

Sabbath School Teacher.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

THE WORD MADE FLESH.

John 1: 1-18.

GOLDEN TEXT.—The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us.—John 1. 14.

INTRODUCTORY.

Like many other parts of the Sacred Scripture the Gospel of John has in these days been subjected to the fire of criticism. It has stood the ordeal and come out of it unharmed. The most reliable scholarship of the age has ascertained that it was written by the beloved disciple, the Apostle John, between the years 80 and 90 A.D., when John was in Ephesus. The Gospel is the authentic and inspired testimony of an eye-witness, of one who was profoundly influenced by the truth of Christ, and who under divine guidance wrote with a direct and practical end in view, that "Ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name."

I. The Eternal Word.—The Word was made or became flesh, but in the beginning in the past ages of eternity He was. He was before all things and by Him all things consist. The beginning here spoken of is the same that in the Book of Genesis belongs to a past eternity before creation. He was the Word. Words are the interpreters, the revealers of thought; Christ is the revealer to us of the thoughts of God. Creation is the revelation of God's majesty, power and goodness. In this work Christ was the revealer. Providence is a revelation of the divine wisdom and goodness, and here also Christ is the interpreter of the purposes of God. In the work of redemption Christ unfolds to a lost and guilty world the infinite love, justice and mercy of God. In the Gospel age, the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us. Christ's own declaration is, "he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, existed from eternity. "The same was in the beginning with God." Christ was God's agent in the creation of the universe. "All things"—everything however great or however small—"were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." Christ is the source of all life. All life must come from the Living One. This is directly true of eternal life which is God's gift through Jesus Christ. His life is the light of men, the light that gladdens all nature, the light of joy and purity, the light of understanding, the light of the soul. The light shineth in the darkness—the darkness of ignorance and sin in man's nature and in the moral world. Into this darkness the true light shines, but the darkness does not apprehend the light, the soul darkened by sin does not by its natural powers perceive that light. The darkness does not swallow up the light, and the light is shining more and more unto the perfect day.

II. The Forerunner of Christ.—The coming of Christ was clearly foretold by the prophets centuries before. When He was about to enter on His public ministry His coming is heralded by John the Baptist. He too was divinely sent on his special mission. He was sent from God, and was named by Him. The purpose of John's mission is expressed. He came for a witness. He was to bear his testimony to Christ, to bear witness of the Light, one of the many names most fittingly ascribed to Christ. John pointed out Jesus as the Messiah, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, and by his ministry in the wilderness preparing the people for the teaching and work of Jesus. The end of his testimony was directly practical, "that all men through Him might believe." John was not the Light—Christ alone is that—but the reflector of the Light.

III. Christ's Advent.—He came into the world as the uncreated Light. He is the true light, not merely in opposition to false and misleading lights, but the one, true, genuine source of all light that has come into the world. He lighteth every man. All moral and spiritual light that men possess is Christ given illumination. All light comes from above. Without Him we can only walk in darkness. He was in the world, present in ever-expanding, enlightening and life-giving influence. He was the Creator, and therefore had claims to be received by men when he came. Though He was the source of all good, though He was the Creator of men, they nevertheless rejected Him; "the world knew Him not." Many of those on whom He had the strongest claims failed to recognize Him. They were His own yet they received Him not. This was specially true of the Jewish people as a whole. The official Jewish world handed Him over to be crucified. There were people in that age, as in every age, who received Christ as the Messiah, their Saviour and Lord. They believed on Him, and to all such He gives the power to become His children, and the right to claim all the privileges and blessings of this divine relationship. All such are born anew and from above into this Sonship. This is what is meant by regeneration. That is a divine work. It is not accomplished by blood, that is it cannot be derived from earthly parents, nor by the purpose and determination of the individual, or the effort of others, however good or however wise they may be; it must come from God alone, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Word became flesh; that is what is meant when it is said that He became incarnate. The divine nature took on the human form. Jesus Christ became the God-man, "two distinct natures, one person forever." This is the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. We may not understand it, but we cannot deny it. In our own case there are two distinct natures, soul and body, whose mysterious union we can neither explain nor deny. Those who are thus savingly united to Jesus Christ behold His glory, the glory that is peculiarly His own, as the only begotten Son of God, in whom the divine glory is reflected. He is full of grace and truth, grace, the favour and mercy of God, and the truth of God that makes known to us His perfections and His purposes. John the Baptist bore earnest and emphatic testimony to Jesus Christ. Christ's ministry followed that of John, but it was essentially higher and immediately efficacious. Then He was before John, since He existed from eternity. John the writer of the Gospel, says of himself and of all believers, that "of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" that is grace in addition to grace. The law as a means of grace had served its purpose. It had been given by Moses, but now grace and truth, more precious divine gifts, come by Jesus Christ. God is invisible. The only begotten Son of God makes Him known to us as the Father. All Christ's redeeming work is an unfolding to us of God's glorious perfections.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

