

The Sunday School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON XLIX.

Dec 7. } THE HEAVENLY SONG. { Rev. v.
1879. } 1-14.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."—Rev. v. 12.

HOME STUDIES.

- M. Rev. iv. 1-11... The throne of God.
T. Rev. v. 1-14... The heavenly song.
W. Rev. xiv. 1-12... A new song.
Th. Ex. xv. 1-19... The song of Moses.
F. Rev. xv. 1-8... The song of Moses and the Lamb.
S. Ps. xcvi. 1-13... Greatly to be praised.
Sab. Ps. cl. 1-6... An exhortation to praise.

HELPS TO STUDY.

In lesson XLVII. we found that John commissioned to write "the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter" (Rev. i. 19).

"The things which are"—the condition of Christianity in the apostle's time, as represented by the seven churches of Asia—we find recorded in the second and third chapters (see Lesson XLVIII).

"The things which shall be hereafter"—the then future history of the Church of Christ—begins to be revealed in the fourth chapter, which opens with the command given to the seer, "Come up hither and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter." The remaining part of this book, from the beginning of the fourth chapter to the end of the twenty-second, is therefore wholly prophetic.

It must be always kept in view that the vision of John was symbolical—that he saw neither heavenly objects, nor the actual scenery connected with events which were to occur on earth, but figurative representations, or what are called *simulacra*, of these.

In attempting to explain the symbols, or to decide definitely upon the particular events foretold, the great danger is that of falling into fanciful interpretations. No exposition of this book yet given has met with general acceptance. It is safest in most cases to leave the events and objects spoken of in that "sublime obscurity" which in no way detracts from the weight and importance of the practical lesson which the book conveys.

We suggest the following division of our present lesson: (1) A Sealed Book and a Weeping Prophet, (2) An Open Book and a Singing Universe.

I. A SEALED BOOK AND A WEEPING PROPHET.—Vers. 1-4. Under this head four subdivisions may be made: (1) The Book, (2) The Challenge, (3) The Failure, (4) The Lament.

1. *The Book.* Its position, in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne (chap. iv. 2), indicates that its source and author is God, the Father.

Its being written within and on the back may teach its fulness, and its double aspect—one God-ward and the other man-ward. The "books" in those times were not bound like ours, but in the form of a roll, somewhat like our maps.

Sealed with seven seals: The number seven, so frequently used in this book and in other prophetic writings, denotes completeness or perfection; so it was impossible to ascertain the contents of the book until the seals were broken. Trench calls it the "covenant number," the sign and seal of God's covenant with His people.

2. *The Challenge.* Who is worthy to open the book? This challenge was proclaimed by a strong Angel (compare Psalm ciii. 20), acting perhaps in behalf of God's justice, or publishing the demands of His law. This loud voice may be heard sounding throughout the Bible. "Adam... where art thou?" (Gen. iii. 9); "Who shall ascend into the hill of God?" (Psalm xxiv. 3); "How can a man be just with God?" (Job xxv. 4).

3. *The Failure.* No man (literally *no one*; no one either among men or among other created intelligences) was found worthy to open the book. It required not only holiness but some extraordinary merit, some great work connected with the contents of the book.

4. *The Lament.* I wept much. The Apostle must have been impressed with a sense of very important interests depending upon the opening of the book, and something very sad being involved in failure. However unable we may be to tell exactly what it is that this book represents, it is pretty plain that it includes the problem of existence, the destiny of man, the question of eternal life or death. Had no one been found worthy to open it John would not be alone in his sorrow. But there is comfort at hand.

II. AN OPEN BOOK AND A SINGING UNIVERSE.—Vers. 5-14. Of this division also four subdivisions may be made: (1) The Opener of the Book, (2) His Success, (3) The Song and its Singers, (4) The Chorus.

In chap. iv. ver. 4, we read that "round about the throne were four-and-twenty seats (rather thrones), and upon the seats four-and-twenty elders." These are supposed to represent the Church. It is one of these elders that now addresses to John the words weep not, and gives him good ground for comfort.

1. *The Opener of the Book.* The Lion of the tribe of Judah... hath prevailed. This name is given to the Messiah in accordance with Jacob's dying prediction (Gen.

xliv. 9). The use of the word "prevailed" here implies that the worthiness to open the book was attained through a great struggle, and by extraordinary effort.

