

## "Looking Two Ways," 1911-1912

New Year's Topic for week of December 31st.

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Lesson: Psa. 25: 1-14. Joshua 3: 4: 1: 8

All days are alike. Each rolls out its allotted span of time. They come and go with even beat, disregarding the moods of the elements, the rise or fall of nations, or the sentiment of men.

All days may be alike, but we make them different. We pick them out and give them names. We call some holy days, and others holidays, and such they become. We call some birthdays and others anniversary days, and thus we keep ourselves in touch with the great that is past in the history of men and events.

We choose one hour from all the rest and make it to divide time from time, and call it New Year's day. Here we ask the past and the present to meet together, and as they meet we look both ways. Review and pre-view: Retrospect and prospect, are forced upon us.

Twelve months we pick past with their joys and sorrows, their successes and failures throw themselves open to our gaze. Twelve months of the future, presenting opportunities and possibilities, loom up before us, and upon them we must enter at once. Let us at this dividing point in the flight of time, face the records and plan for the future as honestly and wisely as we may.

### THE OLD VOLUME OF 1911.

Could we look over the past year better by thinking of it as a volume containing 12 chapters each with 27 to 31 pages; making in all 365, on every one of which we have written. Let us leaf over its pages, review its records and learn the lessons they would teach us.

**Blessings Demand Praise.**—Surely the most striking thing in these pages is that abundant blessings have been lavished upon us by our kind all-Father's hand. To have been alive; to have lived in this world; to have lived with our friends, and in this land, and in this age, should cause to flow from our souls a stream, yes, a river of praise and thanks-giving to God for His goodness. We can say with Austin:—

"My manhood keeps the dew of morn,  
And what I have I give,  
Being right glad that I was born,  
And thankful that I live."

Let thanksgiving be the dominant note in our review of the past year.

**Blots Demand Penitence.**—But look again at the pages, are not some of them blotted and blurred? Must we confess that wilful, selfish sin have crept into our lives in the past year. If at this time we have to face the record of sin, let us meet the demand and go honestly to God pleading for pardon: and though we cannot efface the record or call back the mistaken or selfish act, we can, in God's goodness, start the New Year with a clean heart.

**Blanks Demand Plans.**—Take one more look. Are some of the pages keenly reproachable by the blank spaces they contain? Have we not had calls to service that have come to us clear and imperative? And yet have we not turned unheeding to pursue our pleasures? Hearts have been lonely and some of them sink. Meetings have lagged or have been neglected. The Sunday School has been calling for help. A whole world of need and sin has been appealing to us. Have there not been a thousand things we might have done that would have been

some help in advancing the Kingdom of Love and Righteousness?

If there has been neglect in our past year's service, perhaps our first need is penitence, but our next need is some clear and definite planning for the future. Having learned the lessons, let us close the volume, and leave it closed, till by the Angel's hand "the Books are Opened." But as we close the old volume of 1911, behold we have in our hands

### THE NEW VOLUME OF 1912.

This new book also contains 365 pages. (No, leap year has one day more.) These pages are clean and white, and we must fill them up.

May we for this year throw the formality of New Year's resolutions to the winds, and in their place make some real and definite plans, which shall enter into our very life.

**Success through better Bible Knowledge.**—The word Success appears but once in our English Bible, and is here (Josh. 1: 8) promised to Israel if they would "know" and "observe" the Book of God's Law. Success, abiding success, comes only to those who "know" and "observe" God's law of gravitation. If he ignores it and builds away from the plumb-line, God will pull down his wall. So will God pull down that life, or business, or home, or nation that is not built according to what is written in the book of His Law. Let us for this year give up our Bible Reading to ease our conscience, and really study God's Word to know His will.

**More Prayer Needed.**—If the ability to know God's will comes from the study of God's word, then the power to do it comes from God, himself. Those who do most for God pray most to Him. If sin has been in our lives prayer will kill it, for as one has said "our prayer will either kill our sin or our sin will kill our prayer." If weakness and failure have marked the past, prayer will bring the needed strength, but the great need of the world today is for hearts that engage in intercessory prayer. "Ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence, and give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." Isa. 62: 6 and 7.

