

unable to distinguish between men and gods—that God had “not left himself without witness.” The same truth was repeated and enforced on Mars Hill, at Athens, when he urged on his polite hearers that God was not “far from every one of us.” So, then the ignorant and the learned are interested in knowing that in Him “we live, and move, and have our being.” According to St. Paul, this is a very practical fact. The “witness,” the “signs” the proofs of His presence about our paths, our lying down and rising up, our outgoings and incomings, are God’s spiritual approaches to us through our observation. If we choose, we can read the “signs of the times.” So taught the Lord Jesus; and, furthermore, He gave the Pharisees to understand that much of their guilt as Pharisees was due to the fact that they would not see these “signs.” “The signs of the times,” therefore, are a part of our Christian education—a means of growth, a help to clearness of judgment, an inspiration to effort, and even as a cloud by day and a column of fire by night for our sure guidance.

Whither are we moving? The “signs” very fully show it. Looking at the outer world—the world of national interests—we see plainly enough that nations are nothing like as selfish and as separate as they were a century ago. Trade is no longer the means of national alienation and discord that it was when Adam Smith made the argument in the “Wealth of Nations” that laid the basis of modern “political economy.” The ocean is not what it was before the second war of America with England. Germany, since Sadowa, is a new Germany; and Italy, since Cavour’s genius gave her a new future, is a renovated Italy as to ideas and impulses. Without an exception, all these amazing changes have been more or less in the interest of a more liberal and generous policy. Internationality has become a far more prominent principle. Nations have begun to feel themselves “members one of another.” Interests of trade and commerce are now recognized as mutual. Instead of the old folly, that what one nation acquired was at the expense of another, we now know that in any right system of exchange all parties are profited. This is a great step toward commercial brotherhood. But is that all? Are we only bartering American cotton for foreign goods? Are we merely sending our wheat, tobacco, petroleum, to the other continent, to bring return cargoes of cloths, silks, wines? Nay; this is only one side of the matter. The transaction has a far deeper significance. God’s wisdom never lies on the outside of things. The earth has to be opened, and her deep bosom laid bare, before we get her iron, coal, and other treasures; and so too we must go beneath externals to find the import of divine realities. Nations are drawing closer to one another, that they may share common sentiments and impulses. The enlarged intercourse brings fellowship of thought and feeling, and this fellowship, though at first earthly, prepares the way for something beyond. “That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.”

Just now is the “afterward” which we are anxious for our readers to contemplate. Already this divine “afterward” is in clear view, right before us, plain and tangible. The “signs of the times” have begun their glorious fulfilment, showing beyond doubt that the spread of the gospel is the grand fact to which all these indications point. On philosophic grounds, this conclusion is warranted; on Christian

grounds, it is inevitable. If so, our “duty” in respect of missions has a very wide foundation, and multiplies its motives from various sources. In part it takes up into itself the obligations to our own civilization and that of humanity. It has a national and international interest. Every bag of cotton, every bushel of wheat, every shipload of goods, has something to say in favour of missions; but infinitely above all these are the words of the Lord Jesus: “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations.” “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” The world is mine, says the Lord Jesus, about ascending to heaven. “Go ye,” and bring it to me—bring it to the throne of my service and to the arms of my blessedness. “All power is given unto me.” My providence shall prepare your way. I will open doors which no man can shut. “In earth” you will see the “signs of the times,” and they are my “signs.” Hear my voice in them, see my hand in them, and then “Go ye” and obey.—Exchange.

### INTERNATIONAL S. S. LESSON.

Sunday, Aug. 7.

The Passover. Ex. xii. 1-14. B. C., 1491.

GOLDEN TEXT, 1 Cor. iii. 7. Christ our Passover, is sacrificed for us. Commit vs. 11-13.

#### INTRODUCTION AND CONNECTION.

We pass over four chapters intervening between our last lesson and this. In these we find recorded the successive instances of Pharaoh’s hardening his heart against God’s just demands, and of eight successive plagues that were sent upon Egypt, each of which had proved powerless to break down his pride and obstinacy. It is with the last, in connection with which Israel, as a nation, were taught their first great lesson of salvation through blood, that we now have to do.