The Saviour that God has sent into this world is eternal, all-powerful, divine. He is the author of eternal salvation. Christ became man that He might save man from sin, and that He might have the fullest sympathy with the sorrows of humanity. Christ is still the only true light from whom men can receive their enlightenment. We can only obtain the blessings that Christ came to bestow, by receiving Him as our Lord and Saviour.

THE MISSIONARY WORLD.

AFRICAN TERRORS.

Two of the most dreadful evils incident to native life in Africa have ever been superstition and slavery. All the principal tribes, like the Magwangwara, Makololo and Angoni, in South Central Africa, among whom the universities and Scottish missionaries labour, are exposed to these perils, and consequently insecurity is a marked feature of tribal existence in and around Lake Nyassa. On the imaginations of the Africans the witch-doctors had an awful hold, especially when the want of rain, death of cattle and sickness of people afflicted the native communities. The witch-doctor, with his bones and his drums, played a leading part in the lives and destinies of thousands inhabiting the Dark Continent. He then orgies, or the witch-dances, when they danced out the demons which were supposed to possess the natives, were very common events. The hideous sounds proceeding from these pagan rites usually disturbed the missionary's sleep and even endangered his life. More terrible was the poison ordeal. Its application caused an unceasing reign of terror. In times of peace and among the strongest tribes this vile practice had sway. If any one dies who has not arrived at old age, or, peradventure, a child has been killed by a lion or leopard, the report is spread that some wicked person has bewitched or cast an evil eye on the deceased. Promptly the medicine-man, the witch-doctor, is sent for, and, on pretence of smelling out the culprit, he selects two or three natives to whom he administers the cup of poison. Chiefs have frequently given it wholesale to entire villages and afterward seized the goods of the poisoned persons or distributed them among the relatives of the supposed victim.

The cruel traffic in slaves has made the African the prey of the slave-holder from the times of Pharaoh down to the present day. Far beyond knowledge were the sorrows, misfortunes and sufferings of the hapless negro. A track of desolation always remained behind the forays of the slave-hunter. Arabs, and, alas, the most powerful tribes, made periodical assaults on peaceful native villages, which they burned to the ground. The men were slain and the women and children carried off or sold into wretched captivity. As the weaker tribes were the more numerous, they lived in such fear that a child or a woman dreaded going outside the little village lest the Arabs should snatch them away.

Horrid sights, says Mr. F. L. Moir, may be witnessed on the shores of Lake Nyassa and Tanganyika on the passing of the slave caravans, in which scores of women are fastened to chains or thick bark ropes. In addition to their heavy burden of grain or ivory many of them carry a little brown baby, as dear to the heart of a negress slave as the child of a mother in Christian land. On they struggle through the jungle, the dense forest, and across burning plains beneath their double load, knowing sorrowfully that when they show fatigue "not the slaver's ivory, but the living child would be torn from them and thrown aside to die." Daily the foot of the missionary is piercing these dark regions in order that his mission stations may become centres of light and havens of refuge for Africa's sorely-oppressed children.—*Rev. James Johnston.*

CANDIDATES FOR THE MINISTRY IN CHINA.

The raising up of Chinese preachers and pastors, to work among their own people, is justly considered one of the most important of missionary works. In a more recently-occupied part of our field three men have developed into preachers from attendance upon the missionary and aiding him in his work. Of these two are now labouring with us and one has died. The boarding school has furnished us with a few men, some good and some inferior, of whom three are still employed by us as preachers. A school for the training of adult converts of good promise, giving them suitable biblical instruction for about three years, has given us most of our present number, or ten out of fifteen preachers. The same sources in nearly similar proportions have supplied the two other missions located in Foochow with their force of preachers.

