

The Sunday School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON VIII.

Feb. 23, } THE KING IN ZION. } Psalms, ii. 1-12.
1879. }

GOLDEN TEXT.—“God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”—Acts ii. 36.

HOME STUDIES.

- M. Dan. vii. 1-14. . . . Messiah's kingdom.
- T. Psalm ii. 1-12. . . . The King in Zion.
- W. Acts ii. 25-36. . . . Both Lord and Christ.
- Th. Acts iv. 23-33. . . . Against the Lord and his Christ.
- F. Acts xiii. 26-35. . . . The promise fulfilled.
- S. Psalm cx. 1-7. . . . The Priest-King.
- S. Psalm xlv. 1-17. . . . A right sceptre.

HELPS TO STUDY.

This Psalm is attributed to David, in Acts iv. 24. Its primary reference was, without doubt, to the series of events recorded in 2 Sam. v. 9-12; vii. 1-17; viii. 3, 12; x. Shortly after the elders had anointed David at Hebron, he captured Zion from the Jebusites. There he built his house, and there he received the Divine Promise of abiding dominion. Further, we find that he subjugated the Syrians and Ammonites, and that these rose ineffectual revolt against him. This is a combination of circumstances nowhere else found, and one which corresponds most remarkably to the language of the Psalm. But while the basis of the Psalm is the Promise of 2 Sam. vii. 13-16, both Promise and Psalm find their true fulfilment only in the reign of Messiah. Jesus is the King whose conquests are herein celebrated.

The Psalm is divided, with unusual distinctness, into four strophes of three verses each.

I. THE KING'S ENEMIES—Verses 1-3.

Their attitude excites the astonishment of the seer, which expresses itself in abrupt questions. The heathen were all the nations beside Israel; so Christ's enemies are those not of the true Israel. Why, he asks, have they raged like the sea in its fierce, aimless tossing? And in their proud hostility, blinded by passion, they have imagined a vain thing—vain, for it is without a cause, unreasonable; the God of love, just and true in all His ways, has given neither occasion nor excuse for this enmity; and the rage is vain, because it is useless, utterly impotent. The Psalmist describes the vain thing which the kings and rulers have planned. It is against the Lord and His anointed (Not-1) that they have set themselves and taken counsel. Foolishly, defiantly, they give utterance to their ominous purpose: “Let us break the bands asunder.” They would throw off all the restraints of divine authority. God's laws are a grievous yoke to them. What they call liberty is license. Picture Christ's enemies arrayed against Him. It is first Herod, Pilate, the people of the Jews and Gentiles Acts i. 25. In the next age it is brute force, cruel persecutions, the lions. Later the hostility assumes another form, anti-Christian superstitions and sacerdotalism, the Bible sealed, the Church assuming Christ's place.

Then rationalists, like Straus and Renan trying to prove Jesus a fanatic and a mere man, or to make out contradictions between science and revelation. all these try to wrest the kingship from Jesus, but in vain. All their counsels will come to naught. Nothing which is arrayed against Christ can stand.

Every one who loves sin and abides in it, who puts self first, is the enemy of Christ. Are we for Him or against Him?

II. GOD'S THRONE—Verses 4-5.

At once we are lifted up from the tumults of earth to the calm of the heavens, where above the waste floods, God sitteth a King forever. There is something unspeakably awful in His laugh and derision. It is the figurative expression, drawn from our human emotions, of God's perfect security and conscious power, and His righteous contempt for the folly and mad rebellion of puny man. In reply to these rebellious words, He speaks out of the intensity of His indignation; and to speak is to confound (not “vex”) He will surely bring to naught every device which is formed against Him. There is terrible reality in God's wrath. How little we fear it, and yet how we dread the displeasure and ridicule of men—Isai. li. 22, 13. Let us seek for the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom.

Yet, that is in spite of all rebellion and opposition, God says, my purpose will stand. I have set, established, my King, who is to reign for Me and with Me, upon Zion, the Church of which the earthly Zion was the type. So far from the wicked counsels of sinners hindering God's purpose, He overrules them to establish it. They killed Jesus, sealed the tomb, posted a guard. Yet “vain the stone, the watch, the seal.” By death itself death was overcome; the guilty deed becomes love's sacrifice and the salvation of the guilty.

