

The Gracious Invitation.

DECEMBER 20. B. C. 712. ISAIAH LV: 1-11.
Golden Text, Isaiah 55: 1.

THIS exquisite chapter should be engraven on the memory. Nowhere in all the Bible is the fullness and freeness of the message of salvation more beautifully expressed. Notice the similarity of our Saviour's words uttered 700 years later, John 4: 14; 7: 37. See also Rev. 22: 17. V. 1. *Ho—hold, stop, attend*—as though the prophet saw the world rushing in pursuit of happiness in the wrong direction. *Every one*—Acts 10: 34, 35. There is no limit to the offer of salvation, except that the sinner feels his need of it, and is willing to accept it in the way in which it is offered. *Without money*—not but that it will cost effort and sacrifice, but "the gift of God" satisfies, while the rewards of the world do not. Money cannot buy it, Acts 8: 10. *Wine and milk*—emblematic of the blessings of God, which nourish and cheer the soul. V. 2. Money is spent in countless ways that neither satisfy the heart nor bring peace to the conscience. Nothing short of eternal life can satisfy the cravings of the soul, Eccles. 4: 8. *Placess*—the richest blessings in abundance; everything that the soul can need, Ephes. 3: 19. V. 3. *Incline your ear*—listen attentively to the Gospel call. *Come unto me*—Matt. 11: 28. *Everlasting covenant*—contrasted with the perishing nature of earthly things. *Mercies of David*, such as God promised to David, Ps. 89: 28, 29. V. 4. *A witness*—John 18: 37. *A leader and commander*—so sympathetic and powerful, we need not hesitate to follow and obey. V. 5, see Ps. 2: 8. How gloriously true of many heathen lands to-day in which the Gospel is proclaimed and accepted by multitudes!—Hawaii, Madagascar, Formosa, S. S. Islands, &c. V. 6. The promise is to those who seek Him now, 2 Cor. 6: 2. Probation has limits—certainly at death, and sometimes before—when the character becomes fixed and the heart hardened, Prov. 1: 24-26; Rom. 2: 5. V. 7. No one can come to Christ without first forsaking his evil ways. *Mercy* must ever be the sinner's plea—not merit, Luke 18: 10-14. *He will abundantly pardon*—see ch. 1: 18; 2 Pet. 1: 11. V. 10. God's mercy is put in contrast with man's unforgiving spirit. *As the rain, &c.*—so the outpouring of the Spirit makes barren hearts yield the fruits of righteousness. V. 11. *So shall My word be*—It shall produce the intended effect—either a savour of life or of death to those who hear it, 2 Cor. 2: 16. The full accomplishment of this and of verses 12, 13 will be in the final restoration of the Jews and conversion of the whole world. To-day it is the privilege and duty of every Sabbath-school teacher to say to each and every scholar—**COME YE TO THE WATERS: COME NOW!**

Josiah and the Book of the Law.

JANUARY 3. B. C. 641. 2 KINGS XXII: 1-13.
Golden Text, 2 Kings 22: 2.

COMPARE 2 Chron. ch. 34. Josiah, son of Amon and grandson of Manasseh, like Edward VI. of England, was crowned when yet a boy. He was conspicuous for piety. The prophets Jeremiah and Zephaniah flourished in his reign. The latter wrote a plaintive elegy on the occasion of his death, 2 Chron. 35: 25. To the former he was probably indebted for his early religious training, and may have been led to enter upon his great life-work by his rousing appeal in Zeph. 2: 1-3. Josiah destroyed every vestige of idolatry in Judea, and then, in the 18th year of his reign, caused the feast of the Passover to be celebrated with unwonted solemnity, 2 Chr. 35: 18. This beloved monarch fell in the battle of Megiddo, and died, greatly lamented, when only 39 years old. V. 2. *That which was right*—Remarkable for his integrity from childhood, at 16, he began to seek after God, 2 Chr. 34: 3. Note that his piety was progressive and genuine. V. 3. At 23, he entered upon the work of reformation enthusiastically. He did it thoroughly; not only in Judea, but in Samaria also, "even unto Naphtali," 2 Chr. 34: 6. Besides destroying the altars and temples of Baal, and exterminating the priests, he even exhumed the bones of the false prophets and burned them on the same altars where they had sacrificed to Baal, see 1 Kings, 13: 2. *Shaphan, the scribe*—the king's secretary. The art of writing was a rare accomplishment in those days, and the office of scribe an honorable one. The first mentioned in the Bible is Sheva, in David's time, 2 Sam. 20: 25. The N. T. scribes were copyists and teachers of the Law, frequently denounced by our Lord for their hypocrisy, Matt. 23: 13. V. 4. Builders had already been engaged and money collected for the repairs and embellishment of the temple. Now the high priest is directed to have a survey made and estimates prepared. V. 8. The interest of the lesson culminates in the discovery of an old M.S. among the *debris*. It may have been the whole, or only a part of the Pentateuch. Perhaps the original, "given by the hand of Moses," 2 Chr. 34: 14; or the temple copy, Deut. 31: 26, which may have been secreted a century before by some pious hand. Its coming to light was a matter of rejoicing, for the Bible was scarce in those days. Vs. 10, 11. The relic was not regarded as a mere curiosity. They immediately began to *read it*, with marked effect on Josiah, who rent his clothes and *wept*, v. 19. The Word of the Lord is quick and powerful, Heb. 4: 12. Other prophetesses are mentioned in Scripture—Miriam, Deborah, Anna. We cannot begin too soon to seek the Lord, nor to engage in his work, Prov. 8: 17. We should take the Bible as our guide in all things, Ps. 119: 105; 2 Tim. 3: 6.