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LESSON XII. December 23, 1917.

Preparation for the Messiah-Christmas Lesson .--- Malachi 3: 1-12.

Commentary.-I. The Messenger of the Messiah (v.). 1. I--God him-eelf is the speaker. He answers the question recorded in the last verse of the preceding chapter. will send my messenger-God's messenger, to whom messenger—God's messenger, to whom reference is here made, is John the Baptist, as is clearly shown by our Uord himself (Matt. 11:10, 11; Mark 1:2-4; Luke 1: 76; 7: 24-28). shall pre-pare the way—It was anciently the custom to make great preparations for the subrack of a rowal percent. the approach of a royal personage. Hills were graded down, valleys were filled and crooked roads were straight-ened, that the way might be attractive and easily passable. See Isa, 40: 3, 4, before me-God here speaks of himself in the third person. the Lord-God changes his form of address and speaks of himself in the third per-son. whom ye seek—The Jews were expecting the Messiah to come. shall suddenly come to his temple-"The Lord" would come unexpectedly or in an unexpected manner, and he would come as Lord of the temple at Jeru salem, or as he who had full right to control all the spiritual interests of the chosen nation. the messenger of the covenant—The Messiah is here "the messenger of the covenant" since he would fulfil God's promise

11. The Mission of the Messiah (vs. 2-6). 2. who may abide the day of his coming—The Messiah, infinitely holy and just, would put to shame and con-demn the ungodly. To receive him would mean the putting way of all in-iquity. Like a refiner's fire—The re-finer's fire was used to separate impurities from the metal. fullers' soap -An alkaline substance in the form -An alkaline substance in the form of lye, secured by filtering water through ashes, was used to cleanse cloth. This is spoken of as "fullers' soap." The fuller was the one who washed the cloth and thickened it by diminishing it in length and breadth. The work of the Messiah would be to purify the hearts of the people. 3. as a refiner...of silver-Reference is here made to the work of those who obtain pure silver from the ore. The refiner places the metal in the cruci-refiner decision of the second second second second second bla and melts it. He worther it close ble and melts it He watches it clos ly and notes the instant when the dross is all consumed and only the pure silver remains. In the atone-ment provision is made for the complete cleansing of the nature. purify the sons of Levi—The priests had bethat they should be purified if they would "offer unto the Lord an offer ing in righteousness." 4. offering o 4. offering o Judah and Jerusalem-The offering by the Jews as representative of all who would receive the Messiah pleasant unto the Lord-Acceptable to pleasant unto the Lord—Acceptable to Jehovah. as in former years—"As in ancient years."—R. V. he prophet looks backward to the time when God's people, including the priests, were obedient and trustful. God's true people now offer to him the sac-rifice of praise and devotion in a true people now other to him the sac-rifice of praise and devotion in a spirit of faith. 5. I will come near to you to judgment—The Messenger, Christ, would come to condemn the We would not overlook those who were guilty of the acts which are specified in this verse. The sins here mentioned were common in the time of the month of a common in the time of the prophet and in succeeding ages, sorcerers—This term includes all who claimed to have power over evil spirits or to be able to foretell future evenis or to consult the dead. oppress-The Lord takes note of those who oppress the wage-earner, the widow, the or-phan and the stranger, and will bring just punishment upon them These classes are looked upon by the greedy chasses are looked blow by the greedy as lawful prey, but God has special regard for them. 6. I, Jehovah, change not (R. V.)—However much the people of Judah had changed. Jehovah had not changed. III. Stern rebukes to Judah (vs. 7-9). 7. from the days of your fathers-An indefinite expression which indi-cates remote past time, gone away mine ordinances-For generafrom tions the people of ligael had been disobedient and rebellious. "I am not changed from good; ye are not chang-ed from evil. I am unchangeable in per-versity." Return unto me, and I will return unto you. There is a double of versity. Return unto me, and 1 will return unto you—There is a depth of affection and mercy couched in these words. Jehovah was yearning over his erring people. He would receive them graciously if they word only depart from iniquity and com to him. Saith the Lord'of Hosts—The, vords dd merch weight to the initiation of the add much weight to the promis they follow, wherein shall we The people are represented as fied that they had seen doing

