to remember that we are dust.

*All things point to him, v. 2.* The stars of heaven and the wisdom of this world began to gravitate toward the new-born king. He is the centre of centres, the wonder of wonders. The great Spurgeon was converted through the preaching of this truth. As a young man he wandered from chapel to chapel and at last turned in where he heard a thin, pale man preach from the words: “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” The manner in which the preacher cried, “Look! look! look!” was peculiarly effective, and Spurgeon felt immediate relief.

*He is not wanted by the bad, v. 3.* Herod and all of Jerusalem that had an axe to grind were troubled at the coming of the king. There are many still who will have nothing to do with Jesus because they love darkness rather than light, and they love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. Hence it is that the attitude of any one to the Christ is the supreme test of character. What will you do with Jesus, that is called Christ? That is the question of the hour.

*He is welcomed by the good, vs. 10, 11.* The wise men from the East were open to the good spirit of God and because they followed