

International S. S. Lessons.

15 July.

VISIT OF THE WISE MEN.

Les. Matt. 2: 1-12. Col. Text, Matt. 2: 11.
Mem. vs. 9-11. Catechism Q. 81.

In last lesson we saw Jesus as an infant in the temple. Then Joseph and Mary instead of going away north with Him to Nazareth, their home, returned south to Bethlehem, where he had been born, and soon afterwards when He was six or eight weeks old, came the visit of the wise men.

These men were from the plains of Babylon. In the book of Daniel we learn that there were many wise or learned men there, and some who pretended to be wise were very foolish.

But how did they know anything about Christ's coming? In this way. The Jews were in captivity in Babylon in Daniel's time, and many of them remained scattered through the Persian Empire. These people had their Scriptures with them and some of their prophecies foretold the coming of Christ. Daniel had been noted among the wise men of that country several hundred years before, and in his book these men would read about Messiah the Prince, and about the time he was to come.

Further, they used to think that any strange grouping of the stars had something to do with the affairs of men. Learned men tell us that about this time there must have been unusual coming together of the stars. Common people would not notice it, but these wise men did, and when they saw it and knew that the time had come spoken of by Daniel, when Messiah the Prince should come, they felt that the stars had something to do with it. Then as this Prince was to be so great they wished to be among the first to do Him honor.

But where should they find Him! They thought that the best plan was to come to Jerusalem, a journey of several hundred miles, and inquire there. How anxious they were to do Him honor when they took so long a journey!

When they came, no one that they asked had heard about His coming, but some of the scribes knew that the old prophets had told how Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem.

They went to Bethlehem, about six miles from Jerusalem, and found Him as they were directed. Then when they looked up they saw the same grouping of the stars that they had seen in their Eastern home, and not knowing that the world moved round they would naturally think that the star had come with them all the way. In addition to this there may have been a miraculous star, but they found Bethlehem by inquiry. Then

they worshipped Him who was born king of the Jews.

It is not probable that they had any idea of who he was. Their idea, as was that of the Jews, was of a great earthly king and kingdom.

When they had been making inquiry in Jerusalem, Herod the king heard of it. He felt that if another king should arise he would be dethroned and perhaps killed, and he determined to prevent this if he could. So he sent for the wise men before they left for Bethlehem, and asked them how long it was since they had first noticed the star. We are not told how long it was, but it is probable they told him they had seen it more than a year previously. Herod then told them that when they had found the king they should come back and tell him, that he might come and worship Him also. But he was deceiving them. He wished to kill Him.

When they had found the Saviour, worshipped Him, and presented their gifts, they would probably remain in Bethlehem for some time before returning to their far Eastern home, and in that time God sent a dream warning them not to go back and tell Herod, but to go home some other way. Herod no doubt thought he was very cunning, that he was going to get possession of the infant king very easily, but he had forgotten as people often do that he had to deal with God. God sent two dreams, one to the wise men telling them not to go back to Herod, and one to Joseph and Mary telling them to escape into Egypt. One of these dreams is mentioned in this lesson and one in the next.

1. If those wise men came so far to pay homage to a king, how much more should we seek and find and worship the Christ.

2. Herod was troubled at the coming of Christ. All guilty ones will be troubled when He comes to judgment. Seek His forgiveness now and you will be ready.

There was a poor Scotch laddie in America at the time of a strange shower of meteors or stars in 1833. Men and women on every hand were in terror for they thought the day of judgment had come. At once the boy was on his feet shouting "Glory to God, I'm ready." Are you ready to meet Him?

22 July.

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

Les. Matt. 2: 13-23. Col. Text, Ps. 121: 8.
Mem. vs. 13-15. Catechism C. 85.

Herod kept waiting and watching from day to day, for the return of the wise men from Bethlehem, and he expected soon to have in his power this child whom he so much dreaded. But days passed and they did not come. Then perhaps he sent down to Bethlehem, which was only six miles distant, to