<section-header><text><text><text><text><text><text><text><text> that because the people had dis-obeyed the Lord and had been with-holding from him tithes and offerings, a curse was resting upon them. IV. Gracious promises (vs. 10-12). 10. Bring ye all the tithes—The way to escape from the curse that was

resting upon the people was to begin at once to obey the Lord. If they sheuld do this, they would accomplish sheuld do this, they would accomplish two things. They would be relieved of condemnation for their neglect, and there would be ample provision made for carrying on the temple service. This would be a test of their interest in spiritual things. Prove me—They were called upon to bring in the tithes and offerings, and to do it in faith. They were invited to put God to the test. Open you the windows of heaven—This is a strong expres-sion indicating the magnitude of the blessing which God was waiting to sion indicating the magnitude of the blessing which God was waiting to 'pour out" on his obedient, believing people. A blessing—The blessing would include God's favor, satisfaction and joy; and there would be increased fruitfulness in the fields and flocks, for the windows of heaven would be opened to pour out rain upon the land. 11. I will rebuke the devourer— The Lord promised to hold in check all the agencies that would naturally lestroy the increase of the fields. 12 All nations shall call you blessed—If Judah wulod fully obey Jehovah, their prosperity would be so great as to attract the attention of surrounding nations.

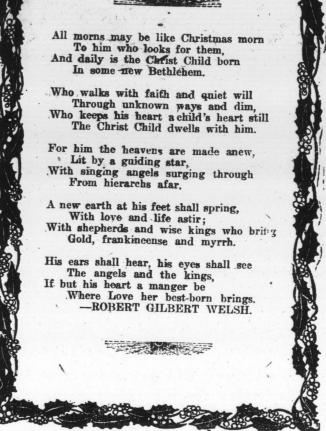
Questions-Who was the writer of this lesson? When did he write? Of what messenger does he tell us ni v what messenger does he tell us ni v. I? For whose coming was he to pre-pare the way? What work was the Messiah to accomplish? Where was Christ born? In what sense would he be like a refiner of silver? How had the people of Malachi's time been robbing God? What is meant 'y tithes and offerings? What were the people called to do? PRACTICAL SUBVEY

PRACTICAL SURVEY.

Topic-A message for the times. 1. Pronouncing judgment against sin.

