

SCHOLARS' NOTES.

(From the International Lessons for 1880, by Edwin W. Rice, as issued by American Sunday-School Union.)

LESSON I.

JANUARY 4.]

THE INFANT MESSIAH.—Matt. 2: 1-12.

[About B. C. 4.]

COMMIT TO MEMORY vs. 7-12.

- 1. Now when Jesus was born in Beth-le-hem of Jude-a in the days of Her-od the King, behold, there came wise men from the east to Je-ru-sa-lem,
2. Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.
3. When Her-od the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Je-ru-sa-lem with him.
4. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.
5. And they said unto him, In Beth-le-hem of Jude-a: for thus it is written by the prophet.
6. And thou Beth-le-hem, in the land of Ju-da, art not the least among the princes of Ju-da: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Is-ra-el.
7. Then Her-od, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.
8. And he sent them to Beth-le-hem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child: and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.
9. When they had heard the king, they departed: and in the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.
10. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.
11. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.
12. And being warned in a dream that they should not return to Her-od, they departed to their own country.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

Christ Jesus became man.

INTRODUCTORY.—The events of the lesson occurred after those recorded in Luke 1, Matt. 1, and Luke 2: 1-21—perhaps, even after Jesus' return from Jerusalem (Luke 2: 22-38), when Joseph and Mary may have remained in Beth-le-hem for some time, yet before their flight into Egypt (vs. 13, 14) and return to Nazareth (vs. 22, 23; see Luke 2: 39).

TO THE SCHOLAR.—Notice how God directed and overruled all things so as to fulfil his purposes.

NOTES.—The book of Matthew, written primarily to Jewish believers in Palestine, probably between A.D. 60 and 68, and perhaps in Hebrew, by Matthew, a publican, son of Alphaeus, before conversion, called Levi, one of the twelve disciples. JE-SUS, Saviour, same as Joshua, but specially applied to Christ. BETH-LE-HEM OF JU-DE-A. It means "house of bread." It is about six miles south of Jerusalem; earlier it was called Beth-le-hem-Ephrath or Ephrath, (Gen. 35: 19; Mic. 5: 2). In it lived the family of David (Ruth 1: 1, 19; 4: 16, 17). Still a thriving town, and the grove in which Jesus is supposed to have been born is now shown to travellers. HER-OD, the Great, second son of Antipater, an Idumean Jew, appointed king of Judea by the Roman Senate about B.C. 49; rebuilt the temple; adorned Jerusalem and other cities; a crafty, unscrupulous, and unhappy man; reigned with much cruelty till his death, in B.C. 4. WISE MEN FROM THE EAST, or magi, originally, the title of a priestly order at the Persian court and at Babylon, where Daniel was a chief magus (Dan. 2: 48); later the name was applied to astrologers, magicians, etc. (See Acts 8: 9; 13: 8). What nation of the East they came from is not known. MARY, the virgin wife of Joseph; parents' names unknown; of an ancient family; home at Nazareth, in Galilee.

EXPLANATIONS.

LESSON TOPICS. (I.) SEEKING THE MESSIAH. (II.) FINDING HIM. (III.) WORSHIPPING HIM.

I. SEEKING THE MESSIAH. (1-1.) JESUS WAS BORN, most probably in B.C. 4—not 1880, but 1884, years ago; IN THE DAYS, during the reign of, and a short time before, Herod's death; TO JERUSALEM, because the capital of Judea; KING OF THE JEWS, the magi were probably acquainted with the Scriptures (Isa. 9: 6, 7, 40: 1, 2; Num. 24: 17, etc.) and traditions of the Jews; STAR, perhaps miraculous, possibly a conjunction of three planets—Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn—in the sign Pisces, together with the appearance of a new star or comet which occurred about this time, and must have been noticed by the magi, but more probably a miraculous appearance of a star; WORSHIP, do homage; CHIEF PRIESTS, the high priest and his predecessors in office, and also the heads of the twenty-four classes of priests (1 Chron. 24: 6; 2 Chron. 36: 14); SCRIBES, interpreters of the law. It was not a formal meeting of the whole Sanhedrin, but private at Herod's palace.

II. FINDING HIM. (5-3.) BY THE PROPHET, (Micah 5: 2), the quotation is made freely from the Greek version of the Scriptures; PRINCES, or thousands; the Hebrew word in y mean either; each tribe was divided into "chillads" or thousands; RULE, and feed, as a shepherd (Is. 40: 3); PRIVILY, secretly; ENQUIRED DILIGENTLY, ascertained exactly; APPEARED, not when it first was seen, but for how long a time it had

been seen; BRING ME WORD, or send me word; WORSHIP ALSO, only a pretext; he did not intend to do homage, but to destroy the Christ.

