



Lesson XIII. Dec. 24, 1916. Unto Us a Son is Given—Christmas Lesson.—Isaiah 9: 2-7.

Commentary. I. Light in darkness (vs. 2, 3). The people that walked in darkness—Isaiah had been showing the deplorable condition into which his people had fallen because of their sins. Ruler and subjects were far from God. The nation's enemies were permitted to overrun the country. The prophet turns toward the future and paints a brighter picture. People do not need to walk in darkness. The darkness comes from the failure to make the right use of knowledge and opportunity. Rejected light, and truth spurned, leave ones in a state of spiritual night. There was also social and political darkness, for temporal adversity came upon the nation because of their rejection of the true God. Have seen a great light—The prophet uses the perfect tense, speaking as if the light had already come.

The perfect throughout are those of prophetic certainty; the writer is transported into the future.—Cam. Ebb. The prophecy is twofold. In its lower sense, there was its fulfillment in the temporary and partial removal of the Assyrian oppression; but in its higher sense its fulfillment meant the coming of Christ. The land of the shadow of death. This represents a condition in which spiritual death prevails. Some think the Babylonian captivity is meant. There would be deliverance from that captivity, and the light would shine upon the nation in its fulness with the appearing of the Messiah. 2. Thou hast multiplied the nation—Isaiah's prophetic vision beholds the rising and spreading of the Redeemer's kingdom. And not increased the joy—Dr. Clarke, as well as most recent scholars, think the text should read, "Thou hast increased their joy." Many ancient manuscripts have the latter reading. They rejoice. According to the joy in harvest—The springtime prophecy of a harvest is fulfilled, and there is joy because of the fruitage obtained. "They joy before thee" is an expression which shows that the joy is a religious joy. "Hilarious joy" is still a common usage in Palestine on festive seasons after harvest and after vintage; and spiritual joy in the text is, in its outward manner, not in its quality or kind, compared with this also with the joy which occurred in old time in the division of spoils of war after great victories.—Whedon. As men rejoice when they divide the spoil—This is the joy of victory and conquest. The coming of Jesus means the defeat of Satan and victory over sin. In earthly affairs there is rejoicing over gaining the victory; in the spiritual warfare also there is abundant reason for gladness over the victories gained.

11. Deliverance from oppression (vs. 4, 5). 4. Thou hast broken the yoke—The prophet in his vision saw so clearly that deliverance from oppression was coming, that he spoke of it as already realized. Many deliverances came to Israel, such as that from the Assyrians, that from the Chaldeans, and those from the Persians and Macedonians. The great deliverance would come when the power of Satan would be broken by the coming and complete work of the Messiah, the staff of his shoulder—A sort of yoke fitted to the shoulders, upon the ends of which burdens were balanced, the rod of his oppressor—The rod is the symbol of oppression and authority. There was to be temporary deliverance from Judah from Assyrian oppression, but the prophecy would have its complete fulfillment in the deliverance of the people from the power and bondage of Satan, as in the day of Midian—reference is here made to the marvelous deliverance from the hosts of Midian (Judg. 7), wrought for Israel by the Lord, through Gideon, and his small company of men. 5. For every battle, etc.—See the Revised Version. It was an ancient custom to gather the armor and weapons of a conquered enemy, together with their blood-stained garments, into a heap to be burned. "The idea of the verse is, that after Jehovah's great victory every vestige of war shall be burned up in preparation for the kingdom of universal peace."—Skinner. The time is coming when the war shall be no more.

111. The Messiah (vs. 6, 7). There is a great difference between the sentiment of this verse and the one which precedes it. The word "introduces the reason for the victory, deliverance and joy that were coming to the nation and to the world, unto us—One of the names of Jesus is Emmanuel, "which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:23). The one whom the prophet saw in his vision was to be identified with the Israelish nation, and not only with them, but with the entire race of mankind, a child is born—a son is given—As Son of man Jesus was "a child born"; as Son of God he was "a son given"—Spurgeon. He came to the earth as an infant, being thus most intimately joined to the race, government—Upon his shoulder—He would be born to rule. All power is vested in him, his name—All the names applied to Jesus are expressive of his nature or work. Wonderful—Jesus stands alone in all the universe. There is no other being with whom he may be compared. He is wonderful in his nature, human and divine; wonderful in the works he performed; wonderful in his manifestations of love; wonderful in his sacrificial death; wonderful in his resurrection and ascension; and wonderful in his intercession. Counselor—Guide. Some have ever submitted to his leadership and been led astray. The mighty God—Divine in the absolute sense. The everlasting Father—He not only possesses the attribute of eternity, but the thought is, he continually acts as a Father to his people, in provision, in protection, and in loving kindness. The Prince of peace—His reign is promotive of peace. He sets up his kingdom in individual hearts, and that kingdom is peace. Whenever he reigns, peace prevails. Families, communities, or-