11. Offering incentive to repen tance.

1. Pronouncing judgment agai --T. R. A. sin. The various aspects under which the Messiah was presented by the prophets bear distinct relation to the ****************** immediate needs of the people to whom the message was given. Mala-chi presented him as the Refiner to **Prophetic** a people who were in a state of moral and religious degradation. A proud and self-righteous pharisaism had These lines were found among the pa-pers left by Lieut, Leo Bachanan, B.A., LL.B. They were written in England shortly before he crossed to France. A few weeks later he was killed in action at St. Eloi on April 19th, 1916.—Teronto Universal Monthly. supplanted all true spirituality of worship. Attention even to the cut-ward forms of piety had become a little better than a name. The depth of wickedness portrayed by Malachi was very naturally followed by a divine threatening against the work-ers of induity by him where demud A moment now to say "good-bye," The bugles thing their piercing cry: "Fall in, fall in," a thousand feet, Tramp to their places in the street. supremacy, absolute knowledge, in-flexible justice and spotless holiness A moment fleet as flash of swords, Time for a dozen grasping words— Yet I shall live it o'er and o'er, In silent watch and battle roar. constitute him Judge of all. On ac-count of a careless and 'irreligious spirit among the people, God's bless-ing had been withheld and Israel was live me your hard-and may I choo smitten with a curse. Their stiffer-ings as a people were self-imposed. guerdon for the things I lose; could be that from your inmost heart image may not quite depart. The unbelieving priests of Malachi's time ventured the complaint that they could see no tokens of the presence So when in storm, and dark and cold, A thousand leagues away we hold Our selemn watch in pits of dread, Where lie entombed the myriad dead of God among his people. The peo-As a result and as a mark of That I may hold a solemn faith. That when across your eyes, a wraith, My face a pears, a shade of fear, Brings to your eyes an unshed tear. national decay the hearts of the children were alienated from the parents. Neglect of the divine ordinances and That when they tell a thousand tales Of war, your cheek a little pales, And that you scan with pause of breath The narrow print of deeds and death. decay of spiritual life bore their fruit in the time when Malachi delivered his messages. The Jewish people anxiously looked forward to Messiah's For me, and if my name is there, And you should find a record fair, That you will pause and turn aside. And know a more than foolish pride. coming, but they greatly mistook its object. They little thought what a searcher of hearts and corrector of wrongs he would be. They thought Some day you'll hear the thrilling strain "Fall in," for those who come again. If I am left on Flander's coast. For me in echo, the "Last Post." themselves ready for his coming. The prophet Malachi saw them to be selfdeceived. To prepare them for the coming Messiah a faithful herald in John the Baptist was sent. He moment's past, again good-bye, John the Baptist was sent. aroused the attention, awakened con-The bugles fling their piercing cry, 'Fall in, Fall in." a thousand fect, Tramp to their places in the street. Risboro', England, Jan. 14, 1916. sciences, announced the neutress of the Messiah's approach, proclaimed his reign, convinced of sin and showed SMARTEST DRESS LINES. the people that they stood in need of a much greater salvation than do-Hiph collars. Draped sashes. Long tight slevres. Suggestions of the Redingote Francess from that belted back. liverance from the Roman yoke. Malachi's message announced the Messiah as one who should begin a great purifying among the people of Israel. The illustration furnishes a beautiful fig-DINNER WEAR. It may be diaphanous. With a sash prolonged to a train. And sleeves that are winged roceful. ure of the plans and purposes of God in Christ Jesus, God over all, graceful. The back of the neck should be chastely high. But the front may be quite, oh, quite abcut: and watching all, guiding all with untir ing love and patience from generation to generation in a refining process to bring man into a state of purity and likeness to himself. Through the prophet God called the Jewish nation to a recollection of their transgres-Sir John Lubbock said that ants recognize each other, not by sight, but sions and particularly with regard to by smell, and Sir John knew as much God's own ordinances. His requirements were disregarded, his right: about ants as any man of his day. resisted, the demands and intereof his kingdom were neglected. Such robbery of God proceeded from failure to acknowledge the great fact of God' sovereignty. II. Offering incentive to repentance If you will go to the crossroads be-tween eleven and twelve on Christmas hight you will hear what most con-11. Othering incentive to repentance. The event announced by the prophet was the appearance of that great De-liverer who had for many ages been the hope of Israel. He is described as the everlasting God, the Jehovah of the Israelites. The long twilight cerns you in the coming year. If on Christmas Eve you make a little heap of salt on the table, and it melts over night, you will die the next of figure and type was about to be succeeded by the clear day of spiritual religion. It was the purpose of Malayear; if, in the morning it remains un-diminished, you will live. If a shirt be spun, woven and sewchi to arouse the conscience of the different classes of the people and to ed by a pure, chaste maiden on Christ-mas Day, it will be proof against lead tell them to consider seriously their or steel. tell them to consider seriously their or steel. national, religious and domestic If you are born at sermon time on duties. He presented an idez! future Christmas morning you can see spir. If it smoulders, daversity.