2. *His Success.* It was a "Lion" that prevailed to take the book—it needed strength to do so; it was a Lamb as it had been slain that came and took the book—it needed a worthiness procured by sacrifice. Jesus Christ is both the Lamb and the Lion—the sacrificial Lamb to free His people from the grasp of divine justice, and the strong Lion to rescue them out of the hands of the enemy. Seven horns: all-powerful. Seven eyes: all-seeing.

He took the book out of the right hand of the Father, and the book was not withheld. This shewed that He was accepted worthy to open it.

3. *The Song and its Singers.* The passing of the book from the hands of the Father to those of the Son is the signal for a triumphant burst of praise beginning with the four beasts (properly living creatures) and the four-and-twenty elders immediately surrounding the throne, and then taken up by all intelligent and sinless beings throughout the universe.

Various interpretations have been given of the "four living creatures" unfortunately translated "beasts" in our version. Two of these interpretations are much more reasonable than any of the others, (1) that they represent "redeemed humanity" and (2) that they symbolize "God's sentient creation." The latter is the view of Alford, who says: "Thus the throne of God is surrounded by His Church and His animated world; the former represented by the twenty-four elders, the latter by the four living beings." We incline, however, to the former view, because these four living creatures are represented as joining with the elders in singing the new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us, and none but the redeemed could sing that song.

This is the song of redemption and is called "new" perhaps to distinguish it from the song of creation with which the fourth chapter closes.

Shall we ever join in singing that new song in heaven? If so, we must learn it on earth.

4. *The Chorus.* The song itself is sung only by those who "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" and we may well suppose that in exercising this privilege they experience a peculiar rapture, to which even the "angels that kept their first-estate" are strangers; but the Chorus is universal. All sinless and intelligent beings throughout the creation are struck with boundless admiration by the disclosure of the wonderful work accomplished by the Saviour in redeeming His people from sin without detriment to divine justice; and although they cannot say "Thou hast redeemed us," they lend their voices to swell the chorus, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, an honour, and glory, and blessing.

CHALMERS ON THE MESSAGES TO SARDIS, PHILADELPHIA AND LAODICEA.

The following is from Dr Chalmers' "Sabbath Scripture Readings," written shortly before his death. He did not intend these private meditations for publication. They were found among his papers and published after his death.

"My God, how descriptive this, regarding the Church of Sardis, is of myself—a name to live, while I am well-nigh if not altogether dead. O, my God, strengthen for me, or rather strengthen by me, the things which remain—give me to be more watchful than hitherto. My works are not perfect, and to instance but in one thing, has patience had its perfect work in me? I would renew, O God, my repentance before Thee, and at the same time hold fast my faith, or the rejoicing and confidence of my hope, lest sudden destruction come upon me. Give me to confess Christ before men, that He may confess me before the Father and his angels. Give me, O Lord, of the blessings and the promises which Thou here holdest forth to the Church of Philadelphia. Mine is indeed but a little strength if any at all. I have adversaries, and I pray for charity towards them. In as far as I am right and they are wrong, give them to see, and if Thou thinkest meet, to acknowledge their error, I will not pray for their humiliation, but for their amendment. Bring forth my judgment unto light, and my righteousness as the noon-day. Save me from the trials that are too heavy for me, and give me to overcome. Prepare me for the land of blessedness and everlasting peace—where enemies cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. And my closing prayer from these verses, my prayer to Him who is unchangeable and true—to Him who is not the beginning but the beginner, not the first created but the Creator, not the first originated but the Originator—for though to Him is ascribed a Sonship, His is an Eternal Sonship, and without Him was not anything made that was made—my prayer to this high and holy One is that He would save me, both from the character which is here denounced, and the curse which, if not reformed, will most assuredly be fulfilled upon it. Save me, save, O God, from the lukewarmness of the Church of Laodicea. I have a zeal about things pertaining to God, but where is my zeal for God Himself? I may be a zealous asserter of the doctrine that has come out of His mouth; but where is my zeal for God as a being—for the living God? And I am actuated by the strong conviction that nothing will make society right but a diffused Christianity—yet where, alas! is my warm and zealous affection for human souls, or for Christ, the real person. Christ, who is the alone Saviour? It may be that I am not cold; but assuredly I am not hot. My only comfort is that I do not say of myself, and most assuredly do not feel

of myself, that I am rich and have need of nothing. I will cry unto Jesus. May the chastenings that are now upon me yield this peaceable fruit, ever taking unto Him both as the Lord my righteousness, and the Lord my strength—my righteousness wherewith to be clothed, my wisdom also by which I may see. O the blessed universality of the saying—If any man open. Lord, I would open my heart, and welcome with outstretched arm Thine admittance there. Enter into convivial friendship with me, O Christ. Give me to overcome as Thou hast overcome. And let all these warnings be not only heard by the ear but sink deep into the heart. Amen, amen.

