

LESSON XII—December 20th, 1896.

The Birth of Christ. MATT. 2: 1-12.

(Commit to memory verses 10, 11).

GOLDEN TEXT: "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Luke 2: 10.

PROVE THAT—If we come to Jesus he will receive us. John 6: 37.

SHORTER CATECHISM. Questions 76, 77, 78.

LESSON HYMNS. *Children's Hymnal*—Nos. 17, 66, 233, 21.

DAILY PORTIONS. *Monday.* The birth of Christ. Matt. 2: 1-12. *Tuesday.* The sojourn in Egypt. Matt. 2: 13-23. *Wednesday.* The angel choir. Luke 2: 8-20. *Thursday.* Simeon's prophecy. Luke 2: 25-35. *Friday.* Filled with wisdom. Luke 2: 36-40. *Saturday.* Sent to save. 1 John 4: 7-14. *Sabbath.* The incarnate God. John 1: 1-14. (*The I. B. R. A. Selections.*)

HELPS IN STUDYING.

INTRODUCTORY. Again the joyful season has come round when nearly the whole christian world remembers the birth of Jesus. As we gather in spirit around his manger-cradle let the charity and love reign in our hearts. We can best celebrate the visit of the wise men who brought costly gifts to the Babe of Bethleem by giving freely to those whose homes are less comfortable and whose lives are not so bright as our own.

LESSON PLAN. I. The Child Sought. vs. 1-2. II. The Child Feared. vs. 3-8. III. The Child Worshipped. vs. 9-12.

The Herod who sat on David's throne was surnamed "the Great." He reigned by grace of the Roman conquerors. He had tried to conciliate the Jews by repairing, or rather rebuilding, the temple till it displayed almost its first glory, but his tyranny, his vices, and his cruelty caused him to be universally detested. The wise men who came to Jerusalem were probably members of the ancient guild over which Daniel at one time presided¹ and which under the name of "men of the east," existed from very ancient times.² Perhaps their knowledge of the time when Christ should be born came from Daniel originally, for it was he who gave a definite date for the advent of the Messiah.³ That they did not come to render homage to an earthly prince is evident from their openly calling him a king before Herod and declaring that their object in seeking him was a religious one—they wanted to "worship" him. Their enquiries created much alarm both in the palace and in the city. Herod feared that a lawful prince might dethrone him and the people feared the cruelty and bloodshed which might ensue if a struggle for the throne were commenced. In order to answer the enquiry of the wise men Herod summoned the priests and scribes learned in the law, and asked where the prophets declared that the Messiah should be born. By this he clearly shews that he set himself "against the Lord and against his anointed."⁴ He wished,

foolish man, to defeat the purposes of God and cause prophecy to fail. Having received the answer he sought,⁵ Herod next tried to discover the date of the star's first appearance, for he supposed that that would indicate the date of the child's birth, and hence he would have a clue to his age. Hypocritically pretending that he wished to do Christ honor he bade the wise men return and tell him when they had found the object of their search. The wonderful star which had guided the wise men to Jerusalem seems to have disappeared for a time, for when they set out from Jerusalem to Bethleem it again went before them, to their great joy, and did not leave them until it had rested on the very house where Jesus lay. This star could only have been some supernatural light floating in the air not far above the earth. It would have been impossible for one of the heavenly bodies to mark out clearly a single house. The crowds had left Bethleem and Joseph had secured a respectable lodging for the young child and his mother. The wise men found them in a house, not a stable. There they tendered him, representatively, the homage of the Gentiles, whose Saviour he was,⁶ and the costly gifts they brought doubtless defrayed the expenses of the flight into Egypt and the sojourn there. He to whom all things are naked and opened knew the heart of Herod⁷ and, sending the wise men home another way, gave the "holy family" time to escape the cruel edict of the tyrant.⁸

¹Dan. 2: 48. ²Job 1: 3; Esther 1: 13. ³Dan. 9: 24, 25. ⁴Ps. 2: 2. ⁵Micah 5: 2. ⁶Luke 2: 32. ⁷1 Chr. 28: 9; Heb. 4: 13. ⁸Ps. 34: 7; Heb. 1: 14.

LESSONS. 1. Jesus is seeking to save. 2. Only the wicked are troubled when Jesus comes. 3. We may know all about Jesus and yet not love him. 4. If we really want to find Jesus the Holy Spirit will guide us to him. 5. We should give our best to Jesus.