

## SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

## INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

## LESSON LI.

Dec. 22. } THE SAVIOUR'S LAST WORDS. { Luke xxiv. 41-53.  
1878.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."—Matt. xxviii. 20.

## HOME STUDIES.

M. John xx. 19-31. . . . . The salutation of peace.  
T. John xxi. 1-25. . . . . Feed my lambs.  
W. Luke xxiv. 44-53. . . . . The Saviour's last words.  
Th. { Matt. xxviii. 16-20. } The ascension.  
      { Acts i. 1-12. }  
F. Ps. xxiv. 1-10. . . . . The King of glory.  
S. Eph. i. 1-23. . . . . Head over all things.  
S. Heb. x. 1-14. . . . . On the right hand of God.

## HELPS TO STUDY.

The last words, especially of the good and great, are often memorable. They may be the outgrowth of Christian experience and a blessed testimony to the reality and power of Christianity, like Baxter's: "I have pain—there is no arguing against sense—but I have peace! I have peace!" Or they may be the sad expression of a heart unsatisfied and groping after God, as Goethe's: "Light, more light!" The words of the great Reformers, witnesses for Christ against anti-Christian error and superstition, are fraught with a significance to which we would do well to give heed when we are now again called upon to testify against the same miserable follies and superstitions which are being revived in our midst. Such are Cranmer's confession when he thrust his offending hand among the blazing fagots, "Thou unworthy hand shalt turn first, I will be revenged of thee for subscribing for fear of death to that damned scroll!" and Tyndall's prayer—"Lord, open the eyes of the King of England!" or the prophetic words of Huss to a poor bigot who hurled a burning brand at his head, "O holy simplicity, God send thee better light! You roast the goose (which the word Huss means in Bohemian) now, but after me shall come a swan (i.e., Luther), and he shall escape your fire." And Latimer's, at the stake, "We shall light such a candle by God's grace, in England, this day, as I trust shall never be put out again."

All these are words of bold witnesses. Christ Himself was the great "Witness" "faithful and true" (Rev. i. 5; iii. 14)—who bore witness to the truth, and now He has finished His testimony and sealed it with His blood; and ere He departs hence to the Father, whence He came, He gives His last charge to those whom He had chosen to be His witnesses. Luke appears here to give a summary, in a few brief words, of the instructions of Christ during the "forty days." Our lesson divides itself into two, the charge to the witnesses, and the ascension of Jesus.

I. THE CHARGE OF JESUS TO THE WITNESSES. Vers. 44-49.

"Ye are witnesses," said Jesus to them—ver. 48, Acts i. 8. And the apostles ever kept this before them. This was the peculiarity of the apostolic office. Two things were essential in an apostle, they were to be eye and ear witnesses of the great facts of the life of Jesus, above all of His resurrection—Acts i. 22; 1 Cor. ix. 1; and they must be called by Christ Himself, without any human intervention. St. Paul vindicates his claim to be an apostle on the ground that, although Christ, he had not known Jesus according to the flesh, yet the glorified Saviour in visible form had actually appeared to him on the way to Damascus, and that he was called to his office, not through human mediation, but immediately by the Lord Himself—1 Cor. ix. 1; xv. 8; Gal. i. 1, 11. Both the twelve and St. Paul continually claim to be witnesses—Acts ii. 32; iii. 15; v. 32; xxii. 15; 1 Pet. v. 1; 1 John i. 1, 2.

And every Christian in whom God has revealed His Son (Gal. i. 16) is to be a witness, both in word and in life, to the power and reality and purity of Christianity. He can and ought to bear testimony to his own experience of Christ's power.

Two qualities are requisite in a witness, knowledge and power. These were given to Christ's witnesses.

