

LESSON XII—March 22nd, 1896.

Faithful and Unfaithful Servants. LUKE 12: 37-48.

(Commit to memory verses 37 and 38).

GOLDEN TEXT: "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." Eph. 5: 18.

PROVE THAT—We should be ready for Christ's coming. Luke 12: 40.

SHORTER CATECHISM. Quest. 52. *What are the reasons annexed to the second commandment?* A. The reasons annexed to the second commandment are, God's sovereignty over us, his propriety in us, and the zeal he hath to his own worship.

LESSON HYMNS. *Children's Hymnal*. Nos. 71, 70, 169, 176.

DAILY PORTIONS. *Monday*. Faithful and Unfaithful Servants. Luke 12: 35-48. *Tuesday*. Need of Watchfulness. Matt. 24: 42-51. *Wednesday*. Ready and unready. Matt. 25: 1-13. *Thursday*. Be Watchful. Rev. 3: 1-8. *Friday*. Walking wisely. Eph. 5: 6-21. *Saturday*. True service. Eph. 6: 1-9. *Sabbath*. Reward of integrity. Isa. 33: 13-17. (*The I. B. R. A. Selections*).

HELPS IN STUDYING.

INTRODUCTORY. The exact time when Jesus spoke the discourse in which our lesson occurs is a matter of much dispute, and is of no practical consequence to us in studying the passage. Some place it in the connection in which it stands here, immediately after the feast in the Pharisee's house; others think that it belongs to his last journey through Perea to Jerusalem. There are no parallel passages.

LESSON PLAN. I. Faithfulness and its Reward. vs. 37-44. II. Unfaithfulness and its Punishment. vs. 45-48.

Our lesson is part of one of the longer discourses of Jesus and was spoken at a time when the scribes and pharisees had declared themselves his enemies and sought to "catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him" (ch. 11: 53, 54). It is full of solemn instruction in regard to the nature of true discipleship.

I. The true followers of Jesus are to be like servants who are awaiting their master's return from a wedding. He is sure to come, but they do not know the exact hour so they have their long loose robes tucked up under their girdles and their lanterns, or torches, lighted¹ so that as soon as he comes in sight they may be ready to meet him and wait upon him. A master who has such servants will greatly honor them² and will treat them as kindly as they treat him. So Christ is coming again,³ we do not know just when,⁴ but he is certainly coming to each one of us when he calls us to himself at death, so we ought to be ready all the time. He does not want us to be standing idle mean time, but busy about the various duties he gives us from day to day. A burglar does not give any warning, but if anyone knows that he is going to try and break into the house some time during the night, he will watch so as not to be robbed while he is sleeping. So we need not expect that strange and wonderful things will precede Christ's coming. If we are not wakeful and watchful he will come when we are spiritually sleeping like the

foolish virgins, and we shall be shut out from his kingdom at last.

II. Christ has appointed some work to each of his servants. We are not to live for our own selfish ends, but to live for Christ, and to do all the good we can in the world. The reason why God gives any talent, or position, or influence is that it may be used for his glory and the good of others.⁵ If we keep this in mind he will bless us in our work.⁶ It will bring us much joy while we do it, and wider opportunities of doing good will open up before us. Then, when all our work in this world is finished, we will receive the crown of life at his hand. If, on the other hand, we forget our responsibility for our blessings and privileges,⁷ if we use them to gratify our ambition, or vanity, or love of pleasure; if we are selfish and tyrannical, covetous and passionate, living for our own pleasures only, and forgetful that Christ is coming to ask how we have used all the blessings he has given us—then he will come when we do not expect him,⁸ and our punishment will be exactly what we have deserved. Some whom we regard as very bad indeed will not be really as guilty as we are. They may have had fewer opportunities for learning their duty and less help from the good example of others. Surely if we who have Christian parents and friends, church and Sabbath school, education and comfortable homes, do not try to love and serve our good and gracious Saviour, we will deserve at last to be "beaten with many stripes."⁹

¹ Matt. 25: 1. ² Rev. 3: 21. ³ Pet. 3: 8, 9. ⁴ ch. 21: 34-36; 1 Thess. 5: 2-6; Rev. 3: 3; 16: 15. ⁵ 1 Cor. 4: 2. ⁶ Matt. 25: 21, 22; Luke 19: 17, 26; 22: 29. ⁷ Rom. 2: 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9. ⁸ Prov. 29: 1; 1 Thess. 5: 3; Rev. 3: 3. ⁹ Luke 10: 13-15; Jas. 4: 17; 2 Pet. 2: 21; Jonah 4: 11; 1 Tim. 1: 13; John 15: 22; Lev. 5: 17; Rom. 2: 14, 15.

LESSONS. 1. Watching does not imply inactivity. 2. God's blessings to us should be shared with others. 3. Beware of self-indulgence, it leads to sinful excess. 4. God's punishments are sure and terrible. 5. The love of Christ in the heart is the only sure antidote against "fleshy lusts."