

3. He read therein. It was not a bound volume, but a number of manuscript rolls, kept in a case. Each book formed a separate volume, with two rollers between which the pages were shown by being unrolled upon one and rolled upon another. **From morning until midday.** It was a service of six hours' length, and impressive from its picturesque surroundings, the rank and importance of those who conducted it, the multitude of listeners, and from the sacredness of the volume now brought forth from the selection of ages. (6) *How great may be the effect in after years of the memory of attendance during childhood upon God's house!* **People were attentive.** So in the dawn of the Reformation, all Europe was eager to hear and to read the Bible, for, as in Ezra's day, copies of it were scarce. In England, when the "Great Bible," newly translated by royal authority, lay upon its desk chained to a pillar in each cathedral, the people gathered in throngs, stood for hours on the stone floor listening to the reader, and when he paused, cried out, "Read on! read on!" (7) *Let us cherish a deep interest in the word of God.*

4. Upon a pulpit of wood. Literally, "a tower," probably a raised platform upon which the reader could be seen and heard by the multitude. **Beside him stood.** These thirteen persons were perhaps the priests then employed in temple service. They added to the moral influence of the service by their presence, and perhaps by turns relieved Ezra in the reading. Their names alone remain, but the influence of their work lives. (8) *The leaders of society should sanction the service of religion by their presence.*

5. Opened the book. Unrolled the scroll. **All the people stood up.** The multitude had been sitting on the ground, in Oriental manner; but all arose as a sign of reverence for the word of God. The ancient Jews would not tread upon a scrap of paper, lest it might contain the name of the Lord. (9) *Let us handle God's book carefully, and never miss a copy of it.*

6. Ezra blessed the Lord. Gave thanks, perhaps repeating a psalm of praise. **The people answered.** The whole congregation testified their concurrence with the prayer and praise. (10) *The public worship should not be a spectacle, but a service in which all should participate.* **Amen.** A Hebrew word meaning "firm," or "be it so," adopted as the affirmation of prayer. **Lifting up their hands.** This was an ancient custom in worship. *Ps. 63. 4; 1 Tim. 2. 8.*

7. Also Joshua, etc. These were Levites who assisted in the service. It is uncertain whether they

HOME READINGS.

- M.* Reading the law. Neh. 8. 1-12.
Tu. The law described. Ps. 19. 1-14.
W. The place for the law. Ps. 40. 1-11.
Th. Thinking of the law. Josh. 1. 1-9.
F. The law fulfilled. Rom. 5. 1-21.
S. The end of the law. Rom. 10. 1-10.
S. The royal law. James 2. 1-26.

GOLDEN TEXT.

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. Neh. 8. 8.

LESSON HYMNS.

- No. 157, Dominion Hymnal.
 Father of mercies, in thy word
 What endless glory shines!
 No. 159, Dominion Hymnal.
 No book is like the Bible,
 For childhood, youth, and age,
 No. 161, Dominion Hymnal.
 The Gospel bells are ringing,
 Over land from sea to sea.

TIME.—444 B. C. Fifty-two days after the arrival at Jerusalem the wall was done. This service followed. 89d Olympiad. Year of Rome, 399.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

RULERS.—Same as Lesson IX, except that Nehemiah is governor of Judaea.

stood by the reader and gave the explanations by turn, or whether they were stationed at distances through the crowd, thus dividing it into Bible classes, and all teaching simultaneously. **Caused the people to understand.** The old Hebrew in which Ezra read was obsolete, as Chaucer's English would be to an audience at the present, and these Levites acted as interpreters, rendering it into the Chaldean, which was at that time the dialect of Palestine. They also explained the more difficult passages. (11) *There is no power or art or truth that of causing people to understand God's word.*

8. So they read. This verse, the Golden Text of our lesson, states just what should be the aim of every Sunday-school teacher. And it should be the aim of every preacher also. A young minister once asked an old Christian for his counsel concerning the best way to make his preaching effective. He answered promptly, "Read Nehemiah 8. 8." **Distinctly.** This refers to the audible, clear tone of the reading. **Gave the sense.** This refers to the explanation.