ganizations and nations that act in harmony with the Prince of Peace are not engaged in strife and warfare. The horrible wars of the world, and all wars are horrible, indicate the absence of the spirit of the Prince of Peace.

IV. Messiah's kingdom (v. 7). 7. Of the increase... no end—The kingdom of Jesus Christ is an expanding and an enduring kingdom. Its progress can not be stopped. It is irresistible. Earthly kingdoms have their rise and fall, but the kingdom of Christ shall have no end. Upon the throne of David—Christ springs from the family of David, and he is spoken of as ruling over Israel. He is the ruler of the people of all ages and climes, who accept the great salvation which he has provided. To order it—To rule it. With judgment and with justice—His administration is absolutely just, and unimpeachable. Zeal—Earnest care, intense, glowing love, and determined purpose. "It is that overflow of the love that can not keep still, which, when men think God has surely done all he will or can do for an ungrateful race, visits them in their distress, and carries them forward into unexpected dispensations of grace and glory. It is the Spirit of God, that yearns after the lost, speaks to the self-despairing of hope, and surprises rebel and prophet alike with new revelations of love. We have our systems representing God's work up to the limits of our experience, and we settle upon them; but the Almighty is ever greater than his promise or than his revelation of himself."—Expositor's Bible. Lord of hosts—it is he who commands all forces in the universe and who will carry his purposes into execution. Men and nations may conspire to defeat God's purposes, but he is the Almighty and is able to defeat the plans of his enemies.

Questions.—Who is the writer of the words of this lesson? When and where did he live? Who was king in Judah at the time he wrote these words? To what people did he write? What was their condition? Whose coming did he foretell? How was the Messiah to come to earth? What names are given to Christ and what do they mean? Describe the kingdom which he was to establish.

PRACTICAL SURVEY.

Topic.—The divinity of Christ. I. The foundation of the world's hope.

11. The certainty of full redemption.

I. The foundation of the world's hope, in his prophecy Isaiah contemplated the world at large in a picture of the spiritual conditions as they were and would be when Jesus should come. That which was typical was the advent and mission of Christ. His incarnation, His advancement to supreme rule and authority, bringing light and liberty, constituted the design of God for a best world. He was to be the marvelous light in the midst of a dreadful darkness, working an astounding change such as only God could work. The enrapturing view of further glory which burst upon the prophet's soul was in bright contrast to the preceding gloomy outlook which had filled his mind. The long dark shadow which was so evident had fallen over all the pursuits and hopes of human life. The glory which God revealed at that time was but the prelude to that greater glory which the incarnation made manifest. The era in which Jesus was born was one of peculiar darkness, ignorance, vice, superstition, violence, fanaticism, unbelief and despair. His coming was to undo and expel blighting error, to uproot pride, cruelty and selfishness, to abolish iniquity, to plant and nourish in the mind and heart of man the opposites of all these and so to exercise a beneficent and transcendent power, and thus to take the government of the world upon his shoulder. The only way to do this was by winning the world's devotion to Himself through His undying love. Therefore Christ entered and pursued the path which led to Gethsemane and Calvary. He stood pre-eminently glorious as a great light dividing the darkness from the day, possessing in Himself a fulness, commensurate with His divinity.

