

LESSON XI.—Dec. 10.

Lessons in Giving.

Malachi, i., 6-11; iii., 8-12. Memory verse, 10. Read chapter i., and ii., Cor. viii., and ix.

Golden Text.

'God loveth a cheerful giver.'—I. Cor. ix., 7.

Home Readings.

M. Mal. i., 6-11 and iii., 8-12.—Lessons in giving.
T. Deut. xvi., 9-17.—'As he is able.'
W. Luke. vi., 30-38.—The reward.
Th. II. Cor. viii., 1-9.—Christ's example.
F. II. Cor. viii., 10-21.—A willing mind.
S. II. Cor. ix.—A cheerful giver.
S. I. Tim. vi., 6-19.—Ready to distribute.

The Bible Class.

Giving.—Gen. xxviii., 20-22; Deut. xv., 7, 8, 10, 11; xxvi., 1-3, 10-13; Josh. i., 13-15; I. Kings iii., 5, 9, 11-14; Ezek. xx., 12; Matt. v., 42; vii., 11; xiv., 16; xvi., 25, 26; xxv., 42; xxvi., 26-28; Mark x., 21; xii., 15-17; John i., 12; iii., 16, 24, 35; x., 28; xiv., 16; xv., 16; Rev. ii., 10; xxi., 6.

Lesson Text.

Supt.—6. A son honoreth his father and a servant his master; if then I be a father, where is mine honor? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?

School.—7. Ye offer polluted bread upon my altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible.

8. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts.

9. And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us; this hath been by your means; will he regard your person? saith the Lord of hosts.

10. Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on my altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.

11. For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts.

8. Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

9. Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed me; even this whole nation.

10. Bring ye all the tithes into the store, house, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

11. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts.

12. And all nations shall call you blessed; for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts.

Suggestions.

Malachi means 'My Messenger,' or 'the messenger of Jehovah.' He was the last of the prophets, and prophesied at the same time as Nehemiah wrought reforms, about B.C. 420.

The Scriptures had become the book of the people through the efforts of Ezra, and the people being able to read the Word of God for themselves were not in such great need of prophetic messengers from God. But Malachi was sent as a last messenger before the coming of the Messiah, just to

show them how far wrong their lives were according to the standard their loving God had set them. They had grown lax and indifferent in their ideas of duty to Jehovah, and would soon have been worse off than ever as a nation, if Malachi and Nehemiah had not appeared on the scene and spoken emphatically and acted promptly and decisively.

The accusations brought by Malachi against the people are startlingly plain and vivid. One wonders how such a state of things could have come to pass. God is not mocked. How could these priests offer to Jehovah the imperfect sacrifices, the corrupt offerings? Did they think they could deceive the Almighty? Did they think God could not hear their wicked complaints, or see their unwilling hearts? Did they think of the Eternal simply as a great controlling force which must be satisfied? Had they forgotten what the services meant, had they become simply machines? Or had they actually forgotten that there was a God of omniscience? Surely they could not have realized what they were doing, they did their duties as a matter of course, but having lost the spirit of loving service soon grew to hate the form of service, and to do their work negligently.

They simply forgot God. It is only the realization of God's character that makes man see himself as sinful and in need of a Saviour. It is the realization of God's mercy, that makes man hopeful of salvation. It is the realization of God's claim which makes man ready to give himself and his possessions to his Owner.

Will a man rob God? Yes, and without the slightest hesitation. A man robs God of the life he has created for his own pleasure and glory. It is of little use to offer to God some gifts of money or work when you are withholding that to which he has the first right, your heart's love. The gift without the giver is unacceptable. The man who does not acknowledge God's claim not only robs God, but robs his own soul of its eternal heritage.

If all nominal Christians gave a tenth of their income to God there would be no dearth in the Lord's treasury. At present retrenchment is being cried in almost every department of God's work for lack of funds. But we must give from love and from principle. That which is given for the sake of appearance is not given for Christ's sake. The matter is entirely between our Saviour and our own hearts, the heart must decide by consultation with the Saviour what portion of the income shall be regularly and systematically laid out in distinctive Christian work, and what shall be retained for the necessary expenses of this particular Christian. A lady in New York, having an income of a thousand dollars a year, gives eight hundred dollars yearly toward hastening the coming of the Kingdom of God.