III. THE MESSIAH'S KINGDOM—Vers. 7-9.

The Lord's anointed Himself speaks and declares the divine purpose. Jesus is the eternal Son of God—2 Sam. vii. 14; Ps lxxxix. 26; Heb. i. 5. In Acts xiii. 33, the words of this verse are treated as bearing special reference to the Resurrection, when Christ is “declared to be the Son of God with power.” Rom. i. 4; Then that which was always true was openly manifested. God in His love delights to honour His Son. Ask of me, He says. Jesus

has but to ask and to have. What power have the intercessions of our great High Priest—Heb. vii. 23. Let us seek to have Him as our advocate—1. Jno. ii. 1.

I will give them the heathen: A hint here of the ingathering of the Gentiles. They were the Son's inheritance, He has a right and a title. They shall be His possession, when by conversion they become His submissive, trustful and beloved people. It is thus Christ conquers His enemies, as He did Saul of Tarsus. But they who will not be won by His love, will be overwhelmed by His wrath, the terrible “wrath of the Lamb.” He shall break them with a rod of iron. Utter and terrible will be their destruction, like the breaking of a potter's vessel. The illusion is to the custom of grinding up the broken crockery to a fine powder used for making cement. See Jer. xix. 11; Isai. xxx. 14. It implies not merely the breaking of the vessel in fragments, but the complete grinding up of it into powder. The thought of so awful a doom leads to—

IV. THE PSALMIST'S WARNING—Vers. 10-12.

Now, therefore, in view of these judgments, be wise. As rebellion was folly, so submission is the truest wisdom. Let them serve—His service is perfect freedom. His yoke easy—Matt. xi. 30. Let them fear—not as cowards and as enemies, but with respect and reverence as children. Let them rejoice in the Lord,—on His side, under His care, sharing His triumph, there would be every reason for joy. Not the joy of presumption, but of holy and reverent fear. Kiss the Son in token of submission, as a pledge of allegiance, as loyal vassals. If the beginning of His anger be so dreadful, what will be the day of His wrath?

Beware of His anger. To escape from God, fly to Him. The only refuge from Him is in Him and with Him. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him. There are no exceptions to this beatitude. Yours? He that trusts and loves Christ is blessed; but he that loveth Him not, is anathema, accursed—1 Cor. xvi. 22.

EXPLANATORY NOTES.

1. His Anointed. The one whom He anointed. The original word here is “Messiah,” the Anointed One, to which the word “Christ” is the Greek equivalent. Anointing is the form of consecration to a sacred use or office, especially to that of king or high priest. Oil denotes the Spirit of grace, and anointing signifies the sanctifying and qualifying of the person by the Holy Spirit for the discharge of any duty.

2. A Vain Thing. A medal was struck by Diocletian, which still remains, bearing the inscription, “The name of Christians being extinguished.” And in Spain two monumental pillars were raised, on one of which was written, “Diocletian, for having extended the Roman Empire in the East and the West, and for having extinguished the name of Christians, who brought the republic to ruin;” on the other, “Diocletian, for having everywhere abolished the superstition of Christ, for,” etc. A modern writer has elegantly observed: “We have here a monument raised by Paganism over the grave of its vanquished foe; but in this the people imagined a vain thing. So far from being deceased, Christianity was on the eve of its final and permanent triumph, and the stone guarded a sepulchre as empty as the urn which Electra washed with her tears.”

DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.

The Roman governors of Judea and Samaria became so oppressive that the Jews broke out in rebellion, and, seventy years after Christ, Jerusalem was finally besieged by Titus, afterwards emperor of Rome. No tragedy on the stage has the same scenes of terror as are to be found in the history of this siege. The city itself was rent by factions at the deadliest war with each other; all the elements of civil hatred had broken loose; the streets were slippery with the blood of citizens; brothers slew brothers; the granaries were set on fire; famine wasted those whom the sword did not slay. In the midst of these civil massacres, the Roman armies appeared before the walls of Jerusalem. Then for a short time the rival factions united against the common foe; they were again the gallant countrymen of David and Joshua; they sallied forth and scattered the eagles of Rome. But their triumph was brief; the ferocity of the ill-fated Jews soon wasted itself on each other, and Titus marched on; encamped his armies close by the walls, and from the adjacent heights the Roman general gazed with awe upon the strength and splendour of the city of Jehovah. At a distance the whole temple looked like a mount of snow fretted with golden pinnacles. But alas! the veil of that temple had years before been rent asunder by an inexpiable crime, and the Lord of hosts did not fight for Israel. But the enemy is thundering at the walls. All around the city arose immense machines from which Titus poured down mighty fragments of rock and showers of fire. The walls gave way, the city was entered, the temple itself was stormed; false prophets ran through the streets; even nature itself perished, and mothers devoured their infants; every image of despair completes the ghastly picture of the fall of Jerusalem. And now the temple was set on fire, the Jews rushing through the flames to perish in its ruins. It was a calm summer night, the 10th of August. The whole hill on which stood the temple was one gigantic blaze of fire; the roofs of cedar crashed; the golden pinnacles of the dome were like spikes of crimson flame. Through the lurid atmosphere all was carnage and slaughter. The echoes of shrieks and yells rang back from the hill of Zion and the Mount of Olives. Amongst the smoking ruins, and over piles of the dead Titus planted the standard of Rome.—Lord Lytton.

