



LESSON XIII.—DECEMBER 28.

Review.

Scripture.—The Golden Texts for the Quarter.

Golden Text.

'Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.'—Psa. xc., 1.

Home Readings

- Monday, Dec. 22.—Josh. i., 1-11.
- Tuesday, Dec. 23.—Josh. iii., 9-4, 7.
- Wednesday, Dec. 24.—Josh. vi, 8-20.
- Thursday, Dec. 25.—Josh. xiv., 5-15.
- Friday, Dec. 26.—Josh. xxiv., 14-25.
- Saturday, Dec. 27.—Judges vii., 1-8, 16-21
- Sunday, Dec. 28.—1 Sam. iii., 1-14.

Condensed From Peloubet's Notes.

Let us first review the rise and progress of the Hebrew nation.

The Founder, Abraham, about B. C. 2000.

The Family, The Patriarchs.

The Egyptian Experience.

The Exodus, B. C. 1491.

The Wilderness Discipline.

The Conquest of the Promised Land, 1451.

The Rule of the Judges, B. C. 1427-1094.

Time. About 900 years, from B. C. 2000-1100.

Countries. Chaldea, Palestine, Egypt, Arabia.

Lessons. 1. God is preparing a people, not for themselves alone, but as a means, making the whole world to be his kingdom. 2. The progress is slow, difficult, variable, but on the whole a steady growth. 3. There is seen to be a great variety of influences,—punishments, glorious works, manifestations of love, hard battle, great victories, revelations of God and his will, rewards of faithfulness, long discipline.

Next, recall the history given in this quarter's lessons as follows:—

Appearance of the captain of the Lord's host.

Arousing courage for a great work.

Crossing the Jordan: A divine wonder.

Capture of Jericho: A miracle and a sign.

Reward of Caleb's faithfulness.

Cities of refuge.

Good advice from an aged man: the past teaching the future.

The times of the Judges: the sins and crimes, disobedience, idolatry, unfaithfulness, wars and devastations on the one hand; and on the other the heroisms, the penitence, the long periods of prosperity; such glimpses of the inner life of the people as are furnished by Ruth, Hannah, Boaz, Eli, Samuel.

The victory of Gideon and his three hundred.

The character of Eli and his sons.

The call of Samuel.

It will then be of interest to find comparisons between this history and the experiences of the Christian life. The following are suggested:—

Taking Possession of our Promised Land, the new life fully entered upon.

The Promised Land held by enemies, beset with temptations.

The captain of the Lord's host.

Miracles of grace, heavenly helps (crossing the Jordan, the fall of Jericho).

Some of the fruits of the land, foretastes of the perfected life.

Renewing the covenant.

Cities of refuge, helps for the slips and failures and imperfections of our daily lives.

The Judges, the great struggle of life. Periods of rest, prosperity, growth; the peaceful tenor of daily life.

The call of God, to a consecrated life for the service of God and man.

C. E. Topic.

Sunday, Dec. 28.—Topic—Our heavenly home, and the way.—John xiv., 1-6; Rev. xxi., 1-4.

Junior C. E. Topic

LEARNING FROM MISTAKES.

- Monday, Dec. 22.—The year's crown. Ps. lxxv., 11.
- Tuesday, Dec. 23.—God will pardon. Isa. lv., 6, 7.
- Wednesday, Dec. 24.—A new heart. Ezek. xi., 19, 20.
- Thursday, Dec. 25.—Depart from evil. Ps. xxxiv., 14, 18.
- Friday, Dec. 26.—God's pleasure. Ezek. xviii., 21-23.
- Saturday, Dec. 27.—Fruits of repentance. Matt. 3-8.
- Sunday, Dec. 28.—Topic—Learning from our own mistakes. Isa. i., 16, 17.

Acquaintance with the Bible.

(Edward Judson, in 'Congregationalist.')

