

LESSON NOTES.

FOURTH QUARTER.

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF JESUS.

LESSON XII—DECEMBER 23.

CHRISTMAS LESSON.

Matt. 2, 1-11. Memory verses, 4-6.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.—2 Cor. 9, 15.

OUTLINE.

1. The Light of the Star, v. 1, 2.
 2. The Light of the Scriptures, v. 3-6.
 3. The Light of the World, v. 7-11.
- Time.—The very end of B.C. 5, or early B.C. 4.

LESSON HELPS.

1. "When Jesus was born"—Not on the precise day or week or month, but in general connection with his birth. The star may have appeared before his birth, and the wise men may have spent months on their journey. "Wise men from the east"—Probably from Persia. Legend gives their names as Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. Such men are called in Daniel Magi. They were students of the stars.

2. "Where is he?"—Pagan historians tell us that the whole world of antiquity had for many years been looking for a Saviour, who was expected to come as a King of the Jews. Even the Chinese, who were quite shut off from the world of Greek and Roman and Hebrew, were so impressed by this hope that they sent messengers westward to greet the coming King. Missionaries of Buddhism met these messengers, and by their means that religion was introduced into China. "Born King of the Jews"—Not made king, as Herod had been, but king by birthright. "We have seen"—Far away in Persia. Bethlehem saw neither the star nor the Babe for whose sake the star shone. "His star"—Very possibly a miraculous appearance, but we know nothing at all about it. These men were sincere astrologers. According to the rules of their superstitious art the star led them on their journey. That astrology itself has since been proved to be a delusion has no bearing at all on the story. God makes use of men's superstitions and blunders, as well as of their knowledge and wisdom.

3. "He was troubled"—Fearing a revolt against his own rule. "All Jerusalem with him"—The Jerusalem of that day would fear a rule of justice more than all the cruelties of Herod. Strange that, while the Messiah was born, not six miles off, Jerusalem gets her first news from strangers coming from perhaps a thousand miles distant. No wonder the city is excited through all its depths.—Whedon.

4. "Chief priests"—The high priests and heads of the priestly order. "Scribes"—Students and interpreters of the law. Taken together in this way, the Sanhedrin is probably referred to.

5. "Written by the prophet"—Written by Micah centuries before, and well understood by all students of the Scripture in that day.

6. "Among the princes"—The word in our Old Testament version is "thousands," which were smaller divisions of tribes, and each of which had its own ruler or prince.

7. "Privily"—Secretly, so that it might not be known. "Diligently"—Here meaning precisely, exactly. "What time"—So that he might know the age of the child. "So long as any one lived who was born in Bethlehem between the earliest appearance of the star and the time of the arrival of the Magi he was not safe. The subsequent conduct of Herod shows that the Magi must have told him that their earliest observation of the sidereal phenomenon had taken place two years before their arrival in Jerusalem."—Edersheim.

8, 9. "Worship"—While saying "worship" he was meaning to slay. "The star"—Which had disappeared for a time.

10. "They rejoiced"—How different the feeling of these Gentile seekers from that of the Jews of Jerusalem!

11. "When they were come"—From Luke 2, 39, it has been inferred that soon after the birth of Jesus the holy family returned to Nazareth. If such was the case, they must have come back to Bethlehem once more. "Treasures"—Chests or boxes in which the gifts had been carried during their journey.

—Alford. "Gifts"—The orientals always bring gifts when they visit kings or great personages. "Frankincense, and myrrh"—Fragrant and costly gums, obtained from trees and used in sacrifice.

HOME READINGS.

- M. Christmas lesson.—Matt. 2, 1-11.
- Tu. Herod's cruelty.—Matt. 2, 12-23.
- W. Simeon and Anna.—Luke 2, 25-40.
- Th. Prophecy of Christ.—Isa. 9, 1-7.
- F. Sent of God.—1 John 4, 9-19.
- S. The living word.—John 1, 1-14.
- Su. Revealed to shepherds.—Luke 2, 8-18.

