



## LESSON VIII.—NOVEMBER 19.

## Public Reading of the Scriptures.

Nehemiah viii., 1-12. Memory verses 1-3, Read Nehemiah xii., and Luke iv., 16-22.

## Golden Text.

'The ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.' Neh. viii., 3.

## Home Readings.

M. Neh. 8: 1-12. Public Reading of the Scriptures.

T. Neh. 8: 13 to 9:3. Obeying the law.

W. Deut 11: 13-21. God's Word to be studied.

Th. Psalm 119: 1-16. Delight in the Word.

F. 2 Kings 22: 3-13. The Scriptures believed.

S. Jer. 36: 9-24. The Word rejected.

Su. Psalm 19: 7-14. Reward in keeping.

## Lesson Text.

Supt.—1. And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ez'ra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Mo'ses, which the Lord had commanded to Is'ra-el.

School.—2. And Ez'ra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.

3. And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morn'g until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.

4. And Ez'ra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mat-tith'ah, and She'ma, and An-a-i'ah, and U-ri'jah, and Hil-ki'ah, and Ma-a-se'iah on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pe-da'iah, and Mish'a-el, and Mal-chi'ah, and Ha'shum, and Hashbad'a-na, Zech-a-ri'ah, and Me-shul'lam.

5. And Ez'ra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up:

6. And Ez'ra blessed the Lord the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands; and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

7. Also Jesh'u-a, and Ba'ni, and Sher-e-bi'ah, Ja'min, Ak'min, Shab-beth'a-i, and the Le'vites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place.

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

9. And Ne-he-mi'ah which is the Tir'sha-tha, and Ez'ra the priest the scribe, and the Le'vites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.

10. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength.

11. So the Le'vites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved.

12. And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

## Suggestions.

Nehemiah had brought the people together and made them feel their common bond in the need of building the walls of Jerusalem for protection. Then he had appealed to the rich to make restitution to their poorest brethren of the pledges and mortgages they had taken from them (Neh. v., 11, 12), thus fostering the spirit of brotherliness and unity.

But Nehemiah found that many abuses had crept into the life of the dwellers in Jerusalem mostly through ignorance of what God required of his people. They seem to have had no copy of the law, as the Scriptures were then called, until Ezra returned after thirteen years' absence in which he had probably been copying the Scriptures, containing the law of God and the history of God's people, and putting them into their present shape. When the Jews had finished building the wall, and had got a more settled and secure feeling, they gladly gathered themselves together to hear the wonderful law of God read. All the men and women and children who could understand the reading gathered in the public square near the watergate and listened with close attention while Ezra read from early morning until noon time.

Ezra stood on a sort of tower or pulpit with thirteen of the leading men of Jerusalem, and the people all stood round to listen, they probably sat down to listen to the explanations, but stayed in the same place all the time. A great many of the Levites helped also in the explanation of the law.

Before beginning to read, Ezra solemnly, yet joyfully praised God for his wonderful law, and the people joined in the worship saying, Amen, Amen. Then Ezra and perhaps the thirteen nobles with him, read loudly and distinctly the words of the book, and gave the meaning. The people hearing the holy and just decrees of Jehovah, began to realize how greatly their thoughts and conduct differed from his requirements. And with the sight of their shortcomings and sin, they were filled with sorrow, and wept.

But Nehemiah, the governor, bid the people not to keep on mourning, but to rejoice in that this holy and righteous God was also all powerful, and joy in the Lord would be the strength to keep his holy law. The joy of the Lord is your stronghold from danger and temptation. The joy of the Lord makes us strong against discouragement and evil. The joy of the Lord is so engrossing and satisfying, that we can afford to despise the pleasures of this world. To keep filled with the joy of the Lord, we must live in the presence of the Lord, drinking in constantly his life and peace and joy.

The Jews began to understand that Jehovah was the God of life and joy, not sadness. So they spent the rest of that day in gladness and feasting, and sending good cheer to the poorer ones or those who had no homes. So we on our feast days, Christmas, New Year's day or Thanksgiving, should not only be joyful ourselves, but should see that others are made glad in our joy (Luke xiv., 12-14). There are always those for whom nothing is provided, unless we send a festive portion, there are always those who are homeless and particularly lonely on such days unless we invite them to share the joy of our homes. A single act of loving hospitality may by the grace of God save some young life from destruction, or reclaim a wanderer by the thoughts of God's love shown forth in the lives of his children.

