

The Sunday School

BIBLE LESSON

Abridged from Peloubet's Notes.

Fourth Quarter.

REVIEW OF CHRISTMAS LESSON.

Lesson XIII. December 25.—Heb. 1:1-9.

Read Luke 2:1-20. Commit Verses 1, 2.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts, Mal. 3:7.

GOLDEN TEXT.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord, Luke 2:11.

THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH AND THE LESSONS IT TEACHES.

NOTE 1. That there were nineteen kings and one queen, or twenty in all, and all of one dynasty, that of David; while in Israel there were nineteen kings, but of nine different dynasties, implying a different condition and character of the people.

NOTE 2. The kingdom of Judah lasted, according to the Revised Chronology, three hundred and fifty years, while the kingdom of Israel existed only two hundred and fifteen years. The reasons for this can be seen by comparing the story of Israel with that of Judah. Turn to the Review of the Third Quarter.

NOTE 3. The bad kings, and the evils they wrought in morals and religion, introducing idolatry, and its license and crimes, corruption, selfishness, oppression, and luxury. Some of these rulers were Rehoboam, Jehoram, Athaliah, Ahaz, Manasseh, and the last four kings.

NOTE 4. What God did to keep the nation from growing worse and going to their own ruin. There were prophets, written Scriptures, warnings, prosperity, adversity, five great revivals of religion, lesser punishments and dangers, rewards of obedience, the fate of the northern kingdom.

NOTE 5. Study the work of the prophets, their mission, their names, and the place in the history where they prophesied; how they were treated, their character, their visions of hope, their written words.

NOTE 6. How in spite of all this they rushed on to their own ruin, slowly at first, then more rapidly at last, as in the rapids above Niagara, then over the precipice to destruction.

NOTE 7. That after all there was a remnant left, a good seed, the living stump of the beautiful tree. The revivals and the prophets accomplished this work that all the time to the end there was a small but real people of God, faithful and true, sometimes hidden like the seven thousand true worshippers in Elijah's time, sometimes more in evidence, but always existing. They carried the truth into captivity. They were the nucleus of the return. The new shoot sprang up from the old stump because of this spiritual life the remnant preserved.

NOTE 8. There came a "too late" for the great body of the nation. Read Prov. 1:23-32 as a commentary on their fate.

A LESSON IN GEOGRAPHY.—Compare the charts with the map and see how the surrounding nations influenced the fate of Judah. Palestine was wonderfully well situated for the work which had been divinely given to it. It was small and isolated, and defended on most sides from attack, like most of the greatest nations that have endured long, as Greece, Rome and England; and yet there were avenues by which it could influence other nations.

The two great political powers of the world were Assyria on the northeast and Egypt on the southwest. Palestine was on the narrow highway between them. If the Jews had served God as they ought, these powers might have been willing that their country should be the natural bulwark between them, for neither would be willing that the other should possess it.

Disobedience, pride and morals blinded the Jews' eyes, and instead of trusting God and being independent, they were continually trying to ally themselves to either one of these, and thus making enemies of the other. And this led to their ruin. As missionaries of the kingdom of God they were safe. As enemies of the nations they were conquered.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

1. Evils that seem not so very bad, when introduced into a nation or into a heart, if they find a congenial soil, grow and thrive, and drive out the virtues.

ILLUSTRATIONS. "The thistle is the emblem of Scotland, and may be said to be worshipped by all patriotic Scotchmen. Well, it happened that a Scotch resident of Melbourne, while visiting the old country, took it in his head to carry a thistle with him on his return to Australia. So he placed the plant in a pot and watered it carefully every day during the voyage from London to Melbourne. When he arrived his performance was noticed in

the newspapers, and a subscription dinner was arranged in honor of the newly arrived plant. About two hundred Scotchmen sat down to dinner, at which the thistle was the centrepiece and the great object of attraction. The next day the thistle was planted with a great deal of ceremony in the public garden of Melbourne, and it was carefully watched and tended by the gardener, who happened to be a Scotchman.

The thistle blossomed and everybody rejoiced. The seeds of the thistle were borne on the breezes, and all over the colony of Victoria they found a lodging in the soil, grew and prospered, and sent out more seeds.

"That thistle has been the cause of ruin to many a sheep and cattle run all over Australia. Thousands, yes, millions of acres of grass have been destroyed by that pernicious weed. Anathemas without number and of the greatest severity have been showered on the Scotchman who brought the plant to Australia, and the other Scotchman who placed it in the public garden."

A similar experience came from the escape, in Eastern Massachusetts, of some gypsy moths from a scientist who was experimenting with them. It has already cost the country a million dollars to exterminate the pest, besides the loss of fruit.

The character of a people decides its destiny. A would-be statesman said not long ago that purified politics were an iridescent dream, and that "the decalogue and Golden Rule had no place in statesmanship." But the man or the nation that lives according to such principles will find their prosperity to be an "iridescent dream."

3. Revivals have a lasting effect, although there is often an outward reaction. A shower does good although the rain ceases to fall and the water sinks out of sight in the ground. Revivals kept alive the true kingdom of God. Israel had no revivals and perished utterly.

4. "It may be well for us to listen to Hesiod, who maintains not, with Plato, punishment is a suffering that follows wrong doing; but that it is a twin birth with wrong doing, springing from the same soil and the same root."

5. God punishes as a last resort when other methods fail, and would rather not punish, but it is necessary.

A writer in The Country Gentleman gives the following formula for feeding ducklings: The first meal after being placed in the brooder is cornmeal and bran equal parts, with a handful of coarse and introduced; all thoroughly mixed with cold water and fed in a moist condition. After they are two days old a small quantity of soaked beef scraps is added. This mixture should be fed five times daily, but only just as much as they will eat up clean. They should always come up to the feed board lively and hungry.

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