#### LESSON NOTES.

(1, 2.) *And the Lord spake*—probably had spoken some days previous (compare vs. 3 and 12), in order that all the families of Israel might be prepared—saying; *this month* (Abib—ch. iii. 4—corresponding to a portion of our March and April) *shall be to you the beginning of months—the first month of the year.* The beginning of the year had, previous to this, been reckoned from Tisri, corresponding to a part of our September; consequently the ecclesiastical year would commence on the seventh month of the civil year. The Jews have kept up this two-fold reckoning—the civil year from Tisri; the ecclesiastical from Abib.

(3, 4.) *In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb* (or kid, v. 5)—a lamb for an house,—that is, one for every household sufficiently large to consume it. *But if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour, &c., &c.* This paschal lamb was a type of Christ; hence no more life was to be sacrificed than was necessary to meet the requirements of the case.

(5.) *Your lamb shall be without blemish.* As this lamb typified Christ in whom there was no taint or blemish, so the type must, in this respect, be perfect;—compare Lev. xxii. 20-25. *A male of the first year*—(“a son of a year”). Female animals were sometimes offered in sacrifice, but not in this which was pre-eminently typical of the Son of God. *From the sheep or goats.* Either animal was acceptable—equally so, we must conclude—but the former was more frequently chosen.

(6.) *Ye shall keep it up.* That is, apart, or separate from others. This lamb, as soon as it was chosen for sacrificial use, was separated from its fellows. So God’s Lamb was separate from sinners—see Heb. vii. 26. *Until the fourteenth day*—that is, until it was sacrificed—Lev. xxiii. 5. *And the whole assembly shall kill it.* In other words, the head, or representative of each house in which it was eaten. There being no regularly constituted priesthood at this time, the heads of families or households were to act for those whom they represented. *In the evening*—or “between the two evenings,”—that is, any time between twelve noon and the end of twilight. *The afternoon, or the time between noon and sunset, was reckoned the first evening of the day, and that between sunset and dark the second evening.*

(7.) *And they shall take of the blood* (carefully collected for this purpose), *and strike it* (sprinkle it from a hyssop branch) *on the two side-posts and on the upper door-post* (the head-piece above the door) *of the houses wherein they shall eat it.* It is not likely that all the Israelites lived in houses at this time. In cases where they were in tents, the blood would be sprinkled at the sides and above the entrances.

(8, 9.) *They shall eat the flesh.* Safe, behind and beneath the blood, they should eat of the flesh of the victim. The blood typifies the blood of Christ by which atonement for sin is made. Eating the flesh typifies the partaking by faith of the body of Christ, the “Bread of Life”—(John vi. 51, 57.) *In that night, even while the sword of divine justice was abroad in the land of Egypt, there should be light, and safety, and sustenance in the dwellings of God’s people.*

*Roast with fire.* The Israelites usually boiled flesh for eating. This necessitated the division of the animal into parts. In this case, the body was to be kept entire—not eaten raw, nor sodden with water, but roasted with fire, his head, with his legs, and the purulence thereof, that is, whole. Compare v. 46 with John xix. 36. *With unleavened bread.* Leaven is a symbol of evil; it also implies corruption and decay. Unleavened bread was used because of the necessary haste with which their preparations had to be made; but this is the smallest reason. It is a type, and holds in itself a two-fold meaning. First, it typifies Christ’s own body which was not to see corruption; secondly, *Christ’s body, the Church*, which is to be holy by the putting away of sin. (Hab. ix. 26; 1 Cor. v. 7, 8). *Bitter herbs.* The literal reason of this would probably, could we discover it, be found in some current usage or custom; the typical reason is that the bitter herbs represent the sufferings of Christ, first, in His own body, and secondly, in His body the Church. *Eat not of it raw, &c.; but roast with fire.* Christ’s body must pass through the fire of divine justice before it could become food for the believer’s faith; this is the typical reason for roasting the body of the lamb; the literal, is the necessary haste with which it was to be done, as a part of their preparation.

(10.) (If possible) *let nothing of it remain until morning, and that which* (unavoidably) *remaineth of it, ye shall burn with fire.* It was a very sacred emblem; and if any of it should remain, it might, on the one hand, be treated with idolatrous reverence, or, on the other, be cast out as valueless, and so be treated with contempt.