If well-laid plans are needed for every other part of our life, why not for our prayer-life? Let us plan a time and place, if possible, when we go apart to pray, and let us select definite objects for which we will plead with God during this coming year.

Having found our place, and our work, by faithful Bible study, and honest and our prayer, let us go forward to fill up this new volume of 1912, and make it better, cleaner and fuller;—more beautiful to us and God, than the volume of 1911.

### The Birthday of Hope

"This is what I saw in my dream," says Rev. J. D. Jones, M.A., B.D., in a daily brochure, entitled, "The Birthday of Hope." The dream was one he had one Christmas Eve, when he dreamt of a world into which the little child Jesus had never come.

In the Christless world there was no Christmas. The 25th of December was no different from any other day in that dreary place. I walked out into the streets. I noticed that business was being carried on just as usual. The shops were all open. The chimneys of factories and foundries poured out dense clouds of black smoke.

Christmas is a glad-some time in the home. But I walked into a home in this Christless world on

"the 25th of December, and I saw no signs of unusual rejoicing or gladness. I peeped into the rooms where the little ones slept, but I saw no tiny stockings hung up at the foot of the bed for Santa Claus to fill with good things. I looked into the parlor, but I saw no Christmas tree. . . .

Christmas was a gloomy time for the poor and needy. So, full of expectation, I wandered on the morning of the 25th of December into the courts and alleys, where the poor spend their dull and monotonous lives. I opened the doors of their houses and looked in. I saw no sign that the rich had been caring for the comfort of the poor. The 25th of December was as dull and dreary a day as any day in the twelfth month. The children's faces were pinched and pale. And as I noticed this, I wondered and asked myself, 'Where are all the little gracious and kindly gifts men and women offer to the poor and needy? Where are all the brighten and gladden their Christmas?' and I remembered I was in a world into which He had not come; and in the Christless world there is no Christmas.

"The vision of that world without a Christmas, without a Church, without a Cross; the vision of that world without pity and white hope; the vision of that world in which life was misery and death, despair—made me thank God I lived in a world into which Christ had come. I realized then that pity and sympathy and love and hope, the things that make life glad and beautiful, were born with Christ at Bethlehem."

### Christmas Boxes

Christmas boxes first became illegal in London, nearly 500 years ago, when the following was issued: "Regulations made that the Sergeants and other officers of the Mayor, Sheriffs, or City shall not beg for Christmas gifts. . . . Forasmuch as it is not becoming to propriety that those who are in the service of reverend men . . . should after a nervous custom be begged for gifts of people like paupers on the Feast of our Lord's Nativity . . . from brewers, bakers, cooks, and other victualers, to the great dishonor of their masters—therefore . . . by William Sevenok, the Mayor, and the Aldermen of London, it is ordered that no Sergeant of the City shall in future beg or require of any person of any rank any moneys on pain of losing his office." It takes considerable met to decline a gift without hurting the feelings of your would-be benefactor, especially at this season of goodwill. Sir Thomas More softened his refusal of a customary offering—his was to decline all when in office—and on one occasion a lady, who brought him a pair of gloves in which were forty current coins of the period—angels—was gently let down with, "Mistress, since it were against good manners to refuse your gift, I am content to take your gloves, but, as for the lining, I utterly refuse it."—Sci.

Do you keep in touch with the Secretary of our Forward Movement as you should? One president says they are very deficient in missionary literature, another wants hints for missionary meetings, while still another asks for information which no League would lack if they were in communication with Dr. Stephenson occasionally. Every League should have at least one copy of the Missionary Bulletin coming regularly to the Missionary Vice-President; and all possible suggestions, plans, mission study text-books, maps, and supplies generally, may be readily obtained by addressing Rev. P. C. Stephenson, M.D., Methodist Mission Rooms, Toronto.