THE ATHENS REPORTER, DECEMBER 19 1917

as an incentive for present action. Jewish history abounded with exam ples that might have improved and instructed the degenerate age in which Malachi lived. The "days of old" were full of divine relevations. God's faith-fulness ulness, mercy and truth were written unmistakably on those wondrous days. Through his prophet Malachi Jehovah sent a message of affectionate com-passion to his ancient people. It was also a solemn charge and call to a backsliding people to return with a fixed purpose in all things to conform to God's will. They were called to reflect upon their waywardness and to wield to the divine optrestica. In God's yield to the divine entreaties. In God's return to them was implied all spir-itual blessedness. All wanderings were to be forgiven. Springs of deep and immortal happiness were to be opened within their souls. Prosperity, honor an happiness were the blessings which should follow true repentance Israel had a golden opportunity to regain all she had lost.



..................... The club looked just the very thing Gerald Mannersley was craving fora sense of home.

A few lines read accidentally in an out-of-date newspaper had made him restless with longing for the old scenes. And so he had traveled two days and nights in a sleeper, vaguely connecting his journey's end with all the love and friendship his starved nature was dependent. ature was demanding.

When he arrived at his old club on when he arrived at his old club on a chill, grey Christmas morning, it was only to find that fifteen years' silent absence had been too severe a test for friendship. The place was empty of all but servants, and they Wore strates unsultants, and they wore strange, unwelcome faces.

wore strange, unwelcome faces. He stood at the club window, look-ing out in the desolate, desorted street which he had always remem-bered as being thronged, and a great sadness swept over nim. This was not what he wanted. From his pocket he drew out the scrap of paper which had really brought him so many miles, and looked at it bit-terly. It was only a death announce-ment cut from a paper of a year ago, and ran in the usual way---"Michael Townley, at his residence," etc. In fancy he saw a sweet-faced maiden, who sought her happiness on-ly in the eyes of the youth by her side

maiden, who sought her happiness on-ly in the eyes of the youth by her side. There were joybells there, too. as they left the church with the fragrance of mutual iove about them. The bells pealed on outside, and willing fancy led him still further into the realm of "might have been."

the realm of "might have been." In an instant he made up his mind to visit once more the old-fashioned to visit once more the old-lashionen cottage not many miles away, to which he had hoped fifteen years be-fore to take a bride. He would go and see it, even if its neglected conpain. Two hours later he was striding through the crisp country air along a winding path which led to a ramb-ling, ivy-covered cottage. As the last turn brought him in As the last turn brought him in sight of the house he stopped in sur-prise. He had expected to see dirt. Iruin and decay. But instead he look-ed upon a trim, well-kept cottage, and a soft crooning song in a voice which reawakened the tender memories of long ago, came floating through the unlatched door. unlatched door. Half believing that it must be fancy leading him still, he entered the house leading him still, he entered the house softly, and following the voice went into the inner room, and stood in the glow of the warm firelight. The sweet, tired-faced, middle-aged singer turned as his shadow fell across the light, and then stood white and trembling. "Gerald!" she whispered, "Gerald

laid for two, daintilly spread with Christmas fare. "Yes," she answered. "I am quite alone. I have often come down here." "But you are expecting some-body?" he said, calling attention to the table. She flushed prettily, looking almost as young as she had in his dreams of the morning, as she replied: "I was expecting you. Gerald."

the morning, as she replied: "I was expecting you, Gerald." He smiled happily at her; then the smile faded, and he sighed as he sank into a chair. "This is all foolishness, Nance," he said, sadly. "You could not live here in the old days, you could do so less now, and I could not live here on an-other man's thousands." A smile hovered over the woman's face as she flitted here and there. busily preparing things for a meal. Then she slipped behind a chair, and leaning over whispered with burning cheeks:

"Perhaps you do not know. Gerald, that Mr. Townsley's money goes ack to his family if--if I marry again" again.

again." The man sprang to his feet and to his family if I marry again." "It is not too late," he cried. "We are still young. Will you let me try to make you hanny?"

to make you happy?" Her answer was drowned in the burst of Christmas bells that pealed from the village church close by. But he did not need her words; he could see her eyes.