III. WORSHIPPING HIM. (9-12.) DEPARTED, immediately after their interview with Herod; SAW IN THE EAST, had seen in the East whence they came, not in the eastern part of the sky. They travelled at night, as is the custom in the East; WENT... CAME... STOOD, appeared to do so; OVER WHERE—i.e., over Bethlehem. It did not show them the exact house where Jesus was; this they found by enquiry; REJOICED, because a proof to them that this child was the King they sought; HOUSE, to which the family had removed from the inn-stable (Luke 2: 7) after the town was no longer overcrowded; FELL DOWN, prostrate, the Oriental style of saluting a superior; TREASURES, chests or bags; PRESENTED... GIFTS, as was usually done to a distinguished person when visiting him, especially when rendering homage to a ruler; FRANKINCENSE, a fragrant gum of a tree found in India, Arabia, and Persia, used for incense in the temple; MYRRH, similar gum of a shrub found also in Palestine, rare and precious, used in ornament; DEPARTED, withdrew, escaped; ANOTHER WAY, not by the high-road through Jerusalem.

What facts in this lesson teach

- (1.) God's providence over all?
(2.) That the Scriptures testify of Christ?
(3.) That God helps and prospers the sincere seeker after truth?
(4.) That he hinders and prevents them that have wrong motives?

LESSON II.

JANUARY 11.]

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT. Matt. 2: 13-23.

[About B. C. 4.]

COMMIT TO MEMORY vs. 10-20.

- 13. And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word; for Her-od will seek the young child to destroy him.
14. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt.
15. And was there until the death of Her-od: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.
16. Then Her-od, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Beth-le-hem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.
17. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jer-e-m-y, the prophet saying,
18. In Ra-ma was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Ra-chel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.
19. But when Her-od was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,
20. Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.
21. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Is-ra-el.
22. But when he heard that Ar-che-la-us, did reign in Ju-de-a in the room of his father Her-od, he was afraid to go thither; notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Gal-i-lee:
23. And he came and dwelt in a city called Naz-a-reth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Naz-a-rene.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word. Matt. 2: 13.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

Prophecy is fulfilled in Christ.

CONNECTED HISTORY.—The events of this lesson follow in close connection upon those of the previous one in the narrative, though, actually, some days probably intervened between the departure of the wise men and the flight into Egypt.

NOTES.—ANGEL OF THE LORD, same as in Matt. 1: 20; Gen. 16: 7, 9; Ex. 32: 34; Isa. 63: 9; more specifically named in Luke 1: 19; and Dan. 8: 16. JO-SEPH, Mary's husband (1: 21), a devout Jew (1: 19), lineally descended from King David (1: 1-16), though living in poor circumstances (Luke 2: 21; see Lev. 12: 3) as a carpenter or worker in wood (13: 55; see Mark 6: 3). He probably died before Jesus grew to manhood (John 19: 26, 27). E-GYPT, the ancient, rich, and fertile country occupying the north-east corner of Africa, along the river Nile, and extending to the very borders of Palestine. Joseph, son of Jacob, was sold into bondage there; then became chief officer of the kingdom (Gen. 41: 39-44). Israel was in his bondage there for several centuries, until brought to Canaan through Moses and Joshua (Exodus). From that time it is often mentioned in Scripture; large numbers of Jews lived there, and even had a temple of their own. After B.C. 30 it was subject to Rome. HER-OD AND BETH-LE-HEM, see former Lesson. RA-MA, an ancient fortress, six miles north of Jerusalem, in the tribe of Benjamin (Jer. 40: 1). RA-CH-EL (Gen. 29: 16-31), daughter of Laban, wife of Jacob, mother of Joseph (Gen. 30: 23, 24) and Benjamin (Gen. 35: 16-18), the representative of the mothers of Juda bereaved of their infants. AR-CHE-LA-US, oldest of the three sons of Herod among whom the kingdom was divided after the latter's death. Archelaus received Judea, Idumea, and Samaria. GAL-I-LEE, north of Samaria, and under the dominion of Herod Antipas. NA-ZA-RETH, a mountain town in Galilee, about midway between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean; in Christ's

time it had about 10,000 inhabitants, now has some 3,000; the home of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus.

EXPLANATIONS.

LESSON TOPICS. (I.) THE FLIGHT. (II.) THE RAGE OF HEROD. (III.) THE RETURN.

I. THE FLIGHT. (13-15.) IN A DREAM, (see 1: 20; 2: 22), a vision during sleep; ARISE, from sleep immediately (see v. 14 "by night"); BY NIGHT, for greater secrecy; TRAVELLING BY NIGHT is not uncommon in the East; WAS THERE, in what part of Egypt is not known; tradition says at Mataria, near Leontopolis, or at Memphis; DEATH OF HEROD, in the same year of the flight, B.C. 4. If they returned immediately after his death, their stay in Egypt was only for a few months; PROPHET (Hos. 11: 1), applied primarily to the exodus of Israel (Ex. 4: 22, etc.).