II. The certainty of full redemption. God designed to reveal Himself at last to his creatures through an earthly life. The very person of Jesus Christ revealed the Father. In announcing the birth of the child and the gift of the Son, the prophet included the purpose for which he was born, his work, his suffering, his death and resurrection. God's naming always meant character. They were always revelations. All the perfections of "the mighty God" are, in Scripture, ascribed to the Redeemer. Each reveals some distinct part of his nature. The prophet may not have been familiar with the doctrine of the Trinity, but he could apprehend the thought of God incarnate. The names by which Isaiah designated the coming Redeemer include his past, present and future. The first speak man's reverence and awe, the foundation of religious feeling. They then call forth admiration. They then call forth love. They then follow love towards him as a protecting Father, who will at last conduct his own into perfect peace. Isaiah saw that the only deliverer who could accomplish the necessary work must fill out the full measure of these terms. The grandeur of the titles sufficiently determines the meaning of the prophet. Every name is the divine exponent of a corresponding attribute or office or work. They are appropriate descriptions of living realities. As a child born, the reality of his human nature is set forth; as a Son given, the same nature with His Father is expressed. The kingdom of grace and the administration of mercy are proclaimed in the words, "The government shall be upon his shoulder." All parts of the universe are concerned in this glorious design. Christ is to be proclaimed the God-man, wonderful in the constitution of his person, wonderful in his character, his teaching and his mission. His truth illumined the dark valleys of error. His life shed a bright light on the life of man. His atonement made clear to mankind the way of return and restoration to God. Wonderful is the Son in his eternal relation to the Almighty Father. The chief counsel of Christ was that man with his sins, his sorrows, his struggles, his aspirations, should come into intimate union with Himself, the Saviour of mankind.



"A RAPID GROWER."—From "La Baionnette," Paris. The descriptive lines, starting at top and from left to right are: (1)—"That's a contemptible little weed, Willie; 'British Army,' I call it!" (2) However, by the end of the year it had begun to sprout... (3) And a few months later was still making growth. (4) During 1915 it developed fast and began to throw out long spikes. (5) And early in 1916 it became too prickly to be pleasant. (6) It is no longer a "contemptible little weed" but more than ever—the "British Army."

The Kingdom of the Prince of Peace in its essential laws and principles differs from all the kingdoms of men. It wins its way among men by the inherent power of its own excellence, terminating war and conflict, restoring love and order. Higher yet, it establishes peace between man and his own conscience, between man and his maker. T. R. A.

Mother is Here

It was the day before Christmas. There were, however, no preparations—as far as any one could see—in the home of the Noxons. Mrs. Noxon was in bed, in fact the bed had been her place of abode for some weeks. For the first few weeks she had been quite sick—very near pneumonia—and had had a nurse. At present she was very weak and nervous. "What you need," the doctor had said, "is cheerful company and rest of mind. You worry too much, my dear Mrs. Noxon."

"Who wouldn't worry?" was her questioning retort, "with such servants as I have what is the comfort of living?" And, to tell the truth, there seemed no prospect of "rest of mind." As for "cheerful company," that was conspicuous by its absence. Mr. Noxon was at his office the greater part of the day, and when he returned home tired after a busy day, he too, felt the need of "cheerful company." But he did not have it. The house was a lonely place nowadays. His wife's usual greeting was some recital of domestic vexation, and he often found her crying. His little children, Grace, aged five, and Bertram, three, were cared for at the home of a friend of the family. Mrs. Noxon could not endure the noise and confusion of children in her present condition. And yet on this day before Christmas her longing to see her children grew intense. Mr. Noxon had gone away the previous day "on business," but he would be back before Christmas. It was lonelier than ever with her since Mrs. Noxon nursed her grievances all day long. She decided that life was not worth living. The doctor said that she should have nourishing food and plenty of it—well cooked. "It's easy enough for Dr. Swift to say things," was her discouraged thought when Betty brought in her lunch at one o'clock. "I wish he could see this."

"This" meant the tray of food. Betty, the waitress and chambermaid, had prepared the tray, and Sally, the cook, had prepared the food. There was a piece of beefsteak so rare that the blood ran out of it and yet the outside was badly scorched and black as the stove. There was some burned toast—floating in a sea of greasy-looking milk and some lukewarm tea. To make the tray look still more uninviting, Betty had "slopped" the tea into her way to the sick room. The pepper and salt cups had not been properly cared for and Mrs. Noxon's napkin looked as if it might have done but for the fact that the woman who needed "nourishing food" took but one small taste of the burned steak. She lay back on her pillow, weak and faint from want of food. During the afternoon she thought often of the coming Christmas and of the last one. Her own mother had died when she was too young to remember, but last Christmas her mother Noxon had been there. In fact her mother Noxon had lived there ever since their marriage, until there had been some hard words, and then she had gone to her Mother Noxon had gone back to her lonely old home in the country.