The great French satirist, Moliere, describes a wealthy tradesman who aspired to be a gentleman. He took lessons in dancing, fencing, music and rhetoric—in fine, all the accomplishments that went to make up the culture of his time. 'What is poetry?' he asked his master in rhetoric one day, and, being told, he proceeded to inquire what was meant by prose. 'Why,' answered the professor, 'prose is everything that is not poetry.' 'To think,' replied the apt pupil, 'that I should have been speaking prose all my life without knowing it!'

It is so with my study of the Bible. I have had no conscious method. From childhood I have read it daily. Besides this, we had family prayer. The Bible was read in course. And at church I listened to the Scriptures. The Sunday school, too, did its share.

Acquaintance with the Bible is essential to liberal culture. Our best literature abounds in Scriptural allusions, as when Tennyson speaks of 'Joshua's moon in Ajalon.' And the best way to know the Bible is to read it, as you would Shakespeare or Browning. Read the book itself, not merely books about the book. Read a portion every day. Let the passage be brief. Do not aspire to read many chapters. One can finish the Bible in three years by reading it a few minutes every day. Let the daily reading embrace a lesson from the Old Testament, a lesson from the New, and a devotional passage, as, for instance, the first thirteen verses of Genesis, the first sixteen verses of Matthew, and the first psalm. Use commentaries, but sparingly. Scripture is luminous in itself.

But the Christian does not read the Bible merely for literary purposes. To him it is a devotional book. He descends mirrored in its limpid depths the very image of God. He listens to its words as to the voice of the heavenly Father. It is like a letter from home to a child away at school. In this world we are exiles. Beyond we shall be at home with the Lord. The Bible is God's message to us in the land of our exile. We go to the Bible to find our Father.

In reading the Bible, then, we come face to face with God. We are not guilty of bibliolatry. We worship not the book, but the Being. When we read the Bible it is as if God spoke to us. This is why we call it his word. In prayer we speak to him. Worship is thus a sort of august dialogue between the soul and God. Bible reading is even a purer and more sacred part of worship than prayer itself. In the former God speaks; in the latter man answers. He should not monopolize the conversation, or listen with a far-away look in his eyes, as if only waiting to put in his word.

Religion consists more in receiving than in doing. The divinest of arts is to sit at Jesus's feet and hear his word.

Individuality.

(James Edmunds, in 'The Standard.')

In a class of girls of 15 or 16 years of age was one seemingly without any interest in the Bible school, the class, the teacher, the Word, or the Saviour. She was there regularly enough because her parents attended and she must needs do so also. But she was present in body only. The teacher's many attempts to awaken interest had all alike failed. In this strait she acted promptly on the hint that a Bible school teacher may learn many helpful things about her pupils by having a confidential talk with their public school teacher. The latter gave the Bible school teacher much information, and she went away to ponder over it, and to discover its application to her problem. Looking at the list of coming lessons she observed one entitled 'The Father's Care,' containing a reference to the lilies of Palestine. At once she remembered that the week-day teacher had said that Jennie—let us call her—was very greatly interested in botany, leading her class in that study. Here was something of which she might make use.

The Sunday preceding that to which this lesson was assigned she said, in making her usual assignment of advance work on the lesson to her class, 'Next Sunday our lesson will contain a reference to one of the flowers of Palestine, the lily, and, Jennie, I wish that you would find out what you can about it and others of the flowers of that country, and report to the class.' The young lady looked somewhat surprised, and neither assented or declined; but on the following Sunday she appeared in the class with an entirely different bearing from that which was customary. When the teacher asked she was ready to tell much of the flowers of the Holy Land, and had a little souvenir booklet containing several of them pressed. Before she had finished her enthusiastic and interesting account to which the class listened eagerly, the lesson hour was almost gone, but when the teacher had said, 'If God clothes the lilies of the field which to-day are and to-morrow are cast into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, Jennie, and all of us'; the lesson was taught in a way to impress its truth beyond the possibility of its being forgotten. And from that time Jennie was interested in all that pertained to the school and the Saviour. The point of contact had been found and a strong current of interest had passed through the flowers into all these hitherto uninteresting things.

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Religion cannot pass away; be not disturbed by infidelity. Religion cannot pass away; the burning of a little straw may hide the stars, but the stars are there and will reappear.—Thomas Carlyle.