(11.) *With loins girded, with shoes on, with staff in hand, and in haste.* These preparations were to be made, in order that there might not be a moment lost when the command to depart came; and they suggest the strength, protection, support, and eagerness, of those who will run the Christian race successfully.

(12.) *I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, &c.* God here forewarns Israel of what He is about to do. Hitherto, His judgments had been directed against the comfort or security of the Egyptians; now since these had all been resisted, they were to fall upon themselves and their gods. The most excellent, or those persons and animals held in most esteem, many of the latter regarded as gods, were to fall before the God of Israel. If neither the gods of the Egyptians nor the first born of their families could stand before the power of this great God, what hope was there for any person or any thing.

(13.) *The blood shall be to you a token, &c.* that is, a sign that those upon whose dwellings it was found, had voluntarily placed themselves under the protection of God, by accepting His own provision.

The Israelites were not compelled to place themselves under the blood. They had the choice to do it, or perish with the Egyptians. This is precisely the position of the sinner who refuses salvation through the blood of Christ.

(14.) *This day shall be to you for a memorial.* A feast of memory. *Ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord—by an ordinance forever,* that is, in this form until Christ, the true Passover, should be offered afterwards, as suggested by Paul.—1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

### SINFUL JESTING.

A sense of the ludicrous was given to man for some wise purpose, and is not to be eradicated. Like other parts of our nature, it is capable of perversion, and its perversion may cause much harm.

There is “a time to laugh.” There is such a thing as an innocent jest. “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine.” Austerity and gloom are not the characteristics of piety. But while pleasantries and laughter are lawful at proper times, it is evident they are to be sparingly indulged in. The Scriptures are adapted to the nature of man; hence their varied contents are addressed to the varied elements of human nature. Man’s conscience, his sense of indignant wrong, his sympathy for sorrow, are addressed; but no passage in all the Bible is addressed to man’s sense of the ludicrous. There are examples of irony, but not of wit. This fact would indicate that the mirthful faculty is to be sparingly exercised.

The abuse of this faculty promotes habits of levity which are unfavourable to serious thought and devotional feeling. We believe that a keen sense of the ludicrous is often possessed by men of great capacity of thought, but an habitual laughter is not an habitual thinker. Levity and profound thought are incompatible. Much less are levity and true devotional feeling compatible. No one could pass from reading the works of Dickens, or from the circle of wit and laughter to the prayer-meeting. Christians should be serious. They have serious business to do, there are serious scenes before them, and they have a serious account to render.

The frequent exercise of this faculty leads to foolish jesting. Attempts at wit often result in folly. Ridicule and sarcasm are produced to the pain of those who are made the subjects. Anger and deadly hate often follow a foolish jest. Contempt is harder to be borne than injury; more strifes have resulted from foolish jesting, than from acts of inflicting physical loss or pain.

Sinful jesting follows foolish talking. All folly is of the nature of sin, but sinful jests are of a heinous kind. Impurity of thought often composes the staple of sinful jests. This is a species of wit sometimes indulged in by good men. The ludicrous application of a passage from the Bible is often made to court a grin. Is this right? Is it treating God’s solemn and holy word with due reverence to pervert it from its meaning and cause that to produce a laugh which was perhaps designed to extort a sigh? Is it not grieving the Spirit to trifle with His utterance?

While Christians should not, therefore, assume a sour, repulsive gravity, while they should rejoice with those that rejoice, they should be sober and watch unto prayer. No man ever utters a sinful jest while he is in a praying frame.—Baltimore Presbyterian.

### SIX BIBLE NAMES.

Say them over a good many times, until you can remember them and the order in which they are given.

Adam, Enoch, Abraham, Solomon, Christ, John. Repeat them again, and then learn the following bit of Bible chronology:

1. From the time Adam was created, until the time Enoch was translated, was a thousand years.

2. From the time Enoch was translated, until the time Abraham was born, was a thousand years.

3. From the time Abraham was born, until the time Solomon dedicated the temple, was a thousand years.

4. From the time Solomon dedicated the temple, until the time Christ was born, was a thousand years.

5. From the time Christ was born, until the time John died, was a thousand years.

Thus the Bible history, of forty-one hundred years, may be divided.