"Martin has never been the same since his mother went away," she said to herself, sorrowfully; "he has always said she was such a good and devoted mother. He is an only child, Martin is, and his mother is a widow." Over and over the words repeated themselves, "an only child and his mother a widow." "It was more my fault than hers, any way," she admitted to herself, regretfully. "I wish I'd been more patient and less dictatorial." She cried herself asleep. The short winter afternoon was drawing to a close when the slamming of an outer door awakened her. She sat up in bed, waiting, expectant. "It must be Martin," she said to herself. "I'm glad he has come." Presently she rang her bell peremptorily, and Betty appeared. "Mr. Noxon came, did he not?" she said. "Yes, ma'am." Wondering why he did not come to her as usual, she asked where he was. "It's awful cold and stormy out," was Betty's answer, and I guess he wanted to get the chill off of him before he came in here. He's a warm'n' himself in the hall."

"Mr. Arfur's" Christmas Gift

Henrietta, on the rug by the fireplace, was absorbed in her occupation, which was the putting off of all Ariminta Endella's articles of wearing apparel, and the putting them on again. When the last garment had been adjusted to her satisfaction, she found time to look at "Mr. Arfur," who sat by the window, a picture of doldrums. With a regretful glance at Evangeline Bell, who was yet to be attended to, the small mother arose and went over to Mr. Arfur. Resting one hand on his knee, she gazed anxiously into his face.

The young man raised himself and smiled down at the squarely cut locks, the great brown eyes and the dimples of Henrietta. "Have you been bad, Mr. Arfur?" she inquired, solicitously. "I don't think I have been as bad as—the bad man, Henrietta," he answered, squeezing her small hand. "I've been good as an angel," she remarked, modestly, "so Santa Claus is going to bring me an answer dolly in a tooting cat."

"In a what, Henrietta?" she repeated; then, as Arfur failed to grasp her meaning, she exemplified patiently, "like Sister Wose's what she takes you widening in." "Oh, I see! A touring car, you aristocratic baby. No mean dolly wagons and go-carts for you, eh?" he chuckled, then grew gloomy again. "What do you want for Kwismas?" "Something, I am afraid, I can never have in all this wide world, Henrietta." He drew in a long breath. "If you are good, Santa Claus—"

"It's entirely out of the old fellow's jurisdiction, my pet." The child gazed at him curiously. "It's a heart of fine gold that I want, Henrietta; and only one person can give it to me, and if she won't, give—"

"Is she a fairy?" Henrietta's tone was reverential, her eyes full of excitement. "The queen of them all." "And has a crown on?" "Yes, a crown of her own golden hair, and her eyes are like brown velvet pansies, and she has the sweetest red lips, Henrietta; but yesterday I met her and she hurried by, scarcely speaking, and this morning on the street she pretended not to see me, though I know she did; and all because you wouldn't have believed such a queen of a girl would care so much because she didn't get the prize at the masquerade, would you now?"

"My!" ejaculated Henrietta, but her next eager question was cut short by Mr. Arfur's springing to his feet. "Sister Wose" had entered the room, and Henrietta, knowing from much experience that she was decidedly dropped when they two were together, went reluctantly back to Evangeline Bell and the fireplace. "Good morning," said Sister Rose, her tone suggestive of a glare of ice and a flurry of snow. "I have an engagement." But she sat down. "Oh, I am sorry; then I will go," he said, gently, but he also sat down.

In his eyes, honest and grey, was a complexity of expressions as he watched her trying desperately to appear very much at her ease. Love looked from his eyes—there was no doubt of that—and admiration and approval; and yet a growing wonder that, after all, his idol could be so human. "I am sorry that you are angry," he began when the silence was getting tense. "Try to realize my position, Rose. I sat there, an unwilling judge—my duty awarding prizes to the best sustained characters in the masquerade. Among the maskers was one to whom my heart went out. A slender little figure, whose white satin gown, caught loosely around the waist with a saken girdle, fell in straight folds to her tiny feet. Crowning her small head were chrysanthemums, maroon and gold, and a line of the royal flowers reached from one sweet, bare shoulder to the hem of her gown. The Chrysanthemum Girl was the loveliest sight in the room, but she was not the best sustained character, so—"

"I hope you don't think I care because you awarded the prize to Grace Hereford," interposed the girl, scornfully; "and please don't for a minute think I am angry at anything; I am only disappointed in you." Her voice quavered a little. "I have suspected this Chrysanthemum Girl of having moods," Arthur observed, looking at her reflectively. "A fellow I know has different names for her—Moonlight, White Rose, Laughing Flower, gentleness, beauty, wisdom. The fellow has admired her when she was gay, and when she was serious, but never before has he seen her when she was unreasonable."

