

SUNDAY SCHOOL BANNER

for
TEACHERS
AND
YOUNG PEOPLE.

Vol. 27.]

FEBRUARY, 1893.

[No. 2.]

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The Sunday-School Banner

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SUNDAY SCHOOL BARRER

for
TEACHERS
AND
YOUNG PEOPLE.

Vol. XXVII.]

FEBRUARY, 1893.

[No. 2.

The Inductive Study of the Bible.

This method of studying the Word of God is more and more attracting deserved attention. This larger study of the Bible, as a whole, and of the relations of its inter-dependent parts will be a benediction to those who undertake it and to the whole Church. Too often attention has been focussed upon a single text, or a few verses, but one of the greatest advantages of the International Lesson system is that it selects large portions and leads to the study of the connecting links so as to give a more comprehensive idea of that wonderful book, the Bible, as a whole, and of God's leading, widening and brightening from age to age, from the narrow beginnings of patriarchal times to the broad sunlight of the new dispensation. It is well illustrated by Dr. Burwash's lectures to the Sunday-school teachers of Toronto, as given in the Victoria College Chapel and attended by a large number of Sunday-school workers and others in the city. Some notes from the lecture on the first lesson of the year will indicate some of the points of this method.

The lessons of the first quarter cover about one hundred years, and inclose the Canon of the New Testament. They are marked by the absence of the stupendous miracles of the eras of Moses and of the Divine Teacher of whom he testified. Few parts of Scripture are more instructive, more full of the spirit of faith, prayer, obedience to the command of God and the duties of everyday life. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are not a continuous history, but their object is to relate the various leaps by which God's plan was carried out, the Tabernacle set up in Jerusalem, and the old institutions of the land re-established after the captivity.

Beside the study of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, as a whole, Chancellor Burwash recommends that, in order to enter into the spirit of the period, the book of Isaiah, from the fortieth to the forty-ninth chapter, should be carefully read. This was written for the people of the captivity to arouse their faith and zeal. Then

the Psalms written in captivity should also be carefully studied, as the 107th, 126th, 137th; also the book of Daniel and the later prophets—Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

The Jews in their captivity became sick with the idolatry of the nations, and the prophets used to employ their bitterest sarcasm in setting forth the wickedness of idolatry.

Dr. Burwash strikingly compared the return of the Jews from the fertile plains of Babylon, where many of them had long settled and become wealthy, to the sterile and stony hills of Judea and desolated city of Jerusalem, as a great religious movement, more akin to the migration of the Puritan Fathers of New England and of the United Empire Loyalists of Canada than to anything else which has occurred in history.

It has been well said that the wheat of the earth was sifted for the seed of that planting on the rugged New England shore, and doubly sifted for the second migration of the United Empire Loyalists to Canada, into the then pathless wilderness of this country. So the faithful Jews were winnowed by the fan of persecution, and they were men of high spirit and bold enterprise who traversed the nearly 5,000 miles from Babylon to Judea.

The broad and comprehensive study of this great religious movement will be full of lessons of patriotism and religious duty, of faith in God and love of country—the institutions and ordinances of God's house and God's law. We trust that all the teachers in Toronto and its neighborhood will endeavor in person to enjoy the advantages of the Chancellor's important lectures, and that very many teachers throughout the country will take up this inductive study of the lessons, and arrange for local examinations in the month of April, and that year after year the numbers may increase till all our teachers, and many who are not, shall become enthusiastic Bible students in the broad and comprehensive plan. Nothing will do more to improve the quality of teaching and to make the Word of God a more real, living, inspiring book.

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Sunday School Banner.

W. H. WITHROW, D.D., EDITOR.

TORONTO, FEBRUARY, 1893.

Home Department of Sunday-school Work.

We have been much impressed by the importance of the Home Department of Sunday-school Study, and, therefore, brought the matter before the last meeting of the Sunday-school Board. The Board considered that as several other subjects were being strongly urged, as the Epworth League, the Junior League, the Inductive Study of the Bible, Catechumen Classes and other topics, that it would look like unduly multiplying machinery and having too many irons in the fire to urge the adoption of the Home Study Department. It was also feared that it might, in some degree, divert attention from the Sunday-school around which it was felt desirable that the chief rally of the congregation should be. The following resolution was passed:

"Whereas, it is felt that the systematic study of the Word of God should be still more widely observed and practised in all our households, *Resolved*,—That this Board strongly recommends the use of the Home Readings in connection with the Sunday-school lessons, and that, so far as practicable, adult, as well as youthful, members of the family, may be found on the Lord's day in the Sabbath-school.

"And, whereas, we note with regret that a considerable proportion of the schools close in

winter, *Resolved*,—That the utmost effort be made to secure the continuation of these schools throughout the year; but, where their closure is found unavoidable, that this Board recommends that efforts be made to secure the distribution of our Sunday-school papers and the maintenance of the study of the lessons as a Home Department of our Sunday-school work, in accordance with methods which will be more fully outlined in our Sunday-school periodicals."

We have been written to by some of our superintendents who are much interested in this department, and will be glad to hear how it is worked and with what success where it has been adopted. We have pleasure in calling attention to the following circular of the Sherbourne Street Methodist Sunday-school, Toronto:

HOME DEPARTMENT OF SHERBOURNE ST. METH.
CHURCH SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

Dear Friend:

The objects of this Home Department are:

1. To promote a regular and systematic study of the Bible in the home.
2. To keep alive the interest of those who are forced to be away from home, or who remove to localities where they are without Sunday-school privileges.
3. To reach individuals and families who are without the Gospel.
4. To promote family religion.
5. To develop Christian workers.
6. To increase the attendance upon the school.
7. To increase attendance at Church.

By becoming a member of the Home Department you have the advantages of:

1. A definite understanding with yourself, and an agreement with others as to what you propose to do.
2. The helps which are prepared for the International Lessons.
3. The inspiration of studying in company with your children, as well as with your fellow-members of the Sherbourne St. Methodist Church Sunday-school.
4. Actual membership in the school.
5. A plan which will help you and your family to study God's Word pleasantly and profitably in your home.

You are strongly urged to become a member of the Sunday-school and attend its sessions every Sunday afternoon at three o'clock; but, if you cannot do so, you are cordially invited to become a member of the Home Department, and to organize a home class with such members of your family as do not attend the school; and if you will do so, kindly observe the following directions:

1. Please sign the membership card attached hereto, with any others who may join you, and send it to the address of the Secretary.

2. Retain the Home Class Report Card to keep a record of the study of your lessons, and return it to the Secretary not later than Wednesday following the last Sunday of each quarter, unless it should be called for by a visitor before that day. The quarters end with the last Sunday of March, June, September and December, and a list of the lessons and Home Readings for each quarter will be supplied to you free in advance, while as a member of the Home Department you will be gladly welcomed at all the sessions, entertainments and social services of the School.

Trusting that this simple plan of Bible study will have your hearty co-operation.

We are, yours faithfully,

THOMAS MANNING, *Pastor.*
J. W. FLAVELLE, *S. S. Supt.*

WALTER H. CLEMES, *Secy.,*
320 Wellesley St.

MEMBERSHIP CARD.

Class No.

Sign this card and send it to

48* One or more numbers may sign this Card, but no one should sign it who is already a member of the school.
EVERY WORD OF GOD IS PURE. Proverbs 30: 5. THE WORD OF GOD SHALL STAND FOREVER. Isaiah 40: 8.
AND THIS IS THE WORD WHICH BY THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED UNTO VOC. I Peter 1: 25.

I hereby signify my desire to be enrolled as a member of the Home Department of the Methodist Church, Sunday-school, and agree to devote at least one half-hour each week, or five minutes each day, to the study of the International Lessons, for each week, unless prevented by sickness or other sufficient cause.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES. John 5: 39. THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, WHICH ARE ABLE TO MAKE THOSE WISE UNTO SALVATION THROUGH FAITH WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS. MAT. 23: 23. ILLUSTRATION OF GOD, AND IS PROFITABLE FOR DOCTRINE, FOR REPROOF, FOR CORRECTION, FOR INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS: THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE PERFECT, THOROUGHLY FURNISHED UNTO ALL GOOD WORKS. 2 Timothy 3: 15-17.

Opening and Closing Services

FIRST QUARTER.

OPENING SERVICE.

- I. Silence.
- II. The Doxology.
- III. The Lord's Prayer.
- IV. Responsive Sentences. [Psalm 119. 9-16.]
Supt. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way.
School. By taking heed thereto according to thy word.
Supt. With my whole heart have I sought thee.
School. O let me not wander from thy commandments.
Supt. Thy word have I hid in mine heart.
School. That I might not sin against thee.
Supt. Blessed art thou, O Lord.
School. Teach me thy statutes.
Supt. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.
School. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.
Supt. I will meditate in thy precepts.
School. And have respect unto thy ways.
Supt. I will delight myself in thy statutes.
School. I will not forget thy word.
- V. Singing.
- VI. Prayer.
- VII. Responsive Reading of a Scripture Lesson.

LESSON SERVICE.

- I. Class Study of the Lesson.
- II. Singing Lesson Hymn.
- III. Recitation of Title, Golden Text, Outline, and Doctrinal Suggestion by the school in concert.
- IV. Review and Application of the Lesson, by Pastor or Superintendent.
- V. The Supplemental Lesson.
- VI. Announcements (especially of the Church service, and week-evening prayer-meeting).

CLOSING SERVICE.

- I. Singing.
- II. Responsive Sentences.
Supt. Now unto him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.
School. Unto him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.
- III. Dismission.

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS.

FIRST QUARTER.

B. C. 515.] LESSON VI. DEDICATING THE TEMPLE. [Feb. 5.]

GOLDEN TEXT. I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Psalm 122. 1.

Authorized Version.

Ezra 6. 14-22. [Commit to memory verses 21, 22.]

14 And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Hag'gai the prophet and Zech-a-ri'ah the son of Id'do. And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Is-ra-el, and according to the commandment of Cy'rus, and Da-ri'us, and Ar-tax-er-x'es king of Per-sia.

15 And this house was finished on the third day of the month of A'dar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Da-ri'us the king.

16 And the children of Is-ra-el, the priests, and the Le'vites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy,

17 And offered at the dedication of this house of God a hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin offering for all Is-ra-el, twelve he-goats, according to the number of the tribes of Is-ra-el.

18 And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Le'vites in their courses, for the service of God, which is at Je-ru'sa-lem; as it is written in the book of Mo'ses.

19 And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month.

20 For the priests and the Le'vites were purified together, all of them were pure, and killed the passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves.

21 And the children of Is-ra-el, which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the Lord God of Is-ra-el, did eat,

22 And kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the Lord had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of As-syr'i-a unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Is-ra-el.

Revised Version.

14 And the elders of the Jews builded and prospered, through the prophesying of Hag'gai the prophet and Zech-a-ri'ah the son of Id'do. And they builded and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Is-ra-el, and according to the decree of Cy'rus, and Da-ri'us, and Ar-15 tax-er-x'es king of Per-sia. And this house was finished on the third day of the month A'dar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Da-16 ri'us the king. And the children of Is-ra-el, the priests and the Le'vites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication 17 of this house of God with joy. And they offered at the dedication of this house of God an hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred 18 lambs; and for a sin offering for all Is-ra-el, twelve he-goats, according to the number of the 19 tribes of Is-ra-el. And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Le'vites in their courses, for the service of God, which is at Je-ru'sa-lem; as it is written in the book of Mo'ses.

19 And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first 20 month. For the priests and the Le'vites had purified themselves together; all of them were pure; and they killed the passover for all 21 the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves. And the children of Is-ra-el, which were come again out of the captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the Lord, the 22 God of Is-ra-el, did eat, and kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the Lord had made them joyful, and had turned the heart of the king of As-syr'i-a unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Is-ra-el.

TIME.—B. C. 515. From four to six years after the delivery of the prophetic messages of Lessons III, IV, and V. **PLACE.**—Jerusalem. **RULERS.**—Darius Hystaspes, King of Persia; Zerubbabel, Pasha of Judah. **DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION.**—The worship of God. (Verse 14.)

HOME READINGS.

M. Dedicating the temple. Ezra 6. 14-22.

Tu. The decree of Darius. Ezra 6. 1-12.

W. The first temple dedicated. 2 Chron. 7. 1-11.

Th. The spiritual temple. Eph. 2. 13-22.

F. Self-dedication. Rom. 12. 1-9.

S. Joy in God's house. Psalm 84.

S. "Let us go." Psalm 122.

LESSON HYMNS

No. 12, New Canadian Hymnal.

Glory to God on high!

Let heaven and earth reply.

No. 25. New Canadian Hymnal.

From all that dwell below the skies.

No. 339. New Canadian Hymnal.

God be with you till we meet again.

DOMINION HYMNAL.

Hymns, Nos. 183, 184, 187.

QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR STUDENTS.

1. A Dedicated House, v. 14-18.

Who were the elders of the Jews?

Who were their leaders in the building of the temple?

How many years after the destruction of Solomon's temple was the second temple begun?

How many years after it was begun was it finished?

For about how many years did work cease upon it?

During how many years was the work vigorously pushed on the impulse of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah?

What did each of the kings mentioned in verse 14 do to advance the work?

At what season of the year was the work finished?

What is the meaning of "dedication"?

How many sacrifices were offered?

How many sacrifices were offered at the dedication of the first temple? (2 Chron. 7. 5.)

Was one more acceptable to God than the other?

What is the rule of acceptance? (2 Cor. 8. 12.)

2. A Dedicated People, v. 19-22.

What feast did the people keep?

When was this feast instituted, and what did it commemorate?

What was required of those who partook? (2 Chron. 30. 17, 18.)

Who ate the passover here described?

What ceremony in the modern Church takes the place of the Hebrew passover?

What is meant by "filthiness of the heathen"?

What is "unleavened bread," and why was it used at this feast?

How did they keep the feast? (Verse 22.)

How had they kept the dedication? (Verse 16.)

Why were they joyful?

Who was the King of Assyria?

How may we become pure? (1 John 1. 7-9.)

Why should we wish to become pure? (Matt. 5. 8.)

What should be our prayer? (Psalm 51. 10.)

Practical Teachings.

What illustrations have we in this lesson of—

1. A heart-temple dedicated to God's service?
2. A heart-service according to God's law?
3. A heart purified and joyous in God's worship?

Hints for Home Study.

1. Find wherein the sacrifices of Solomon's temple differed from those here offered.

2. Find when and how David came to divide the priests into courses.

3. How did ancient worshippers purify themselves?

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE SCHOLARS.

1. A Dedicated House, v. 14-18.

Who builded the house of the Lord?

What prophets encouraged the work?

According to whose orders was the work done?

In what month and day was the work finished?

In what year of Darius?

Who came together to dedicate the house of the Lord?

What thank offering did the people make?

What was the sin offering?

What orders were given for priests and Levites?

Who had established this order?

2. A Dedicated People, v. 19-22.

What feast did the people keep?

What preparations had the priests made?

For whom did they kill the passover lamb?

Who partook of the feast?

How long did they keep the feast?

Who had given them joy?

How had the Lord aided them?

Who can control all rulers as he will? (Prov. 21. 1.)

When ought all of God's people to have joy? (GOLDEN TEXT.)

Teachings of the Lesson.

Where are we taught these lessons of duty—

1. Joy in God's service?
2. Purity in God's service?
3. Devotion to God's service?

Home Work for Young Bereans.

Find wherein the sacrifices of Solomon's temple differed from those here offered.

Find when and how David came to divide the priests into courses.

How did ancient worshippers purify themselves?

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.

Who encouraged the Jews to finish the temple? **Zerubbabel and Joshua.**

What did their enemies again try to do? **To hinder them.**

To whom did they write evil letters? **To King Darius.**

What did Darius command? **That the Jews be allowed to build.**

What did this command cause? **Great joy.**

When was the temple finished? **In the sixth year of King Darius.**

How was the dedication of the house kept? **Joyfully.**

To whom was it dedicated? **To the Lord.**
What was offered at the dedication? **Many burnt offerings.**

For what were the priests and Levites set apart? **For the service of God.**

What great feast was kept? **The passover.**
Who ate the passover? **All true servants of God.**

How many days did they keep the feast? **Seven days.**

Who had made them joyful? **The Lord.**
Whose favor had he given them? **The king's.**
Why did he turn the king's heart toward them? **To strengthen them in their work.**

Words with Little People.

Has a child anything that can be dedicated to God? Yes, for—

My feet, my hands, my head, my heart,
Are of God's temple each a part.
Will you give yourself to him to use?

Lesson Truth.

Ye are the temple of the living God.

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

BY ROBERT R. DOHERTY, PH.D.

General Statement.

Despite the Persian king's authorization, it was not an easy task for the Jews to reestablish themselves in Jerusalem. The political and financial interests of the neighboring tribes intensified natural race prejudices against the returned captives. The vigorous narratives of Ezra and Nehemiah show how bitter and active was the hostility which the Jews were compelled to face. The last three lessons have shown us how tedious was the enforced delay in the rebuilding of the temple. For twelve or fourteen years the walls were unfinished. When the work seemed about to be rebegun certain Persian nobles of high rank, Tattai, "governor on this side the river," and Shethar-bozrai, with others, made an appeal to King Darius, and inquired whether the Jews' claim that they had been authorized by King Cyrus to rebuild the house of God was well based. In response to this Darius ordered that search should be made in "the house of the rolls;" and there was found the original decree which Cyrus had made. The result was a new and more liberal royal patent, by which the Persian governors were ordered to assist the Jews with liberal contributions from the royal "tribute," while severe penalties were ordered to all who hindered the work. This substantial assistance, following closely the earnest appeals of the prophets, led to vigorous work on the temple. At last the building stood complete, and our lesson to-day tells of its formal dedication to Israel's God, while the people renewed the services and joyfully kept the feast.

Verse 14. The elders of the Jews builded. We are not to think of these "elders" as old men. While the precise structure of the Hebrew commonwealth in the days immediately preceding and following the captivity is not yet minutely understood, it is evident that the "family system" dominated political life. "The heads of the families" into which the tribes were subdivided—called in the sacred record "elders" and "chief of the fathers"—had by inheritance great power and influence. Without their leadership the erection of the temple would, humanly speaking, have been impossible. Neither the Scottish highlands in the Middle Ages nor Rome in its republican days furnish better examples of what may broadly be called "clan life" than we have presented in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Many of the difficulties which at a later day Nehemiah experienced were evidently due to the resentment felt by these born aristocrats against the appointment of a "tirshatha," or chief governor, who did not, like Zerubbabel, inherit his rights. **They prospered.** (1) *Those who labor in God's cause are certain of final success.*

The very secret of success is to get in line with God. **The prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah.** Haggai was intense and direct in his exhortations; Zechariah was picturesque and inspiring in his descriptions. Lesson III gave us a specimen of the first; Lessons IV and V of the second. When these prophets appeared doubtless the people had utterly ceased to expect to hear again the prophetic voice, for no inspired teacher had appeared for two generations. (2) *In the hour of extreme need God comes manifestly near to his people.* Even a pagan observed that "man's extremity is God's opportunity." **Commandment of the God of Israel.** The King of kings receives honor for the Jews' success above the King of Persia. (3) *All power comes from Him who controls the hearts of princes.* **Cyrus and Darius.** The one had authorized the beginning of the temple; the other, its completion; both had made large gifts toward it. **Artaxerxes.** This is not the Artaxerxes who forbade the work (Ezra 4. 7-22), but the one mentioned in Ezra 7. 1, 12-28. He is mentioned here, though his reign did not begin until some years

after these events, because he was the monarch under whose auspices the journey and reform of Ezra were undertaken. (4) *God never does anything himself that he can fit a man to do.* (5) *Perseverance conquers difficulties.*

15. This house was finished. (6) *God, who inspires and directs his workers, will crown his work with completeness.* **Adar.** The last month in the ecclesiastical year of the Jews, reaching from the new moon of February to the new moon of March. **Darius the king.** This is not the monarch called Darius in Dan. 5, 21. The king who is called Artaxerxes in Ezra 4, 7 (who forbade the erection of the Jewish temple) is usually identified with Gomates the Magian (known in history as the pseudo-Smerdis), a usurper whose rule was tyrannical in the extreme. Seven nobles successively conspired against him, and one of their number was chosen king in his stead. This man was "Darius the king," the great Darius Hystaspis, under whose wise administration the Persian empire came to its height of power and grandeur. Next to Cyrus he was the best of Persian kings.

