

SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON XLIX.

Dec. 7. } *THE HEAVENLY SONG.* { Rev. v. 1-14.
1899. }

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."—Rev. v. 12.

HOME STUDIES.

- M. Rev. iv. 1-11. The throne of God.
T. Rev. v. 1-14. The heavenly song.
W. Rev. xiv. 1-12. A new song.
Th. Ex. xv. 1-19. The song of Moses.
F. Rev. xv. 1-8. The song of Moses and the Lamb.
S. Ps. xcvi. 1-13. Greatly to be praised.
Sab. Ps. cl. 1-6. An exhortation to praise.

HELPS TO STUDY.

In lesson XLVII. we found that John was commissioned to write "the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter" (Rev. i. 19).

"The things which are"—the condition of Christianity in the apostle's time, as represented by the seven churches of Asia—we find recorded in the second and third chapters (see Lesson XLVIII).

"The things which shall be hereafter"—the then future history of the Church of Christ—begins to be revealed in the fourth chapter, which opens with the command given to the seer, "Come up hither and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter." The remaining part of this book, from the beginning of the fourth chapter to the end of the twenty-second, is therefore wholly prophetic.

It must be always kept in view that the vision of John was symbolical—that he saw neither heavenly objects, nor the actual scenery connected with events which were to occur on earth, but figurative representations, or what are called *simulacra*, of these.

In attempting to explain the symbols, or to decide definitely upon the particular events foretold, the great danger is that of falling into fanciful interpretations. No exposition of this book yet given has met with general acceptance. It is safest in most cases to leave the events and objects spoken of in that "sublime obscurity" which in no way detracts from the weight and importance of the practical lesson which the book conveys.

We suggest the following division of our present lesson: (1) *A Sealed Book and a Weeping Prophet*, (2) *An Open Book and a Singing Universe*.

I. A SEALED BOOK AND A WEEPING PROPHET.—Vers. 1-4. Under this head four subdivisions may be made: (1) The Book, (2) The Challenge, (3) The Failure, (4) The Lament.

1. *The Book.* Its position, in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne (chap. iv. 2), indicates that its source and author is God, the Father.

Its being written within and on the back may teach its fulness, and its double aspect—one God-ward and the other man-ward. The "books" in those times were not bound like ours, but in the form of a roll, somewhat like our maps.

Sealed with seven seals: The number seven, so frequently used in this book and in other prophetic writings, denotes completeness or perfection; so it was impossible to ascertain the contents of the book until the seals were broken. Trench calls it the "covenant number," the sign and seal of God's covenant with His people.

2. *The Challenge.* Who is worthy to open the book? This challenge was proclaimed by a strong Angel (compare Psalm ciii. 20), acting perhaps in behalf of God's justice, or publishing the demands of His law. This loud voice may be heard sounding throughout the Bible. "Adam... where art thou?" (Gen. iii. 9); "Who shall ascend into the hill of God?" (Psalm xiv. 3); "How can a man be just with God?" (Job xxv. 4).

3. *The Failure.* No man (literally no one; no one either among men or among other created intelligences) was found worthy to open the book. It required not only holiness but some extraordinary merit, some great work connected with the contents of the book.

4. *The Lament.* I wept much. The Apostle must have been impressed with a sense of very important interests depending upon the opening of the book, and something very sad being involved in failure. However unable we may be to tell exactly what it is that this book represents, it is pretty plain that it includes the problem of existence, the destiny of man, the question of eternal life or death. Had no one been found worthy to open it John would not be alone in his sorrow. But there is comfort at hand.

II. AN OPEN BOOK AND A SINGING UNIVERSE.—Vers. 5-14. Of this division also four subdivisions may be made: (1) The Opener of the Book, (2) His Success, (3) The Song and its Singers, (4) The Chorus.

In chap. iv. ver. 4, we read that "round about the throne were four-and-twenty seats (rather thrones), and upon the seats four-and-twenty elders." These are supposed to represent the Church. It is one of these elders that now addresses to John the words weep not, and gives him good ground for comfort.

1. *The Opener of the Book.* The Lion of the tribe of Judah... hath prevailed. This name is given to the Messiah in accordance with Jacob's dying prediction (Gen. xlix. 9). The use of the word "prevailed" here implies that the worthiness to open the book was attained through a great struggle, and by extraordinary effort.

2. *His Success.* It was a "Lion" that prevailed to take the book—it needed strength to do so; it was a Lamb as it had been slain that came and took the book—it needed a worthiness procured by sacrifice. Jesus Christ is both the Lamb and the Lion—the sacrificial Lamb to free

His people from the grasp of divine justice, and the strong Lion to rescue them out of the hands of the enemy. Seven horns: all-powerful. Seven eyes: all-seeing.

