

The Sunday School

BIBLE LESSON

Abridged from Peloubets' Notes.

Fourth Quarter.

LESSONS IN GIVING.

Lesson XI. Dec. 10. Malachi 1:6-11; 3:8-12.

Read Chapter 1, and 2 Corinthians, Chapters 8 and 9.

Commit 3:10.

GOLDEN TEXT.

God loveth a cheerful giver, 1 Cor 9:7.

EXPLANATORY.

I. MALACHI AND HIS WORK.—Malachi means "My Messenger," or if the name is an abbreviation of Malachijah, as Abi is Abijah (2 Kings 18:2 with 2 Chron. 29:1), then the meaning will be "The Messenger of Jehovah."

The Book of Malachi belongs either to the period preceding (possibly following) the reforms of Ezra-B. C. 458) or the reforms of Nehemiah (B. C. 427). Its prophecies are applicable to either, for the reforms were very similar in character, but the later period seems more probable to the majority of critics.

The Work of Malachi. Malachi prepared the way for Nehemiah's great work. "For the steps taken by Nehemiah were so prompt, not to say vehemently swift, that no time seems to have intervened after his return during which the words of Malachi could have been listened to. But if we suppose that the prophet appeared slightly before Nehemiah's return, then the practical measures of the governor would seem to be the natural fulfilment and execution of the threats of the prophet.

Malachi in prophecy marks the same era of change that Ezra does in history. "From Ezra's time the law was carefully edited, copies of it were multiplied, trained teachers of it were scattered through the land, the people were summoned week by week to hear it, and thus the need of living prophets was the less felt. Looking at it from the human side, this marked change was similar to that through which a nation passes when its age of creative genius gives way to an age of learning, of criticism, and of history.

II. GOD'S FATHERLY LOVE AND CARE FOR HIS PEOPLE.—Vs. 1-6. Malachi's prophecy begins with the statement of a great fact, which fact is itself an argument and appeal for right conduct. "I have loved you," saith the Lord. The reply was, "Wherein hast thou loved us?" How do we know you love us? What have you done to show your love?

The prophet replies by two arguments. First, Let them take a wider view of God's providence. See how God had treated Edom. They, too, had been desolated by the same power which brought Israel into exile, but in spite of all their plans for restoration, there had been no return for them, as there had been for God's people.

The second argument was that God was their Father, with all a father's love and compassion and desire to do his children good. For many of them knew what a father's love was from experience, but his children had acted in such a way that he could not express his love in the way he would.

That God loves us as we are, that he is our Father with an infinite love and compassion and care, is the most wonderful revelation God has made to man. It was dimly seen in the ages we are now studying, but revealed in its fullness of glory and blessing by the person and the words of Jesus.

III. THE MEAN WAY IN WHICH THEY TREATED THEIR LOVING GOD.—Vs 6-11. The prophet shows them why they have not been treated as they expected a good Heavenly Father to treat them. They would not permit it. No father can treat a bad child in the same way he does a good child. With the same love toward them they require a different discipline.

6. A SON HONORETH HIS FATHER. That is the normal, natural, and usual way. If THEN I BE A FATHER, as you call me, and whose fatherly love you expect, WHERE IS MINE HONOR? Why do you not treat me as a father? O PRIESTS! The religious leaders of the people. AND YE SAY, WHEREIN HAVE WE DESPISED THY NAME? They either tied to dazzle it out, or their conscience were too dull and dead to realize what they had been doing.

7. YE OFFER POLLUTED BREAD UPON MINE ALTAR. That which they could not use themselves they offered in sacrifice, thus going through a form of sacrifice, but offering that which cost them nothing. It was hypocrisy and insult. It was saying louder than by words, THE TABLE OF THE LORD IS CONTEMPTIBLE.

8. THE BLIND FOR SACRIFICE. . . . THE LAME AND SICK. Whatever was worthless and could not be sold or eaten by them-

selves they offered in sacrifice. The law prescribed that only the best should be offered, but they thought they could cheat God, and keeping the outward forms of worship and sacrifice, while denying its spirit, could receive the promise made to true religious service. OFFER IT NOW UNTO THY GOVERNOR. Would you take such a present as that when you went to honor him, or ask a favor of him?

9. AND NOW, I PRAY YOU, BESECH GOD THAT HE WILL BE GRACIOUS UNTO US. That is, apply the same reasoning to God. As you take a present to the governor when you wish a favor, so bring your polluted bread, and your sick sheep, and your blind lambs, and, presenting them to God, ask your favors of him. Yet, THIS HATH BEEN BY YOUR MEANS. This is what you really have done, and yet you wonder that you have not received all the favors you have asked!

10. WHO . . . WOULD SHUT THE DOORS FOR NOUGHT? You are supremely selfish and will do nothing for love, nothing from the heart. Or rather, with the R. V. and most modern commentators, "Better that sacrifice should cease than such offerings should be presented in such a spirit! 'Is there no one,' cries the prophet, 'to close the doors' of the temple altogether, so that 'the altar' smoke not 'in vain?'"