16, 17. Children of Israel. Most of these were of the tribe of Judah; but all who belonged to the stock of Jacob were now united into one family, and the old enmity of Ephraim and Judah was extinguished. **Children of the captivity.** Literally, "sons of the transportation;" descendants of those who had been dragged in chains to Chaldea. **With joy.** Because of the brightening prospects of their nation, the renewal of their worship, their triumph over their enemies, and the success of their great undertaking. (7) *Those who work for God find frequent occasions for joy.* **Dedication . . . joy . . . offered.** (8) *These three elements of worship are inseparable—dedication, sacrifice, and joy.* The prayerful heart always gives itself and all it has to God with glad surrender. **Bullocks . . . rams . . . lambs.** The contrast was great between this sacrifice and the thousands slain at the dedication of the first temple (1 Kings 8, 5, 65), yet the cost to the people was perhaps greater, and the service fully as acceptable to the Lord. (9) *God estimates the offering according to the heart of the offerer.* He cares nothing for market prices; what he seeks is heart's love. (10) *The Jew's offering was of slain beasts; ours is ourselves—an offering acceptable to God, and our reasonable service.* **Sin offering.** A sacrifice peculiarly representing atonement for sin. (11) *Never forget that you are by nature a sinner in need of divine mercy.* **All Israel.** Though the tribal lines were obliterated, and the most of the northern tribes extinguished, the unity of Israel was still kept in view. (12) *Let us never forget the essential unity of God's present Church.*

18. Divisions . . . courses. The priests

were divided into twenty-four sections for duty in the temple, each section in rotation having charge of the service for a week. A somewhat similar rule was made for the Levites. **As it is written.** The Jews of the restoration were characterized by a resolute determination to turn away from all heathen innovations, and to follow precisely the law of God. Objection has been made that the priestly arrangement in courses actually originated with David, not with Moses; but it was based upon the ordinances of the Mosaic law, and might, without extravagance, be said to be "according to the writing of Moses." (13) *The Church should ever inquire after the "old ways" pointed out in the Book, and follow them.* (14) *When we suffer adversity let us inquire whether God is not chastising us as he chastised these Jews—to bring us closer to him.*

19. Passover. The greatest of the Jewish feasts, held at the beginning of the ecclesiastical year, and commemorating the departure from Egypt. **The first month** was "Nisan," which immediately followed "Adar." The date of the passover was fixed by the Mosaic law.

20-22. Purified. No priest could fulfill the service of killing the passover lamb unless he was ceremonially clean. Nor could the passover be eaten by any person who had contracted legal defilement. This law had been neglected in earlier days (2 Chron. 30, 18, 19), but now it was rigorously enforced. **For themselves.** (15) *The human priest must offer sacrifices for his own sins as well as for the sins of his people; but our great High Priest needs no pardon, for in him is no sin.* **All such as had separated themselves.** Gentile proselytes who had renounced idolatry and Jews who broke away from idolatrous associations. **The filthiness of the heathen.** Moral defilement. The worship of false gods—especially in the ancient East—was all interwoven with practices of vice, often made picturesque and attractive to lovers of beauty, but always "filthy" and loathsome in the sight of the morally pure. **The Lord had made them joyful.** (16) *See God's hand in the enjoyments and mercies that we possess.* **Turned the heart.** They recognize an overruling Providence in the favor of their rulers. (17) *So let us realize that God controls ambitious statesmen and the strife of States for the advancement of his kingdom.* **King of Assyria.** Though the Assyrian kingdom had long since been merged in the Chaldean, and that, in turn, in the Persian, yet the old name was still retained in the popular language. This is not strange, for the same geographical provinces constituted the greater part of each successive empire. **The work of the house of God.** The erection of the new temple. **The God of Israel.** The Jews fondly regarded Jehovah as their own.

CRITICAL NOTES.

BY PROFESSOR MILTON S. TERRY, D.D.

Verse 14. The elders builded. Observe the leadership of the chief men; men who, because of their years and experience and representative character, held the responsibility of carrying forward the public work. **Prospered through Haggai and Zechariah.** The extant prophecies of the men here named are invaluable commentaries on this period of Jewish history. This Book of Ezra helps to explain the prophecies of the post-exile prophets, and the books of those prophets serve a like purpose in understanding the contents of the Books both of Ezra and Nehemiah. In like manner, the other prophets of the Old Testament supply information of the first importance for understanding the history of their times, and, on the other hand, without a knowledge of the facts recorded in the historical Books of Kings and Chronicles, the prophetic books of the Old Testament cannot be understood and appreciated. **According to the commandment of God.** The reference here is to the word of Jehovah as communicated through the prophets. The oracles of Haggai and Zechariah begin with the announcement that they are "the word of the Lord." See Hag. 1. 1, 12; 2. 1, 10, 20. Zech. 1. 1, 7. **Cyrus . . . Darius . . . Artaxerxes.** The temple was completed in the reign of **Darius** (verse 15), but the writer, who lived after **Artaxerxes** had come to power (see chap. 7. 1), quite naturally mentions him also as one from whom the Jews obtained great favor. For like reason he also goes back to **Cyrus**, who had died some fifteen years before the completion of the temple. Such inaccuracy of statement, therefore, as building and finishing the house according to a decree of **Artaxerxes** is to be explained as a prolepsis, not unnatural to a writer in the time of Ezra, and the more natural if Ezra himself were the compiler of this book which bears his name. The latter chapters of the book seem to be an autobiography of Ezra, and it is commonly believed that he also compiled the preceding chapters.

15. Adar. The end of the Jewish year, and falling about the time of our March. The word appears to be of Babylonian origin, and besides this passage occurs only in the Book of Esther. The foundation of the temple was laid in the second year of Cyrus (Ezra 3. 8), and continued with various oppositions of surrounding peoples through the four remaining years of Cyrus and the eight of Cambyses. It was interrupted during the short rule of the usurper called Artaxerxes in chap. 4. 7, resumed in the second year of Darius, and completed in his sixth year. From the second year of Cyrus unto the sixth year of Darius was a period of about nineteen years. The temple of Solomon was seven years in building

(1 Kings 6. 38). The enlargement and renewal of the second temple, begun by Herod the Great, occupied forty-six years (John 2. 20).

16. Kept the dedication . . . with joy. As well they might, for it was a turning point in Israelitish history, and marked the close of a long period of calamity and exile.

17. They offered. The number of sacrificial victims here mentioned seems large and liberal when we consider the circumstances of the people. The one hundred, two hundred, and four hundred are graded according to the relative value of **bullocks, rams, and lambs**. The notably greater number and different value of Solomon's dedication, as stated in 1 Kings 8. 63, were in proportion to his immense wealth and the peaceful and prosperous condition of the kingdom of Israel in his day. **Twelve he-goats, according to the . . . tribes of Israel.** The old envy and bitterness between Judah and Israel had now perished, and Israel's memorable prophecy was so far fulfilled (Isa. 11. 13). The chastisements of the exile had thoroughly broken up the old national factions, and at the feast of dedication they seek to make atonement for all Israel by means of a sin offering, which in the number of the offerings made would present them as one people and one nation. So, too, was fulfilled a prophecy of Jeremiah, according to which Judah and Israel should return to Zion and be joined to Jehovah in an everlasting covenant (see Jer. 50. 4-7). There was no longer any motive or disposition to perpetuate the ancient schism.

18. Priests . . . Levites . . . courses . . . service . . . book of Moses. The connection of these words in this one verse has a noticeable bearing on current critical discussions of the history and religion of Israel. The obvious import is that the distinction of **priests and Levites** was no novelty at that time, and their distribution into **courses for the service of God** is not mentioned as an arrangement now for the first time instituted. Moreover, the whole thing is spoken of as something prescribed by law and written in the **book of Moses**. What form that book may then have had, and how far identical with our present well-known books of Moses, may be an open question; but that Mosaic legislation touching the services of priests and Levites was no recent thing is manifest upon the face of this narrative.

19. Kept the passover . . . first month. This first month was doubtless the Nisan, following immediately after the Adar mentioned in verse 15. The passover, no less than the service of priests and Levites, was an institution as old as the times of Moses, and we find the record of its

origin in the Mosaic books. See Exod. 12 and 13. It is interesting to note that, according to Josh. 5. 10, the children of Israel improved the first opportunity after entering Canaan to observe the passover. Then they exulted that "the reproach of Egypt" had been rolled away (Josh. 5. 9). So here, after the completion of their temple, the **children of the captivity** (mark the expression) celebrate the ancient feast, rejoicing that the reproach of Babylonian exile was ended.

20. For the priests . . . purified. This verse gives the reason why they could proceed immediately after the dedication to the observance of the passover. Comp. 2 Chron. 30. 3, where the failure of the priests to purify themselves is given as a reason why Hezekiah observed the passover in the second month.

22. King of Assyria. The particular king referred to is Darius, mentioned in verses 1, 12, 13, 14, and 15 of this chapter. Why he is called **king of Assyria** here, and "King of Persia" in verse 14 and chap. 4. 24, may be variously answered. The Aramaic section of this book includes the two places where he is called "King of Persia," and this account of the passover (verses 19-22) is in the Hebrew. The Hebrew and Aramaic sections may be attributed to different authors or sources from which the author of our book quoted. One of these sources used the title "King of Assyria" and the other "King of Persia," and both were so far correct as not to call for any change on the part of the compiler of our present narrative. In chap. 5. 13, Cyrus is called "King of Babylon," because Babylon was one of the chief provinces of his empire. So here he is called **king of Assyria** because all that region familiar to a Hebrew writer as the realm of Assyria was now incorporated in the dominion of the Persian kings.

The Lesson Council.

Question 1. *Why was the Persian government so friendly toward the Jews in Palestine?*

The links of relationship between the Jews and the Persian government appear to have been religious and secular. 1. The Jews had stamped the seal of their religion upon the people with whom they had sojourned in captivity; some of them embraced the Jewish religion (Ezra 6. 21); 2. God had stirred up the heart of Cyrus the king until he had become the friend of the Jews and resolved by decree to aid them in rebuilding the temple (Ezra 6. 3, 8); 3. Darius, having married two of the daughters of Cyrus, readily acceded to the wishes of his father-in-law in perpetuation of

the family name.—*Rev. D. F. Waddell, D.D., mington, Del.*

Question 2. *Why are no sacrifices offered now? By what authority was the ancient custom of sacrifice dispensed with by the early Christians?*

Because Christ, the Sacrifice, of which all others were types, from which all received significance, was offered once for all. The authority for the change, though perhaps not direct command, was conclusive. The example, life, and teachings of Christ, apostles, and others inspired revealed that the antitype superseded the type, the substance replaced the shadow. Note the following: proclamation of John Baptist (John 1. 29); Christ's figure of "new wine and old bottles;" his conversation with the Samaritan woman (John 4. 20-26); his substitution of the Lord's Supper for the passover (Matt. 26. 26); the rent veil of the temple; Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8. 32-35); Peter's teaching (1 Peter 1. 18); Paul's whole Epistle to the Hebrews, and other writings (Gal. 3. 24, 25; Gal. 2. 20).

Question 3. *What became of the ten tribes of Israel after the restoration of the Jews?*

1. Some came over to the kingdom of Judah before the captivity, and so were never "lost." See 2 Chron. 15. 9. 2. Josephus informs us that many of them returned with the Jews from Babylon by the invitation of Ezra, but the main body remained in Media. 3. The Scriptures refer to them as still existing at the time of writing, though dispersed. 4. They were in Media at the time of the restoration of the Jews; and they probably were gradually incorporated with the people among whom they were captives. Names, customs, and traditions peculiarly Jewish found in Afghanistan and India indicate where some have been "dispersed."

Question 4. *Wherein did the second temple differ from the first?*

The second temple was inferior to the first. Josephus says that the ancient men, "who had seen the glory of the former house, and computing how little this was in comparison with the other, brake out into tears and lamentations at the thought of it." Also see Ezra 3. 12. The inferiority was not so much in dimensions as in splendor, and in being deprived of the ark of the covenant, which had been burned with the first temple. The magnificence of the first was a reflection of the peaceful and prosperous condition of the nation, which had reached the height of glory under the reign of Solomon. The inferiority of the second was a remainder of the low estate to which they had been reduced during the captivity.

Analytical and Biblical Outline. Gifts to the Lord.

- I. THE BUILDING.
- The Workers.** "Elders." v. 14.
"Do it with thy might." Eccles. 9. 10.
 - The Encouragement.** "Prophesying." v. 14.
"Be strong...and work." Hag. 2. 4.
 - The Authority.** "Commandment of God." v. 14.
"Obey God rather than men." Acts 5. 29.
 - The Opportunity.** "Commandment... of King." v. 14.
"King's heart...hand of the Lord." Prov. 21. 1.
- II. THE DEDICATION.
- Joyful.** "With joy." v. 16.
"Rejoice in the Lord." Phil. 4. 4.
 - Sacrificial.** "Offered." v. 17.
"How much more...Christ." Heb. 9. 14.
 - United.** "All lead." v. 17.
"All may be one." John 17. 21.
- III. THE PASSOVER.
- Purified Leaders.** "Priests." v. 20.
"Clothed with righteousness." Psalm 132. 9.
 - Consecrated People.** "Separated." v. 21.
"Not having spot or wrinkle." Eph. 5. 27.
 - Joyful Feast.** "With joy." v. 22.
"Children of Zion, be joyful." Psalm 149. 2.

Thoughts for Young People. God and His Worship.

- The services of God's house, though solemn, are yet joyous.* We should enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise.
- We should search God's book for direction as to his worship.* These Jews had direct communication with the divine Being through the prophets; but that did not lead them to ignore the law given by Moses, the man of God. So our exalted spiritual privileges, rightly understood, will only make us more appreciative of God's word.
- Those who officiate in the worship of God must themselves be pure.* In the old times it was necessary to symbolize this inner purity by an outward ritualistic form. This is no longer necessary, but larger spiritual privileges bring with them larger responsibilities for personal purity.
- Those who would acceptably worship God must separate themselves from sinners.* The "filthiness of the heathen" no longer festers our civilized lands, but there are in street, shop, and home a thousand things that are of the "earth earthy," and in their nature hostile to the pure religion of Christ. The call of duty to these Jews to separate themselves from idolatrous surroundings was not more imperative than the call of God to-day to us to separate ourselves from everything which to any degree would separate us from the Lord.

Lesson Word-Pictures.

BY REV. E. A. RAND.

Such a merry ringing of hammers and rolling of stones and shouts of workmen! The temple once more is going up, steadily, and in strength. Yes, it had been standing there on its holy hill neglected, the winds sighing about it, and the rains weeping over it, and the old men moaning about it; but now it is going up, actually going up. The Lion of Judah, stricken down in shame, once more raises his proud head. Watch, and you will see the walls rising higher and higher each day, coming into symmetry and completeness. Finally, on the third day of the month Adar, the last stone is laid, the gates are all hung, the courts are swept and in order, and up out of them towers the temple, finished! O Levites with the trumpets, you might well lift them now and send out one long, triumphant blast, ringing across the broken walls of Jerusalem, across the deep valleys, over Olivet, to all the world proclaiming, "The temple is done! Come and worship!"

The trumpets will sound in jubilant consecration; do not fear.

Passover is approaching.

From every quarter there are lines of pilgrim-travel striking across Judah and entering in Jerusalem.

They come with happy songs. They bring gifts in their arms. They may lead some choice lamb of the flock. And now, gathered at Jerusalem, the people are to offer one other gift to God, even this completed house of worship. What crowds swarm through the courts of the temple, and gather before the very gates! And now look! How the great altar smokes with offerings! What repeated sacrifices! Not for many, many days has the like been seen. The priests are there in their flowing robes.

The players on instruments send out their joy in stately peals. The happy singers lift up their praise. It is one great chorus of adoration ascending to God. Priest and Levite, ruler and people, offer to God this house of praise. The service at last is over. The song dies away. The voice of prayer ceases. The people slowly separate and pass away. The temple is deserted save by those who keep watch and ward through the long night. The fires die down on the great altar. In the holy place burns on the lamp of God, while behind the veil are darkness and stillness. But everywhere, in the Holy of Holies and without, in the silent courts, under the white stars looking down on empty streets and broken walls, abides the presence of the Almighty who has accepted Jerusalem's temple.

And now passover is here, passover that carries the thought back to the days of darkened Egypt, to the blood sprinkled doorposts, to the bitter

herbs, to the passover cup. But this is Jerusalem where the people meet, Jerusalem after the long exile, the city with ruined wall, but dear old Jerusalem. No other place like this for the precious passover feast. I seem to see them gathered here and there in many homes. The lamb has been slain, the doorposts sprinkled, the feast begun. And now, hark! It is the joyous Hallel they are singing. Rich and strong and full and triumphant are the notes of sacred psalms rising as on wings before God.

Their fathers' God is with them.

The purposes of Assyria's king he has guided even as the water's flow is directed in the spring. The temple has been rebuilt. Jerusalem gets new honor. Sing higher, stronger, sweeter, richer, every voice! Oery aloud, in the night, under the solemn stars, that Jehovah's mercy endureth forever!

Orientalisms of the Lesson.

BY REV. J. T. GRACEY, D. D.

The one hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and twelve he-goats is a sacrifice that is still numerically equaled and even exceeded in the East. At the annual gathering at Mecca the number of animals slaughtered varies from one hundred and eighty thousand to four hundred thousand. The accumulated refuse of this vast slaughterhouse breeds pestilence, and Mecca becomes one of the few great centers from which cholera spreads over the world. In this Feast of Sacrifices it is enjoined by the Koran that every household must slaughter a sheep at sunrise; the sultan gives away to others to be slaughtered as his share three hundred thousand sheep. Dr. Van Lennep says there still occurs yearly on Mount Gerizim a sacrifice resembling that of the paschal lamb. The Arabs sacrifice a sheep on the top of Herob and cast its body over the rocks, which Stanley says is suggestive of the Jewish scapegoat sacrifice, "the sin offering" of the twelve he-goats alluded to in our lesson (Ezra 6. 17).

By Way of Illustration.

BY JENNIE M. BINGHAM.

Verses 14, 15. God's plans were carried out through human instrumentality. He is the Master-builder, we are the workmen. Bishop Phillips Brooks says: "You cannot set the world right, or the times, but you can do something for the truth, and all you can do will certainly tell if the work you do is for the Master, who gives you your share, and so the burden of responsibility is lifted off. This assurance makes peace, satisfaction, and repose possible, even in the partial work done upon earth. Go to the man who is curving a stone for a building; ask him where

is that stone going in the temple, and how he is going to get it into its place, and what does he do? He points you to the builder's plans. This is only one stone of many. So, when men shall ask where and how is your little achievement going into God's great plan, point them to the Master, who keeps the plans, and then go on doing your little service as faithfully as if the whole temple were yours to build."

Verses 16, 19, 20. A dedicated house and a dedicated people were the foundation for service. "Ye are the temple of the Holy Ghost," and now personal consecration is the door to Christian work. A short time before Mr. Wendell Phillips died, a friend asked him, "Mr. Phillips, did you ever consecrate yourself to God?" "Yes," he answered; "when I was a boy fourteen years old, in the old church at the North End, I heard Lyman Beecher preach on the theme, 'You belong to God;' and I went home after that service, threw myself on the floor in my room, and prayed, 'O God, I belong to thee; take what is thine own. I ask this, that whenever a thing is wrong, it may have no power of temptation over me; whenever a thing is right, it may take no courage to do it.' From that day to this it has been so." Eight years later this boy, just graduated from Harvard College and Law School, turned away from the proud traditions of his family and the allurements of fame and wealth, and for nearly fifty years was a leading advocate for the African slave. There was a close connection between Wendell Phillips's hour of consecration and his after life of service.

Verses 17. O, that man would accept the testimony of Christ touching the blessedness of giving! He who sacrifices most, loves most; and he who loves most is most blessed.

There is a sign of the millennium down in Maine, where, about a year ago, a church disciplined five members because they would give nothing.—*Dr. Josiah Strong.*

Verses 22. "Kept the feast with joy; for the Lord had made them joyful." "Lightning and sunlight represent well the nature of worldly and spiritual joy. Carnal joy, like lightning, is short-lived, transient, and scorching. Spiritual joy, like sunlight, is lasting, healthful, and healing." Joy is the characteristic of the Christian life. "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice." In a message where there are two commands, both are for joy.

