

## INTERNATIONAL S. S. LESSON.

November 20th.

## LESSON VIII.

THE YEAR OF JUBILEE. Lev. 25: 8-17.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound—Ps. 89: 15.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—All true freedom is God's gift.

## LESSON EXPLANATIONS.

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Men live under the power of this world, its fashions, possessions, and demands. They used to be brought under the "power of the world to come." For this end they need *time* to learn of it and reflect on it; and they need fitting methods of bringing it near to them. Among other ways in which God met this double want in Israel were three periods of rest, allied to one another. One of them we now consider.

The first was the *weekly Sabbath*. It is for rest; but it is for more—instruction and worship. The next was the sabbatic year (vs. 1-7), which stopped agriculture, (not trade probably) and gave rest and teaching. The third we now consider—the hallowed fiftieth or "jubilee year." This was God's plan for the people, neglected by them, no doubt, as they fell into carelessness (see Jer. 34: 8-22); but none the less wise and good. V. 8 fixes the *time* after seven sabbatic years. Whether this fiftieth year was in addition to the sabbatic, making two years of rest, or not, is a question among the critics. (The difficulties attending calculations are obvious to any one who thinks how different the views of men as to the beginning of this century, when one is fifty years old, etc.)

V. 8 fixes (1) the *mode of announcing* it by the "trumpet of the jubilee." In Num. 10: 10 we see how much use was made of the trumpet or cornet. *Jubilee* is almost the Hebrew word, if pronounced, as was probably meant in the English Bible, in two syllables (Jubeel), and is uncertain as to its derivation, some making it to mean liberation or the act of freeing, and some a cornet or ram's-horn, while by others it is considered to describe the sound of a trumpet or cornet, as in Ex. 19: 13, its first occurrence. It would be blown wherever priests and Levites lived, and ultimately, no doubt, in every town and village. All the people would hear the joyful sound.

(2) The *exact commencement* is fixed, and is very significant, "on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement." It would be in the evening, after the people had humbled themselves before the Lord, and cried to him, and after the priest in the temple had concluded the solemn rites of that day (see lesson November 6), the trumpet-blast would be heard from town to town, all over the land, carrying joy to many a home, and renewed hope into many a life. No wonder it should become so ready a figure for any good news, especially the proclamation of the gospel. (See Isa. 61: 1, 2 and Ps. 89: 15 etc.) The idea is easily suggested by this arrangement that rest, peace, freedom, and all the abiding blessings come through the great High Priest.

The practical benefits of the year are set forth positively in v. 10. It was not a long holiday. (The Scripture never provides for *saturnalia* or carnivals.)

(1) It was to be "hallowed." How can time be hallowed? Surely only by applying it to holy uses, as with the Sabbath. The sabbatic year was (v. 4) "for the Lord," and gave opportunity for learning God's will. (The whole law was read to the people at the feast of tabernacles.) The same was true of the jubilee year.

(2) It was a time of liberation. "Pro-

claim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof." Wherever Hebrews had been in temporary servitude or been obliged to part with their possessions in land, they now returned to freedom and to their homes. This prevented permanent bondage among the people, made the accumulation of great estates in single hands impossible, and kept alive a feeling of hope, self-respect, and respect for others in the body of the people. The man who "belongs nowhere" lacks one strong motive to well-doing which he has to whom a definite spot is "home," and who has a regard for the good will and esteem of long-time neighbours.