1. Knowledge, vers. 44-47. Christ Himself was their teacher. But not only did He speak many words unto them and give them the outward and intellectual knowledge of these divine things, but He also opened their understandings, took away the veil from their hearts, 2 Cor. iii. 16, the veil of prejudice, ignorance, and unbelief; and imparted unto them spiritual insight and illumination. It was thus that He enabled them to understand the Scriptures.

We must have the Spirit in order to understand the words of God, for they are spiritually discerned: 1 Cor. ii. 14. In our study of them we must continually lift up our hearts with David's prayer, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." Let us remember lest we be misled by our own imaginations, that "the Spirit in the word and the Spirit in the heart say the same thing."

But what were the words which Christ spoke to them? What was the subject of this teaching?

Evidently our Lord, while no doubt having in mind the whole of His teaching, refers especially to His words respecting that which was the centre and substance of all, namely, His death and resurrection. These he had repeatedly set before them, at first only in obscure allusions, John ii. 19; iii. 14; vi. 51; Matt. ix. 15; xii. 39; but at length "openly," Mark viii. 32; Matt. xvi. 2; xvii. 22, 23; xx. 18, 19.

Christ's own words were fulfilled in those events which had most shaken the faith of His disciples, Luke xii. 23. Christ's death was no unforeseen calamity; from the very first He had set the cross before Him. To this end He had come that He might give His life a ransom for many.

But not only was Christ's death and resurrection the fulfilment of His own words; they were also the fulfilment of the predictions of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament bore witness to Christ; He is the central figure in every page; the substance and subject of its types, its promises and its prophecies.

And in turn Christ bears witness to the Old Testament. He sets upon it the seal of His divine approval, He quotes it in its recognized three-fold division (Note 1), and thus He endorses the whole Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, just as we now have it.

Thus, therefore, it behoved Christ to suffer, not only because in this way His own words and the words of the Old Testament were fulfilled; but because of the divine purpose and the divine love which constrained Him.

The word translated behoved in ver. 46, is the same that is translated must in ver. 44. This must ran through the whole of Christ's life. Yet it does not imply unwillingness; but the endurance and unreservedness with which His whole will and life were given up to the great work of saving lost men: Luke ii. 49; John ix. 4; Mark viii. 39; John xx. 9; Luke xxii. 37.

And this divine necessity is, in ver. 47, laid upon us. The Gospel must be preached among all nations. Christ's Church must be a missionary Church. Here is the responsibility laid upon us. What are we doing to fulfil it? It is the Gospel of Repentance. This is the sinner's part. Turn away from sin—turn to God.

It is the Gospel of the Remission of sins, the full, free, forgiveness which is to be sought, and which is sure to be obtained, in the name of Jesus. There is no salvation in any other name. Acts xiii. 38; Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14; 1 Pet. ii. 24.

This Gospel was to be preached to all nations; all need it; it is adapted to all. There is no limit; but freeness, fullness and sufficiency.

But they were to begin at Jerusalem. This would prove the fidelity of the disciples, who would then face Christ's bitterest enemies; the truth and power of the Gospel, because there the events, it was claimed, took place, and there were the hardened ones who rejected Jesus; and the love of Christ, because it was to be first offered to those who slew him.

2. Power is the other great qualification of witnesses, ver. 49. No machinery, no capacity, no knowledge, can be of use without power. How weak and powerless are even men who have been so long with Christ until they receive this power. It is power from on high, not from themselves, although it was to be in them and fill them; not from the world, although it was to subdue the world; but from the fullness of the risen and ascended Christ to whom all power had been given. Matt. xxviii. 20; Isa. xxxiii. 15.

It is power promised—the promise of the Father. It was the promise of the Son, the promise for which Israel looked. Acts xvi. 7. Then it was the promise of the Spirit; a promise which is to us as well as to them. Acts ii. 39. It is to be tarried for, not in idle, listless waiting, but in earnest, prayerful watching and waiting. The first disciples were praying when the Comforter came. Let us seek the same endowment of power and strength for our work.