He took the book out of the right hand of the Father, and the book was not withheld. This shewed that He was accepted worthy to open it.

3. *The Song and its Singers.* The passing of the book from the hands of the Father to those of the Son is the signal for a triumphant burst of praise beginning with the four beasts (properly living creatures) and the four-and-twenty elders immediately surrounding the throne, and then taken up by all intelligent and sinless beings throughout the universe.

Various interpretations have been given of the "four living creatures" unfortunately translated "beasts" in our version. Two of these interpretations are much more reasonable than any of the others, (1) that they represent "redeemed humanity" and (2) that they symbolize "God's sentient creation." The latter is the view of Alford, who says: "Thus the throne of God is surrounded by His Church and His animated world; the former represented by the twenty-four elders, the latter by the four living beings." We incline, however, to the former view, because these four living creatures are represented as joining with the elders in singing the new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us, and none but the redeemed could sing that song.

This is the song of redemption and is called "new" perhaps to distinguish it from the song of creation with which the fourth chapter closes.

Shall we ever join in singing that new song in heaven? If so, we must learn it on earth.

4. *The Chorus.* The song itself is sung only by those who "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" and we may well suppose that in exercising this privilege they experience a peculiar rapture, to which even the "angels that kept their first-estate" are strangers; but the Chorus is universal. All sinless and intelligent beings throughout the creation are struck with boundless admiration by the disclosure of the wonderful work accomplished by the Saviour in redeeming His people from sin without detriment to divine justice; and although they cannot say "Thou hast redeemed us," they lend their voices to swell the chorus, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, an honour, and glory, and blessing.

REVIEWS.

Every lesson may be subjected to pre-views, views, and reviews. If the work is well done it will be subjected to each of these methods. A pre-view is the general outlook upon a lesson before its detailed study is attempted. It is the "preliminary reconnaissance" of the surveyor of truth. It includes the surroundings as well as the contents of the lesson. Its aim is comprehensive rather than particular.

After this preparatory outlook, the lesson must be viewed in all its parts, and in the connections and bearings of these parts. This is the detailed survey, or the careful study of the lesson. Thus far every teacher must go, and having gone thus far he is in a fair way to teach the lesson. He at least has discovered in some measure what is contained within it. Many teachers go thus far in preparation, but go no farther. The third element of good work, reviews, they do not understand, or they misunderstand, and therefore they either neglect it entirely, or attempt it in forms which insure failure.

Fundamental to all effective reviewing are weekly reviews in the class, and from the desk. In his opening services the superintendent should ask questions enough to put the school in sympathy with past work, and on a direct line of approach from that to the lesson of the day. By this means a fair start is secured. Every person in the school needs this, and therefore it should be a general exercise. They all need it before the new lesson is taught, therefore it should be an opening exercise. This brief, pointed, well-considered effort may be known as the superintendent's opening review. It reviews enough of what has gone before to open the way for a new advance.

In each class the lesson of the day should be opened with a few moments of similar work. If the superintendent has already put things just as they should be, then this class review will serve to make them clearer, and to fix them more firmly. But, in all probability, each thoughtful teacher will prefer a little different adjustment at the outset, so as better to serve his special purpose in the work which follows. For this he needs these moments of review; and a few moments only should be thus used. This may be called the teachers' opening review.

Practical duties or important doctrines may be discovered as the lesson-study goes on, and these should be emphasized as they appear. They should also form the final impression of the teaching service. To correct the views and to improve the life of the pupils is the great aim. But shall these duties and doctrines, upon the remembrance and adoption of which the attainment of this end depends, be left to the chances of remembrance from a single presentation? By no means. Gather them up in a closing class-review, noticing the grounds on which they were found to rest, and the considerations by which they were enforced. This work is the teachers' closing review.

But shall the effort rest here? It had better unless superintendent and teachers are in such intelligent accord that he can enforce what has been done. But if in some cases this work has been ill done in the classes, then he can do something to make amends for the defect. And if he be a competent superintendent, he can in any case add to the impression for good already made in the class. To do this, however, he must not be diffuse, so that he shall bury in a flood of words the points that should stand out as mountain peaks. Nor should he be out of harmony with the drift of work agreed upon in the teachers' meeting, else he will

multiply points, or so modify points that scholars will become confused, and will see nothing clearly. By a very few well-formed questions he may draw from the school the doctrines and duties they have learned, and then, by sanctified tact, he can fasten these, and so the superintendent's closing review will be well done.