It rested the land—no small matter when rotation of crops was not known—and it promoted habits of forethought and thrift; for in these sabbatic and jubilee years people lived in a good degree on what they had provided beforehand. (See v. 21.) Sowing, reaping, raising, and storing fruit were forbidden (v. 12). The breeding of cattle would be encouraged, and the hard feelings about land—the curse of many a people—would be understood. The holidays, too, which labour now finds it so hard to get, were thus provided by the wise God of Israel. It was a holy time (v. 13), and a time of restitution. A man, for example, as we have it explained in the paragraph, vs. 14-17, "going behind," not able to keep his farm, but compelled to sell it and go to work for others, did not sell it out and out. If it was say twenty years to the jubilee, then he sold the occupancy of it for twenty years. He, or if not he his children, would then get possession of it again. The family might be reduced, and some of its members might be servants to better-off Hebrews, but they had always the feeling, which has lifted themselves up, that they had a *past* and would have a *future*. The principle of this rule is in vs. 23, 24. The land was the Lord's. They were his guests, and could not sell it "forever," only lease it. One reason for this arrangement is urged in v. 7, though stated in v. 14. "Ye shall not oppress," which means ye shall not overreach or take advantage one of another, as, for example, the rich of the poor. The land was divided by lot among the families at the beginning, and could not be alienated permanently. (See Num. 26: 52-56.)

But, without dwelling further on the many good social and economic influences of the jubilee year as a part of God's plan for Israel, let us turn to the spiritual gains we may see in the light of our Bibles shadowed forth in it.

I. *God is in covenant with his people.*—The sound of the cornet was the signal for the descent of Jehovah from Sinai to take Israel into covenant with himself. (Ex. 19: 13, 16 and 20: 18.) So at the close of the great day of atonement, the same trumpet-blast recalled the blessings of the covenant to all the people. The land is God's. He cares for the poor. He hates oppression, *i. e.*, overreaching. He is the friend of liberty. He will not have bondage of Hebrew to Hebrew. He will not let men forget their dependence on him. The rich shall not become too rich, nor the poor too poor. There will be a break in the toil of the labourer. Men must learn that they "do not live by bread alone, but by every word of the Lord," as sabbatic and jubilee years make them dependent on his bounty for seasons when they "neither sow nor reap, nor gather into barns."

II. It was after the propitiation by the priest, and the humble prayers of all devout Jews on the day of atonement, that the blast of the trumpet of freedom was blown.

So it is with us. Christ, the great high priest, gives his life, and on the strength of that sacrifice the gospel is preached. (See Luke 4: 18-21.) The day of his

crucifixion was the day of atonement for men. After that the word was "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel," etc. (Matt. 28: 16-20). "The year of jubilee is come" may now be declared. "Return, ye ransomed sinners, home."

III. And the blessings of our gospel jubilee are reflected in those of the Hebrews. (a) *How many souls are in bondage*, "serving divers lusts and pleasures," led captive of the devil. Here is freedom for you,—for the drunkard, the bond-slave of mammon, of lust of passion. (b) *How many weary toilers* has the world! To live, to do anything in life, to do any good in life, is hard work. But oh, ye weary ones, there is rest in God, in holy communion, in foretastes of the life to come! Ye shall be free one day. Adam had to till the soil for hard won bread. On that God sends his blessing (see v. 21), and the toiler has his rest. But a new heaven and earth await the believers, who know the joyful sound. (c) *We had an inheritance*, and we lost it by sin. The gospel shows us how we can get it back. It is for us, waiting us, if we will but believe and take it. We cannot estimate it now aright, but we are helped to do it. The Sabbath, we can look through it; then the sabbatic year, like another line of the great telescope brought out into place; then the jubilee, yet another line, drawn out (so it seemed to Dr. Bonar), through which we look and see "the rest that remaineth for the people of God."

## THE LORD'S TABLE.

We come to the Lord's Table to feed on Jesus, on Jesus alone. Not on our frames or feelings. Not on our doings or sufferings. Not on our vows or professions. No; but on Jesus only. His body is represented by the bread. His body *on* which our sins were laid, *in* which our sins were punished, *by* the sacrifice of which our sins were put away. His body is the food of our faith. His body is offered to and accepted by God, for the expiation of our offences. He was bruised for our iniquities. He died for our sins. He put away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself. His blood is represented by the wine. The blood is the life. He laid down His life for us. He poured out His soul unto death. Nothing will satisfy the thirst of faith but the blood of Jesus. Nothing will quench the fiery law in the heart but the blood of Jesus. Nothing will silence and pacify the sinner's conscience but the blood of Jesus. As hungry, we feed on the Saviour's broken body; as thirsty, we drink His precious blood.