"The Chrysanthemum Girl sniffed. "Will you kindly explain?" asked Arthur. "I had always been so proud of your strength of character," she began. "The first time I ever saw you was in a trolley car. You sat opposite me, and when the car turned the sun shone into your eyes. There was plenty of room on my side, where the sun wouldn't have annoyed you, but instead of changing your seat you got up and pulled down the curtain. I thought to myself, 'There is a man who will be master of circumstances, no matter what they are, and—'"

Rose stopped in confusion as she remembered other things she had thought about this finely formed, handsome young man. "Go on," he said, leaning forward with great interest. "What else did you think?" "And now to find out that you are nothing but a chameleon, after all," she wailed. "A what!" Arthur exclaimed, in amazement. "A chameleon," she repeated, tearfully. "If you are on a brown leaf you're brown; if on a green tree then you're green!"

"Well, green I acknowledge I am, for bless me if I can see what you are driving at." "The other day when auntie was talking about the sin of wasting your time in dancing, you said that you agreed with her, that when there was work to do folks ought to do it; you said you were not going to the masquerade for that very reason."

"Well, I didn't intend—" "You said you had several hours' work at the office that night. Then Grace Hereford came along and asked you to go and you went!" "There was a flicker of amusement on Arthur's face, which Rose did not see, being too busy winking back unwelcome tears. "Miss Hereford had nothing to do with it, Rose," he said, gently. "I went to work as I said. About 9 Mr. Jones, the president, came in and said that if I could find Hasson and get his signature to a certain paper and get back by 11 o'clock he would make it worth my while. I had an idea that Hasson was managing that masquerade, and that's where I found him. He buttonholed me at once to be judge of the concern, and wouldn't sign the paper unless I agreed. I saw that I could get back by 11. So I stayed."

"And had plenty of time to dance with Miss Hereford," supplemented Rose, sweetly, but unjudicially. "This time Arthur's smile was certain. "I looked for the Chrysanthemum Girl first and couldn't find her," he said, truthfully. "I danced only once. But what made you think Miss Hereford asked me to go?" "She said she would wager she could get you to go, and that you would dance with her first; so I went to see if I didn't think you would when you said you wouldn't, but—"

"I see," said the young man, quietly. "An inborn loyalty to womanhood kept him from telling Rose that just as he had started away Miss Hereford had run to him exclaiming that as he was so kind to award her the prize she certainly must award him with the first dance, etc. With a sudden impulse he took Rose's little hand in his. She sprang up and started for the fireplace, but he held her gently back. "Listen," he whispered. "On the glowing coals smoked Evangeline Bell, and on the rug, with eyes turned to the ceiling, knelt Henrietta. "O God," she was saying, "now I lay me down to sleep, I give my precious dolly, so you will make the fairy queen win the crown on her golden hair to bring Mr. Arfur the little head he wants for Kwismas. That's all, God, only please let me see her when she comes. Amen."

"Amen!" echoed Arthur, fervently. "Grace Hereford has black hair," observed Rose, inconspicuously. "I wonder if God will," Henrietta was murmuring, with sad eyes fixed on the mound of ashes which was once Evangeline Bell. Rose went over to the fireplace and kissed her small sister. "I think God will," she said, reverently; then she went back to radiant "Mr. Arfur."

FOR THE BIRD'S CHRISTMAS.

Do not forget out little feathered friends to-morrow, but give them a Christmas treat. If you had not thought of it before, plan for one just as soon as you read this. If there are children in the household they will love the idea, if not (more the pity), why some of your grown-ups. Take some nuts and bones, some cracked nuts, some bread crumbs, even raw oat meal or any of the uncooked breakfast foods and scatter in the yard; tie bits of the ties to trees with a red apple or two. Then go inside and watch the delighted guests. In the north the chickadees, woodpeckers, blue jays and sparrows ought to abound in grateful throngs. Don't forget the squirrels and put out some nuts, even though they have helped to destroy our gardens. They often have a hard time to exist when the snow is deep. At Christmas time we all should remember our dumb friends.

The man who doesn't believe in luck must have some difficulty in explaining the success of other people. Jill—Women are more logical than men. J. K.—Yes, a man wonders after he has seen a fool of himself over a woman, but the woman takes it as a matter of course.