

## TRUE GIVING.

Not only around our infancy  
Doth heaven with all its splendours lie;  
Daily, with souls that cringe and plot,  
We sin and climb and know it not.

Earth gets its price for what Earth gives us;  
The beggar is taxed for a corner to die in;  
The priest hath his fee—who comes and survives us.

'Tis heaven alone that is given away;  
'Tis only God may be had for the asking.

And the voice that was calmer than silence said,  
"Lo, it is I, be not afraid!  
In many climes, without avail,  
Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail!"

Behold, it is here! This cup which thou didst fill at the streamlet for Me but now;  
This crust is My body, broken for thee,  
This water His blood who died on the tree;

The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,  
In what we share with another's need;  
Not what we give, but what we share—  
For the gift without the giver is bare.

Who gives himself with his alms feeds three—  
Himself, his hungry neighbor, and  
Me."

—Lowell's "The Vision of Sir Launfal."

## Sabbath School.

## BIBLE LESSONS.

## FIRST QUARTER.

(Condensed from Robinson's Select Notes.)

Lesson X. March 13. Ezek. 36: 25-38.

## PROMISE OF A NEW HEART.

## GOLDEN TEXT.

"A new heart also will I give you,  
and a new spirit will I put within you."  
—Ezek. 36: 26.

## EXPLANATORY.

DOCTRINE. A NEW HEART IS THE HOPE OF THE WORLD.

THE PRINCIPLES. FIRST, APPLICATION TO THE EXILES. The prophecy of which this lesson is a part was first of all a sermon to the exiles who stood there, what was necessary for them in order to return and again become the people of God in their own land.

SECOND, A PAR-OFF VISION. But the same principles apply to the kingdom of God in all ages. From the exile, as from a mountain-top, the prophet saw and proclaimed the redemption of the whole world. This, as well as the return, would bring comfort and strength to the exiles.

THIRD, NOTE THE CIVIL PREPARATION then begun among the world kingdoms, and shown more clearly in Daniel, for the return and for the triumph of the kingdom of God. In the words of Prof. Blaikie, "It pleased God to raise up a succession of great conquerors, whose work was to bring the kingdom of the world into one. First, Nebuchadnezzar brought into one empire Chaldees, Assyria, Arabia, Palestine, Egypt, and other countries. Next Cyrus the Persian was raised up, under whom nearly the whole of Asia was brought under one sceptre. Then followed Alexander of Macedon, whose territories embraced the east of Europe besides. And lastly the Romans who, though not extending quite so far on this side of Asia, added the north-west of Africa and the south and south-west of Europe." It was by Cyrus controlling all the kingdoms as one that the return from exile was possible; and from the universal sway of the Romans, "when Christianity was introduced, it had only to be planted in a single centre, and from that centre it was able to spread out east and west, over the length and breadth of the Roman empire. The apostle Paul could travel from Arabia on the east, to Spain on the west, without ever losing the benefit of his Roman citizenship, and the benefit of the laws of Rome." God is still guiding the nations in the interest of His kingdom. Even the wars have aided it, and the commerce, and the inventions of civilization, and the discoveries of travellers are preparing the way of the Lord.

FOURTH, THE UNIFICATION OF THE JEWS. The ten tribes went into captivity more than a century before the captivity of Judah. Doubtless some of them adhered closely to the true religion, and when their brethren came from Jerusalem, the sorrow of the exile brought together the true worshippers from all the tribes. So Ezekiel teaches by the illustration of the two rods (chap. 37). The return was of the twelve tribes. The present Jews are the representatives of the twelve tribes. So in the Revelation the nation is spoken of as the twelve tribes. God is now preparing for the final conquest of the world by the growing unity of the church, still twelve tribes, but under one head, and bound together in a unity of love and spirit and purpose.

FIFTH, THE NEW LIFE, purified from evil, was also absolutely essential to the return of the Jews to their own land. The new heart is the essential condition of the final triumph of Christianity. It is this preparation which is the subject of to-day's lesson, "the awakening of better hopes, the preparation for a better state."