II. THE RAGE OF HEROD. (16-18.) HEROD, see Notes, Lesson I; SAW, knew, became aware by the failure of the magi to return to him with news of Christ (see vs. 8, 12); MOCKED, literally, made a fool of, outwitted; WROTH, angry; SENT FORTH, probably in secret (see v. 7), hiring bands of robbers to do the work that his agency in it might not be publicly seen; CHILDREN, "male children;" COASTS THEREOF, the neighboring country; TWO YEARS AND UNDER, etc., the duration of the star's appearance, as told him by the magi (v. 7), was probably considerably less than two years; some time must have elapsed since their visit; he set so long a time to make sure of including the child Jesus, who he took for granted, had not been born before the first appearance of the star, and therefore at the very most could not be two years old; JEREMY Jeremiah (Jer. 31: 15); primarily spoken of the Babylonish captivity; RAMA RACHEL, see Notes.

III. THE RETURN. (19-23.) WHEN... DEAD, see v. 15; ISRAEL, i.e., Palestine, without defining any particular part of it; THEY ARE DEAD, scriptural language is used (Ex. 4: 19), and it refers to Herod; JUDEA, he had intended returning to Bethlehem in Judea, although their home was at Nazareth; AFRAID, thinking that the son would carry out his father's plans; NOTWITHSTANDING, but, however; BEING WARNED, implying that he had asked for direction; TURNED ASIDE, went; same word as "departed into" of v. 14; PARTS, regions, within the limits; under the government of Herod Antipas, brother of Archelaus; GALILEE, see Notes; DWELT, took up his residence; NAZARETH, see Notes; THE PROPHETS, no particular ones are referred to or quoted; the general sense of prophecy concerning Jesus is given.

What truths teach us in this lesson

- (1.) The duty and blessedness of simple obedience to God?
(2.) That God fulfils all prophecy?
(3.) The wickedness to which selfish ambition may lead?
(4.) The uselessness of striving against God's will?

WISE MEN'S VISIT. EARNINGS FROM GOD. WICKEDNESS OF HEROD. WEeping OF MOTHERS. ORD TO RETURN.

THE MESSENGER'S NEW DRESS.

The MESSENGER is quite proud of its new dress, not the one it ended the year with, for that was a second-hand dress, which was merely adopted while the new one was being made. It begins the new year with a brand new dress. Does it not look pretty? and is not the MESSENGER much more easily read with it? The MESSENGER has made arrangements to keep this dress always new, and to that end will keep it away from the ink, type and press altogether. It has determined that iron iron jaws and grinding wheels of the press will not deface its beauty.

"But how can this be done? How can you print from type and still not go near the press, MESSENGER?"

These questions can easily be answered. By a process which modern ingenuity has discovered, an exact reprint of a page of type (called a "form") can be made in copper, and this is placed in the press and printed from, while the type remains uninjured. This process is called electrotyping, and the MESSENGER will be electrotyped in future, and its new dress ever be kept new.

The MESSENGER now makes its bow in its new dress, and hopes that during the year 1880 (how old it is getting!—this is its fifteenth birthday!) it will be much better liked than ever before.

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The MESSENGER wishes every reader a happy and prosperous New Year for 1880.

PROSPECTS FOR 1880.

If the present rate of increase in subscriptions for the MESSENGER continues for a few weeks longer we will have NINETY THOUSAND SUBSCRIBERS to begin the year with! Is not this a pleasing announcement? We think so; but you will notice it begins with an "if" "If" our workers do their very best during the Christmas week and January, the MESSENGER will have, perhaps, the largest circulation of any paper of any kind in this whole continent. Volunteers, prize-winners, friends of all kinds, will you please make one united and extra effort to accomplish this result. Your efforts have had the result of improving the MESSENGER very much, as this number shows. Who knows what additional improvements might not be made if the circulation were doubled!

A LETTER ABOUT THE NEW DRESS—VOLUNTEERS AND PRIZES.

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"I was very pleased with your offer to volunteers, and would very much like to join your regiment and become an officer; I shall work very hard to obtain an office. I have quite a number of subscribers now.

"Will you please send me a prize list. You give very good prizes. Your paper is highly spoken of here in town. I shall try my best to do something for it. Wishing you good success,

"I remain yours truly, "LOUIS L. BARTON."

We have already had several offers of volunteers, and it must be remembered that this is written before the whole of last edition has been mailed; so there is every evidence that we will very shortly have a regiment of volunteer officers. We hope it may be so.

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