

are not equal. We remember, however, that outward prosperity is not God's best gift. His best gift is inward peace. John was better off than Herod. John had nothing, yet because he was at peace with God, he possessed all things (2 Cor. 6: 10). He might truly have said:

"My crown is in my heart, not on my head;  
Not deck'd with diamonds and Indian stones,  
Nor to be seen; my crown is called content!  
A crown it is that seldom kings enjoy."

Herod thought not in his revels of his helpless captive, but with startling suddenness he was reminded of his existence. The height of merriment was reached when Salome, robed by her mother in the fantastic garb of a dancing-girl, entered the scene of carousing and engaged in an ungodly dance (Ex. 32: 19-25, 1 Cor. 10: 7). Just as the Danube flows through the heart of Europe and pours itself into the Black Sea by its three mighty mouths, so the iniquitous stream of this court life poured itself by the "issue" of these three hearts into a Black Sea of diabolism scarcely equalled in human history (v. 8-11).

"Keep thy heart with all diligence"; you are responsible for the "issue" of your own life. Men talk in a profound way about heredity and of our sins being "blood legacies" for which we are hardly responsible. A recent writer on this subject says: "Just as the current of the mighty river carries the floating spar over the rocks, under the bridges, and along the banks, playing with it as a child with a new toy, so men would have us think that each life is helpless,"—the Herods and the Johns—and that each life "is at the disposal of passions and tendencies over which it has no control. As a comfortable evasion of responsibility, the doctrine of heredity is an important discovery, and in it many men find much consolation; but if in that spar there are hidden forces abundantly able to cope with those of the river; if instead of being a helpless log it is known to be a thoroughly equipped river boat; if it has ability at any time it pleases to cut through waves and sail dead against the current, the excuse for shipwreck is only a lie founded on delusion and desire." The Herodian family were of bad blood, and this group formed a family compact (from choice) with the devil and were true to the terms. John kept his heart, but lost his head. "He being dead, yet speaketh." His voiceless tongue speaks to-day through this lesson.



LESSON 13.—MARCH 27, 1898.

### Review.

GOLDEN TEXT. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."—Matt. 16: 16.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday: Matt. 4: 1-11. Tuesday: Matt. 4: 17-25. Wednesday: Matt. 5: 1-12. Thursday: Matt. 6: 5-15. Friday: Matt. 6: 24-34. Saturday: Matt. 11: 20-30. Sunday: Matt. 12: 1-13.

The theme of the Gospel according to Matthew, which we have studied for the last three months, is the Kingdom of Heaven. The coming of this Kingdom was announced by John the Baptist (Matt. 3: 2). A Kingdom which "cometh not with observation" (Luke 20: 17). "For the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14: 17.)

Jesus Christ, the King of this kingdom, was introduced to us in the first lesson. At His baptism we heard Him endorsed by the Father, "This is my beloved Son," and we saw Him anointed to His Kingship by "the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him." Thus the communication of this great fact was made to the people, through their ears and their eyes, that they should become

obedient to His behests and live loyal subjects and citizens of His Kingdom.

It was a kingdom of small beginnings. His cabinet consisted of eleven unlettered Galileans and one from Judea. But there was in that little band the element, the seed-germ, of a power which was to be world-wide in its conquest, all inclusive in its scope.

Numbered amongst His subjects shall be the Esquimaux, shivering in his frozen hut; the African, sweltering in his kraal; the Hindoo, from the land where Juggernaut has ceased its pilgrimage; and Chinese, from the flowery land. From mountain and valley, continent and island of the sea, this King shall harvest the nations for His Kingdom, and Satan, conquered in the wilderness by three verses from Deuteronomy (lesson 2), shall be finally overcome by "the sword of the Spirit"—"the Word of God," which is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword."

After Jesus had gone forth in His public ministry, the people, and even members of his own family, failed to recognize His true office, nature, and character. They were bitterly hostile to Him; they said, "He is beside Himself."

In the days of the Crusaders, a knight left his home and family to engage in the conflicts and struggles of that great enterprise. He was taken a prisoner by the enemy, and languished in prison for many years; being set at liberty, he returned to find that his family did not recognize in him the husband and father. At last they thought of the strong bow that in days gone by none could pull to speed its arrows but their own sire. He took the bow and with ease drew the string, and sent the flying arrow to its mark, identifying himself as the one for whom they had waited and watched so long. So Jesus sought to prove Himself the Messiah, when, as King, He issued His inaugural address or proclamation (lesson 4). Then he pulled the bow of *Instruction*, and "taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." When He opened His mouth and taught them, saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," etc., He declared His policy and the basis on which rests His government. He told who might be subjects and the terms on which they might be accepted. He defined the duties and responsibilities resting upon each individual, and clearly set forth the privileges to be enjoyed.

It is a social kingdom. The rich and the poor meet together round one common throne, praying, "Our Father," give us our bread, forgive us, lead us, deliver us (lesson 5). Within this kingdom on earth are mixed and mingled the wheat and the tares, the loyal and rebellious (lesson 11). This King sent forth His chosen ambassadors two by two, qualified and equipped to deliver His ultimatum, the acceptance or rejection of which decides whether there shall be war or peace between man and God (lesson 9).

He also pulled the bow of *Power*. During the time of the judges and the kings of Israel there were often supernatural manifestations of divine power, but most of them were visitations of divine displeasure against sin. The miracles of Christ were not of this kind. When He put forth His divine power it was in sublime forms and for higher objects (lesson 3).

The teaching and power of this King has been as manifest to our eyes and ears during the study of this quarter's lessons, as was the dual witness of Christ's divinity to the multitude by the Jordan. So we can say with Peter, in the language of the Golden Text, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of God." Through our sight and hearing He has captured the confession of the tongue.