9. Nehemiah. See notes on the last lesson. **Tirshatha.** This is the Persian title for "governor." It is equivalent to "Your severity," or "Dread sovereign." **This day is holy.** The first day of the seventh month was to be observed as a sabbath. **Mourn not, nor weep.** Hence it appears that the ancient Sabbath was not considered as a day of solemnity, but of gladness. (12) *We should make God's day cheerful and happy.* **All the people wept.** The contrast between their own conduct and the demands of the law, as well as its threatened penalties, awakened their alarm and convicted their conscience.

10, 11. He said. Nehemiah is here referred to. **Eat the fat.** The fat pieces of flesh, considered the best. **Drink the sweet.** The new, sweet wine. **Send portions.** In their own joy they were to remember the poor, and supply their wants. (13) *"God's bounty should make us thankful." The joy of the Lord is your strength.* That is, the joy and peace which spring from reconciliation with God are the signs of spiritual strength. **Hold your peace.** They were not forbidden to regret their sins, nor to think of them, but to mar the gladness of the holiday by manifestations of sorrow.

12. Went their way. To their homes. **To make great mirth.** Not in drunkenness and riot, but in glad worship of God. **Because they had understood.** What a cause of joy it should be to any people when they know clearly what is God's will!

CONNECTING LINK.—Nehemiah's prayer gives him boldness to address the king in behalf of his countrymen. The king hears and sends him with royal authority to execute the desire of his heart. Facing opposition, overcoming his enemies, he finishes the work, and institutes the service of which we study.

DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION.—The authority of the word.

QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR STUDENTS.

- 1. A Great Congregation, v. 1.**
 Who composed the great congregation?
 What was the purpose of their gathering?
 What similar gathering to hear God's word can you recall?
 What part of the word of God was read on both these occasions?
- 2. A Bible Reading, v. 2-8.**
 Were any persons present at this service besides Jews? ver. 2.
 What was the character of the audience?
 What respect did they show to the speaker and the word?
 What occurred besides the reading of the law?
 Can you recall another scene where thousands were gathered to hear the law expounded by the world's greatest teacher?
- 3. A Day of Gladness, v. 9-12.**
 Why did the people weep at the words of the law?
 What did these leaders teach as the true way to keep holy day?
 What saying of our Lord, preserved by Paul, was proved by these people on this day? Acts 20. 35.
 What should be the spiritual condition of the one who truly understands God's word?
 What does Paul declare that the kingdom of God is? Rom. 14. 17.

Devotion to God.
 The true reader.
 1. Contrition.
 2. Joy over.
 3. Benediction.
 4. Quiet at.

QUESTIONS FOR

- 1. A Great Congregation, v. 1.**
 Where did the people assemble?
 Upon whom did they look?
 What did they do?
 - 2. A Bible Reading, v. 2-8.**
 Who came together?
 How long did it last?
 How did the people feel?
 Where did Ezra stand?
 How many were present?
 How did the law affect them?
 What was done?
 Who assisted in the reading?
 What was on the minds of the people?
 10. 18.
 In what manner did they respond?
 - 3. A Day of Gladness, v. 9-12.**
 What important lesson was taught?
 What advice was given?
 How had the people been convicted?
 What token of their repentance was there?
 What was the result?
 What obedience was shown?
- TEACHING.**
 Where, in this story, is the word of the Lord?
 of the word?
 of the word?
 of the word?
 of the word?

QUESTIONS

- Where did the people assemble?
 before the water?
 What was the result?
 which water was used?
 Why did they do this?
 feast of the truth?
 What did they do?
 Moses?
 What did he do?
 and read it.
 How long was the service?
 noon.
 Where did Ezra stand?
 pit of wood.
 Who were with him?
 plained the law?
 How did the people respond?
 close attention?
 How was the law read?
 and clearly, so
 Why did the people weep?
 What had sinners deserved?
 punishment.
 What did Ezra teach?
 "Weep not, the Lord is good."
 What should they do?
 For what reason?
 them.
 What is the joy of the Lord?
 comes from doing his will?
 Who?

If you would like to know more about the GOLDEN TEXT, v. 8, notice what you have to listen very carefully or taught to you, do this you will find that leads to heaven.

THE GOLDEN TEXT.
 1. For what purpose?
 2. Who read it?