If stress is laid in the school upon titles, topics, outlines, golden texts, etc., the proper time for reviewing them is in the opening exercises. They form part of the path already trodden, and the last addition each Sabbath should be these elements pertaining to that day. There is no good reason for reviewing these at the close of the teaching. They must then serve to divert attention from the new truths gained in the fresh work of the day.

The chief doctrines and duties of every lesson already studied naturally come in for mention in the superintendent's opening review on each Sabbath. So do the topics and other permanent appendages. How easy it is, therefore, for knowledge to be kept fresh Sabbath after Sabbath through the quarter, and how easy on this plan a quarterly review becomes. Without weekly reviews continued through the quarter, a review at its end must drag; but where superintendent and teacher hold to the true method, quarterly reviews run themselves; and reviews covering two or three quarters are by no means difficult; while an annual review becomes, not a possibility merely, but an absolute pleasure.—Rev. G. A. Pett, in *National Sunday School Teacher*.

WHAT WILL MAKE HIM A CHRISTIAN?

A note came to me not long ago in regard to the average boy of fifteen years. This note was from the father of such a boy, and doubtless not a few parents have the same anxious thoughts about their boy that the writer of the note evidently had about his. The note contained this question: "What will put the average boy of fifteen in the way of salvation, and make him a Christian?" It has occurred to me that as other parents are asking the same important question, in answering it for one I may answer it for many. The question implies that the average boy of fifteen is not a Christian. It does not ask what will save him, but what will put him in the way of salvation. Now where does the average boy stand?

I here assume that the writer of the note meant, not the rough boy, not the boy on the street, airing his fast tendencies, but the decent well-behaved boy, whose conduct is outwardly correct, and who is reasonably thoughtful. I believe many such are a good deal nearer being Christians than they think they are, and that what they most need is, not the acceptance of a creed, but the performance of some specific act that shall commit them to known duty. Suppose an acorn lying on the ground could look up to the tree from which it fell, and say, "What will put me in the way of becoming an oak-tree?" The possibility of the oak is in the acorn. Place it in your bureau drawer, and it never moves in the direction of becoming a tree. Put it in the ground, and you place it under conditions that put it in the way of becoming an oak-tree in time. The average boy must place himself under conditions that are suitable for his becoming a Christian, in order to become one. If I wish to go to a given place, I must take the road that leads there, and then keep in the road. What then is the one specific act for the average boy to perform? The man who is going the wrong way must change his course, and strike into the right way. That involves a choice between two courses—a determination to stop going in one direction, and to begin to go in another.

To get into the way of salvation, then, is simply to change one's purposes that need changing. A Christian is a Christ person; and one cannot be a Christ person, and not come into proper relations to Christ. Our acorn has the law of growth within it, but must be in actual contact with the ground that is to nourish it, and bring out its latent powers, or it will remain an acorn. Such a contact as the acorn has with mother earth, the human heart must have with Christ to become a Christian heart. There is a rap at the door. I say, "Come in." "But," says one on the outside, "I can't get in; the door is locked." I push back the bolt and open the door, and my friend comes in. To me, the whole process of becoming a Christian resolves itself into this: First, there must be belief in Christ; and it is as easy to believe in Him as it is to give our honest confidence to an earthly friend. Secondly, there must be a deliberate purpose to do what Christ has told us to do; and the summary is a brief one, it is only to do right by God and man. Christ, admitted to the heart, in the same confiding way that a friend, in whom we have all confidence, is admitted there, and an honest decision made to live as Christ tells us to live,—that is all that is needed to be in the way of salvation. Conversion, if you choose to use that word, is thus a simple, common-sense affair, that the average boy need not be more puzzled about than he would be in making any other decision whatever.—Egbert L. Bangs in *S. S. Times*.

THE Sabbath-school idea is making progress among the Indians. In May last, a Sabbath-school convention was held among the Choctaws at Caddo. At that place arrangements were made for an Intertribal Convention at Muskogee, in the Creek nation, to be held during the week of the Intertribal fair, in October. It was held according to appointment. "Boston Charlie," of Modoc fame was there, and so was the Indian who fired the first shot at Custer's command. Secretary Shurz, who was visiting the Indian agencies, was present, and made an address. Rev. Drs. Irwin and Boyd, of St. Louis, Rev. Jas. A. Worden, of Philadelphia, the Presbyterian Sabbath-school secretary, and Rev. Wm. P. Paxson of the American Sunday School Union helped in carrying out the programme. So successful was the gathering, that arrangements have been made to establish a Normal Institute for the training of Sabbath-school teachers among the Indians. The plan is to be carried out by a committee of five educated Indians—one from each of the five tribes represented. There are hopes yet for the poor Indian.