Christmas Feasts

Many curious feasts arose in connec Many curious feasts arose in connec-tion with the celebration of Christ-mas in early days. Thus, the ass on which Balaam rode in the "Reims Mystery" won for the feast the title "Festum Asinorum," the Feast of the Asses. As it was celebrated in France, Seconding to William Lage it expects according to William Hone, it consist ed almost entirely of dramatic show. On one occasion the clergy walked on Christmas Day in procession, habited to represent the prophets and other characters.

Moses appeared in an alb and cope, with a long beard and a rod. David had a green vestment. Balaam, with an immense pair of spurs, rode on a wooden ass which enclosed a speaker. Moses appeared in an alb and cope There were also six Jews and six Gentiles. Among other characters the poet Virgil was introduced, singing monkish rhymes, as a Gentile prophet and a translater of the sibylline or-acles. They thus moved in procession through the body of the church chant-ing versicles and conversing on the nativity and kingdom of Christ till they came into the choir.

"This service, as performed in the cathedral at Rouen, commenced with a procession in which the clergy rea procession in which the clergy re-presented the prophets of the Old Tes-tament who forstold the birth of Christ; then followed Balaam mount-Christ; then followed Balaam mount-ed on the ass. Zacharias. Elizabeth, John the Baptist, the Sibyl. Erythree. Simeon, Virgil. Nebuchadnezzar and the three musicians in the furnace. After the procession entered the cath-edral several groups of persons per-formed the parts of Jews and Gentiles to whom the choristers addressed speeches; afterward they called on the prophets, one by one, who came speeches; alterward they called on the prophets, one by one, who came forward successively and delivered a passage relative to the Messiah. The other characters advanced to occupy their successively and relative to their proper situations and reply to the questions of the choristers. They performed the miracle of the furnace; Nebuchadnezzar spoke, the Sibyl apwhich concluded the ceremony.

"The Missal of an Archbishep of Sens' indicates that during such a service the animal itself, clad with preciev priestly ornaments, was selemnly conducted to the middle of the choir, during which procession a hymn in praise of the ass was suge symn in praise of the ass was sung, ending with: -

'Amen, bray, most honored Ass, Sated now with grain and grass; Amen repeat, amen reply. And disregard antiquity. 'Hez va! hez va! hez

hez va! hez va! heze! Hez val hez val hez val nezel The service lasted the whole of a night and part of the next day, and formed altogether the strangest, most ridiculous medley of whatever was usthe brief dialogue between an inually sung at church festivals. When the choristers were thirsty wine was miring child and his impation! served; in the evening, on a platform before the church lit by an enorm-ous lantern, the grand chanter of parent: "What is mind?" "No matter." "What is matter?" "Never mind?"—Westminster belove the cauron ht by an enorm-ous lantern, the grand chanter of Sens led a jolly band, in performing broadly indecorous interludes. At re-specific divisions of the service the Gazette. You never can tell about orafory. Lots of shallow remarks are delivered ass was supplied with drink and proin a deep voice.



From Time Immemorial Part of the Holiday Celebration.

From time immemorial a tree has been a part of the Christmas elebration. It may be seen outside the traditional mangers in the missals and early paintings of the preraphaelite Italian school. In the tree or near it are seen angels in flowing robes singing out of a scroll of illuminated paper the "Peace on Earth and Good Will Toward Men" or "Glory, Glory, Halleluiah !"

The correct German Christmas tree always has an angel or a Christkind on the topmost branch, with a tinsel star at the end of a staff, like a pantomime fairy, and if the tree belongs to a very orthodox family there is usually at its foot a small top group represent-ing the Saviour's birth in the stable of Bethlehem.