25. Then, When God restores Israel to their own land (ver. 24), "Will I, God is speaking. Sprinkle clean water upon you. The conception of cleansing by sprinkling clean water comes from the Mosaic ceremonial system. See especially Num. 19: 17-19, and also Ps. 51: 7. Also Heb. 9: 13, 14. Clean water is a natural symbol of cleansing, used everywhere and in all ages. From all your filthiness. Sin is to the soul what filth is to the body—defiling, unwholesome, uncleanly, repulsive. And from all your idols. The exile completely cured the Israelites from idolatry. They never again fell into that snare. There would have been little use in restoring the Jews to their own land, if they were to fall again immediately into the sins for which they were exiled.

26. The deepest and most essential need of men is a heart that loves and chooses righteousness and God. No outward forms or control can make a person truly good. A man in sin-prisons cannot steal or become drunk; but he

is not, on that account, honest or temperate. The honest man is one that loves honesty. The temperate man is one who is governed and controlled by right principles. The righteous man is righteous in heart and character. A new spirit. A new motive, new principle of action, a new love, one like God's spirit. "I will put My Spirit within you."

This is the great doctrine of the New Testament, taught forcibly by our Lord Himself in His statements respecting the new birth (John 3: 3-8), and everywhere presented as pre-eminently the work of the Spirit of God. See also 2 Cor. 5: 17; Gal. 5: 22, 23; John 1: 12, 13; Titus 3: 5.

THE STONY HEART. And I will take away the stony heart. The heart of sin is called stony, like a rock. It is dead to God's goodness, dead to holy influences, dead to heaven. Neither the example of Christ, nor His death in the cross, nor His pleadings of love, move it to true life. This is the completed result of the stony heart, that toward which wicked men are ever growing.

27. And I will put My Spirit within you. The new Spirit will be His Spirit—like like His, desires like His, a nature like His, to which a right life is as natural as apples are natural to an apple-tree, or roses to a rose-bush. And this came in its fulness when the Pentecostal gift was bestowed, and God sent His Spirit in large and free measure, upon His people. The source of the new life was the Spirit of God (see Joel 2: 28; Acts 3: 16). Keep My judgments. His laws, His decisions, as to what was right.

28. And ye shall dwell in the land. No outward power can overcome them, or take them again into exile, unless they depart from God; but they would be under the divine protection. And I will be your God. Every good thing is included in this. God is not only their shield, but their sun (Ps. 84: 11). All life, power, beauty, comfort, warmth, fruits, blessings, come through the sun. What the spring sun is to the earth, that would God be to them after the cold, hard winter of their exile. See such promises as Isa. 60 and 61.

29. I will also save you from all your uncleanness. This must ever be the first thing in their salvation. The other blessing cannot come till this is done. They were saved from sin. I will call for the corn. Grain.

30. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree. There shall be plenty of food. No more reproach of famine. The heathen seem to have reached the land of the living, and with having a God who would allow them to suffer hunger. The heathen did not understand the reason.

FULFILLMENTS. (1) This promise was in large measure fulfilled in the return after the 70 years of exile was completed. (2) There will be a more complete fulfilment if the Jews, now in exile in all lands for rejecting Christ, shall return to their own land. Many signs are pointing to this return and making it probable, but the Jews must first receive the new heart from Christ, and be filled with His Spirit. (3) The promises are truly fulfilled in the spiritual children of Abraham, who belong to Christ and the kingdom of God through faith, even if there be no literal return. God now gives temporal blessings to the nations who serve Him. The most Christian and moral nations are the most prosperous and happy. Individuals are not always prosperous and happy in proportion as they are children of God, for that would be likely to destroy true piety. But they have abundance of real good, and are the most blessed of people. But in nations you can almost gauge the degree in which they are filled with the spirit of God, by their outward peace and happiness.

31. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and shall loathe yourselves. When they see their own sins in contrast with God's goodness, then they will realize how mean and disgraced their sins were. They measured their conduct by the true standard, and were convicted of sin.

32. Not for your sakes. Not because you deserve it, not on account of your virtues and goodness. They could not claim the deliverance as a right, for they ought to be ashamed and confounded for your own ways. The salvation was the free gift of the goodness of God.