11. FOR I HAVE NO OFFICER TO ACCEPT SUCH OFFERINGS, "for" there is an abundance of true sacrifices elsewhere. MY NAME SHALL BE (R. V., "is") GREAT AMONG THE GENTILES. "The present as foreshadowing the future." INCENSE. A type and expression of prayer. OFFERING. Spiritual sacrifices of praise, love and obedience. These sacrifices, were already offered in their synagogues by the Jews of the Dispersion.

Practical Suggestions. "A cheap religion, costing little, is rejected by God, and so is worth nothing. It costs more than it is worth, for it is worth nothing, and so proves really dear. God despises not the widow's mite, but he does despise the miser's mite."

"Alas! many a human heart ought to be smitten with a sense of its sins against the glorious Jehovah, in having constantly withheld from him the best of its love, homage and service, and in doling out only the meanest, cheapest offerings, in a way which signifies that the heart does not intend to give the least thing in real love to 'he good and glorious God!'"

IV. THE CONDITIONS OF SPIRITUAL PROSPERITY.—Vs. 8-12. After setting some other duties in the right light, and showing that judgment swift and sure was coming upon evil-doers, the prophet returns to the subject of dishonoring God by their neglect or perversion of their religious duties. In chapter I it was through offerings, here through tithes.

8. WILL A MAN ROB GOD? Can any man dare to do such a thing? YET YE HAVE ROBBED ME. . . . WHEREIN? IN TITHES AND OFFERINGS. The tithes was "the tenth" of the increase of their property, the produce of their orchards, vineyards, flocks, herds, and all their gains.

9. YE ARE CURSED WITH A CURSEL. (See Deut 28). They had expected to gain for themselves by so much as they withheld from God. The arithmetic was plain, "If I add to my store the grain, instead of carrying it to the temple storehouse, I must have so much more wealth for myself." But they left God out of the calculation, and in fact they were poorer instead of richer.

10. BRING YE ALL THE TITHES INTO THE STOREHOUSE. The chambers which surrounded the temple on three sides. AND PROVE ME IF I WILL NOT OPEN YOU THE WINDOWS OF HEAVEN. A poetical and proverbial expression, signifying a great downpouring which is fancifully ascribed to the opening of windows in the sky (Gen. 7:11; 2 Kings 7:2). POUR YOU OUT. "Empty out," as if God meant that he would empty forth his vast reservoir of blessings. There is evidently allusion to various rain; and the choice of imagery plainly implies that the land had been suffering from a severe drought.

11. I WILL REBUKE. Warn off, prevent from coming. THE DEVOURER. Lit., "eater"; i. e. any insect, especially the locust, that would devour the fruits of the earth. God in many ways can control these pests.

12. ALL NATIONS SHALL CALL YOU BLESSED. Happy. So great will be your prosperity and happiness that the fame thereof will extend to all nations, as in Solomon's time. A DELIGHTSOME LAND. A lovely place to live in, a paradise.

Normal Study Lesson No. 3.

Title: The Holy Spirit in Person and Office.

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Holy Trinity, co equal and co-existent with the Father and the Son. It is easy to comprehend the personality of the first

and second persons of the Trinity, but not so easy to grasp the idea of the personality of the Holy Spirit. As he is spoken of and prayed about as an influence or inspiration shed forth by the Father. But the Scriptures teach that he is a person.

I. The Holy Spirit. A Person. 1. Because Christ and the apostles use personal pronouns in referring to him, John 14:16, 17, 24; 15:26; 16:8, 13.

2. Because personal powers, understanding and will are ascribed to him, 1 Cor. 2:10, 11; 12:11; Eph. 1:13.

3. Because of his personal appearance. Matt. 3:16, Acts 2:3, 10:44.

4. Because certain feelings are ascribed to him, as (a) grief, Eph. 4:30, (b) vexed Isa. 63:10, (c) tempted, Acts 5:9.

5. Because personal divine attributes are ascribed to him. (a) Omniscience, 1 Cor. 2:10, 11, Isa. 43:13, 14. (b) Omnipresence, Ps. 139:7. Omnipotence, Luke 1:35. Eternal existence, Heb. 9:14.

6. Because Divine works are ascribed to him. Gen. 1:2. J. b. 26:13, Ps. 104:30.

II. The office of the Holy Spirit.

1. To convince of sin, John 16:8, 9, Acts 2:37.

2. To regenerate, John 3:5, 6, Titus 3:5, 1 John 3:9, 1 Peter 1:23. Eze. 36:26, 37:14.

3. To sanctify, 2 Thes. 2:13, 1 Cor. 6:11, Rom. 15:16, 1 Peter 1:2.

4. To comfort, John 14:16, 26; 15:26, 16:7, Rom. 8:15, 16, 26.

5. To direct and teach, John 14:26; 16:13, Rom. 8:14, Eph. 2:18.

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