

## INTERNATIONAL S. S. LESSONS.

December 23. Isaiah ix: 2-7.

The Christmas festival of modern times is characterized by features derived from the religious observances of every nation. The Mother and Child are found in ancient Egypt, the Christmas tree is the tree of life, the Yedrasil, the Asvattha, the holly and mistletoe come from the Druids, and so we may trace all our other observances. The astronomical symbolism of the Sun reaching the southern limit of its journey on the 21st of December, remaining three days in the balance, and ascending again, or being reborn on the 25th leads to the fixing of that date as the birthday of all the world saviours, Horus, Mithra, Krishna, Buddha, etc. This Saviour, the Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, is not of course the Being to whom Christians and others pray for success in their wars, but the adversary of all strife, He who rules by non-resistance, of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end. His Kingdom is certainly not of this world.

December 30. Review.

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day and forever. Heb. xiii. 8. This text alone would be sufficient to emphasize the purely spiritual aspect of the true Christian ideal. It was not the man, who was born, who grew in stature and who died, but the Spirit, the Christos, the same yesterday, to-day, and unto the ages, on which rests the whole religious life. While churches and philosophies continue to materialize these conceptions, there can be no general realization of the facts of the higher planes of existence. This Christ is truly the "I am," the very affirmation of Being, the "consuming fire" of life in all its phases, ever the noumenal potency, never the changing and transitory phenomenal.

January, Mark vi: 17-29.

The Christian spirit is not one of condemnation; it distinguishes between the sin and the sinner, denounces the one and warns the other. Modern theology has lost sight of this, and this passage is mainly cited to hold up Herod to reprobation. While we abhor his conduct and deplore his weakness there is more to be gained from a study of the central figure, John the Baptist, himself. As a reincarnation of the prophet Elijah, (Matt. xi, 14, xvii, 12 13; Luke i, 17) we have a striking example of the operation

of Karma. Herod himself presents an interesting parallel with Ahab, but a study of I Kings will clearly indicate the causes that result in the occurrences of John's life. "They that take the sword shall perish with the sword," Matt. xxvi. 52, and he who slew the prophets of Baal, I Kings xviii, 40, now reaps what he has sown. Yet woe unto Herod by whom the offence came. Matt. xviii, 7. If we see Jezebel in Herodias, the vindictiveness she displays is explained by the unfulfilled passion of the earlier life, I Kings, xix, 2.

January 13. Mark VI: 30-44

They were as sheep not having a shepherd, and He began to teach them many things. The disciples had taught them all they knew, but they had only five principles, and the two spiritual faculties were not yet in their gift. Only at the hands of a Master was this food satisfying, and it is only the five thousand who are worthy to receive it. He taught them many things, for the Path is not so plain as some fancy, and there was left of the fragments, for knowledge does not cease by spreading, twelve baskets full, the twelve great signs that embody all knowledge. Man does not live by bread alone, but by the Word. In the kindred allegory of Matthew xv. 32, in which he feeds them with the fuller knowledge of the seven loaves they had been in the wilderness for the mystical three days of initiation. The actual multiplication of the loaves is of course, less important than the spiritual truth it typifies, and is readily credible to those acquainted with the yoga practices of the East.

## THE LOCAL BRANCH.

Increased interest has been observed in the work of the Society during the past month. An attempt is being made to organize the women's work and good results are expected. The Sunday morning meeting has been changed to 4 o'clock in the afternoon and the conduct of this meeting is placed in charge of Mr. Synthe. The change will take effect from the first Sunday after New Year. The papers on Sunday evenings have been of high quality and the substance of Mr. Scott's is published in this issue of THE LAMP. Mr. Derrett's paper on "The Christian's Vow," Mr. Mason's on "Theosophy and Christianity" and Mr. James' almost too exhaustive paper on "Reincarnation," are evidences of the value of the new blood lately added to the Society.