The lights on the tree are said to be of Jewish origin. In the ninth month of the Jewish year, corresponding nearly to our December, and on the twenty-fifth day, the Jews celebrated the feast of dedication of their temple. It had been desecrated on that day by Anticchus. It was dedicated by Judas Maccabeus. and then, according to the Jewish legend, sufficient oil was found in the temple to last for the seven branched candlestick for seven days, and it would have taken seven days to prepare new oil. Accordingly the Jews were wont on the 25th of Kislen in every house to light a candle, on the next day two, and so on till on the seventh and last day of the feast seven candles

twinkled in every house. It is not easy to fix the exact date of the Nativity, but it fell most probably on the last day of Kisleu, when every Jewish house in Bethlehem and Jerusalem was twinkling with lights. It is worthy of notice that the German name for Christmas is Weihnacht (the night of dedication), as though it were associated with this feast. The Greeks also call Christmas the feast of lights, and, indeed, this was also the name given to the dedication festival, Chanuka, by the Jews .-- New York Mail and Express.

Popular Jokes.

The most popular joke which has been published in any fanguage in the history of the world is stated to be that which appeared in an obscure corner of the Punch almanae for 1845. It read: "Advice to persons about to marry-Don't!" It would be into teresting to know who was its author. Another, founded on a similar subject, was the "Advice to persons who have 'fallen in love'-Fall out!" One of the most brilliant things that ever appeared in our contemporary was

have you come to reproach me? Not to-day! Not to-day" The strong man's voice broke as he held out his arms.

"Nance" he cried, joyfully. In a moment she was crushed, sobbing, to his reast.

"Oh, Gerald, is it really you? God is very good. I thought you must be dead."

dead," For several moments they stood thus, the strong man's tears falling on her gray tinged hair. Then he gently pushed her into a chair.

"You are not alone?" he asked, as his eyes caught sight of a little table

Old Christmas Portents

hood.

If you burn elder on Christmas Eve you will have revealed to you all the witches and sorcerers of the neighbor-

If you eat a raw egg on Christmas morning, fasting, you can carry heavy weights.

It is unlucky to carry anything forth from the house on Christmas morning until something has been brought into it.

If the fire burns brightly on Christ-nas morning it betokens prosperity;

Yuletide Tragedy

And by and by the cigars were all smoked by Spicer, and Gibbs' wife was led to say to Gibbs:

"It's just a perfect shame, Josiah. that you couldn't take any pleasure in those eigars and that your friend Spicer should have had them all.

At which Josiah smiled his knowing smile and said:

"Oh, well, my love, never mind. Joe seemed to enjoy them.

"Yes, indeed!" said Josiah's wife, why shouldn't he?"

Which made Josiah smile more and more and almost cuckle. But he said nothing. "Yes, indeed,"

repeated Mrs. Gibbs, why shouldn't he? You know, Josiah, you told me that a woman should never choose eigars Spicer he told him how he had for a Christmas present to her husband, as a woman knows nothing about their quality, so I asked Jon Spicer, having heard you say often what an excellent judge of a cigar he was, to select a box for me-the best he could get-and he

did, and "-Josiah Gibbs had instant business down at the office, where he tore his hair and flung his pipe and tobacco out of the window. And he passed Joe Spicer without bowing and without his knowing his knowing smile. And Joc smile. But Joe still wore his.-

Browning's Magazine.

When Josiah Gibbs found that his wife "had it in for him," as

a box of eigars for his Christmas present he grew wise and, with

'Now, isn't it too bad, my love? I discovered that eigar smoking was becoming so injurious to me that I have quit it and have to content myself with a few whiffs now and then on my pipe with mild tobacco. Now, isn't it too bad!'

he called it, and had bought him

apparent sorrow, said to her:

"I'm so sorry, dear!" said Josiah Gibbs' wife. "But your

friends will enjoy them, and I am

sure that will please you." Gibbs smiled grimly and, as his wife departed, winked knowingly at himself in the looking glass. And when he saw his friend Joe

eigars-Joe Spicer, the best judge of a good cigar that ever bit off | the end of a two-for-a-half. And

But every time Joe Spicer called at Gibbs', which was often-he was an old friend of Gibbs-he smoked one or more of Josiah's

"Gallant and diplomatic of you, old man!" Gibbs would say to Spicer on opportunity and smile

would smile his.

Joe smiled primly, too.

wife's Christmas cigars.