With this promise of the Comforter, John xvi. 7, is closely connected another, "the promise of His (Christ's second) coming." 2 Peter iii. 4, 9, 13. A promise is something to be claimed; and something which He who promises, being faithful, will perform.

II. THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST: VERS. 50-53. Thus we have at length come to the last act which appropriately ends the redemptive work of Christ upon earth. In Acts i. 1-14, we have a fuller account, both from one pen, Luke's. It was predicted in the Old Testament, Ps. cx. 1; lx. 18; and by our Lord, John vii. 33. (Note 2.)

The Ascension (1) sets the seal of truth upon the record concerning Him, by rounding out His career to completeness. (2.) It fully attests His divinity. He came from heaven and he returned to heaven. (3.) It gives us proof of the reality of the heavenly world, and a new interest in it. (4.) It gives us the assurance of our own eternal reward. "I go to prepare a place for you." (5.) It permits all His disciples to have personal communion with Him, which would be only to a few if He were here abiding on earth. (6.) It adds to the self-reliance and strength of Christian character. The apostles could never have become such strong saints if Jesus had remained with them to bear their burdens. (7.) It puts honour on Christian faith in Him by leaving His followers to carry forward the great conquest which he began on Calvary.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES.

1. The law of Moses.—The five books of Moses, called the Pentateuch. This was the first division of the Old Testament among the Jews, and was called the Law. When our Lord speaks of the "law of Moses" concerning Himself, there can be little doubt but that he points to all the types and figures which were emblems of Himself, and specially to the sacrifices. In the prophets. This was the second division, and included Joshua, Judges, the four books of Kings, and the prophets except Daniel. In the psalms. This was the third, and was called the Hagiographa, or the holy writings. It contained the Psalms, and all the rest of the canonical books Daniel, Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah being reckoned as one book, and the Chronicles closing the canon. This division of the Old Testament was in use long before the time of Christ, and was what he referred to here; and he meant to say that in each of these divisions of the Old Testament there were prophecies respecting Himself.

2. Bethany.—There is something very touching in the fact that our Lord's ascension took place close to Bethany. It was near Bethany, over the Mount of Olives as it descends to Bethany. There was a small village bordering on the Mount of Olives, where Mary and Martha and Lazarus dwelt. It is probable that they all were present when our Lord left the earth. Carried up into heaven, in Acts it says, "a cloud received Him out of their sight." There was a manifest propriety in the last withdrawal of the Lord while ascending, not consisting in a disappearance of His body as on former occasions since the resurrection; for thus might His abiding humanity be called in question. As it was, He went up past the visible boundary of heaven—the cloud—in human form; and so we think of and pray to Him.

## WORDS OF THE WISE.

YOU cannot dream yourself into a character; you must hammer and forge yourself one.

IF we want to conquer the world for the Lord Jesus Christ we must take men one by one. —Spurgeon.

MEN seldom improve when they have no other models than themselves to copy after. —Goldsmith.

A PULPIT silent on temperance discredits itself as much as a pulpit silent on dishonesty. —Rev. Joseph Cook.

TALENTS are best nurtured in solitude; character is best formed in the stormy billows of the world. —Goethe.

THERE is just now a great clamor and demand for "culture," but it is not so much culture that is needed as discipline. —Shedd.

THINK is in Christianity light enough for those who sincerely wish to see it, and darkness enough to confound those of an opposite disposition. —Pascal.

SUPERSTITION makes every thing of ordinances; infidelity, profanity and mysticism make nothing of them; faith uses them according to divine appointment. —MacDonald.

MINISTERS are not like Plato and Aristotle, the originators of their own doctrines, or the teachers of the doctrines of other men, but simply the dispensers of the truths which God has revealed. —Hodge.

RETRIBUTION, atonement, grace, redemption, a great perdition, a great salvation, a great and divine Saviour, all become credible when there is truly realized the idea of sin. —T. Lewis.