The poor often despise the wealthy because they do not make larger gifts to God's work, but our riches are immeasurable in the heavens, and believing prayer is the only bank note required. If we are niggardly enough to make small requests and to be content with a tiny portion of the inheritance designed for us, our gifts will indeed be parsimonious and unbefitting our rank and dignity as children of God. Therefore he who withholds prayer is more criminal toward God than he who withholds money.

C. E. Topic.

Dec. 17.—Teach us to pray. — Luke xi., 1-13

Junior C. E.

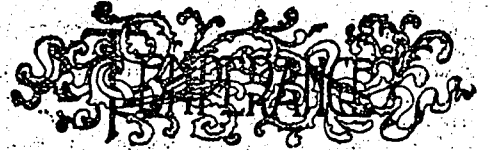
Dec. 17.—Christ's ascension command; how can we carry it out? Acts i., 8; Matt. xxviii., 16-20. (A missionary meeting. The Island World.)

The Holy Spirit.

Our blest Redeemer, ere he breathed
His tender, last farewell,
A Guide, a Comforter bequeathed,
With us on earth to dwell.

He came in tongues of living flame,
To teach, convince, subdue;
All-powerful as the wind he came,
And all as viewless, too.

—Harriet Auber.

**Opium Catechism.**

(By Dr. R. H. McDonald, of San Francisco.)

CHAPTER I.—WHAT OPIUM IS.

1. Q.—What is opium?
A.—The hardened juice of the poppy plant.
2. Q.—Of what country is the poppy a native?
A.—Asia, but it is now in cultivation in Europe, and America, also.
3. Q.—Is it the same plant which we see grown in gardens for its bright flowers?
A.—Yes, although the true opium poppy is a large, white, single flower.
4. Q.—From what part of the plant is the juice which makes the opium extracted?
A.—From the great, round, green seed-cup which grows in the heart of the flower.
5. Q.—What is this juice like?
A.—It is white as milk, and sticky to the touch.
6. Q.—How is this juice obtained?
A.—Collectors go out in the poppy fields in the early morning, and gash with a sort of knife all the full-grown seed-cups.
7. Q.—What for?
A.—That the milky juice may run out. This juice is afterward gathered and put in shallow dishes, where it dries up first into a jelly, and then into a bitter gum.
8. Q.—What is this bitter gum?
A.—Opium.
9. Q.—How long does it take the juice to dry into opium?
A.—About five weeks. While it is drying, it is stirred, beaten, and when it gets harder it is kneaded and rolled into cakes or balls.
10. Q.—Describe opium?
A.—It is of a reddish-brown color. When cold it is brittle, but heat softens it. It is very bitter and burning to the taste, and has a strong narcotic odor.
11. Q.—Where is the best opium made?
A.—In Asiatic Turkey, India makes the greatest quantity of any country.
12. Q.—Is opium very expensive?
A.—Very, and it is the most valuable and wonderful drug ever discovered.

Nettie's Doubt.

Nettie Hynd, was ten years old when she went to a school kept by a lady who took only a small number of girls. Nettie enjoyed this change very much, and every evening she had much to tell her mother and sister about her new companions. But one evening when she had been about a week at school, she came in and sat down to tea, and finished it almost without speaking. At last Nettie said, while slowly buttering her last bit of bread, 'Mother, do you think I need to go to the Band of Hope meeting to-night?'

'Why, Nettie,' said her mother, surprised; for Nettie was in general so eager about the meetings; 'have you so many lessons to prepare?'

'No,' said Nettie; 'I have time enough; only—is there much use in my going?'

'Why, Nettie!' exclaimed her mother, setting down her cup and looking at her little daughter, 'what are you thinking of now?' and her elder sister Jane, who was walking up and down with the baby, stood still to listen.

'Well,' said Nettie, hesitating, 'this afternoon I remembered it was meeting night, and I asked some of the girls if they were going, and they all laughed so, every one of them, and asked me if I was afraid of being a tippler.'

'Oh, Nettie!' said Jane, 'would you give up for fear of a laugh?'

'No,' said Nettie, 'I don't think I care about a laugh, if it is for a needful thing; but, that's just what I don't know. I don't think Miss Rigby thinks it needful, mother.'

'Did she say so?'

'No; and she told them not to laugh at me; but I saw that she was half smiling herself; and when they asked her, she said that she saw no harm in a glass of wine