QUESTIONS FOR HOME STUDY.

1. The Light of the Star, v. 1, 2.
 - What did the star of Bethlehem announce?
 - To whom was the star sent?
 - Whom do these strangers represent?
 - What spiritual lesson does the guidance of the star teach?
 - Where did the wise men go for information?
2. The Light of the Scriptures, v. 3-6.
 - How did the news of the Saviour's birth affect Herod?
 - What steps did he take to find Christ?
 - Did the scribes know where the Messiah was to be born?

A Christmas Carol.

BY DINAH MARIA MULOOK ORATE.

God rest ye, merry gentlemen; let nothing you dismay,
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour, was born on Christmas Day.
The dawn rose red o'er Bethlehem, the stars shone through the gray,
When Jesus Christ, our Saviour, was born on Christmas Day.

God rest ye, little children; let nothing you affright,
For Jesus Christ, your Saviour, was born this happy night;
Along the hills of Galilee the white flocks sleeping lay,
When Christ, the Child of Nazareth, was born on Christmas Day.

God rest ye, all good Christians; upon this blessed morn
The Lord of all good Christians was of a woman born;
Now all your sorrows he doth heal, your sins he takes away;
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour, was born on Christmas Day.

She pinned her stocking to the seat,
And closed her tired eyes,
And soon she saw each longed-for sweet
In dreamland's paradise.

On a seat behind the little maid
A rough man sat apart,
But a soft light o'er his features played
And stole into his heart.

As the cars drew up at a busy town,
The rough man left the train,
But scarce had from the steps jumped down
Ere he was back again.

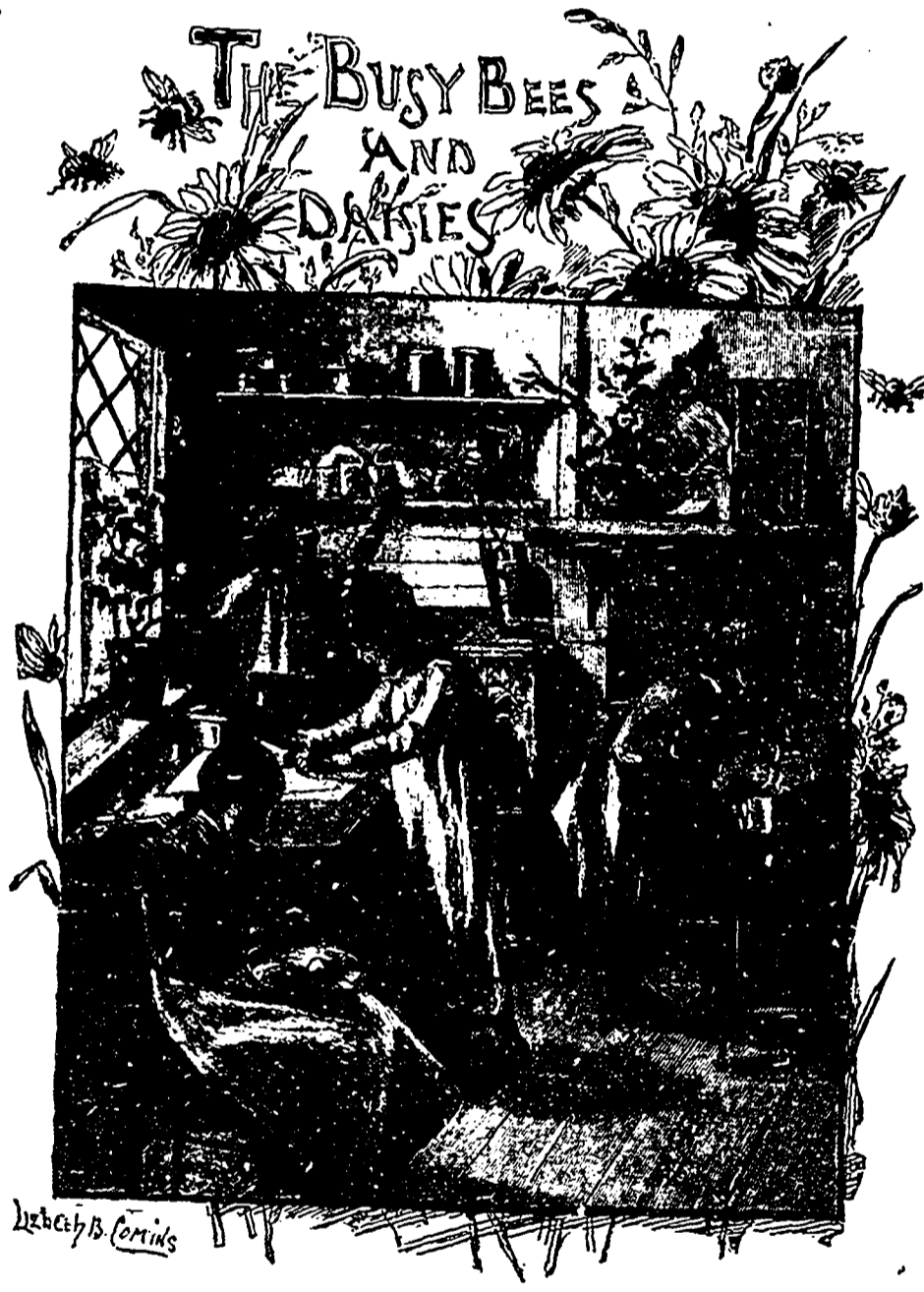
And a great big bundle of Christmas joys
Bulged out from his pocket wide;
He filled the stocking with sweets, and toys
He laid by the dreamer's side.