Here is a whole Christ—a perfect Saviour. Here is nourishment for the soul, of which, if a man partake, he shall live forever. If I partake of the elements alone, they do me no good; but if while partaking of the elements, I partake of Christ by faith, I am strengthened, quickened and nourished up into everlasting life.

—The *Whitehall Review* says.—"Extremes meet. In the Market-square of Northampton, where the free and independent electors meet to protest against the 'illegal exclusion' of their junior member from the House of Commons, is an ancient house, and over one of the windows the Welsh motto. 'Heb Dym, Heb Dym. Dwyne Digon.' ('Without God, without everything, God and enough.') Even the stones are not silent."

—It is sad to read that on Sunday, the 14th inst., some 1500 persons assembled in an amphitheatre at Marseilles to witness the cruel and disgusting spectacle of a bull-fight. Heart-rending scenes are described when the building collapsed and buried the crowd. More than two hundred persons were wounded, 14 killed instantly, and 13 have died since. In 1874, a like lesson in connection with bull-fights on Sunday was given in Marseilles.

## THE STORY OF LIFE.

BY REV. ABNER BRANFORD.

A LITTLE helpless infant,  
In mother's arms of love,  
Almost a little angel,  
From the home of God above.

A little, childish prattler,  
Brimful of childish glee,  
A ray of golden sunshine  
Upon life's stormy sea.

A fair-haired, rosy urchin,  
On fun and mischief bent,  
Whose lustrous eyes are sparkling  
With thoughtless merriment.

A youth approaching manhood  
With firm and fearless pace,  
Life's easy cares supporting  
With careless, youthful grace.

A young man, on the threshold  
Of active, earnest life,  
Base-aching sickle Fortune  
To aid him in the strife.

A man, within the whirlpool  
Of busy business care,  
Elated when successful,  
When shipwrecked, in despair.

A man, whose eager footsteps  
Past life's high noon have run,  
Making unwilling journey  
Toward the setting sun.

An old man, slowly tottering  
Along life's rugged way,  
Where oft-recurring shadows  
Announce the close of day.

A mournful sound of weeping,  
A funeral address,  
A stone of snowy whiteness,  
And then—forgetfulness.

This sweetly mournful journey,  
With joy and toil and woe,  
For sunshine and for shadow—  
This, this is life below.

Co-heir with Christ, or outcast  
Throughout eternity,  
A child of light or darkness,—  
This is the yet to be.

Thus do we write the story,  
In wormwood or in gold,  
Of that we now are doing,  
Of that we must behold.

In our account celestial,  
Of lasting loss or gain,  
Which shall we make our portion—  
The pleasure or the pain?

Savoy, Mass., July 28, 1881.

—Religious Herald.

—The cheapest riding in the world is on the underground railroads of London. Some of them carry workmen twelve miles for a penny—two cents. The passengers last year numbered 110,000,000.

—The British Museum has recently purchased a collection of forty manuscripts made in Southern Arabia. Fifteen are portions of the Hebrew Scriptures, of which two are probably the oldest which as yet have come to light. One of the fifteen contains the Hagiographa, exhibiting a recension of the Hebrew text, and, with two other portions already in the Museum Library, forming the complete Hebrew Bible.

—In a late number of the *Nineteenth Century* there is a deeply interesting paper by the Rev. Dr. Jessop on the improvement which the last twenty-five years have witnessed in the condition of English villages, but the writer very properly emphasizes "one notable and shameful exception." He shows that during that period about twenty millions sterling have been spent in building, restoring, and enlarging Episcopal churches; a large sum spent on parsonages; an untold amount on the houses of the gentry; that kennels, stables, and even piggeries, have been improved and ventilated; but that the houses of the peasantry are disgraceful, and worse than they were a quarter of a century ago. It would be well that the clergy everywhere should draw attention to this neglect, which, in its moral as well as its physical effects, has failed to arouse the nation as it should have done.