NO flower can blow in paradise that is not transplanted from Gethsemane; no one can taste of the fruit of the Tree of Life that has not tasted of the fruit of the Tree of Calvary. —Leigh Richmond.

THERE are three things which the true Christian desires with respect to sin.—justification, that it may not condemn; sanctification, that it may not reign; and glorification, that it may not be. —Cecil.

THE hiding-places of men are discovered by affliction. As one has aptly said, "Our refuges are like the nests of birds: in summer they are hidden among the green leaves, but in winter they are seen among the naked branches." —J. W. Alexander.

THIS seems to me a great truth, in any exile, or chaos whatsoever, that sorrow was not given us for sorrow's sake, but always, and infallibly, as a lesson to us, from which we are to learn somewhat, and which, the somewhat once learned, ceases to be sorrow. —Carlyle.

HUMAN happiness has no perfect security but freedom; freedom none but virtue; virtue none but knowledge; and neither freedom nor virtue has any vigor or immortal hope except in the principles of the Christian faith, and in the sanctions of the Christian religion. —President Quincy.

## Births, Marriages and Deaths.

NOT EXCEEDING FOUR LINES 25 CENTS.

## MARRIED

At the residence of the bride's mother, on 26th ult., by the Rev. William Fraser, D.D., of Bonhead, and Rev. D. Mitchell, Adam R. Creelman, barrister-at-law, and Maggie Cumming, daughter of the late Rev. John Jennings, D.D.

At the residence of the Hon. D. Macdonald, Toronto, on the 3rd inst., by the Rev. Professor Gregg, D.D., the Rev. Robert Ore, D.D., of Goderich, to Mary, widow of the late Sheriff Macdonald, of Goderich, and third daughter of Mr. James Fraser, of Inverness, Scotland.

At the residence of the bride's father, on the 4th day of December, by the Rev. R. Chambers, John Ball Dow, barrister-at-law, to Mary A., daughter of Dr. Gunn, of Whitby.

## DIED.

In this city on Friday, 6th inst., of pneumonia, Mr. Benjamin Lyman, of Montreal, in his 69th year.

At Georgetown on December 7th, Robert Young, Esq., aged 68 years and 8 months.

## MEETINGS OF PRESBYTERY.

PARIS.—The Presbytery of Paris will meet in Chalmers' Church, Woodstock, on Tuesday the 17th December, at 11.30 a.m.

ELRON.—This Presbytery meets at Clinton, on 14th Jan., 1879, at 11 a.m.

BRUCE.—In the Pre-byterian Church, Port Elgin, on Tuesday, 17th December, at 2 o'clock p.m.

PETERBOROUGH.—In St. Paul's Church, Peterborough, on the third Tuesday of January.

LONDON.—In First Presbyterian Church, London, on the third Tuesday in December at 2 o'clock p.m.

KINGSTON.—In John Street Church, Belleville, on first Tuesday of January, 1879, at 7.30 p.m.

BROCKVILLE.—At Spencerville, on Tuesday, December 17th, at 3 p.m.

TORONTO.—On the second Tuesday of January, 1879, at 11 o'clock a.m.

HAMILTON.—The next stated meeting will be held in Central Church, Hamilton, on the third Tuesday of December, (17th,) at 11 o'clock a.m.

SAUGEN.—In Knox Church, Harriston, on Tuesday the 17th Dec., at 2 o'clock p.m.

MONTREAL.—This Presbytery meets in St Paul's Church, Montreal, on Tuesday, 21st Janua., 1879.

GUELPH.—In Knox Church, Galt, on the third Tuesday of January, 1879, at 10 o'clock a.m.

CHATHAM.—This Presbytery will meet on Tuesday, the 17th December, at Chatham, in Adelaide Street Church, at 11 o'clock a.m.

LANARK AND RENFREW.—On third Tuesday of January, 1879, at half-past one, p.m.

BARRIE.—On Tuesday, 25th January, 1879.