Golden Text. In the Dark Ages the Nitrian monasteries of Egypt were luminous centers of learning, and priceless manuscripts were accumulated therein. But for four or five centuries these ancient structures were more like sepulchers

than storehouses, and the civilized world did not know until recently that their squalid, ignorant inhabitants were the custodians of the best thoughts and the most beautiful books of the early Christian ages. The monks did not at all value their treasures. Not every condition of heart fits us to appreciate divine things. Before a man can regard the services of God as "amiable" and "lovely," he must have love for God in his heart.

The Teachers' Meeting.

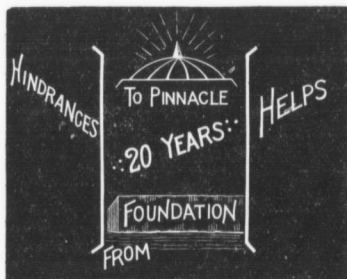
Give the facts of this lesson from the outline: (1) The Dedicated House; (2) The Dedicated People....State the persons of the lesson, and what is known concerning them....Three incitements for work in verse 14....Three characteristics of the consecration in verses 16, 17....Three elements of the passover in verses 20-22.... Teachings of the lesson concerning God; concerning duty; concerning worship; concerning sinners....In the class show how the lesson illustrates (1) Christian work; (2) Christian faith; (3) Christian consecration; (4) Christian worship; (5) Christian holiness; (6) Christian joy.

References.

FREEMAN'S HANDBOOK. Ver. 15: The month Adar, 376....FOSTER'S CYCLOPEDIA. Prose, 11945, 6208, 6209, 6210, 6203, 4559, 12301, 5638, 10399, 12305, 10028; Poetical, 4049, 4032, 4046; Prose, 7293. Ver. 16: Prose, 9644. Ver. 18: Prose, 5288. Ver. 21: Prose, 6892, 9393.

Blackboard.

BY J. B. PHIPPS, ESQ.



EXPLANATION.—From the time of the laying of the foundation until the pinnacle or highest point of the temple was reached, and the work was completed, twenty years had elapsed. Question the school, and write the answers stating all the hindrances, and then by means of questions get a statement of all the helps that either retarded or

forwarded the work. Here are some of the hindrances:

THE PEOPLE'S { POVERTY,
ENEMIES,
SELFISHNESS,
FEARS.

The helps were the prophets (name them), the two princes (name them), the ruling king (name him), and last, but not least, the power of God.

Primary and Intermediate.

BY MARTHA VAN MARGER.

LESSON THOUGHT. *We are God's temples.*

Introductory. Do you know what a temple is? What do we call the house we are in now? Yes, it is called a church. In very old times the house of God, or church, was called a temple.

[Show a picture of a temple.] Do you know that there are many Jews living in this country now? They build their houses of worship, and call them by the old name of synagogue.

Who were building a house for the Lord now? Where? Who tried to hinder this good work? Why? [Tell how for fourteen years the walls stood unfinished, until God sent prophets to urge the people to go on with the work.]

At last it was finished. How glad the people were! Only a few years before the Jews were slaves in a strange land. Now they were in their own dear land, and had finished the temple which God had told them to build! What do you think they would do with it?

[Print in large letters "Dedication."] I will tell you of a large meeting that was once held in this church. Maybe some of you attended it. Your father and mother very likely did.

It was when the church was new. A great many people came to it one day, and there was a glad meeting. They talked about the beautiful house, and what it was for. They sang songs of praise to God, who had put it into their hearts to build such a house. And then they very solemnly gave it to God, and asked him to take it and use it for his glory. What do you think this meeting was called? I will tell you, A DEDICATION. This church was dedicated, or given to God, that day. Now, this is what the Jews did with their temple so long ago, and the lesson today tells about it.

[Make a picture of the altar of burnt offering on the board.] When the Jews dedicated their temple they offered burnt offerings. Lambs and goats and bullocks were slain as an offering to God. This was in obedience to God's law. We do not follow this law given to Moses now. Since Jesus, the Lamb of God, was slain for us, we do not need to kill animals to give to God. We will sing, very softly, this little hymn:

"But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
Takes all our sins away,
A sacrifice of nobler name
And richer blood than they."

I am going to tell you a true story about a beautiful house that I saw once. A father built it for his dear son. He spent a great deal of money on it. He loved his son so much that he wanted him to have the nicest house he could possibly build. But the son never went to live in it! A great trouble came to him, and he went away to a strange land to live, and when I saw the house it had never been opened since the day the trouble came! All the beautiful furniture stood there, but no one was there to use it. The house was of no use, because the one to whom it was given did not take it and use it. When a new, clean, pure temple of God is given to him he comes and lives in it. It is a holy place, because he is there. When we go into it how careful and reverent we ought to be! We must ask God to help us think only good thoughts, and to make us attentive to learn something new about him and his ways.



[Make a heart.] But we have something to dedicate, or give to God. [Read from the Bible, "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. 6. 19).] God has given each one of us a beautiful little temple, not of wood and stone, but of flesh and blood. And he wants us to give these temples back to him to dwell in and to use for his service! Have you offered your temple to God? Do you want him to come and live in it? If he does it must be a clean place. All bad temper, all selfishness, all laziness, and naughtiness of every kind must be put out if God is to be there! Do you want him to be there? Then let us all with folded hands say the words of the Whisper Song.

[Print "Joy" in the heart on the board.] When the Jews had given their house to God they kept a joyful feast for seven days. If we really give our little temples to God, he will fill our hearts with joy. Who will dedicate his temple to God to-day? Here is a little temple song for you to say together:

A little temple of the Lord—
My ears be quick to hear his word,
My eyes to see what I should do,
My hands and feet to serve him too,
My heart to be his very own,
Through grace of Jesus Christ, his Son,
[Use with appropriate motions.]

OPTIONAL HYMNS.

NO. 1.

Lord, this day thy children meet.
In thy name, O Lord, assembling.
With joy we hail the sacred day.
Within God's temple now we meet.
Praise, for his excellent greatness.

NO. 2.

Lord of the worlds above.
Heavenly Father, send thy blessing.
Yes, I will bless thee.
Christians, lift your voices.
Hallelujah! song of gladness.

The Lesson Catechism.

[For the entire school.]

1. How did the elders of the Jews succeed in their efforts to rebuild the temple? **God prospered them.**
2. When the house of God was finished what did the restored captives do? **They dedicated it with joy.**
3. What regulations did they follow in the dedicatory services? **Those found in the book of Moses.**
4. What did they shun in their personal behavior? **The filthiness of the heathen of the land.**
5. What is the GOLDEN TEXT? **"I was glad when they said,"** etc.

CATECHISM QUESTION. Feb. 5

8. And what was the last and greatest proof?
His rising from the dead, as He Himself foretold.
- Acts ii. 32. This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses.
- [Matthew xvi. 21: 1 Corinthians xv. 14, 20.]

B. C. 445.]

LESSON VII. NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER.

[Feb. 12.

GOLDEN TEXT. Lord, be thou my helper. (Psalm 20. 10.)

Authorized Version.

Revised Version.

Neh. 1. 1-11. [Commit to memory verses 8, 9.]

1 The words of Ne-he-mi'ah the son of Haach-a-li'ah. And it came to pass in the month Chis'lev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shu'shan the palace,

1 The words of Ne-he-mi'ah the son of Haach-a-li'ah.

Now it came to pass in the month Chis'lev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shu'shan the palace, that Ha-na'ni, one of my brethren,

2 That Ha-na'ni, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Ju'dah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Je-ru'-sa-lem.

3. And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Je-ru'-sa-lem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.

4 And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,

5 And said, I beseech thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments:

6 Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Is'-ra-el thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Is'-ra-el, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned.

7 We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Mo'ses.

8 Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Mo'ses, saying, *If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations:*

9 But *if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there.*

10 Now these *are* thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand.

11 O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer.

came, he and certain men out of Ju'dah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Je-ru'-sa-lem. And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Je-ru'-sa-lem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire. And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days; and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven, and said, I beseech thee, O Lord, the God of heaven, the great and the terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments: let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee at this time, day and night, for the children of Is'-ra-el thy servants, while I confess the sins of the children of Is'-ra-el, which we have sinned against thee: yea, I and my father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Mo'ses. Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Mo'ses, saying, *If ye trespass, I will scatter you abroad among the peoples: but if ye return unto me, and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts were in the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to cause my name to dwell there. Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand. O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who delight to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. (Now I was cupbearer to the king.)*

TIME.—B. C. 445. **PLACE.**—Shushan, or Susa, a famous Persian royal residence. **RULER.**—Artaxerxes Longimanus, King of Persia, the monarch who had already granted large privileges to Ezra. **DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION.**—God's fidelity to promise. (Verses 8, 9.)

HOME READINGS.

- M.* Nehemiah's prayer. Neh. 1. 1-11.
Tu. The answer. Neh. 2. 1-8.
W. Solomon's prayer. 1 Kings 8. 44-52.
Th. Moses's prayer. Exod. 32. 7-14.
F. Promise to the penitent. Deut. 30. 1-10.
S. Confession. Dan. 9. 3-11.
Sa. A covenant-keeping God. Deut. 7. 6-11.

LESSON HYMNS.

No. 217, New Canadian Hymnal.

What a Friend we have in Jesus,
 All our sins and griefs to bear.

No. 219, New Canadian Hymnal.

More love to thee, O Christ,
 More love to thee.

No. 218, New Canadian Hymnal.

Come, thou Fount of every blessing,
 Tune my heart to sing thy grace.

DOMINION HYMNAL.

Hymns, Nos. 119, 123, 118.

QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR STUDENTS.

1. A People's Need, v. 1-3.

- Who speaks in this lesson?
Where was he living?
What is meant by "the palace?"
Who was Nehemiah's king? (Neh. 2. 1.)
What was Nehemiah's office (verse 11), and what were its duties and privileges?

- Who came to him in the "palace?"
What inquiries did he make of his visitors?
About whom did he receive news?
What was the condition of Jerusalem?
By whom had it been destroyed? (2 Kings 25. 8-10.)

- What was the great need of walls?
Give some of the causes of the "affliction and reproach" from which the Jews suffered?

2. A Patriot's Prayer, v. 4-11.

- How did Nehemiah receive the news?
To whom did he go for help?
What confession did he make?
What had been the offense of the people?
What threatening of the Lord did Nehemiah call to mind?
What promise does he plead?
Must repentance and confession always precede pardon?

- What lessons may we learn from Nehemiah's prayer?

The GOLDEN TEXT should be our daily prayer; repeat it.

Practical Teachings.

Wherein does this lesson show that—

1. One may be loyal to his loftiest convictions amid most unfavorable surroundings?
2. The afflictions of any of God's people should appeal to all God's people?
3. Sympathy with others should be accompanied by prayer for them?
4. The sympathy that only prays when it has power to help is worthless?
5. Even when God afflicts his people he loves them?
6. God has power over all forces and all men?

Hints for Home Study.

1. Recall all the prayers of the Bible that you can, and note differences between them.
2. What risk did Nehemiah run by indulging in sorrowful emotions?
3. Ascertain all that you can about the great Persian Empire which was built on the ruins of the great Babylonian Empire.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE SCHOLARS.

1. A People's Need, v. 1-3.

- Whose words have we in this lesson?
Who came to visit Nehemiah?
Where was Nehemiah?
In what month and year did the visit occur?
Concerning whom did Nehemiah ask?
What was the report about the people?
What about the holy city?
Who had caused this ruin? (2 Kings 25. 10.)

2. A Patriot's Prayer, v. 4-11.

- What three things did Nehemiah do?
To whom did he pray?
How did he address the Lord?
For whom did Nehemiah pray?
What confession did he make?
What promise of the Lord did he plead?
Through what was this promise given?
What did Nehemiah say of the people?
Whose favor did he desire to secure?
What office did he hold?
What king was this? (Neh. 2. 1.)
What should be every true patriot's prayer?
(GOLDEN TEXT.)

Teachings of the Lesson.

Where in this lesson are we taught—

1. A lesson of patriotism?
2. A lesson of piety?
3. The value of prayer?

Home Work for Young Bereans.

Find out all you can about Ezra. He lived in the same time as Nehemiah, and the two helped each other in their noble work.

Find out, if you can, why it was so necessary to have a wall about Jerusalem.

And *think out* how a stone wall could have helped the morals of a people.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.

Did all the captive Jews go back to Jerusalem? **No; some stayed in Persia.**

Who was one of these? **Nehemiah.**
What kind of a man was he? **A good man.**
What place did he hold in the king's court?

He was cupbearer to the king.

Who was now the King of Persia? **Artaxerxes.**
What did Nehemiah love to hear? **News from home.**

Why did he love his country so much? **It was the Lord's land.**

What did he hear one day? **Bad news.**
Who brought him the news? **Hanani.**

What did he say of the people in Jerusalem? **That they were in trouble.**

What did he say was broken down? **The wall of the city.**

What had been burned with fire? **The gates.**
 What did Nehemiah do when he heard this?
He wept and prayed.
 What did he confess to the Lord? **Sin.**
 Who had sinned against the Lord? **The Jews.**
 What did Nehemiah ask him to remember?
His promise of mercy.

Words with Little People.
 What to do when in trouble:
 Pray to the Lord.
 Confess your sin.
 Wait for his help.
 Expect him to help you.
Lesson Prayer.
 Lord, help me.

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

General Statement.

Our present lesson is taken from the Book of Nehemiah, which was written about B. C. 431. The book is largely a personal narrative, and is a natural sequel to the Book of Ezra. The two men thus named as authors were far more truly representative of the restored Judaism than were Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and their colleagues, whose careers we studied last month, and whose piety and patriotism, while genuine, were sadly unenergetic and slow; heirs, respectively, of the ancient royalty and hierarchy, the springs of all their goodness were in the past. But neither Ezra nor Nehemiah had "hereditary rights;" at least, they did not base their authority on their great-grandfathers. They saw with clear vision the needs of the hour; they heard God's command; and with sublime faith and inexorable purpose they set themselves to the task of rebuilding their nation. Nehemiah was unmistakably "born king," though his father may have been a plebeian. As a Hebrew captive he was trained for the life of a Persian courtier. He became "cupbearer to the king," and so won his love that when the news of the desolation of Jerusalem caused him to look sad the king's sympathy led to the appointment of Nehemiah as governor of that city, with orders to rebuild and defend it, and with royal assistance to make possible the fulfillment of these orders. For at least thirteen years Nehemiah ruled over Judea with vigor and justice. He made Jerusalem the leading city of the land. But his greatest work was that of turning a little group of poverty-stricken and dejected Jews into a prosperous and well-organized nation of patriots, and exchanging their half-heathenish customs for unrivaled loyalty to the God of their fathers. Our lesson shows the very beginning of this great work.

Verse 1. Nehemiah the son of Hachabiah. His career is outlined in the General Statement. A sentence of Dr. Crosby's well describes it: "His administration of affairs was marked by patriotism, piety, prudence, perseverance, probity, and courage." **The month Chisleu.** The ninth month of the Jewish sacred year, corresponding nearly to our December. **The twentieth year.** Counting from the accession of the king, who has been identified with Artaxerxes Longimanus. This fixes the date near the close of B. C. 445, or ninety-one years after the return from captivity. **Shushan the palace.** A capital city of the Persian Empire, known to the ancient Greeks as Susa, and to the modern Bedouins as Shush; it was situated east of the Tigris and north of the Persian Gulf. The ruins of its palaces were discovered in 1852.

2. Hanani, one of my brethren. Probably, but not certainly, a brother in the fullest sense. He was afterward made a civic officer (Neh. 7. 2). **Men of Judah.** Rather, "men out of Judah." **I asked them.** In the midst of personal ease and honor Nehemiah's profound interest in his distressed compatriots is deeply impressive. (1) *We should ever have in our heart a love for God's people and an interest in God's cause.* **The Jews that had escaped.** Though ninety years had elapsed since the return

from exile, the Jews of Palestine were still known as "those who had escaped."

3. The remnant . . . are in great affliction. They had never prospered, and seemed now to be approaching a climax of suffering. Poor crops, alert and untiring enemies, and a pitiable lack of leadership had together brought on the hardest of hard times. Their nobles, selfish and unscrupulous, had made marital and political alliances with some of the worst enemies of the nation; the poorer classes were neglectful of the law of God. Vigorous patriotism and vigorous religion were unknown. **The wall . . . is broken down, and the gates . . . are burned with fire.** This breaking down and burning had been done by Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers one hundred and thirty-seven years before. The shattered and charred remains of walls and gates were the last sight these poor men of Judah could distinguish as their beloved city slowly faded in the distance behind them. An oriental city is utterly defenseless while un-walled. Besides, as a Persian courtier must know, there were at the present time threatening political convulsions. A serious revolt in Egypt had been barely quelled, and the Arab tribes from the desert were raiding in all directions. One fact was clear, the wall of Jerusalem must be promptly rebuilt if it was ever again to be the

capital of the Lord's people. (2) *So Christ's Church, the earthly Jerusalem, needs to be so protected that foes will be kept out and friends kept safe.*

4. When I heard. He may have vaguely known the condition of the city before, but the recital made his knowledge vivid. And he knew, probably better than the Jews of Jerusalem, the imminent danger in which they were so long as the city remained unwallled. **Fasted and prayed.** This fast may not have been absolute abstinence from food, but a denial of pleasure and of luxuries, keeping the body in fit condition for prayer. See Dan. 9. 3; 10. 3; Esther 4. 16; Ezra 10. **6. The God of heaven.** This is a conception of God which no doubt existed among the Israelites of every age, but is especially prominent in the later books of the Old Testament, when God's people were widely scattered. (3) *Our prayers should take in the general interests of God's cause.*

5. The great and terrible God that keepeth covenant and mercy. A wonderful phrase, which at once tells us of God's greatness and power and assures us that all that greatness and power will be used in the fulfillment of his promises. (4) *The mightier God is, the safer are his children.* "Covenant" refers to God's definite promises; "mercy" to his loving character, which gives more than is pledged. **For them that love him.** God's love is freely given to all men, however wicked they may be; but only those who give their love in return are in condition to accept the blessings of his covenant. **Observe his commandments.** (5) *Those who love God will delight to do his will, for he asks nothing beyond what a rightly constituted nature would freely give.*

6. The prayer of thy servant. Nehemiah's prayer was rather a recalling of God's promises and a confession of his people's sin than any specific petition. **Confess the sins.** Nehemiah saw that the troubles of his people came from their

own wandering from God. (6) *Whoever comes before God should come humbly, not proudly.*

7. The commandments . . . statutes . . . judgments. General terms expressing the law, and referring not only to the revelation through Moses, but also to the current of spiritual teaching by the prophets, which was considered as explanatory of the law. **Thy servant Moses.** It is evident that Nehemiah was familiar with the Pentateuch, or five books of Moses, for he refers to it as well known, and also quotes from it.

8. Remember, I beseech thee. God does not need to be reminded of his words, yet he desires us, for our own sakes, to remind him of them. **The word.** He cites here freely Deut. 30. 1-5, verses which contain the warning and the promise of God side by side.

9. But if ye turn. Nehemiah finds in the fulfillment of the threatening a ground of hope for divine mercy. (7) *When men turn God turns.* **Keep my commandments.** The best evidence of turning to God is a willingness to do his will. (8) *If you have resolved to be a Christian, do in every respect what Christ would have you do.*

11. Prosper, I pray thee, thy servant. It is not improbable that already Nehemiah had to some degree planned his future life of self-sacrificing patriotism; but he could hardly have foreseen the personal interest the king would take in the welfare of Jerusalem; and this prayer for prosperity was certainly not a prayer for the Judean governorship to which he was soon after appointed. His appointment as governor was, nevertheless, in answer to this prayer. **Mercy in the sight of this man.** These words touchingly set forth the chronic dread which is the atmosphere of despotism. **I was the king's cupbearer;** and therefore more in danger than others of damaging suspicion; also more favorably situated than others for securing and retaining the affectionate interest of the king.

CRITICAL NOTES.