The reason that this particular day was holy, was that it was the first day of the seventh month (Neh. vii., 73: Lev. xxiii., 24), one of the extra Sabbaths or holy days of which there were eight in the Jewish year.

The next day the people gathered together again to hear the law read. When they found that the children of Israel were commanded to keep the feast of tabernacles in the seventh month, they immediately got branches of trees and made booths to dwell in. They kept the feast seven days according to the command, reading and studying the Scriptures diligently. (Deut. xvi., 13-15).

As they continued to study the law they continued to amend their life to its precepts. They began to sustain the temple worship and to keep the Sabbath holy. When a sincere man studies the law of God, his life begins to change. The best laws, and all good laws the world over, are founded on the Scriptures.

## The Bible Class.

God's law—Matt. v., 17-24: xxii., 36-40; John 1., 17: Gal. v., 3, 4: Heb. vii., 19: Ps. 1., 1-3; xix., 7-11: xxxvii., 31; xl., 8; cxix., 1, 2, 9, 11, 13, 24, 29, 30, 62, 72, 92, 97, 111, 113, 142, 163, 165.

Joy—Ps. xxx., 5: Hab. iii., 17, 18: Luke vi., 23: Isa. xxxv., 10: Zeph. iii., 17: Matt. xxv., 21: I Thess. 1., 6: Acts v., 41; xiii., 52.

## Primary Lesson.

The Bible is a wonderful Book. In it God tells us what we are like naturally, and what we must be like as his children, and how to be like him.

God is holy and just and merciful, and he wants us to be the same. But no man can keep the commandments of God, in his own strength. Only by having our hearts made clean by the blood of Jesus, and by having him living in our hearts to keep them clean, can we please God.

In the Bible we find stories about real men, good men who obeyed God, and bad men who disobeyed him. We find there, too, the stories of children. Samuel, whose mother gave him to God and who lived in the temple and served God there. David, a shepherd lad who loved God and whom God chose to be king over Israel. The little Jewish girl who was carried away to be a slave in a heathen country, who told Naaman the wealthy leper, that there was a prophet in Israel whose God could heal the worst diseases. She was a little foreign missionary.

We should study the Gospel stories over and over again. They are true because they are about Jesus, the Truth. We must ask the Holy Spirit to make us understand the Word of God, and to keep remembering the Lord Jesus.

The Bible is like a letter from God to us. If you had a letter from your mother, or some dear friend far away, would you not be anxious to read it and to understand what it said? Would you not think often of the words in the letter and try to do the things it suggested?

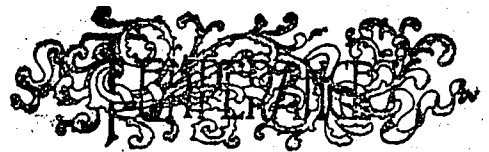
If God loves us enough to send us such a big letter, should not we love him enough to want to read it and understand it?

## Junior C. E.

Nov. 26. For what to praise God, and how? Ps. 8: 1-9. (A Thanksgiving meeting.)

## C. E. Topic.

Nov. 26. Our return for the Lord's benefits. Ps. 116: 12-19. (A thanksgiving meeting.)



## Tobacco Catechism.

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

## CHAPTER XXIV.—SOCIAL PHASE.

1. Q.—Give the great moral principle by which society is governed?

A.—No one has a right to do anything which in the least interferes with the rights and well-being of others.

2. Q.—Does the tobacco user violate this principle?

A.—He most certainly does, by exposing those who do not use it to the poisonous breath and smoke which he causes.

3. Q.—Is he guilty of wrong-doing when he acts in this manner?

A.—Yes; no man can break the golden rule without doing wrong, and the tobacco user undoubtedly does commit a wrong.

4. Q.—Is the tobacco habit a social custom?

A.—It is, and its evil effects may be plainly seen upon the thousands of boys and men who are rendered unfit to cope with the labor and trials of life.

5. Q.—To what does this habit tend?

A.—By the associations which it encourages, the habit tends only to evil. A love for strong drink, for gambling, and a life of crime, shame, and misery is often the result.

6. Q.—What does the use of tobacco involve?

A.—A needless and sinful waste of time, strength, and money.

7. Q.—Why is the use of tobacco a waste of money?

A.—Because tobacco nourishes no man,