Gleanings.

THE question for us is not, What wilt thou, Lord, have the pastor, or the elders, or the deacons, or thus or that private member of the church to do? but What wilt thou have me to do, who am a professor of faith?—Presbyterian Journal.

COURTESY is an admirable quality, but nothing can relieve a man from the right and duty of being assured by his own personal knowledge, that all things are right. People are sick of the baby like excuses which are so often proffered when great swindles are exposed.—Baptist Weekly.

“THERE never was a mother yet who taught her child to be an infidel.” So saith Mr Joshua Billings, and there is a world of meaning in it. There is a story told of a noted infidel dying. His wife was a Christian. His daughter said to him: “Father, whose faith shall I take; your's or mother's?” “Your mother's,” said the dying father.

I AM just going to do something which I have clearly made up my mind to do, and some friend passing by catches sight of me, standing with the tools all in my hands, and on a mere momentary impulse he cries out “What a fool you are to do that!” and so passes on and has forgotten me and my plan in a moment. And yet it is just that sort of taunt, or the fear of it, which has blighted many a sweet and healthful impulse in the bud. It is good for us often to know how superficial, how lightly made, how soon forgotten, are the judgments of our brethren which sound so solemn, and which tyrannize over us so. Such a feeling sets us free, and makes us independent. Be sure that you may feel that about any cruel criticism that is hampering you, and may cast it aside, and forget it, and go your way. The man who made it has probably forgotten it long ago.—Philips Brooks.

LONDON CHRISTIAN WORLD: “Notwithstanding all the protests that have been uplifted against it, there can be little doubt that the next few days will see the lottery scheme for the relief of the City of Glasgow Bank shareholders fairly floated. The Rev. G. Robson, Inverness, hopes that the scheme “will be publicly repudiated by the Church of God in the land,” and a Free Churchman unknown has strongly advocated the exercise of church discipline on all those who countenance the nefarious plan. Rather awkward results would ensue from the adoption of the Free Churchman's suggestion, for among the chief promoters of the lottery are to be found Sir James Watson, Dr. Anderson Kirkwood, and Sir Peter Coats, who may be regarded as fairly representing the lay element in Established, Free and United Presbyterian churches respectively.”

N. Y. CHRISTIAN INTELLIGENCER: “Still we plead for honest money. Gold and silver have come back again. Now let the coins be made worth their face as nearly as possible. Years ago, before the discovery of gold and silver deposits in the Sierras, and when those metals were scarce with us, the coin of the United States was debased in order to keep it in the country. But a great change has occurred, and we are now one of the chief gold and silver producing nations in the world. We have gold and silver to sell. Let the alloy in our coins be reduced and their bullion value be raised. English sovereigns circulate everywhere. They contain 916.5 parts of gold in one thousand. Our coin has 900 parts of gold in one thousand. Why should they not be as good as the British? Cross the line and go into Canada, and our silver quarter is worth only twenty cents, the dime only eight cents. Let us make our coins as pure as possible, introducing only as much alloy as may be necessary to prevent excessive wear. Let us be honest.”

Official Notices.

CONGREGATIONAL COLLEGE OF B. N. A. — The Principal would feel obliged to officers of churches, missionary associations, and to any others who may desire the labours of students during the coming vacation, if they will communicate with him on the subject at an early date.

Montreal, 10th Feb., 1879.

THIS is how one pastor goes about it. He sent ten new subscribers and ten dollars. Then in a week or two afterwards he sent us two dollars and the names of eight of his congregation, requesting that we send them the INDEPENDENT three months, as he hoped that by that time they would themselves subscribe for it. This is a good suggestion. Get the INDEPENDENT once in a home and it will be forever after a necessity.

Births, Marriages and Deaths.

DIED.

Jan. 4th., at his residence, Winnington Mount, Norwich, England, in the 90th year of his age, Rev. Henry Powis, father of Rev. Henry D. Powis, of Zion Church, Toronto.