Verse 1. Words of Nehemiah. The prophetic Books of Jeremiah and Amos begin with this form of expression, but the contents of those books show that the words were a message of divine revelation communicated to those prophets for Israel. Here the words are to be understood in the sense of a biographical and historical narrative. Of similar character were the "words" of Samuel, Nathan, and Gad referred to in 1 Chron. 29. 29. The Hebrew title of the Books of Chronicles is "words of the days." In ancient manuscripts and some printed copies the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah are united together as closely as if they were one book. **Chisleu.** The ninth month of the year, corresponding with the latter part of November and the earlier part of December. The

word occurs only in post-exile literature (only here and Zech. 7. 1), and was probably adopted from Babylonian usage, although it may have been of ancient origin. **Twentieth year**—of Artaxerxes, as chap. 2. 1, shows. **Shushan the palace.** So called because it was the city of the palace, which served as the winter residence of the kings of Persia. The place has been identified with the modern Susa, about one hundred miles north of the Persian Gulf. Here, in 1852, Mr. Loftus uncovered from huge mounds of rubbish the ruins of this ancient palace, and ascertained the position of its seventy-two columns. These columns indicated the plan of a great central hall, surrounded on three sides by great porches. The columns were over eight feet in diameter, and stood about

twenty-seven feet apart, so that the entire palace must have enclosed a space of nearly three hundred feet square. At this great palace Daniel saw one of his visions (Dan. 8. 2); and here Xerxes, the Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther, "sat on the throne of his kingdom" at the feast described in Esther 1. 2-9.

2. Hanani. Not the priest mentioned in chap. 12. 36, but Nehemiah's own brother, as appears from the language of chap. 7. 2. **I asked them.** As one deeply interested in the condition of the fatherland and the Jewish people still remaining there. **Escaped . . . left.** These two words, nearly synonymous, denote two distinct conceptions of the Jews then abiding in Jerusalem and the towns of Judah. The first word points to their "escape" from the land of exile. Although multitudes preferred to remain in Babylon, those who returned to the Holy Land were regarded as a body of people delivered from captivity, and so escaping the bondage which had come upon their race by reason of exile. The word **left** points yet more specifically to such as survived the trials to which the new community at Jerusalem had been exposed from the time of Cyrus until this twentieth year of Artaxerxes Longimanus. All who returned to Jerusalem **escaped** from the bondage of exile, but not all of these survived the hardships and persecutions of the troublous times.

4. Wall broken . . . gates burned. Some critics—supposing that the breaking down of the walls and burning of the gates of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, more than half a century before, could have been no news to Nehemiah—maintain that the destruction here referred to must have been caused by some more recent calamity not now on record. But it is unnecessary to suppose that this part of the report of the men out of Judah was "news" to Nehemiah. The desolate condition of Jerusalem is incidentally mentioned as showing how the Jews there were **in great affliction and reproach**. It is unaccountable that, if the walls of Jerusalem had been rebuilt and afterward destroyed a second time, no mention of such facts is traceable in history. The walls had remained in ruins since the beginning of the exile, and this fact was doubtless known to Nehemiah; but not until these tidings of the great suffering and reproach of his people were reported to him did he feel the keenness of the reproach which such a state of things at Jerusalem involved. Hence the prayer that follows.

5. I beseech thee. The prayer of Nehemiah deserves critical study as a model of blended adoration, invocation, confession, supplication, and confident appeal. Note the propriety and felicity of addressing Jehovah as the **God of heaven, the great and the terrible**. The facts which pressed on Nehemiah's memory and thought at the time most naturally prompted such

a form of words. But the great and terrible God is also one who **keepeth covenant and mercy**.

8. Thy servant Moses. Various passages from the Books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, here appropriated by Nehemiah, show that those portions of the Pentateuch were then recognized as of Mosaic origin.

11. This man. Alluding to the king, whom, though exalted to all but absolute power, he still knows to be only a man, and subject to the God of heaven. **Cupbearer.** The *mashgeh*, translated "butler" in Gen. 40. 1, 2, 5. An office of dignity. Rabshakeh (2 Kings 18. 17) was chief cupbearer in the Assyrian court.

The Lesson Council.

Question 1. *In what sense were the Jews the people of God?*

They were the people of God in a distinctive sense: 1. As his chosen people, with special favor and protection from their enemies. God gave the possessions of the heathen to be their possessions, driving out their enemies before them. 2. To the Jews pertained the Church with all its moral and religious institutions and benefits. To them God revealed his will, and to them he delivered the oracles of his truth (Rom. 3. 1, 2; 9. 4, 5). They were first to have the Gospel preached unto them.

Question 2. *Were the Gentile nations any less the people of God than the Jews? What was the difference between their relation to God and that of the Jews?*

No. "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10. 34, 35; Rom. 2. 11), hence not of nations. His love, purpose (Eph. 3. 11; Mal. 1. 11), and absolute relations (Rom. 10. 12, 13) are the same toward all (Rom. 2. 10, 11; 3. 29). Yet his real relations were not always the same. To the Jews it was a covenant relation, hence special. God's chosen instrument in bringing salvation to man was the Jews. He covenanted with them (Gen. 17. 2-16). The Jews pledged fidelity. God promised to be their King. This covenant relation was for special ends; therefore, to-day all are alike before him (Acts 10. 9-48; 11. 1-18; Gal. 3. 28).

Question 3. *What traits of character in Nehemiah should we consider as examples for us to follow?*

1. Patriotism. Though raised in a foreign land and living in the palace of a foreign king, he is nevertheless solicitous for the welfare of the land of his fathers. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget her cunning." 2. Tenderness of heart. "I sat down and wept." Nehemiah was no weakling. He could superintend the building of a city's walls, lead an army, persevere in the

face of opposition, and sit down and weep. The "remnant" in Jerusalem were in "great affliction and reproach," the city's walls were leveled, and the gates burned. Nehemiah wept. Those tears came from a fountain of disinterested love deep in the tender heart of this noble patriot. Paul wept. "Jesus wept." We should weep over the affliction of sin.

Question 4. *Should not fasting accompany prayer at the present time?*

Fasting is beneficial on general principles. That which chastens and subdues the body ministers to the health and vigor of the soul. There are special emergencies where fasting, according to the Scriptures, is absolutely necessary to victorious conquest over the powers of darkness. Failing to fast, the disciples broke down in the attempt to cast the foul spirit from the child; Jesus deposed the unclean spirit, and informed them that "this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

Analytical and Biblical Outline.

Nehemiah's Prayer.

- I. THE MAN.
 1. **Noble.** "In...the palace." v. 1.
 - "The king's cupbearer." v. 11.
 - "Not many noble." 1 Cor. 1, 26.
 2. **Patriotic.** "I asked them." v. 2.
 - "If I forget thee." Psalm 137, 5.
 3. **Praying.** "Prayed before God." v. 4.
 - "Men pray everywhere." 1 Tim. 2, 8.
- II. THE PRAYER.
 1. **Earnest.** "Wept." v. 4.
 - "Fervent prayer...righteous man." James 5, 16.
 2. **Humble.** "Fasted." v. 4.
 - "Humble yourselves." James 4, 10.
 3. **Persevering.** "Day and night." v. 6.
 - "Continuing instant in prayer." Rom. 12, 12.
 4. **Confessing.** "We have sinned." v. 6, 7.
 - "I will confess." Psalm 32, 5.
 5. **Pleading promise.** "Remember." v. 8, 9.
 - "Remember the word." Psalm 119, 49.

Thoughts for Young People.

The Example of Nehemiah.

1. *Notice Nehemiah's fidelity to his father's God* while in a strange land, in the temptations of the palace and the cares of public life. Let the young man away from home follow his example.
2. *Notice Nehemiah's devotedness to the interests of the Church.* His first inquiry was concerning it; his prayers were in its behalf; for it he was ready to make every sacrifice.
3. *Notice Nehemiah's industrious, practical spirit.* Read the story of his inspecting the condition of the city, his endeavor to arouse the people to ac-

tion, and his labor in rebuilding the wall. What are you doing to build up Christ's Church?

4. *Notice Nehemiah's self-denying liberality.* He gave up much of position and wealth for the sake of God's people.

5. *Notice Nehemiah's persevering spirit,* not yielding to obstacles, but overcoming them.

6. *Notice Nehemiah's intense zeal for a pure Church.* He led the people back to an obedience of God's law, to a solemn covenant with God, to keeping the Sabbath.

Lesson Word-Pictures.

And this is Nehemiah, the Jew. How fine and flowing are his robes! He stands in the palace corridors. Look about you and see how gorgeous is this palace of Artaxerxes. If Nehemiah may have any station here, he is to be envied. What grand corridors, what magnificent apartments! Go into the throne room with its imposing guards, its brilliant throng of courtiers, its gorgeous throne. Enter the banquet hall with its glittering vessels, its luxurious couches, its walls resplendent with richest oriental decorations. And all this magnificence is only a setting to encase that jeweled presence, the King Artaxerxes, the strong, the magnificent the absolute one. See him on his throne when down before him fall his courtiers as if mere grass blades pressed to the earth by a strong wind. The king frowns in anger or nods a smiling assent. People die or live: **is** this absolute one may frown or smile. Has Nehemiah anything to do near that king's source of power? It is an important sphere he fills if his work be inside the palace.

But look again!

There stands Nehemiah.

And who are these coming up?

A group of Jews.

He asks about a city dearer to the Hebrew than all the cities of the great Artaxerxes. As they answer, Nehemiah can see it, seated on lowly Judean hills, its towers humbled, its walls broken down, its gates burnt, while every enemy passing by points at it his sneering fingers. O Nehemiah, that is Jerusalem!

Those fellow Jews are gone, and Nehemiah is alone. How sad and clouded his face! He cannot stay amid the magnificence of the palace. He goes away, all alone, and sits down in sorrow. All the while a voice is ringing in his soul: "Nehemiah, you are the one to speak to the king about Jerusalem!"

Speak to Artaxerxes?

Yes, you are the king's cupbearer. That is what you do in the splendid palace. Now, meet your opportunity manfully.

Imagine it, Nehemiah speaking to the king! Think of it, great Artaxerxes in all his splendor,

the sneer of absolute power on his lip, great Persia all about him, and this cupbearer tiptoeing up to the king, a cup in his hand, and then speaking for the stubborn little city that has given the kings of the land so much trouble—Jerusalem.

Of what use will the venture be?

"I am going," says Nehemiah.

What if the king cry, "Nay?"

"I am going."

What if he scowl and shake his head, and in wrath give thee to his cruel guards?

"I am going."

But first Nehemiah goes to another King.

O, that other King!

What an empire he has! The shining stars are his bodyguard, the fiery sun, the silvered moon. What armies he can marshal! What weapons, what war chariots! The lightning is his sword, the thunder his chariot roll.

O, this other King!

And Nehemiah goes down before him. I see Nehemiah in sackcloth. I see him low upon the ground. I hear his sobs. I catch his pleas. He fasts. He begs. He holds on to the angel of supplication for weary hours. I hear him confessing Israel's sin and the sin of Nehemiah's fathers, and especially the sins of Nehemiah. And then he pleads the promises, to Moses, to all the Israel of God.

Will not this great King hear Nehemiah?

And now I see Nehemiah going before the earthly monarch, a cup in his hand, a prayer to God in his thoughts, a restful trust in his soul. What will Artaxerxes say as the cupbearer approaches him?

God speed thee, Nehemiah!

Good angels go with thee, and Gabriel and Michael be in thy bodyguard!

Make thy plea for Jerusalem, and all the time keep praying in thy heart to the One greater.

Orientalisms of the Lesson.

It is thoroughly in accord with all Western Asiatic custom that humiliation should be expressed by mourning and fasting. In the feast of Ramadan, which lasts a whole lunar month, the Moslems fast all day, and under even a broiling sun do not take a drop of water from sunrise to sunset. They often fast at night, however, with great hilarity. Little business is transacted. Jews everywhere observe fasting as a regular religious practice. Hindoo fakirs sometimes fast, or claim to fast, an incredibly long time, even being buried, as is affirmed by their friends, to prove that they receive no food for forty days or more. These claims, however, are not established beyond serious doubt, but they show the heathen idea of subduing the body, in order to increase spiritual communication and power

But one thing cannot be paralleled in heathen countries, and that is the lofty conception of the spiritual character of sin and the devout penitential language of Nehemiah's prayer. Heathen nowhere show such apprehension of what sin is. With the heathen sacrifices are offered because the gods are hungry. Their sacrifices do not "pertain to the conscience; do not bring any sense of pardon.

By Way of Illustration.

Verses 1-4. John Newton, on the wall of his study at Olney, just over his desk, had these words in very large letters, "Remember thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee." This sympathy with his fellow bondmen in sin kept his zeal at a flaming pitch.

The Christlike character is like the *Æolian* harp, which gives music, bright or sad, according to the breeze which touches it; or like a lake which mirrors tree and rock, dark cloud and heaven's unchanging blue.—Cook.

"I prayed before the God of heaven." Prayer is good preparation for service. In our Canadian Parliament it was a Methodist Senator, the late John Macdonald, of Toronto, who succeeded in procuring the adoption of the observance of daily prayer. In the American Congress the chaplain is a blind Methodist preacher, and very touching it is to see him led to his place by a page and invoking God's blessing on the deliberations of the Assembly. An old proverb says, "Prayer and provender hinder no man's journey." Luther used to say, "Bene orasse, bene laborasse." "To have prayed well is to have labored well." "I have much to do to-day," he would sometimes say, "I must therefore spend an hour in prayer." Prayer will clarify the intellect and lift up the heart, and better equip the soul for the discharge of life's duties.

Verses 6, 7. *Confession.* A German prince traveling through France visited the arsenal at Toulon, where the galleys were kept. The commandant offered to set at liberty any slave whom he selected. In conversing with the prisoners the prince met with universal complaints of the injustice of their confinement. At last he came to one man, who said, "My lord, I have been a wicked, desperate wretch. I have often deserved to be broken on the wheel, and it is a mercy that I am here." The prince procured his release.—Bowe.

Verses 8-11. God redeems and cares for his own. The Russian Empress Alexandra, who died in 1860, instituted a system of releasing debtors from prison by paying their fines. In all such cases she employed a commissioner to see that the person so set free was provided with tools and work and

placed on a good financial standing. The Gospel brings not only pardon, but help to a better life.

"For I was the king's cupbearer." This was a position of highest honor and trust. God gave his best. It is a mistake to suppose that a dull and second-rate man is good enough for the heathen. The worst oft need the very best we have. The most darkened and degraded souls need the best thinking.

When our blessed Lord was presenting his Gospel to a fallen Samaritan woman he uttered in her ears the most august philosophical thesis to be found in any tongue, "God is a Spirit." Missions have had their grandest successes when England's best scholars, like Bishop Paterson and Bishop Selwyn, have devoted their splendid talents to the conversion of the fiercest and lowest savages of Micronesia and New Zealand. It would be a sad day for Canadian Christians if they should ever deserve Nehemiah's reproach: "Their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord." Christianity will advance over the Church with swift strides when the churches are ready to send their best men and the best men are ready to go.

Golden Text. There was once a good woman who was well known among her circle for her simple faith and her great calmness in the midst of many trials. Another woman living at a distance, hearing of her, said, "I must go and learn the secret of her happiness." She went, and, accosting her, said, "Are you the woman with the great faith?" "No," she replied; "I am not the woman with the great faith, but I am the woman with a little faith in the great God."—*Sermon Notes.*

The Teachers' Meeting.

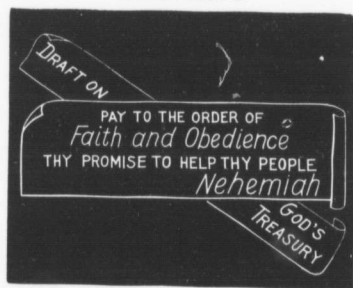
In the study of this lesson do not fail to read the entire Book of Nehemiah; urge the scholars on the Sunday before the lesson to read the book, and to bring to the class their estimate of Nehemiah's character, its traits, etc.... Show on the map the location of Shushan, Judea, etc., and Nehemiah's journey.... The "Thoughts for Young People" will suggest a line of treatment, presenting Nehemiah as an example in character. An interesting story could be told of his work, and the characteristics which he showed in it.... Another plan might be made on the basis of Nehemiah's "seven hindrances," and how he overcame them: (1) The distance—one thousand two hundred miles; (2) The poverty of the Jews, (3) Their discouraged, apathetic spirit; (4) Their miserable class-strife—nobles against common people; (5) The extent of the work; (6) The opposition of the enemies; (7) The general laxity of obedience to the law of God. Show how God's workers encounter the same hin-

drances now.... Still another plan is to take up the Golden Text of the lesson and consider God as the Helper of his people: (1) The difficulties amid which Nehemiah prayed for help; (2) The purpose for which he asked help; (3) The character of the divine Helper; (4) The character of the help given.

References.

FREEMAN. Ver. 1: The month Chisleu, 377. Ver. 11: The royal cupbearer, 378.... FOSTER'S CYCLOPEDIA. Poetical, 3823; Prose, 11870-11873, 5989, 5991, 5972, 11873, 5818. Ver. 3: Prose, 2711. Ver. 6: Prose, 927, 4592, 4562, 4545, 4537, 5309, 5315.

Blackboard.



Draw the design on the board, or cut a large sheet of white paper in the same proportions, and fasten it on the board after having written the words on it as in the design. Have one of the teachers or scholars explain to the school what is meant by a bank draft. Speak of what a fine thing it would be if one of us could have the privilege of drawing a draft on some great bank every day, if needed, with the assurance that the draft would always be paid. How rich we should be! There is a treasury of untold wealth, more precious than gold, on which the Christian may make drafts with the knowledge that they will never be protested, because God's "promise to pay" is true, and his promises are always kept. It was on this treasury that Nehemiah drew for help. He was a man of wealth and position; he might have felt sorry for the poor Jews at Jerusalem; he might have wept a few tears over them; and perhaps have made a pathetic address on some suitable occasion, and urged some one else to do something to help them; he might even have started a subscription list with a liberal sum himself, and felt as though he had done his duty; or he might have got the women together, and had them give some sort of an entertainment. But he did none of these things. He went

to the great Helper of the weak and the oppressed, and prayed for help to enable him to do the work himself. "My help cometh from the Lord." He knew the difficulties in the way, and he knew where to go for help. Even so can each one of us go to the same source of power and receive guidance, strength, and comfort in all right undertakings.

Primary and Intermediate.

LESSON THOUGHT. *What to do with trouble.*

Review. What was done when the temple was finished? What is it to dedicate? Have we anything to dedicate to God? What are these bodies of ours called? When ought we to give them to God? How shall we treat them if they belong to God?

Introducing the Lesson. Where was the new temple? Yes, here in Jerusalem. [Make a square for the city.] Away over here is the land in which the Jews were captives so long. Who can tell the name of the country? Here is a little square that we will call the king's palace. It was at Shushan, and was a beautiful place. There were many noblemen who waited on the king. One was named Nehemiah. I will print his name on the board. He was a Jew. The king loved him for his honesty and faithfulness. Shall I tell you what Nehemiah's work was in the palace? He had to take care of the king's wine, and give him his cups of wine to drink. So he was called the king's cupbearer. This lesson will tell you of some bad news that Nehemiah heard, and what he did about it.

What does this square stand for? Yes, this is to make us think of Jerusalem. It was a long way from Shushan—more than a thousand miles. [Make a delicate line between the two places.] Some men from the land of Israel came one day to the place where Nehemiah was. As soon as he saw them he asked about the Jews who had gone back, and about Jerusalem, the holy city. He loved his country, though he lived so far away.

They told him news which made him feel very sad. It was seventy years since the temple was dedicated, and yet the walls around Jerusalem had not been built! The old wall was broken down, and the gates were burned with fire. There was nothing to hinder the enemies of the Jews from coming to rob and burn the holy city. [Show or make a picture of an ancient walled city, explaining why walls had to be built to protect cities.]

The men from Jerusalem told Nehemiah that the people there were very poor, so that they could not build the wall, and that their enemies looked upon them with scorn and contempt. Are you sorry when you hear that some one you love is in trouble?

Once there was a rich man who heard a sad story about some people that he knew. "I am very sorry," said the rich man.

"Well, how much are you sorry?" said his friend. He wanted to do something to help. Nehemiah was so sorry that he was willing to help. But he could not do the work alone. Was there anyone to help Nehemiah? Yes, he had a great, strong, powerful friend. His friend was greater and stronger even than the king upon whom he waited. It was the great God, the King of heaven! Nehemiah prayed.

[Make a small altar of incense, and a faint line going up.]

He told the Lord all the trouble his people were in, and asked that he might be allowed to go to them and help them. He confessed his own sins, and the sins of his people, and he asked the Lord to make his king willing to let him go and build the wall around Jerusalem.

