

have God's blessing and the nation which dishonors His holy day will suffer. Nehemiah reminds the people that one of the causes of the wrath which had come upon the Jews was that they had profaned the Sabbath. There is no doubt that the same is true in modern Christian days. Those who honor God He will honor and those who despise God and disregard His commandments and ordinances will bring upon themselves trouble and sorrow. It is well known that the necessity for the Sabbath is written upon the very constitution of man. Even physically men need a rest one day in seven. Jesus said that the Sabbath was made for man—that is, for man's good and blessing.

(4) Perhaps the old Puritan Sabbath was a little too severe, but if some of its customs could be revived a blessing would come. With them the preparation for the Sabbath was made Saturday evening. As Nehemiah shut the gates at dark the evening before the Sabbath, so the good old fashion was to put away every worldly thing Saturday night. Tools and implements of labor were housed. Wood was cut and carried in. Food was prepared. The house was put in order so that the least possible work would be necessary on the Lord's day. As the evening drew on the Sabbath air of quietness took possession of the whole family. The evening worship was a solemn preparation for the coming day of rest. The Sabbath itself was sacredly kept. Nothing but works of necessity and mercy were allowed. The gates were kept shut all day. It is not so in these modern times.

(5) Nehemiah commanded the Levites to keep the gates and to sanctify the Sabbath. Every Christian has a part to do in the keeping of the Sabbath. The observance of the day is a personal matter. Whatever others may do, we should carefully follow our own conscience. We shall not have to answer for other people's sins but we shall have to answer for our own negligence. Let every one therefore study the subject carefully and decide how the day should be observed, and then faithfully keep it.

LESSON 11.—DEC. 10, 1899.

Lessons in Giving.

(Lesson Text. Mal. 1:6-11 and 3:8-12. Commit to Memory chap. 3:10.)

(Read chap. 1, also 2 Cor. chaps. 8 and 9.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—"God loveth a cheerful giver."—2 Cor. 9:7

DAILY READINGS.—Monday: Mal. 1:6-11 and 3:8-12. Tuesday: Deut. 16:9-17. Wednesday: Luke 6:30-38. Thursday: 2 Cor. 8:1-9. Friday: 2 Cor. 8:10-21. Saturday: 2 Cor. 9. Sunday: 1 Tim. 6:6-19

TIME.—The date of Malachi's prophecy is variously estimated from 458 to 420 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

Introductory.

Nothing is known of the prophet Malachi apart from what is told us in his book. His prophecy was delivered at some time after the completion of Zerubbabel's temple and the re-establishment of the sacrifices, and at a time when priests and people had fallen into corrupt ways, to rebuke which Malachi was commissioned of the Lord. Most probably it belongs to the period of Nehemiah's reforms.

How to Prepare this Lesson.

Learn all you can about Malachi and his times. The date is about the same as that of Nehemiah. Malachi's book is short, and it will be easy to read

it through more than once during the week. Read also 2 Cor. chapters 8 and 9, and study the teaching about giving.

The Lesson Applied.

(1) The love and generosity of God to us should lead us to liberal and generous giving to God. A son honors his father. A servant honors his master. God is our Father and our Lord, and we should honor Him. Since Christ came and gave Himself to redeem us there is still greater reason that we should give to God. How ungrateful it is to refuse God anything He asks of us!

(2) Nothing could be baser than to give to God merely what we do not want for ourselves. That is what Malachi says the people were doing in his day. They offered polluted bread on the altar for the Lord's service. They offered blind animals in sacrifice, and the lame and sick—choosing those which were of least value to themselves. The law required that only the best of everything should be given to God in offering,—nothing lame, nothing blemished. God wants always our best. No one would give as a present to a friend spoiled food or worn-out things. We should not put God off with anything we do not care for ourselves. We should give Him the best we have, the alabaster boxes of our love.

(3) We should be glad to give our service to God to help in His cause. It is a dishonor when one is willing to do good or engage in God's work only when paid for it. The people in Malachi's time would not even shut the doors of God's house without being compensated. Nor would they attend to the altar fires for nothing, out of love. The true Christian is ready to serve Christ without any thought of compensation. A religion whose ministrations must all be paid for as if they were pieces of the world's business is not the kind that will bless and save the world. A man boasted that he had been a Christian for twenty years, and that it had never cost him a cent. He certainly was not the kind of Christian Christ is proud of.

(4) It is possible to rob God. No man wants to be called a thief or a robber, and yet many people, even of those who claim to be religious, are declared to be robbers—not robbers of their fellow-men, but robbers of God. Malachi said the Jews robbed God in keeping back from Him the tithes and their gifts and offerings which He claimed from them. How is it with us? Do we pay to God all that we owe Him? Do we give Him the love, the honor, the worship due to Him? Then how about the money we owe Him? If the Jewish people, who were simply training for Christianity, were required to give a tenth, and much more really besides, how can Christian people claim that they should not give as much to God? The true Christian teaching is that all our money is God's and is to be used by us sacredly as His stewards, every cent of it to be accounted for.

(5) If we would get the best blessings of God's grace and love we must bring our gifts to Him. How can we excuse ourselves by saying that we give Him love and worship? He wishes these offerings of the heart, but He wishes also our gifts of money, our time, our service, our strength. Then He promises, if we do our part, bringing in all the tithes, He will open the windows of heaven and pour us out blessing. May it not be that one cause of much of our trouble and want of blessing is that we are not faithful in bringing to God the tithes and offerings? As long as we withhold from God that which is due to Him, we cannot expect Him to give us what He has promised.