It is more and more the judgment of older missions in China that, as a rule, graduates of boarding-schools need to have several years of actual work in some other line before their fitness to be candidates for the ministry can be determined. For several years we have had no suitable candidates; but last year six persons were received into a class for biblical study, and two more were added to the number this year, making eight in all, in ages ranging between twenty and thirty years. All were engaged in various kinds of native self-supporting work when they gave evidence of conversion to Christ, and afterward of probable fitness to become preachers of the truth. Three were agriculturists, working on their own or hired patches of land (one of them also engaged in fishing), one was a beater of pewter leaf (used in idol worship), one was an embroiderer, one a yamun runner, one a partner in a small medicine shop, his father was a temple-keeper, and since his death his mother retains the place, with its \$40 of yearly pay; the other was also employed in a medicine shop.

The class is instructed in the Bible and related subjects two hours a day, and their residence is distributed among our four Foochow churches and chapels. Each one aids in the regular evening preaching and other meetings in these preaching places. All read the Scriptures and other books in the Chinese character colloquial quite well, and have

some knowledge of the classical language; but none of them are classical scholars. They all have at least a moderate degree of mental ability, and are wholly in touch with their people, and above all seem truly earnest in trying to bring men to Christ. We hope they will be useful in the Lord's field both as sowers and reapers.

The need of many highly-educated men as native pastors is not very apparent so long as, with a few exceptions, the Christians who can meet in one place are few in number, poor and mostly illiterate, and unable—at least unwilling—to give such pastors any adequate support. It must be kept in mind also that the more highly native preachers are educated, the more liberal support do they demand. And this as a rule tends to prevent their becoming pastors of self-supporting Churches, except the one or two largest Churches of the mission, where there are several missionaries to help shoulder the pecuniary burden. It is to be feared that any high degree of education for the mass of native preachers in China for a score of years to come would mean the putting off for an indefinitely longer time of the prospect of advance toward self-supporting Churches. A similar tendency is seen in Japan, where there is in some places a decided preference for the position of a native evangelist receiving foreign pay, over that of a native pastor depending upon the native congregation for his support.

AFRICANS NOT ALL NEGROES.

"The popular notion that all Africans are Negroes is a delusion. The greater part are not Negroes. Their proper home is the immense Soudan—a tract of country 4,000 miles broad by about 500 deep, extending from the basin of the Congo River on the south to the Sahara on the north, and from Egypt in the east to Senegambia in the west. We regard them as the sin-degraded descendants of originally purer, wiser and happier races. Degradation, like death, is the wages of sin; and in this world, as all experience teaches, it attaches to nations as well as to individuals. Sin reigns in Africa, and sin which, in spite of their heathenism, the people know to be sin. But they are ashamed of their cannibalism, and try to conceal it from the white man, and so with other crimes. Religion they have none, for the fetich-worship to which they are addicted cannot be called a religion. They are not even idol-worshippers, though they have certain images which they regard as charms more than as gods. They do not worship the sun or deify the elements. Their ignorance of all religious truth is utter, and their sole point of sound philosophy is a hazy belief in a future life. But they are teachable, for they are of childlike natures."—*New World of Central Africa.*

TWO PICTURES.

First Picture.—King Theebaw was inaugurated as King of Upper Burmah, at Mandalay, about thirty years ago. He was an incarnation of cruelty. Several hundreds of the nobility and of his own family were massacred to celebrate the event. To undertake missionary work in Upper Burmah meant death or captivity to the individual attempting it. When the city of Mandalay was built, the eight gates surrounding the city were supposed to have been made secure against all invaders by the sacrifice of fifty-six young girls!

Second Picture.—In October, 1890, the Baptist Missionary Conference was held in the same city of Mandalay. The Judson Memorial Church was dedicated during the Conference. Eight thousand rupees of the money needed were given by Christians in Burmah; the Karen choir furnished excellent music, and on the evening of the closing day there was held a communion service at which there were present, Tamils, Telugus, Burmans and Karens, Shans and Tounghus, English and Eurasians, Chinese and Americans, representing 500 churches and 30,000 members in Burmah, all "one in Christ Jesus," about the table of the Lord.

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BEAUTIFUL WOMEN.

Beauty is, perhaps, the greatest power the world holds. It has in all ages controlled the actions of men, and swayed the destinies of nations. Woman with her fatal gift of beauty has always been able "to smile men down imperiously as Venus did the waves." But many women do not fully realize the power of beauty, or they would never allow the roses to be stolen from their cheeks, the light to die from their eyes, the fawn-like gracefulness to depart from their step. They would at once fly to the great and universal cure for the many weaknesses and irregularities common to women, Beecham's Pills, which (if your druggist does not keep them) will be mailed to you for 25 cents, by B. F. Allen Co., 365 and 367 Canal St., New York.