Do you think the Lord heard Nehemiah's prayer? Yes, God knew his servant, and saw the love in his heart which made him willing to take the long journey and do the hard work. God hears every true prayer which even the least of his children offers. [Make a faint line from the top of the board reaching down to the king's palace.]

God sent an answer down to Nehemiah. It made him feel strong and patient and ready to do just what the Lord gave him to do.



The Lesson for Us. [Print "Trouble" on the board.] Does everybody have trouble? O yes, even little children often have to suffer a great deal. Many hard things come to little children. These are their broken walls which they want to have built up. Sin pulls down and leaves down. Faith builds up.

Nehemiah shows us what to do with trouble. [Make a tiny spiral cloud of incense going up from the word Trouble.]

Little Christians may pray about *everything*—all their joys and sorrows; all their good times, as well as their sad times; all their play, as well as their work. God wants us to tell him all that interests us. Let us sing heartily, "What a Friend we have in Jesus," and then ask God to help us take "everything to him in prayer."

OPTIONAL HYMNS.

No. 1.

Father, I stretch my hands to thee.
Guide me, O thou great Jehovah.
My Jesus, as thou wilt.
Father, whate'er of earthly bliss,
Father, lead me day by day.

No. 2.

Awake, my soul, in joyful lays.
Hear thou my prayer.
Shine on our souls.
Art thou weary, art thou languid?
Come, Jesus, Redeemer.

The Lesson Catechism.

[For the entire school.]

1. What sad news was brought to Nehemiah, the Jewish cupbearer of the Persian king? **That his relatives in Jerusalem were in great affliction.**

2. What did he do? **He wept, fasted, and prayed.**

3. What did he confess? **The sins of his people.**

4. What did he plead? **The promise of God.**

5. What is the GOLDEN TEXT? **“Lord, be thou my helper.”**

CATECHISM QUESTION.

9. Have believers an internal evidence that Christ came from God?

They have, according to their faith, the witness and the fruit of the Holy Spirit in their hearts.

John xiv. 20. In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in Me, and I in you.

About B. C. 445.] LESSON VIII. REBUILDING THE WALL.

[Feb. 19.]

GOLDEN TEXT. We made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them. Neh. 4. 9.

Authorized Version.

Neh. 4. 9-21. [Commit to memory verses 19-21.]

9 Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.

10 And Ju'dah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and *there is much rubbish*; so that we are not able to build the wall.

11 And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease.

12 And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us *they will be upon you*.

13 Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

14 And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, *which is great and terrible*, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

15 And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, everyone unto his work.

16 And it came to pass from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers *were* behind all the house of Ju'dah.

17 They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, *everyone* with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other *hand* held a weapon.

18 For the builders, everyone had his sword girded by his side, and *so* builded. And he that sounded the trumpet *was* by me.

Revised Version.

9 But we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them. And Ju'dah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall. And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come into the midst of them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease. And it came to pass that, when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times from all places, Ye shall return unto us. Therefore set I in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in the open places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your houses. And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, everyone unto his work. And it came to pass from that time forth, that half of my servants wrought in the work, and half of them held the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the coats of mail; and the rulers were behind all the house of Ju'dah. They that builded the wall and they that bare burdens laded themselves, everyone with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other held his weapon; and the builders, everyone had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by

19 And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another.

20 In what place *therefore* ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us.

21 So we labored in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared.

19 me. And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon

20 the wall, one far from another: in what place soever ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us.

21 So we wrought in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared.

TIME.—B. C. 445. **PLACE.**—Jerusalem. **RULERS.**—Artaxerxes, King of Persia; Nehemiah, Tirshatha (or Pasha) of Judah; Sanballat the Horonite, in high position in Samaria; Tobiah the Ammonite, the Governor (Pasha) of Ammon; Geshem, probably the chieftain of a predatory tribe. **DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION.**—God's overruling providence.

HOME READINGS.

- M.* Rebuilding the wall. Neh. 4. 7-14.
Tu. Rebuilding the wall. Neh. 4. 15-21.
W. The fear of man. Isa. 51. 9-16.
Th. Wicked devices frustrated. Psalm 33. 10-22.
F. The wall of fire. Zech. 2. 1-5.
S. Wise and foolish builders. Matt. 7. 24-29.
S. Watch and pray. Eph. 6. 10-18.

LESSON HYMNS.

No. 108, New Canadian Hymnal.

A charge to keep I have,
 A God to glorify.

No. 104, New Canadian Hymnal.

Lord, as to thy dear cross we flee,
 And pray to be forgiven.

No. 102, New Canadian Hymnal.

What shall I do, where shall I flee?
 I have no refuge, dear Saviour, but thee.

DOMINION HYMNAL

Hymns, Nos. 128, 129, 127.

QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR STUDENTS.

1. Praying and Watching, v. 9-12.

- What enemies had Nehemiah?
 Who was Sanballat?
 Who were the Ammonites? the Arabians? the Ashdodites?
 Why were they wroth?
 What did they set out to do?
 What did the Jews do to prevent this?
 When God's enemies try to hinder, what should Christians do? (Psalm 50. 15.)
 Why do we need to watch as well as pray?
 What other discouragement had they?
 Which is harder to bear, the opposition of enemies or the dissuasion of friends?

2. Watching and Working, v. 13-18.

- What did they do besides watch and pray?
 How many of them worked?
 How did they work?
 What were the weapons for?
 Whom should we watch against? (1 Peter 5. 8.)
 What else? (Mark 14. 38.)
 Where was he that sounded the trumpet?
 Why was he there?
 Would it do for him to go to sleep?
 What is always by us to notify us when God's enemies are near?
 How shall we keep it awake and alert?

3. Working and Organizing, v. 19-21.

- What did Nehemiah mean by saying "we are separated?"
 Is the law of mutual help more obligatory in war times than in times of peace?
 In whose fighting powers had Nehemiah supreme confidence?
 Repeat the GOLDEN TEXT.
 How can it be turned into a motto for your daily life?

Practical Teachings.

How does this lesson show that—

1. Zeal for God stimulates the world's opposition?
2. The world's opposition should stimulate our diligence.
3. True diligence includes watching, praying, and working?

Hints for Home Study.

1. Was the site of Jerusalem naturally fortified, or was it exposed to easy attack?
2. Find what you can about the difficulty of conquering it experienced by the Hebrews in the first place; by the Egyptians; by the Babylonians; and by the Romans.
3. Find Nehemiah's characteristics as set forth in this lesson—leadership, engineering ability, military skill, tact as a governor and social organizer, and contagious power as a patriot.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE SCHOLARS.

1. Praying and Watching, v. 9-12.

- To whom did the people pray? (GOLDEN TEXT.)
 Against whom did they watch? (Verse 7.)
 What did Judah say in discouragement?

What did the enemies say?

What report did the Jews bring?

What said the Saviour about praying and watching? (Matt. 26. 41.)

2. Watching and Working, v. 13-18.

Where did the governor station guards?

How were these armed?

Whom were the people to remember?

What were they told to do?

Who defeated the plots of the enemies?

What work was then resumed?

While some worked what did others do?

Where were the rulers?

How were the builders armed?

Where was the trumpeter?

3. Working and Organizing, v. 19-21.

What was said about the extent of the work?

What command was therefore given?

How long were men on guard?

How long are we expected to be on duty? (Rev.

2. 10.)

Teachings of the Lesson.

What are we taught in this lesson—

1. Concerning seeking God's help?

2. Concerning helping ourselves?

3. Concerning helping one another?

Home Work for Young Bereans.

Find the meaning of *habergeon*.

Why did not each builder hold a weapon in his hand as well as each bearer of burdens?

Why did Nehemiah keep the trumpeter next to him?

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.

Who gave Nehemiah permission to go to Jerusalem? **King Artaxerxes.**

For what purpose did he go? **To build the walls.**

What did he ask the people of Jerusalem to do? **To help him.**

What did they do? **They began to build at once.**

Who laughed them to scorn? **Their enemies.**

What did Nehemiah tell them? **That it was the Lord's work.**

What made them angry? **To see the work go on.**

What did they secretly resolve? **To fight against Jerusalem.**

Who heard what they were going to do? **Nehemiah.**

What did he do? **He prayed to God.**

What else did he do? **He set a watch.**

How did the men work? **With sword in hand.**

What were they ready to do at any time? **To fight.**

What did Nehemiah tell them? **Not to fear.**

Who did he say would fight for them? **The Lord.**

When will the Lord save us from our enemies? **When we both watch and pray.**

Words with Little People.

We have enemies, too—Satan, our own sinful hearts, the sinful pleasures of the world. **What shall we do when they come to fight against us?**

PRAY. WATCH. WORK.

Lesson Motto.

Watch and pray.

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

General Statement.

Four months after Nehemiah heard of the desolation of Jerusalem Artaxerxes discovered that his cupbearer had sorrow at heart. Now he would be a strange king who could look upon the ruffled brow of a cupbearer without suspicion; so Artaxerxes cross-questioned Nehemiah. When he learned the cause of his favorite's gloom he commissioned him to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and gave him many facilities. When Nehemiah reached Jerusalem he found things even worse than had been said. Before the walls could stand in their place money must be collected, a working force must be gathered, and a fighting force organized. But, as we have seen already, the people were poor and had long lost all patriotic pride and hope, and, in consequence, there was not much love of country left. The nobles and priests on whose patriotism he longed to lean were, many of them, already identified in interest with the foreigners who wanted no wall there. It was a herculean task to build a wall big enough to fence *the enemies out*; but how disheartening when the builder knew that it would surely fence *worse enemies in*! But great is the infectious power of a resolute man.

"O well for him whose will is strong;

He suffers; but he cannot suffer long;

He suffers; but he will not suffer wrong."

Nehemiah did his duty, item by item, and God gave him the largest success. This lesson gives us glimpses of three groups: 1. Heathenish outsiders with murderous hatred in their hearts waiting an opportunity to pounce on the builders; 2. traitorous citizens, whose apathy and covertly hostile words were worse than foreigners' swords; 3. between these two a little group of men with swords and trowels and prayers, setting their watch day and night, and resolutely working till the wall was reared and the permanence of their nation secured.

Verse 9. Nevertheless. In spite of the difficulties recounted in the context. **We made our prayer.** Nehemiah constantly betook himself to "the Christian's mightiest weapon, prayer!" (1) "*Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees.*" **Our God.** The Jews were apt to look upon Jehovah as their God exclusively; but there was a fuller personal appropriation by Nehemiah, who knew that God had committed a special work to him, and would sustain him in it. (2) *While God is the God of all men, he is in a peculiar sense the God of his own people—the invisible Church of Christ.* **Set a watch.** (3) *Trust in God must not supersede effort.* The Christian needs to watch as well as pray. **Against them.** Dr. Rawlinson translates this "opposite them," and believes that it refers to an anticipated attack, which was specially guarded against.

10. Judah said. That is, the returned captives, most of whom were of the tribe of Judah. The rest of the verse expresses in one sentence the despair of the little nation into which Nehemiah was striving to infuse hope. Their statements were doubtless correct; the bearers of burden were exhausted, and before the walls could be rightly begun the accumulated debris of one hundred and thirty-five years of ruin must be cleared away. But their conclusion was wrong; they were able to build the wall, and they did.

11. Our adversaries said. Nehemiah condenses into one sentence the hostile utterance of the Jews' opponents, just as in the preceding verse he condensed the despairing wail of the Jews.

12. The Jews which dwelt by them. Frontiersmen who dwelt in villages near the enemies of the nation oversaw their plans, and felt the full force of their influence. (4) *Those who are surrounded by sinners are in danger of infection by their example.* (5) *To keep the heart firm we should dwell in Zion, the citadel of strength.* **Ten times.** Repeatedly; or, as we would say, "dozens of times." **From all places,** etc. It is better to attach the words "from all places" to the preceding sentence, thus, "Again and again they came to us from all directions, and said, Ye must return unto us." Nehemiah had secured from these border villages many mechanics and laborers for his work. Their kinsmen now besought these men to leave the imperiled city. (6) *It is harder to resist the persuasions of discouraged and persistent friends than the attacks of enemies.*

13. The higher places. A mistaken rendering. It should be "the exposed places." The passage should read, "Therefore set I in the lowest parts at the place behind the wall, in the exposed portion;" that is, where the walls, being unfinished, were open to attack, Nehemiah stationed armed defenders. (7) *Workers must expect sometimes to be warriors.* **After their families.** Arrayed, as were the builders, in groups of families, so that each builder was inspired by seeing his friends around him. (8) *There is great encouragement in the path of duty and of trial in the comforting presence of those whom we love.*

14. I looked. (9) *A leader of God's workmen must not only direct, but also inspect, giving his orders, and then observing that they are fulfilled.* **Be not afraid.** (10) *No man has real occasion for fear so long as he is in the path of duty.* **Remember the Lord.** (11) *Such a moral power goes with the consciousness of God's presence that one man with God is mightier than many against him.*

15. God had brought. (12) *The best human precautions are of no avail unless God be on our side.* (13) *Let us never fail to see God's hand in every success.* **We returned.** Showing that on the expectation of attack there had been a temporary cessation of the work in rebuilding.

16. My servants. This refers to Nehemiah's immediate followers, a sort of body guard, part of whom engaged in the work, while the rest acted as sentries. **Habergeons.** An old expression for "coats of mail."

17. With one of his hands wrought . . . with the other . . . held a weapon. Not to be understood literally, but as expressing the condition of readiness, with weapons within reach.

18. Sword girded. Which might be, without greatly interfering with the work. **He that sounded the trumpet.** Ready to give the alarm at a moment's notice.

19, 20, 21. We are separated. In Nehemiah's time Jerusalem had few inhabitants. The walls were out of proportion to the population, and this fact made it peculiarly open to attack. But his vigorous government soon filled it with people. **The sound of the trumpet.** How much depended on the trumpeter! In the last analysis every victory hangs on the faithfulness of some humble bugler or picket; and as it is in the world of war, so it is in the Church of God. **From the rising of the morning,** etc. Every sunlit hour was occupied by this pressing work.

CRITICAL NOTES.

Verse 9. Prayer . . . watch. Notable illustration of "watching unto prayer." **Because of them.** The context, especially verses 7 and 8 preceding, shows that now Sanballat was not the only enemy, but that he had associated

with himself a number of the neighboring tribes, such as the Arabians, Ammonites, and people of Ashdod from the Philistine plain. This conspiracy was the more dangerous to the Jews, inasmuch as the union of so many of their neighbors against

them might be construed into a proof to the King of Persia that the Jews were indeed a troublesome and factious people. But the opposition of Sanballat alone would have been more readily attributed to some personal antipathy.

10. Strength . . . decayed. Literally, "weak has become the strength of the burden bearer." The greatness of the work and incessant toil had worn upon them, and they naturally yielded to discouragement and a sense of inability to complete what they had taken in hand.

12. Jews which dwelt by them. That is, dwelt near by the adversaries. The reference is to those Jews who had taken up their residence in the vicinity of the tribes mentioned in verse 7. Probably not a few of those whose ancestral homes had been near Samaria, or in the plain of Jericho, or at Tekoa, had settled their families near the old homesteads. Such were probably "the men of Gibeon," "the Tekoites," and "the men of Jericho," mentioned in chap. 3, 2, 5, 7. **Said ten times.** Idiomatic phrase equivalent in meaning to a great many times, or "time and again." The fact thus stated showed their intense anxiety. **Ye must return unto us.** This rendering of the Revised Version is a decided improvement on that of the common version, and probably conveys the true meaning. The Jews who were dwelling in the neighborhood of the enemies who were plotting to slay the workmen at Jerusalem urged their friends and kinsmen to return and protect their homes and families. They would have them leave the imperiled city and escape the murderous assault of those who proposed to steal upon them unawares while they were at their work. The Hebrew text of the latter part of this twelfth verse (verse 6, in Hebrew text) is, however, probably corrupt. Some word or words appear to have fallen out by the carelessness of an ancient copyist, and it is hardly possible now to supply them even by conjecture.

13. Set in the lower places. Better as Revised Version, "lowest parts of the space." He stationed men at those lowest and most exposed places where attack might be most expected. The stationing them **behind the wall** implies that he would utilize the wall itself as a breastwork or fortification. **Higher places.** Rather, "open," or "exposed places." The word means a dry and sunny place, one exposed to the heat of the sun; and, metaphorically, to any bare, open, or exposed places. The "and" supplied in the common version is misleading by serving to place the lower and higher places in contrast; whereas the phrase, "in the exposed places," is coordinate with **behind the wall**, and serves to designate still further and more particularly the exact position of the guard. **After their families.** So that each guard had the support of his own

family, whose immediate presence would tend to intensify the zeal and care of his vigilance. Such an arrangement added to the force of the appeal in the next verse, for when one fights for "brothers and sons and daughters and wives and houses," his strength is like to be at its utmost.

15. Returned . . . unto work. This implies that for a time, until the enemy saw that he was baffled, all work was suspended.

16. My servants. Comparison with verse 23 shows that Nehemiah's **servants**, or "young men," were his personal retinue, who served under his immediate command as a body guard. **Half . . . and half.** So pressing was the work that the governor detached half of his personal retinue of attendants to hasten it to a conclusion, and the other half to hold the weapons in readiness in case of a sudden attack. Other laborers, as verse 17 shows, both labored and carried their weapons. **Habergeons.** A word of French origin, for which the Revised Version has substituted the better term "coats of mail." The Hebrew word is so rendered in the common version in 1 Sam. 17. 5, in the description of Goliath's armor. The ancient coat of mail was a defensive covering for the upper part of the body, extending from the neck to the loins. **Rulers were behind.** Where they could the more easily direct the work and at the same time stand on guard. **All the house of Judah.** The returned exiles were so largely of the tribe of Judah that they are thus naturally called here "the whole house of Judah." For the same reason the entire body of Israelitish people have from that time until now been commonly called Jews, that is, Judahites.

17. They that builded . . . and they that bare burdens. These constituted the main body of common workmen, and should be understood as distinct from the servants of Nehemiah mentioned in the previous verse. They wrought in the work, and at the same time carried their own weapons. There is another way of reading the first part of this verse so as to make the statement refer only to them **that bare burdens.** It is seen in the margin of the Revised Version. The words **they that builded the wall** are connected with the preceding sentence, in apposition with **all the house of Judah.** This construction relieves the apparent confusion between verses 16 and 17 by making only the bearers of burdens hold weapons in one hand while they worked with the other. **With those that laded.** The Revised Version has "laded themselves." There is no connecting particle in the Hebrew, but the word rendered **laded** is a participle agreeing with **they that bare burdens**, and therefore does not denote another class of laborers. The thought expressed is, that the bearers

of burdens were each loaded with a burden in one hand and a weapon in the other.

18. Builders . . . sword girded by his side. Unlike the bearers of burdens, who could work with one hand and carry a weapon in the other, the **builders** needed both hands in their work, and so carried swords which hung girded by their sides. **He that sounded . . . by me.** The next following verses explain the reason and necessity of this. The commander of all the workmen and all the forces must needs have at hand the means of summoning them together at shortest notice.

21. Half held the spears. Here the reference is to Nehemiah's workmen, as explained in verse 16, not to all who wrought upon the walls.

The Lesson Council.

Question 1. *Was the attitude of the Jews after their restoration to Palestine toward the Samaritans right? Was it not narrow and illiberal?*

The Samaritans, the inhabitants of Samaria, were a mixed race of people, the result of the intermarriage of the ten tribes with the Gentile nations. A nation like this could not be otherwise than odious to the Jews. They did not harmonize in faith with the returning captives, having adopted in part the worship of the heathen. The Jews did not affiliate with them, but treated them as aliens and strangers, and they were therefore not permitted to participate in the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 4). The Jews became bitter and oppressive toward the Samaritans.

Question 2. *Would it not have been far better for the Jews to welcome the Samaritans and permit them to worship with them than to make them their enemies?*

No. Their purpose probably was treachery. Their enmity was not caused, but revealed, by this refusal. There was almost nothing in common in their worship (2 Kings 17. 33). So far as we know, they might worship with them, but not become partners in authority and work. The Jews, alone commanded to build, by accepting such partnership, would have offended their Persian king (Ezra 4. 3). The bane of the Jews had always been these forbidden and unwholy alliances. The devout few, as with Gideon (Judges 7. 4), are always mightier than the unreliable many. Numbers count for little with God; loyalty and piety are everything.