FALLING IN LOVE.

It would be interesting to know what part the process of falling in love is destined to play in the future history of mankind. A review of the past development of the custom, from primitive times to our own enlightened age, suggests the reflection that it has tended to become a slower and more conscious operation. It is not many people who now tumble suddenly and recklessly into this condition of mind. Culture seems to have the effect of transforming the process of falling into one of sliding. To refer again to a somewhat analogous mental experience, culture seems to make less frequent both sudden forms of falling in love and sudden conversions. And this change is plainly due in a large measure to the growth of volitional force. All falling in love is, of course, the direct effect of an involuntary and emotional impulse; yet a negative act of will may perhaps be said to be involved in the non-repression of this impulse. As people advance in intellect and character, the ascendancy of the will increases, and the amatory sentiment is only allowed to attach itself to an object very slowly, and after the fullest critical investigation. It is not necessary to adopt the ultra-prosaic supposition that sexual selection will ever become a purely voluntary action. It is commonly said that more and more persons now marry for definite objects, such as wealth, social position, or domestic adornment; yet the normal mode of selection is still held to include the play of an instinctive emotion as well. What the higher culture seems to do, over and above strengthening the controlling power of will, is to make this emotion more reflective and self-conscious. People learn to understand more clearly their own feelings and tastes, and to know better beforehand what kind of objects is likely to satisfy them. The emotional impulse now shows itself as a conscious wish to possess an object of a certain definite character. Still, the actual conception of a strong affection is a process that goes on outside the will, though the will may be said to approve of it in a new sense when its result is recognized as agreeing with a pre-existing wish and desire. We hardly think, then, that there is ground for the cynical prediction that falling in love is rapidly becoming an obsolete custom. The experience will probably grow much less violent and catastrophic in its character by being brought into closer relation to the intellectual and volitional parts of the mind. And the same influences which bring about this effect will no doubt tend to tone down people's rapturous faith in the occult and transcendent nature of the process.—*The Saturday Review.*

A CAPITAL PRESCRIPTION.

A rather eccentric yet eminent physician was called to attend a middle-aged lady who had imaginary ills. After many wise inquiries about her symptoms and manner of life he asked for a piece of paper, and wrote down the following prescription:

"DO SOMETHING FOR SOMEBODY."

In the gravest manner he handed it to the patient and left. The doctor heard nothing from the lady for a long time. On Christmas morning he was hastily summoned to the cottage of her Irish washerwoman.

"It's not meself, doctor, it's me wrist that's ailing. Ye see, I was after goin' out into the black darkness for a few bits of wood, when me foot struck this basket. It stood theae, like a big mercy, as it was, full of soft flannel from Mrs. Walker. She told me that your medicine cured her, doctor. So, if you please to put a little of that same on me wrist, I'll be none the worse for me nice present."

"It's a powerful remedy," said the doctor gravely. And more than once in after years he wrote the prescription,

"DO SOMETHING FOR SOMEBODY."

—*Domestic Journal.*

MANY of the people of Afghanistan are as fair as Englishmen. The boys are noted as being particularly handsome.

DURING October over 35,000,000 postal cards were sent from the Holyoke factory—the largest month's business ever done.

THE editor of "Once a Week" feelingly advises ladies desirous of adding to their incomes to try anything but literature.

Births, Marriages and Deaths.

MARRIED.

On the 19th inst., at the residence of W. E. Weddel, Esq., 69 Vananley street, Toronto, by the Rev. J. B. Silcox, Mr. Frank N. Scott, of Toronto, to Miss Alice Urquhart, of Uxbridge.

At the parsonage, Stouffville, by Rev. E. D. Silcox, on Wednesday, November 19th, Mr. Asa Millard, of Altona, to Miss Emily Kester, of Markham.