At dawn the little one woke with a shout,
'Twas sweet to hear her glee;
'I knowed that Santa would find me out;
He caught the train, you see.'

Though some from smiling may scarce refrain,
The child was surely right,
The good Saint Nicholas caught the train,
And came aboard that night.

For the saint is fond of masquerade,
And may fool the old and wise,
And so he came to the little maid,
In an emigrants' disguise.

And he dresses in many ways because
He wishes no one to know him,
For he never says, "I am Santa Claus,"
But his good deeds always show him.



CHRISTMAS IN THE KITCHEN.

Why did the wise men seek Jesus?
Why did Herod?
How long before Christ's birth was his coming prophesied?
Upon what event did all of the Old Testament teaching rest?
3. The Light of the World, v. 7-11.
What did Herod counsel the wise men to do?
What did the wise men do when they found Jesus?
Can any better advice be given?
What did the Old Testament prophets say Christ was to be to this world?
What did Christ say he was to the world?
Give some instances in which Christ has been "light" to the world?
What must be the feeling of every true believer in Christ? Golden Text.

PRACTICAL TEACHINGS.

- Where in this lesson do we learn—
1. That the ends of the earth shall return to Christ?
 2. That wicked men cannot succeed in their plans?
 3. That we owe the best we have to our Saviour?

Santa Claus on the Train.

BY HENRY O. WALSH.

On a Christmas Eve an emigrant train
Sped on through the blackness of night,
And cleft the pitchy dark in twain
With the gleam of its fierce head-light.

In a crowded car, a noisome place,
Sat a mother and her child;
The woman's face bore want's wan trace,
But the little one only smiled,

And tugged and pulled at her mother's dress,
And her voice had a merry ring,
As she lisped, "Now, mamma, come and guess
What Santa Claus 'll bring."

But sadly the mother shook her head,
As she thought of a happier past;
"He never can catch us here," she said,
"The train is going too fast."

"Oh, mamma, yes, he'll come, I say,
So swift are his little deer,
They runs all over the world to-day—
I'll hang my stocking up here."

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