Question 3. *What spirit shown by Nehemiah in this lesson is an example for us as workers in the Church of Christ?*

1. Confidence in God. His enemies were laughing at his work and conspiring to hinder it. But with unshaken confidence in God he continued to pray and work, and encouraged the builders to be not afraid, but "remember the Lord." 2. Un-

daunted courage. Opposition was great; conspiracy was strong. The hour called for steadfastness and courage. Nehemiah was not lacking in this spirit. 3. Concentrated earnestness. He came from Persia to restore the walls of Jerusalem and take away the reproach of his brethren; and nothing deterred him from his purpose.

Question 4. *What are the circumstances and conditions which authorize the servants of God to take up arms and fight?*

We know of no passage in the Bible forbidding Christians to take up arms in self-defense either of person or property. The spirit of hate, revenge, and retaliation is utterly incongruous with the spirit of the Gospel; but in defense of truth and righteousness God's servants may be justified and even required to take up arms and fight. The doctrine of "nonresistance" finds no support in the teachings of Christ when fairly interpreted. Christians are members of civil government, which is ordained of God, and are under obligations as God's ministers to take up the sword and execute wrath against evil-doers.

Analytical and Biblical Outline. The Requirements for God's Workmen.

I. PRAYER.

We made our prayer. v. 9.

"Call upon me." Psalm 50. 15.

"In everything by prayer." Phil. 4. 6.

II. WATCHFULNESS.

Set a watch against them. v. 9.

"Be vigilant." 1 Peter 5. 8.

"Watch ye." 1 Cor. 16. 13.

III. COURAGE.

Be not ye afraid. v. 14.

"I will not fear." Heb. 13. 6.

"Stand therefore." Eph. 6. 14.

IV. FAITH.

Remember the Lord. v. 14.

"The name of the Lord." Psalm 20. 7.

"The shield of faith." Eph. 6. 16.

V. LABOR.

Everyone unto his work. v. 15.

"To every man his work." Mark 13. 34.

"Work out. . . salvation." Phil. 2. 12.

Thoughts for Young People.

"Sure I Must Fight if I Would Reign."

1. Whenever a good work is to be done adversaries are to be expected.

2. Praying should not prevent watching, nor watching working, for duties never are in conflict.

3. Every plan against God is sure to come to naught if only God's people are faithful.

4. The Christian must be prepared for either work or war, for life or death, at all times.

Lesson Word-Pictures.

Such activity all along the ruined walls of Jerusalem—men at the valley gate and water gate and the east gate and the fish gate and every other gate, all working away like beavers that are building up a dam. Between gate and gate, tower and tower, other human beavers are as active. Priest and Levite, ruler and ruled, goldsmith and merchant, the men of trades and traffic, are all at work. Such a busy day! But who are those without that are growling and scowling and menacing and conspiring to come up around and stop this high and holy work? Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabians and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites! What a horde! What can be done? Any time they may burst upon the builders.

The work falters.

People stop building.

The hammer strokes are hushed.

The wall is forsaken. How lonely it is!

O what an anxious hour!

What will be done?

They can at least appoint watchmen, and soon the somber sentinels stalk up and down the wall, through the weary day, hour after hour. At night they are on the wall, looking off, listening, ready to repel assault. Back in the Hebrew homes, hidden by the wall, men, women, and children are praying. Judah is disheartened. Judah means that it cannot rebuild the wall. The enemy is bold, impudent, threatening. O how stealthily do they claim will be their assault! So softly will they come! So slyly will they attack! How swiftly will they scatter the workmen and stop the work! And here come friendly Jews from without! What long faces, what sighs and groans, what despair! Time and time again they moan and prophesy failure.

Poor Nehemiah! Do you not wish yourself back in Shushan pouring out wine for the great king?

Back! Never! Forward, ever!

Stout hearted Nehemiah!

"Watch, pray"—he seems to cry—"now work, with your weapons!"

And here they come, men with swords, men with spears, men with bows. What a firm front! What a determined tramp! In the lower positions behind the wall, and in the higher, frowns at all enemies this line of defenders.

To nobles, to rulers, to all the people, the dauntless Nehemiah issues his orders not to be afraid, to remember God and fight for their homes and their brethren.

Watch and pray and work with your weapons,

did he seem to cry. Now they are to work with their tools. And here they come! How eagerly the people scramble up the walls again! From gate to gate again go up the cheery sounds of rebuilding.

But look!

Were such workmen ever seen before?

With resolute hands men hammer the stone and build the wall, but at the workman's side hangs a sword! Behind is a row of Nehemiah's servants grim with spears and shields and bows and coats of mail. And there is Nehemiah, a trumpeter by his side. What if the trumpeter should give one ringing peal!

How they would rally from gate and tower and wall and gather about Nehemiah! And how Jehovah would fight for his own!

So the work goes on. The sun looks over Olivet, and it sees the wall builders springing to their work. The sun sets, and the tired wall builders scatter to their homes.

The silver stars look down; they see the watchmen on the walls looking off into the silent night, keeping steadfast watch over dear Jerusalem.

By Way of Illustration.

Rebuilding the Wall. What a man does for others, not what they do for him, gives him immortality

Verse 9. Prayer and watching. Prayer is not enough. Like our fathers when they conquered the English at Bannockburn, or the English when they conquered the French at Cressy, we are to rise from our knees, to stand up and fight, to quit us like men. We are to put on the whole armor of God; and, since we know neither when nor where the adversary may assault us, we are never to put it off. Cromwell had this precaution against the assassin's dagger. His dress concealed a shirt of mail; in the council chamber, at the banquet, in court as in camp, he wore it always. Let the good man go to his workshop, counting room, market, the place of business and enjoyment, as the peasant of the East to his plow, where fiery Bedouins scour the land, and bullets whistling from the bush may suddenly call him to drop the oxgoad and fly to arms.—*Guthrie.*

"And Judah said," "and our adversaries said."

"Fightings without and fears within." We expect enmity from adversaries, but it is hard to have discouraging words from Judah, your own camp.

It is a characteristic of the English soldier that he never knows when he is beaten. That is, when by all the rules of war he ought to consider himself beaten, he just stands up and stubbornly takes his punishment and turns defeat into victory. In the famous battle of Waterloo, Napoleon was victorious

in the early part of the day, and but for the stubbornness of the Duke of Wellington and the red coats, would have been victor at its close; but the British held on like bull-dogs. When, at length, in the crisis of the fight, the Iron Duke cried out, "Up, guards, and at them," they made that famous charge that won the day. On many a hard-fought field, the thin red line of infantry has rallied into a solid square, and hurled back the charge of cavalry sweeping across the plain.

Versé 14. Happy is the man who has that in his soul which acts upon the dejected as April airs upon violet roots. Gifts from the hand are silver and gold, but the heart gives that which neither silver nor gold can buy.—*Beecher.*

As it is said that ferocious animals are disarmed by the eye of man, and will dare no violence, if he but steadily look at them, so it is when right looks upon wrong. Offer a bold front and the enemy is disarmed.

Versé 16. Diversity of service in union of work is valuable. Christian unity is like the rainbow that combines the seven prismatic colors into one glorious arch of promise spanning the heavens.—*Weir.*

"In the leper settlement, where are so many who are maimed, the man who can walk carries one who has hands, and he plants the seed. It used to be a rule in Israel that those that went into the battle and those who stayed by the staff should share alike. 'Go, or help send,' is the missionary call to service. 'Your money or your life,'" says Missionary Wilder.

"*Our God shall fight for us.*" Luther was one day catechising some country people in a village in Saxony, when one repeated, "I believe in God the Father Almighty." Luther asked the meaning of almighty. "I do not know," said the other. "Nor do I," replied Luther, "nor do all the learned men in the world. However, you may safely believe God is your Father, and that he is able and willing to save and protect us all. Almighty God is the lovely Father of all mankind."

The Teachers' Meeting.

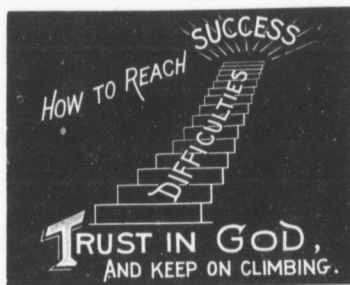
Relate concerning Nehemiah's journey (chap. 1); his exhortation; his fellow-workers (3, 5, 8, 10, 12, 20, 30).... Ascertain how many varied kinds of "opposition" are mentioned, their varied character and motives.... What difficulties at home stood in his way?.... What were the characteristics of his work? It was (1) Prayerful; (2) Watchful; (3)....? (4)....?.... What elements of character does Nehemiah show in this lesson?.... What lesson may we learn: (1) For church work? (2) For times of discouragement?.... Draw in the class a rough map, showing Jerusalem, and locating the various foes around it.... Give three word-pic-

tures: (1) The conspirators looking at the rising walls; (2) The workers at prayer; (3) The guard around the walls, with Nehemiah and his trumpeter on the watchtower.

References.

FREEMAN. Ver. 16; Habergeons, 251.... FOSTER'S CYCLOPEDIA. Prose, 12165, 12197-12204, 9389, 11930, 12189-12191, 5928, 5929, 5972-5984, 8333, 8340, 1886.

Blackboard.



The lesson story is so vivid that it will interest both young and old. Working, watching, defending, and praying are all set forth. The blackboard makes the application for everyday life. The way to achieve success is, first of all, to "trust in God," and then "keep on climbing" until you reach the top. Never be discouraged, for God, being with us, who can be against us?

Primary and Intermediate.

LESSON THOUGHT. *Building for God.*

Review. Who was Nehemiah? Where did he live? Where did he want to go? How far was it to Jerusalem? What did he want to build? Why? To whom did he go for help?

Introductory. One day when Nehemiah carried the cup of wine to his king the king asked him why he looked sad. Then Nehemiah told him all his sorrow, and asked the king to let him go to Jerusalem and build the broken walls. The king said he might go, and gave him letters to help him on his way. Do you remember that Nehemiah asked the Lord to give him favor in the king's sight? Now he knew that the Lord wanted him to do this work, for the king gave him all he asked. So he set out on the long journey of eleven hundred miles, and soon after he reached Jerusalem he began the work of building the walls.

To be taught: 1. That Satan tries to hinder good work. 2. That workers for God must watch

and pray. 3. That workers for God must be ready to fight for him. 4. That God wants all his children to build for him.

1. Mary Grace was a little Christian. She wanted to work for Jesus. One day she went into an alleyway where some children lived who did not go to Sunday school. She asked them to come to her Sunday school. A rude girl laughed at her and spoke harshly. Then some rough boys came up, and they said such unkind things that poor Mary went away weeping. She was trying to do good work, but Satan put it into the hearts of bad girls and boys to hinder the work.

It was just so with Nehemiah. First, the enemies of the Jews began to laugh at him for trying to build the walls. Then they spoke rudely to him, and at last they were very angry, and made a plan to go and fight against Jerusalem and so stop the work.

2. [Make again the little rising cloud of incense.] What did Nehemiah do? Yes, he prayed. But that was not all. What does the GOLDEN TEXT say? He told some of his men to stand upon the high walls. Others were placed behind the walls. All were watching for the enemy.

Jesus has told us to watch, too. [Print "Watch and Pray" on the board.] All who love Jesus, both big folks and little folks, are building for him. And Satan is trying to stop the work! He comes right into the church and Sunday school to see if he cannot hinder us in building good, true, characters. It is an evil spirit that whispers to you not to mind what teacher is saying, but to look around and play and have a good time! It is a bad spirit that makes you forget how holy a place is God's house! Yes, we must all watch every day, and everywhere, or Satan will hinder our building for God. [Sing the little builder's song here.]



3. [Make a sword and a trumpet on the board.] What is this in my hand? Yes, it is a flag. A good soldier will follow his flag anywhere. Nehemiah was the captain or leader of the brave men who were watching and praying; yes, and who were ready to fight, too. I think if Nehemiah carried a flag it must have had these words on it, "Be not afraid. Remember the Lord." This is what he said to his workers. He gave them swords and spears and bows, and a man with a trumpet stayed close by Nehemiah. This was so that as soon as the enemy came in sight Nehemiah could call all the soldiers together.

Who is our great Captain? Jesus knows just how Satan is trying to stop us in building for him. He has told us to watch and to pray and to fight. He will give us weapons and armor. He

tells us what they are and where to find them in this book. [Excite the children's curiosity, and read from Eph. 6, 13-17.]

We need not be afraid if we are working for the Lord, for he will stay close by to help us.

4. What can we build for God? We have been singing,

"Little builders all are we,
Building for eternity."

I saw some boys one day building. They were playing marbles. One boy cheated, and they all became angry and spoke bad words. Were they building in the right way?

This morning some children were in their home studying their Sunday school lesson. They spoke kindly to each other, and tried to learn the lesson as well as they could, and to help one another to do it. They were building too.

Every day, yes, every hour, we are building for God or for Satan.

O, how careful we should be to build on a good, strong foundation for God! Every self-denial, every giving up our way, every kind, unselfish deed, every loving thought and word, is helping this building for God to rise higher and higher! When Satan sees that he cannot make us build for him he will be angry, but we need not be afraid, for God will help us.

OPTIONAL HYMNS.

No. 1.

Give me some work to do.
Sound the battle cry.
Onward, Christian soldiers,
Arise, go forth to conquer.
To the work! to the work!

No. 2.

Sweet is the work, O Lord.
Go tell it to Jesus,
O, the thought that Jesus loves me.
Hark! the voice of Jesus calling.
I want to be a worker.

The Lesson Catechism.

[For the entire school.]

1. What did the adversaries of the Jews intend to do? **To surprise and ruin them.**
2. What did Nehemiah exhort them to remember? **The Lord.**
3. What did one half of the Jews do? **Worked on the walls of the temple.**
4. What did the other half do? **Stood as soldiers to defend them.**
5. Whose orders did they all obey? **The orders of Nehemiah.**
6. What is the GOLDEN TEXT? **"We made our prayer unto God,"** etc.

CATECHISM-QUESTION.

10. What does our Lord say of those who reject Him?

He declares that they ought to believe in Him; and that they would believe in Him if they humbly and patiently listened to His words.

John viii. 46, 47. If I say truth, why do ye not believe Me? He that is of God heareth the words of God; for this cause ye hear them not, because ye are not of God.

[John iii. 19; xviii. 37; 1 John iv. 6.]

About B. C. 445.]

LESSON IX. READING THE LAW.

[Feb. 26.]

GOLDEN TEXT. Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Psalm 119. 18.

Authorized Version.

Neh. 8. 1-12. [Commit to memory verses 5, 6.]

1 And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ez'ra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Mo'ses, which the Lord had commanded to Is-ra-el.

2 And Ez'ra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.

3 And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until mid-day, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of the people were attentive unto the book of the law.

4 And Ez'ra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mat-ti-thi'ah, and She'ma, and An-a-i'ah, and U-ri'jah, and Hil-ki'ah, and Ma-a-se'iah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pe-da'iah, and Mish'a-el, and Mal-chi'ah, and Ha'shum, and Hash-bad'a-na, Zech-a-ri'ah, and Meshul'lam.

5 And Ez'ra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up:

6 And Ez'ra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands; and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

7 Also Jesh'u-a, and Ba'ni, and Sher-e-bi'ah, Ja'min, Ak'kub, Shab-beth'a-i, Ho-di'jah, Ma-a-se'iah, Kel'i-ta, Az-a-ri'ah, Joz'a-bad, Ha'nan, Pel-a'iah, and the Le'vites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place.

8 So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

9 And Ne-he-mi'ah, which is the Tir'sha-tha, and Ez'ra the priest the scribe, and the Le'vites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.

10 Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength.

11 So the Le'vites stilled all the people, saying,

Revised Version.

- 1 And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the broad place that was before the watergate; and they spake unto Ez'ra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Mo'ses, which the Lord had commanded to Is-ra-el.
- 2 And Ez'ra the priest brought the law before the congregation, both men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the 3 first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the broad place that was before the water gate from early morning until mid-day, in the presence of the men and the women, and of those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the 4 book of the law. And Ez'ra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mat-ti-thi'ah, and She'ma, and An-a-i'ah, and U-ri'ah, and Hil-ki'ah, and Ma-a-se'iah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pe-da'iah, and Mish'a-el, and Mal-chi'jah, and Ha'shum, and Hash-bad'a-nah, Zech-a-ri'ah, and Meshul'-
- 5 lam. And Ez'ra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people 6 stood up: and Ez'ra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with the lifting up of their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.
- 7 Also Jesh'u-a, and Ba'ni, and Sher-e-bi'ah, Ja'min, Ak'kub, Shab-beth'a-i, Ho-di'ah, Ma-a-se'iah, Kel'i-ta, Az-a-ri'ah, Joz'a-bad, Ha'nan, Pel-a'iah, and the Le'vites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in 8 their place. And they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, 9 so that they understood the reading. And Ne-he-mi'ah, which was the Tir'sha-tha, and Ez'ra the priest the scribe, and the Le'vites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye grieved; for the

Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved.

12 And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

11 joy of the Lord is your strength. So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

TIME.—About B. C. 445; in the month of October. **PLACE.**—Jerusalem. **RULERS.**—Same as last lesson. **DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION.**—The authority of Holy Scripture.

HOME READINGS.

- M.* Reading the law. Neh. 8, 1-12.
Tu. Obeying the law. Neh. 8, 13-18.
W. The law given. Exod. 20, 1-17.
Th. The law confirmed. Matt. 5, 17-20.
F. Excellence of God's law. Psalm 19, 7-14.
S. In the heart. Deut. 10, 13-21.
S. Delight in God's law. Psalm 119, 1-16.

LESSON HYMNS.

- No. 295, New Canadian Hymnal.
 Father of mercies, in thy word.
 No. 294, New Canadian Hymnal.
 How precious is the book divine.
 No. 289, New Canadian Hymnal.
 Sing them over again to me.

DOMINION HYMNAL.

Hymns. Nos. 248, 225, 251.

QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR STUDENTS.

- 1. Reading the Word, v. 1-6.**
 Where did the people assemble?
 Upon whom did they call?
 What did they desire of him?
 Who came together to hear the reading?
 How long did the reading continue?
 How did the people listen?
 Where did Ezra stand?
 How many people were with him on the platform?
 Why could not the people have read the law for themselves?
2. Teaching the Word, v. 7, 8.
 How did the people show their reverence for the law?
 What was done before the reading began?
 Who assisted in explaining the law? (Verse 9.)
 In what manner was the reading done?
3. Receiving the Word, v. 9-12.
 What important personage was present with Ezra?
 What advice was given to the people?

How had the reading affected the people?
 What tokens of gladness were they to give?
 What was the reason of their joy?
 What obedience was rendered by the people?

Practical Teachings.

- Where in this lesson are we taught—
 1. Reverence for the word of God?
 2. Carefulness in the reading of the word?
 3. To rejoice in the understanding of God's law?

Hints for Home Study.

1. How many streets of ancient cities are named or definitely mentioned in the Old Testament?
 2. Read carefully the description of how the law was first received when Moses delivered it from God to the ancestors of these people.
 3. Indicate passages in the law such as were likely to make the people weep on this occasion of festivity.
 4. Outline your own idea of a proper thanksgiving celebration.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE SCHOLARS.

- 1. Reading the Word, v. 1-6.**
 Where did the people assemble?
 For what did they ask Ezra?
 Why did they ask this of Ezra? (See Ezra 7, 10.)
 Before whom was the law brought?
 Upon what day and month?
 How long was the law read?
 How did the people receive the word?
 Who were with Ezra as helpers?
 How did the people show their reverence for the word?
 To whom did Ezra offer thanks?
 How did the people respond?
 What is the duty of all who have ears? (Rev. 2, 7.)
2. Teaching the Word, v. 7, 8.
 Who were the teachers in this Bible school?
 What clause in verse 7 shows that they were good teachers?
 What three things are stated of their teaching? (Verse 8.)
 Under what King of Judah had the people been taught the law? (2 Chron. 17, 7-9.)
 Whose duty was it to give such teaching? (Lev. 10, 8-11.)
3. Receiving the Word, v. 9-12.
 What command was given to the people?
 By whom was it given?

Why was this command necessary?
 How were the people to show their joy?
 What was a source of strength to them?
 What did the Levites say to the people?
 Why did the people obey promptly?
 Who is a wise hearer of the word?

Teachings of the Lesson.

Where in this lesson have we a good example—

1. For Sunday school scholars?
2. For Sunday school teachers?
3. For all of God's people?

Home Work for Young Bereans.

What great man rearranged the Old Testament Scriptures?