33. In the day that I shall have cleansed you. They must never forget that this was the necessary condition of salvation. 37. I will yet for this be inquired of. Although the blessing was promised it could come only through prayer, for the best part of the blessing was spiritual, and this part came through prayer. Prayer leads to communion with God. Prayer connects every temporal blessing with the goodness and love of God. Then there must be a hungering, a longing for the best gifts, or they will have small blessings for us. Librarians and colleagues are of small value to those who do not hunger and thirst after knowledge. Prayer increases the desire. Thus blessings, coming through prayer, increase faith and love and patience, and spiritual life and character.

34. At the holy flock. When great numbers of people (in the time of Christ as many as two millions) came up to Jerusalem to the Passover, great numbers of sheep and lambs were driven to the city, and were slain and feasted for more than at any other time. (1) The cities would be filled with inhabitants; (2) they would be consecrated to the service of God.

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## A Girl's Work.

Several years ago a young girl took a class of boys in a certain Sunday-school. She was very young, had never taught, and therefore shrank from the work, but with that instinctive sagacity which boys often show, they chose her, and persisted in their choice, and so, very doubtfully, she began her work. There were ten boys in the class, and they lived in a village of four or five thousand inhabitants—a village which boasts of forty drinking saloons! They were not the good sort of boys—not at all! but they had a cordial liking for their teacher, and a strong class-spirit was soon developed, of which our slender girl did not fail to take advantage. She encouraged them to stand together, and she stood among them! They learned to tell her everything, and she was the hearty, sympathetic adviser and personal friend of each.

Was little woman! She was laying the foundation deep and strong. For well she knew that by and by the floods would rise, and the winds would blow, and beat upon these precious human houses entrusted to her care! And so they dug deep into the solid confidence and affection of her boys.

The trial days did not delay to come. The boys were growing tall and manly. They were learning to smoke and taste beer, and what more natural than they should find themselves too large to go to Sunday-school?

"I had a dreadful time with those boys for four years," said the teacher; "but I could not and would not let them go."

"But how did you retain them?" "Well, I followed them. As soon as a boy absented himself from Sunday-school I went after him. I had their confidence, and they would tell me even when they did pretty bad things, which, of course, was a great help.

They were wide-awake, active boys, and wanted to try about every new thing, and they did; but I tried to keep along with them. At one time they found themselves into a city, rented a room, and grew old very fast. I used to tremble in those days, and I had reason to! But I did not give up."

"It must have taken a great deal of time to follow them up."

"Well, yes it did. There have been weeks in succession when I was out every morning looking after my boys. But I thought it worth pay."

"And has it?" "I think so. Six of the ten remain, and I have no difficulty in keeping them in Sunday-school. The others have moved away, but I hear from them. All but two are Christians, and these two are steady and seem to be well established in principle."

"But they are men now. Do you still teach them?" "Yes, I cannot induce them to go into a Bible class, though I have often tried to do so. They seem to dislike the thought of a change."

"And little wonder!" "So that it comes to pass that in a certain Sunday-school there may be seen a class of young men, respectful, attentive, absorbed, listening to the low-voiced teaching of a slender young woman, as if they thought her words carried weight."

And so they do, the weight of a life which means earnest purpose and faith in the work which is given to us to do.

"But she had time to give to her class," some one says.

Listen: During all these years she was a hard-working school teacher, with but a slender stock of health to draw upon! Yes, she had time to give to her boys, but where do you think she found it? Possibly some of the adornments and enjoyments of girlhood had to be given up. Did it pay?—Sel.

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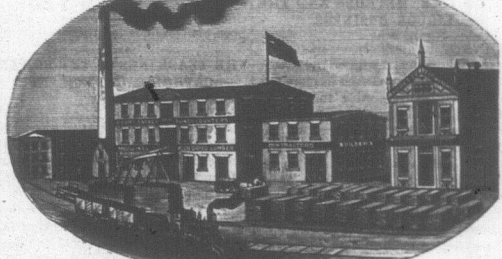
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