How were the Scriptures written in those days?
 What sort of type? what sort of paper? any peculiarities that you can think of.

What was the difference between the priests and the Levites?

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.

What was now finished? **The wall around Jerusalem.**

How long had the Jews been building it?
Fifty-two days.

What was held in Jerusalem? **A great meeting.**

What did the people do at this meeting? **Pray and praise the Lord.**

Who read the book of the law to them? **Ezra.**
 Whose law was this? **The law of the Lord.**
 How did the people treat it? **Reverently.**
 How should we listen to the reading of God's word? **With great reverence.**

Who explained the law to the people? **Ezra and the Levites.**

What did the people do when they heard the law? **They wept.**

What did they remember? **Their sin.**
 Who comforted them? **Ezra and Nehemiah.**
 What did they tell them to do? **To be glad and make others glad.**

What did Nehemiah say was their strength?
"The joy of the Lord."

What did the people then begin to do? **To rejoice.**

May we rejoice in the Lord? **Yes, if we obey him.**

Words with Little People.

The keeping of God's law means SAFETY, COMFORT, LIGHT, JOY. When we are full of joy ourselves we want to give joy to others. Let us learn this text and make it our own: "O, how I love thy law!"

Lesson Teaching.

The joy of the Lord.

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

General Statement.

In the face of difficulties apparently insurmountable Nehemiah accomplished his purpose. In fifty-two days after the first stone was laid the wall was finished. The ruler then called together the people to listen to the reading of God's law. They came not only from within the city, but from the villages near and far. They met in the open square, at the southern entrance to the temple inclosure, a vast company of men, women, and children. A platform had been erected, upon which stood the chief men of the land, the priests, and the appointed interpreters. In the midst stood Ezra, the priestly scribe, who had come from the East several years before Nehemiah. As he opened the parchment roll, the entire assembly first stood, then prostrated themselves upon the ground, in token of reverence for the sacred word. Then began the reading. The priest read a brief portion in the ancient Hebrew tongue, and then paused, while the Levites on each side gave the explanation, which was probably partly a translation into a more modern form, partly a paraphrase, and partly an application. For six hours the service was continued, for the people were eager to know the contents of their sacred books, and the message came as a revelation. Its first effect was to awaken the conscience, and loud cries arose as the listeners realized how unfaithful they and their fathers had been to the ancient covenant. But the Levites quieted their sorrow by telling them that this was a day of rejoicing, and not of grief, when God's word was revealed to them. On that day began a new era in the history of Judah, an era of Bible study and of renewed loyalty to the faith of the fathers.

Verse 1. All the people. People from all Judea, who celebrated the Jewish New Year and the completion of the wall together. **As one man.** There is an impressiveness and moral power in a multitude assembled for religious service. (1) *We should seek to bring all the people to God's house. Into the street.* Better, "the broad place." It was probably an open park on the declivity known

as Ophel, just south of the temple precincts. **Before the water gate.** A gate near the present entrance to el-Aksa. **They spake.** That is, by their rulers, who had called the meeting. **Ezra.** The greatest character in the later history of the Jewish people, called "the second founder of Israel." He was a priest and a student of the law, who had come to Jerusalem by royal appointment

thirteen years before Nehemiah, and wrought great reforms among the people. He is believed by the Jews to have (1) instituted "the great synagogue" at Jerusalem; (2) edited, arranged, and settled the canon of the Old Testament; (3) introduced the use of the Chaldee characters in place of the obsolete Hebrew; (4) written, partly from ancient documents, the Books of Chronicles and Ezra; (5) established synagogues for worship and the reading of the law. **The scribe.** The scribes arose from the captivity, when the prophets began to fail, and the people turned toward the written law. They were of various rank—the highest being interpreters and teachers of the Scriptures, the lowest mere copyists and writers. **The book of the law.** Probably the entire Bible, so far as written. (2) *We should be like these ancient Jews, eager to read and understand God's word.*

2. Brought the law. As an invaluable treasure. Before the invention of printing—especially in ages when learning was low—the value of manuscripts arose to figures beyond easy belief. (3) *Are we grateful enough for having a Bible in every house? All that could hear with understanding.* Including children of an age to listen intelligently. (4) *Let us bring the children with us to worship God.* **The first day of the seventh month.** This was "the feast of trumpets" (Lev. 23, 24; Num. 29, 1-6); the New Year observance for this month, the seventh of the ecclesiastical year, was the first of the civil year. It corresponded nearly with our October. (5) *It is well to begin the new year with the reading of God's word.*

3. He read therein . . . from the morning until midday. A glimpse of this sacred book which had been preserved through countless dangers must have been wonderfully impressive to these men of Jerusalem. We are to think of it as consisting of a number of rolls or volumes, each roll having two rollers, and being unrolled from one and rolled up on the other during the reading. The service was of great length, but the keen interest of the audience continued throughout. Few of these men had ever had an opportunity of hearing God's word before. (6) *How great may be the effect in after years of the memory of attendance during childhood upon God's house? The people were attentive.* This last word is supplied by the translators, but it is implied in the original. How precious would be the Bible to us were there but one authentic copy in the world! (7) *Let us cherish a deep interest in the word of God.*

4. Upon a pulpit of wood. A "tower" or platform of wood. The reader was probably raised so high that all could see and hear him. **Beside him stood, etc.** Here come thirteen names of men not another fact of whose lives is now remembered, but their influence on that pivotal day

was given to God's service, and this fourth verse is a "roll of honor." The moral influence of this service was immeasurable, and these men did what they could to add to it. (8) *The leaders of society should sanction the service of religion by their presence.*

5. Opened the book. Unrolled the scroll. **All the people stood up.** This probably indicates that, like ordinary Orientals, the crowd had been sitting on the ground. In England or America if a thousand men had to wait together in the open air for some expected event, they would stand in great discomfort crowded together. But in the Orient, where life goes more leisurely, they sit down, whenever they have to wait, which really, to the traveller, seems to be most of the time. They probably arose together as a sign of reverence for the word of God, which was now brought out of the seclusion of ages, and then together sat down, and stayed seated while Ezra read. The ancient Jews wonderfully revered the written word of the Lord, and especially the name of Jehovah.

6. Ezra blessed the Lord. Gave thanks, perhaps repeating a psalm of praise. **The people answered.** The whole congregation testified their concurrence with the prayer and praise. (9) *The public worship should not be a spectacle, but a service in which all should participate. Amen.* A Hebrew word meaning "firm," or "be it so," adopted as the affirmation of prayer. **Lifting up their hands.** This was an ancient custom in worship (Psalm 63, 4; 1 Tim. 2, 8).

7. Also Jeshua, etc. "The names of this verse are names of Levitical families, not of individual Levites."—*Railinson.* **Caused the people to understand.** The old Hebrew in which Ezra read was out of date and unintelligible to his audience, but the Levites had been trained to understand it, and they turned the Scriptures, a little at a time, into the dialect of Palestine. (10) *There is no nobler work on earth than causing people to understand God's word.*

8. This verse states just what should be the aim of every Sunday school teacher. **Distinctly.** This refers to the audible, clear tone of the reading. **Gave the sense.** This refers to the explanation.

9. The Tirshatha. Persian title for "governor," equivalent to "your severity," or "dread sovereign" in English, and to the modern Turkish "pasha." **This day is holy. Mourn not, nor weep.** Showing that the ancient Sabbath was a day of gladness. (11) *We should make God's day cheerful and happy. All the people wept.* They could not well refrain. The reading of the law brought before their minds a long vista of sins and punishments.

10. He said. Nehemiah is probably here referred to. **Eat the fat.** The fat pieces of flesh,

considered the best. **Drink the sweet.** The new, sweet wine. **Send portions.** In their own joy they were to remember the poor, and supply their wants. (12) "*God's bounty should make us beautiful.*" **The joy of the Lord is your strength.** The joy and peace which spring from reconciliation with God are the signs of spiritual strength.

11. Hold your peace. They were not for-

bidden to regret their sins, but to mar the gladness of the holiday by manifestations of sorrow.

12. Went their way. To their homes. **To make great mirth.** Not in drunkenness and riot, but in glad worship of God. **Because they had understood.** What a cause of joy it should be to any people when they know clearly what is God's will!

CRITICAL NOTES

Verse 1. Gathered as one man. The close of the seventh and the beginning of this eighth chapter of Nehemiah is nearly identical with the close of the second and the beginning of the third chapter of Ezra. This is explained by the fact that Neh. 7 contains a copy of the same list of returned exiles which is recorded in Ezra 2, and which Nehemiah claims (chap. 7, 5) to have found and transcribed. In both books the list is followed by an account of a great gathering of Israel at Jerusalem in the seventh month. In the former time they assembled to renew the altar, observe the feast of tabernacles, and prepare for rebuilding the temple; now they meet to read the law and observe the usual ceremonies of the seventh month, long after the temple had been completed. **Broad place before the water gate.** The exact locality is at present a matter of conjecture. Comparison with chap. 3, 26, favors the view that it was within the wall of the city, on the southeastern section, which rises above the mountain slope known as Ophel. **They spake unto Ezra.** This public reading of the law appears, therefore, to have been given by popular request. The people knew of the law of Moses, but it was largely a sealed book to them. It was necessary not only to have the book read, but also to have the reading accompanied with such explanations as would make it clear to the popular mind. See verse 8.

2. Ezra the priest. He is called "the scribe" in the preceding verse, but according to his genealogy, given in Ezra 7, 1-5, he was a descendant of the high priest Aaron, and so entitled to all the honors and prerogatives which that ancestry accorded. But his chief distinction was that he was "a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given." He was not merely a copyist, transcribing the letter of the sacred books, but thoroughly versed in the history and significance of the law. He seems to have been providentially raised up at that important period of Israelitish history to preserve the religious records of his people, and show their priceless value for instruction in the knowledge of God. **Both men and women.** Observe that there was no exclusion of "women" at that time, and the later rabbinical teachings, like those of Rabbi Eleazar: "Let the words of the law be

burned rather than they should be delivered to women," have no warrant or apology in the Scriptures. **All that could hear with understanding.** This gives the sense, but the Hebrew may be more literally rendered, "All that knew how to hear." Comp. Luke 8, 18. The more special reference in this last clause is probably to such children and young people as could listen intelligently and profitably. **First day of the seventh month.** A notable month with the Jews. The first day was the feast of trumpets (Lev. 23, 24), the tenth was the great day of atonement (Lev. 23, 27), and on the fifteenth the feast of tabernacles began, and continued a week (Lev. 23, 39). This month was known by two names, Ethanim and Tisri, and was the first month of the civil year, so that the first was New Year's Day.

4. A pulpit. The word so translated means a "tower." Here the context shows it to have been an elevated platform, large enough to hold a dozen or more persons. **On his right hand and on his left.** This gave him the appearance of being supported by others of similar learning and wisdom. The persons named in this verse were probably priests, and this record of their names is an evidence that our narrative was written by an eyewitness or a contemporary.

7. And the Levites. As all the names in this verse are apparently names of Levites, it seems best to omit the **and**, as the error of some transcriber, or else translate it "even." **Caused the people to understand.** The Levites appear to have been the ones who instructed the people, but the exact process is not made clear in this narrative. Whether they merely repeated the words of Ezra and the priests, or whether they did all the instruction, Ezra merely acting as the president and chief officer of the occasion, cannot be positively determined. It is obvious that they all took some part, but what each man's part was is not determined by the author of this book.

8. Distinctly. The margin of the Revised Version gives as an alternate rendering, "With an interpretation." Those who adopt this rendering suppose that the readers accompanied their reading with a running exposition or paraphrase; but such a view seems to make what immediately follows a superfluous tautology. We prefer the common

version, which takes the Hebrew participle adverbially, and understand it to designate the clear and distinct manner in which the law was read. It was not a low, indistinct, and hasty style of reading, but open, clear, and readily understood by the multitude. **Gave the sense.** Explained obscure words and gave such exposition as the occasion seemed to demand. **Caused them to understand the reading.** This translation of the common version adds nothing to the statement of the previous sentence. Better, therefore, the Revised Version here, which has, "so that they understood the reading," and accords with the Septuagint and the Vulgate. They—that is, the people—gave strict attention to the reading, and understood it.

9. Tirshatha. Persian title of the governor of a district. Here it is applied to Nehemiah, who held such office. In Ezra 2. 63, it is applied to Zerubbabel. Its etymological meaning is doubtful, but Gesenius explains it as equivalent to "your severity," or "dread sovereign." **This day is holy . . . mourn not.** The profound impression made upon the people by the reading of the law set them to weeping. So far as the law made known their sins, this was the necessary result, and, in fact, the highest purpose of the law. But as the first of the seventh month was ordained as "a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation," during which no servile work should be done (Lev. 23. 24; Num. 29. 1), it was to be observed as a day of festivity and rejoicing. Moreover, we should observe that a holy day, according to the Old Testament ideas, is not a day of sadness or gloom. The Sabbath itself, on which all were scrupulously to abstain from work, was not a day on which to be sorrowful, or of a sad countenance, but rather a day of holy joy. If one would be holy, let him also be of a glad heart, and full of thanksgiving.

The Lesson Council.

Question 1. *What part of the Bible was read by Ezra at this time?*

It is distinctly stated that "they read in the book of the law" (Neh. 8. 8). By the law in the Bible is sometimes meant the entire word of God (Psalm 19. 7-11; Isa. 8. 20); sometimes the Old Testament (John 10. 34; 15. 25); and sometimes the five books of Moses. The Pentateuch was probably the law, and kings and subjects were required to study it (Deut. 6. 7; 17. 18, 19; 31. 9-19). There is strong probability that the book which was read was not merely the Pentateuch, but the whole body of sacred writings, which Ezra had collected into one volume, and which now constitutes the book of the Old Covenant.

Question 2. *How do we account for the awakening of interest in the Scriptures, on the part of the Jews, after the restoration?*

The city, walls, and temple, long in ruins, were now restored. The Mosaic service, many years suspended, was again imperfectly observed. The captivity had redeemed the Jews from idolatry, had humbled them, and made them sincere seekers after the true worship. The coming of Ezra, a priest and scribe of great piety and learning, his zealous efforts at reforms, the receptive condition of the Jews, and the providential hand of God abundantly explain the awakening now manifested.

Question 3. *What was the part or work of those who "caused the people to understand" in this service?*

In times of captivity the Israelites neglected their religious duties. Negligence brought degeneration and ignorance. And now, coming out of Babylonish captivity, when "Ezra opened the book"—"the book of the law"—it was necessary that they be "made to understand" its meaning and purpose. Hence it was the work of those who did this not only to interpret in the Chaldee dialect the Hebrew Scriptures, but to explain the meaning and purpose of God's requirements in his law.

Question 4. *When did the order of scribes originate, and what was their office?*

Three men are mentioned as successively filling the office of scribe under David and Solomon about 1140 B. C. (2 Sam. 8. 17; 20. 25; also 1 Kings 4. 3). The office involved a variety of duties which culminated with the history of the Jewish Church. Scribes were the king's secretaries, writing his decrees and numbering the military forces. They were custodians of the law, transcribing the old records, and reducing to writing that which had been handed down orally. They were the doctors or teachers of the law, reading and interpreting it before the people on stated occasions.

Analytical and Biblical Outline.

An Old Testament Sabbath School.

I. ITS TIME.

First day . . . seventh month. v. 2.

"A sabbath . . . holy convocation." Lev. 23. 24.

II. ITS MEMBERS.

1. *All the people . . . as one man.* v. 1.

"Read this law before all." Deut. 31. 11.

2. *All that could hear.* v. 2.

"Teach them . . . unto thy children." Deut. 6. 7.

III. ITS TEXT-BOOK.

The book of the law. v. 1.

"All Scripture....is profitable." 2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.

IV. ITS SUPERINTENDENT.

Spoke unto Ezra the scribe. v. 1.

"Had prepared his heart." Ezra 7. 10.

V. ITS TEACHERS.

Levites caused....to understand. v. 7.

"Priest's lips....keep knowledge." Mal. 2. 7.

VI. ITS OPENING SERVICE.

1. *Ezra opened the book.* v. 5.

"Not depart out of thy mouth." Josh. 1. 8.

2. *The people stood up.* v. 5.

"Stand up and bless." Neh. 9. 5.

3. *Ezra blessed the Lord.* v. 6.

"Bless the Lord at all times." Psalm 34. 1.

4. *People....lifting up.* v. 6.

"Lift up our heart." Lam. 3. 41.

7. *LESSON.*

1. *Read in the book....distinctly.* v. 8.

"Open thou mine eyes." Psalm 119. 18.

2. *Gave the sense.* v. 8.

"Make me to understand." Psalm 119. 27.

VIII. ITS EFFECTS.

1. *All the people wept.* v. 9.

"We have not kept." Neh. 1. 7.

2. *The joy of the Lord.* v. 10.

"Love thy name....joyful." Psalm 5. 11.

Thoughts for Young People.

Reading the Bible.

1. *God's word is given to men that it may be read and followed as a guide in life.* The sailor in an unknown sea consults his chart; so should we consult the Bible. More than one ship has been lost by striking upon a rock not laid down in the chart, but every danger is warned against in this guide-book.

2. *The Bible should be read publicly in assemblages for worship.* Its place upon the desk indicates the honor that it should receive.

3. *It should be read by all the people,* old and young, rulers and commons, ministry and laity; for all need its golden precepts, and all will be helped by them.

4. *It should be read as a whole,* in continuous sections, a book at a time. The best view of Washington is from the dome of the capital; of Boston, from Bunker Hill monument; so we need to take a landscape view of Bible truth.

5. *It should be read reverently, as God's message.* When a Japanese officer saw the signature of the mikado he fell prostrate before it. We should treat with reverence a message from our King.

6. *It should be read with careful study and explanation,* to give the sense, and not to interject a meaning into it. We need, not the opinions of men, but the mind of the Spirit.

Lesson Word-Pictures.

There is a wonderful book to be read. What is it? a volume of wisdom from the East, of philosophy from the slopes of the Himalayas, of mysteries from the dark recessed temples of Egypt? Is it history, some wonderful narration? It is an old-fashioned scroll that will be turned back and read to all who may come.

And it will be read near a city gate. Come this way. Look about you. The sun has just peeped over the eastern hills, and you will have all the place to yourself. There is the city wall with an old foundation. But the upper portion has a look as if relaid recently. Here is the water gate before you. It is new in part, but all around the inclosure is a look of fire, the blackened track of the awful flame telling of hours of sack and pillage. Here in the open space before the water gate the people will gather to listen to the words out of the strange, wonderful book. And look! They have built a pulpit of wood. Here will stand the person who unrolls and reads this book.

It is a later hour now. And hark! I hear the patter of footsteps. The people are gathering. They come down yonder street. They turn out of that little lane. The water gate falls back and receives a throng from outside homes. And these here—why they seem to come up out of the ground as they climb over adjacent heaps of rubbish and ruin and suddenly appear before us! Ah, here come the mothers along the street leading to the water gate—women that slyly glance over their veils, while little children cling to their skirts. There is a flock of boys and girls turning that corner. And now up to the pulpit of wood advances a group of staid men with long gray beards. And the reader of the book comes forward. He steps into the pulpit of wood, while on either hand are ranged grave, honored men of the people.

But who is it standing in the pulpit of wood? "Ezra!" somebody near us is whispering; "that's Ezra!"

He opens the scroll, turns it back, and the people all attend decorously and stand patiently. What a reverent stillness!

And now the clear, calm voice of Ezra is heard, as he looks heavenward and blesses God.

It is the great God he honors.

And hark!

How the people respond, "Amen, amen!" It is one lifting up of a sea of voices, and a lifting, too, of hands, like waves rising on the echoing sea.

The people bow.

They worship.

They sink their faces in humble abasement to the earth.

And now comes the reading of the wonderful book, and Ezra reads from "morning till mid-day."

"Why," you say, "that book is the blessed Bible of the exiles from Babylon!"

O, what tender, yet impressive words! What comfort, yet rebuke! The people are much affected. They think of the past, of great Jerusalem, of David's royal city, of Solomon's display of magnificence. They think of their own deficiencies. The sentences of the law are plain, direct, close. O, what sinners! But in the law there are other words than those to sinners. Listen! From the odd-fashioned little pulpit Ezra and his companions speak words of consolation. Now let everyone be happy, happy! Dry every tear! Hasten home and rejoice!

Cheerfully they scatter!

They all pass away.

They seek their homes.

I catch the sounds of rejoicing everywhere arising from the homes sheltered now behind Jerusalem's rebuilt walls, while in the open space before the water gate all alone stands the plain-fashioned pulpit of wood.

Orientalisms of the Lesson.

The Bible reading and exposition of Ezra is a thoroughly Oriental scene, the principal speaker being supported by others speaking at the same time. The great Brahman council recently held to seek to save Hindooism, having reached its conclusions, proclaimed them from the four corners of the great tent of the council. Missionaries often preach in the streets or at fairs in India from the four corners of a large wagon. And as the sacred Scriptures of the Hindoos, Buddhists, and even Mohammedans in many countries are in languages they cannot understand, it is the custom to quote or read and "give the sense." Thus Ezra and his preachers read the Hebrew Scriptures, and gave the sense in the Chaldean dialect, which the Jews had adopted in Babylon. Later, translations were written and read in the synagogues, just as in later years a Greek translation was made, which Christ often quoted. But the Jews of to-day commonly reject translations. The Mohammedans say the Koran must not, because it cannot be translated, and will not allow any but a Moslem to own one. A bazaar in Constantinople is wholly devoted to Arabic Korans, and no infidel is allowed to enter it, lest he secure the holy text. But a European got in there and secured a Koran, and had it photographed, that the text might not be challenged, nor the translations said not to accord with the pure text.

By Way of Illustration.

"The book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel." An eminent lawyer said: "Where did Moses get this law which

surpasses the wisdom and philosophy of the most enlightened ages? I have read history. The Egyptians and the adjacent nations were idolaters; so were the Greeks and Romans; and the wisest and best Greeks or Romans never gave us a code like this. Moses lived at a period comparatively barbarous, but he has given a law in which the learning and sagacity of all subsequent time can detect no flaw. Where did he get it? He could not have soared so far above his age as to have devised it himself. I am satisfied that its origin is divine, that it came down from heaven."

Verses 2 and 3. Ezra realized that the safety and progress of his nation depended on a thorough knowledge of God's law. History teaches that when the people did not have the Bible the dark ages were on the world. Knight's *England* has this note on that period of English history marked not only by civil and religious oppression, but also by intellectual darkness: "An act was passed which limited the reading of the Bible in the English tongue to noblemen and gentlemen, and forbade the reading of the same 'to the lower sort'—to artificers, 'prentices, journeymen, serving-men, husbandmen, and laborers, and to women—under pain of punishment."

"The ears of the people were attentive." Having been deprived of hearing the Bible read, they were prepared to appreciate it. The price of a Bible in the time of Edward I was thirty-seven pounds. The hire of a laborer then was three pence a day. Suppose such a person wished to buy a Bible. It would take the earnings of fifteen years and three months (excluding the Sundays) of constant labor. Think of that! Now ten thousand copies are printed, published, and packed by the Bible Society every day. And I sometimes think, when I see the Bible carelessly handled or treated with thoughtless irreverence or indifference, "Ah, you do not know the value of that book, or what it has cost in life and treasure."

Verses 4 and 7. This is an illustration of the far-reaching work of Sunday school teachers. Their names are immortalized as belonging to the teaching of God's word. Says Daniel Webster: "If we work upon marble, it will perish; if we work upon brass, time will efface it; if we rear temples, they will crumble into dust; but if we work upon immortal minds, if we imbue them with the just fear of God and love of our fellow-men, we engrave on those tablets something that will brighten to all eternity."

Verses 6. When letters were brought home from Livingstone in Africa to his daughter in Scotland, some of her friends were doubtful whether they were really his, but she silenced the doubts with, "They have reached me; I know they are my father's letters." The man who has been

"reached" by the Bible is secure against the skepticism which would lead him to doubt that it is a letter from our Father in heaven to his children on earth.

Verse 8. It must be that many teachers and preachers read that command of Christ, "Feed my lambs," to mean, "Feed my camelopards." The food is put so far out of reach that only a camelopard can reach it.—*Spurgeon*.

"The joy of the Lord is your strength." Across the ages, from the prison at Rome, we hear Paul, in much affliction, in chains, laden with infirmities, his heart weighted down with all the churches, uttering his shout of triumph: "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." This is the motto of the whole epistle to the Philippians.

Verses 10-12. The Bible student not only has a fruitage of joy, but also a fruitage of service. Those "Bible Moths" of Wesley's time gave every available moment to charitable work, visiting and relieving the inmates of jails, prisons, and workhouses. The Bible students and Bible lovers of every town and city are those who carry forward its charitable enterprises.

The Teachers' Meeting.

Describe the walls of Jerusalem as rebuilt by Nehemiah. . . . Draw a map of Jerusalem, and show the "water gate" where the events of the lesson took place. . . . "An Old Testament Sunday school." Note (1) that it was held on Sunday, "the first day of the seventh month;" (2) that all the people were included in it, either as teachers or scholars; (3) its text-book was the Bible; (4) its superintendent was Ezra, an earnest worshiper, a godly man, and a thorough Bible student. Notice his peculiar fitness for the place; (5) its teachers were godly men and Bible scholars; (6) its exercises, taken from the story; (7) its aim, to give clear understanding of God's word; (8) its results, conviction of sin and the joy of acceptance with God. . . . See in the "Explanatory Notes" some good illustration of incidents connected with the Bible.

References.

FREEMAN. Ver. 9: The Tishath, 283. Ver. 10: Sending portions, 354. . . . FOSTER'S CYCLOPEDIA. Prose, 2068, 2069, 3529, 6995-6116, 12262-12265, 335-407, 6762-6826. Vers. 4, 8: Prose, 11290. Ver. 10: Prose, 11064.

Primary and Intermediate.

LESSON THOUGHT. *God's Word Gives Light.*

Blackboard. An ancient scroll; a path, "Way of Truth," printed on it; another path, "Evil Way;" a lamp; a heart, with sun shining upon it.

Review. What were the Jews building around

Jerusalem? Who tried to stop them? What for? Who led them in the work? Was he afraid of the enemy? Why not? To whom did he go for help? What did he do next? What were the workmen ready to do?

[Show picture of a walled city. Tell that now the wall was finished. The builders were happy, for they saw that God was on their side. For fifty-two days they had worked and watched and prayed. The enemy had not dared to touch them, and now they were ready to have a thanksgiving meeting. Make a square and many straight marks to indicate the people who gathered there. Tell that not only the people who lived in Jerusalem were there, but the Jews who lived in the towns and villages.] Do you think they would come to have a great celebration, a procession, and music and feasting?



No; they wanted something better. What book is this? [Hold up the Bible.] What are some of the other names by which we call it? [Holy Bible, Scriptures, Word of God, etc.] The Jews did not have books like this.

[Show picture of the scroll.] This was the way their Bible looked. It did not have any of the sweet New Testament stories in it. It was the book of the law. We have it here in what is called "the Pentateuch," the first part of the Old Testament.

The people wanted to hear this book of the law read at their great meeting. They asked Ezra, the good priest and scribe, to read it to them. Do you wonder why they did not read it at home? They did not have it! There were only a few Bibles for a whole country. Now everyone may have a Bible who wants it! Are you not glad to live in a land where Bibles are so plenty?

[Show the path called "Way of Truth."] The people wanted to hear about the right way. They all listened to Ezra very attentively when he read. They wanted to know what God said to them. Ezra stood on a pulpit of wood, high above the people. When he stood up and opened the book, all the people stood up. Then he spoke words of praise to the great God, and all the people said, Amen. Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord. Was not this a beautiful way to begin a great meeting? Ezra read from God's book in a loud voice, so that all could hear. He explained the meaning, too, so that all might understand. The people listened six hours! Was not that a long time? Do you think they were tired and wished the reading would stop? No; for they really wanted to know God's word.

[Uncover picture of the lamp.] What is a lamp for? God says his word is like a lamp. It gives light to the mind. It shows what is right and

good. Shut your eyes. What do you see? "Nothing." No, we cannot see with our eyes shut. What is the **GOLDEN TEXT**? Let us all fold our hands and offer this prayer: "Open thou mine eyes," etc. The people who heard Ezra read that day wanted light to see. God's word gives it to them. What did it show them?

[Uncover path marked "Evil Way."]

A lady went into a dark room with her little girl. There was a little light, which showed beautiful furniture and fine pictures on the wall.

"O, what a nice room," said the little girl. "Mamma, light the lamp, so that we may see the beautiful things."

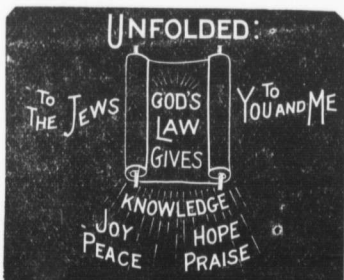
But when the lamp was lighted they saw great cobwebs on the pictures, and the handsome furniture was covered with dust! The light showed the bad things, and it is so with our hearts. When the light of God's word shines into a heart it shows the sin that is there.

[Tell how the people wept.] It was because they saw the sin in their hearts. God's word showed it to them.

What shall we do when we see sin in our hearts? [Uncover heart with sun shining upon it.] What did the weeping people do? God does not want his children to be sorry, no longer than enough to learn what to do with their sorrow. [Sing "I am so glad that Jesus loves me."] Yes, and if he loves me, then I must love other people. Ezra and Nehemiah told the sorrowful people that they need not weep any more. They told them to rejoice and to hold a feast, and to send portions to those who had nothing.

True gladness makes us want to give joy to others. When the light of God shines in our hearts to show us sin we must be sorry. But when we see Jesus, the Saviour from sin, then we must be glad, and make haste to tell others about it. Sorrow does not give strength, but joy makes us strong to work for God.

Blackboard.



COLORS.—Draw the outlines of the book of the law with white chalk, and the rays of light with

the same; the words in the rays, red; the words "God's Law," light blue; "Unfolded," yellow.

The unfolding of God's law in Ezra's Sunday school produced the same result as in this Sunday school. His law gives— [here have the school enumerate the blessings as set forth in the diagram]. Urge the importance of studying God's word.

OPTIONAL HYMNS.

No. 1.

Praise the Rock of our salvation,
Father most holy.
Almighty Spirit, we confess,
How firm a foundation.
More love to thee, O Christ.

No. 2.

Awake, my soul, in joyful lays.
The praying spirit breathe.
Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts.
Holy Bible, book divine.
My God, the spring of all my joys.

The Lesson Catechism.

[For the entire school.]

1. What did the people ask Ezra to do? **To read the book of the law of Moses.**
2. On what did he stand? **On a pulpit of wood.**
3. How did he read? **Distinctly, giving the sense.**
4. What did he tell them? **Not to weep.**
5. Why? **For the joy of the Lord is your strength."**
6. What is the **GOLDEN TEXT**? **"Open thou mine eyes,"** etc.

CATECHISM QUESTION.

11. What is His warning to them?
That His word shall condemn them at the last day.
John xii. 48. He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My sayings, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day.

Lessons and Golden Texts for
1894.

OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY.

First Quarter.

LESSON

- I. JAN. 7.—THE FIRST ADAM. GEN. 1. 26-31;
2. 1-3. *Commit vs.* 26-28. **GOLDEN TEXT:** So God created man in his own image. Gen. 1. 27.

LESSON

- II. Jan. 14.—**ADAM'S SIN AND GOD'S GRACE.** Gen. 3. 1-15. *Commit vs. 13-15.* GOLDEN TEXT: For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 1 Cor. 15. 22.
- III. Jan. 21.—**CAIN AND ABEL.** Gen. 4. 3-13. *Commit vs. 3-5.* GOLDEN TEXT: By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. Heb. 11. 4.
- IV. Jan. 28.—**GOD'S COVENANT WITH NOAH.** Gen. 9. 8-17. *Commit vs. 11-13.* GOLDEN TEXT: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. Gen. 9. 13.
- V. Feb. 4.—**BEGINNING OF THE HEBREW NATION.** Gen. 12. 1-9. *Commit vs. 1-3.* GOLDEN TEXT: I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. Gen. 12. 2.
- VI. Feb. 11.—**GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM.** Gen. 17. 1-9. *Commit vs. 7, 8.* GOLDEN TEXT: He believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness. Gen. 15. 6.
- VII. Feb. 18.—**GOD'S JUDGMENT ON SODOM.** Gen. 18. 22-33. *Commit vs. 23-26.* GOLDEN TEXT: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Gen. 18. 25.
- VIII. Feb. 25.—**TRIAL OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH.** Gen. 22. 1-13. *Commit vs. 11-13.* GOLDEN TEXT: By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac. Heb. 11. 17.
- IX. March 4.—**SELLING THE BIRTHRIGHT.** Gen. 25. 27-34. *Commit vs. 31-34.* GOLDEN TEXT: The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Luke 12. 23.
- X. March 11.—**JACOB AT BETH-EL.** Gen. 28. 10-22. *Commit vs. 12-14.* GOLDEN TEXT: Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee. Gen. 28. 15.
- XI. March 18.—**WINE A MOCKER.** Prov. 20. 1-7. *Commit vs. 1-7.* GOLDEN TEXT: Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise. Prov. 20. 1.
- XII. March 25.—**BRIEF REVIEW.** GOLDEN TEXT: I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Matt. 22. 32. **THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.** Mark 16. 1-8. *Commit vs. 6, 7.* GOLDEN TEXT: But now is Christ risen from the dead. 1 Cor. 15. 20

Second Quarter.

- I. April 1.—**JACOB'S PREVAILING PRAYER.** Gen. 32. 9-12, 24-30. *Commit vs. 28-30.* GOLDEN TEXT: I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. Gen. 32. 26.
- II. April 8.—**DISCORD IN JACOB'S FAMILY.** Gen. 37. 1-11. *Commit vs. 3, 4.* GOLDEN TEXT: See that ye fall not out by the way. Gen. 45. 24.

LESSON

- III. April 15.—**JOSEPH SOLD INTO EGYPT.** Gen. 37. 23-36. *Commit vs. 26-28.* GOLDEN TEXT: Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good. Gen. 50. 20.
- IV. April 22.—**JOSEPH RULER IN EGYPT.** Gen. 41. 38-48. *Commit vs. 38-40.* GOLDEN TEXT: Them that honor me I will honor. 1 Sam. 2. 30.
- V. April 29.—**JOSEPH FORGIVING HIS BROTHERS.** Gen. 45. 1-15. *Commit vs. 3-5.* GOLDEN TEXT: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. Luke 17. 3.
- VI. May 6.—**JOSEPH'S LAST DAYS.** Gen. 50. 14-26. *Commit vs. 24-26.* GOLDEN TEXT: The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Prov. 4. 18.
- VII. May 13.—**ISRAEL IN EGYPT.** Exod. 1. 1-14. *Commit vs. 8-10.* GOLDEN TEXT: Our help is in the name of the Lord. Psalm 124. 8.
- VIII. May 20.—**THE CHILDHOOD OF MOSES.** Exod. 2. 1-10. *Commit vs. 8-10.* GOLDEN TEXT: I will deliver him, and honor him. Psalm 91. 15.
- IX. May 27.—**MOSES SENT AS A DELIVERER.** Exod. 3. 10-20. *Commit vs. 10-12.* GOLDEN TEXT: Fear thou not; for I am with thee. Isa. 41. 10.
- X. June 3.—**THE PASSOVER INSTITUTED.** Exod. 12. 1-14. *Commit vs. 13, 14.* GOLDEN TEXT: Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. 1 Cor. 5. 7.
- XI. June 10.—**PASSAGE OF THE RED SEA.** Exod. 14. 19-29. *Commit vs. 27-29.* GOLDEN TEXT: By faith they passed through the Red Sea. Heb. 11. 29.
- XII. June 17.—**THE WOES OF THE DRUNKARD.** Prov. 23. 29-35. *Commit vs. 29-32.* GOLDEN TEXT: Look thou not upon the wine when it is red. Prov. 23. 31.
- XIII. June 24.—**REVIEW.** GOLDEN TEXT: The Lord's portion is his people. Deut. 32. 9.

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF OUR LORD.

Third Quarter.

- I. July 1.—**THE BIRTH OF JESUS.** Luke 2. 1-16. *Commit vs. 10-14.* GOLDEN TEXT: Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. Luke 2. 11.
- II. July 8.—**PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE.** Luke 2. 25-38. *Commit vs. 27-32.* GOLDEN TEXT: A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. Luke 2. 32.

LESSON

141. July 15.—VISIT OF THE WISE MEN. Matt. 2. 1-12. *Commit vs.* 9-11. GOLDEN TEXT: They saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshiped him. Matt. 2. 11.
- IV. July 22.—FLIGHT INTO EGYPT. Matt. 2. 13-22. *Commit vs.* 13-15. GOLDEN TEXT: The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in. Psalm 121. 8.
- V. July 29.—THE YOUTH OF JESUS. Luke 2. 40-52. *Commit vs.* 40-49. GOLDEN TEXT: And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. Luke 2. 52.
- VI. Aug. 5.—THE BAPTISM OF JESUS. Mark 1. 1-11. *Commit vs.* 9-11. GOLDEN TEXT: Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Mark 1. 11.
- VII. Aug. 12.—TEMPTATION OF JESUS. Matt. 4. 1-11. *Commit vs.* 1-4. GOLDEN TEXT: In all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Heb. 4. 15.
- VIII. Aug. 19.—FIRST DISCIPLES OF JESUS. John 1. 35-49. *Commit vs.* 40-42. GOLDEN TEXT: We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. John 1. 41.
- IX. Aug. 26.—FIRST MIRACLE OF JESUS. John 2. 1-11. *Commit vs.* 1-5. GOLDEN TEXT: This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory. John 2. 11.
- X. Sept. 2.—JESUS CLEANSING THE TEMPLE. John 2. 13-25. *Commit vs.* 13-16. GOLDEN TEXT: Make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. John 2. 16.
- XI. Sept. 9.—JESUS AND NICODEMUS. John 3. 1-16. *Commit vs.* 1-3. GOLDEN TEXT: God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3. 16.
- XII. Sept. 16.—JESUS AT JACOB'S WELL. John 4. 9-26. *Commit vs.* 11-14. GOLDEN TEXT: Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst. John 4. 14.
- XIII. Sept. 23.—DANIEL'S ABSTINENCE. Dan. 1. 8-20. *Commit vs.* 8, 9. GOLDEN TEXT: Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself. Dan. 1. 8.
- XIV. Sept. 30.—REVIEW. GOLDEN TEXT: The Kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel. Mark 1. 15.

Fourth Quarter.

- I. Oct. 7.—JESUS AT NAZARETH. Luke 4. 16-30. *Commit vs.* 16-19. GOLDEN TEXT: See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. Heb. 12. 25.
- II. Oct. 14.—THE DRAUGHT OF FISHES. Luke 5. 1-11. *Commit vs.* 4-6. GOLDEN TEXT: Come

LESSON

- ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. Mark 1. 17.
- III. Oct. 21.—A SABBATH IN CAPERNAUM. Mark 1. 21-34. *Commit vs.* 27, 28. GOLDEN TEXT: He taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes. Mark 1. 22.
- IV. Oct. 28.—A PARALYTIC HEALED. Mark 2. 1-12. *Commit vs.* 9-12. GOLDEN TEXT: The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins. Mark 2. 10.
- V. Nov. 4.—JESUS LORD OF THE SABBATH. Mark 2. 23-28, and 3. 1-5. *Commit vs.* 3-5. GOLDEN TEXT: The Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath. Mark 2. 28.
- VI. Nov. 11.—THE TWELVE CHOSEN. Mark 3. 6-19. *Commit vs.* 13-15. GOLDEN TEXT: I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit. John 15. 16.
- VII. Nov. 18.—THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT. Luke 6. 20-31. *Commit vs.* 27-31. GOLDEN TEXT: As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. Luke 6. 21.
- VIII. Nov. 25.—OPPOSITION TO CHRIST. Mark 3. 22-35. *Commit vs.* 23-26. GOLDEN TEXT: He came unto his own, and his own received him not. John 1. 11.
- IX. Dec. 2.—CHRIST'S TESTIMONY TO JOHN. Luke 7. 24-35. *Commit vs.* 27, 28. GOLDEN TEXT: Behold, I send my messenger before thy face. Luke 7. 27.
- X. Dec. 9.—CHRIST TEACHING BY PARABLES. Luke 8. 4-15. *Commit vs.* 11-15. GOLDEN TEXT: The seed is the word of God. Luke 8. 11.
- XI. Dec. 16.—THE TWELVE SENT FORTH. Matt. 10. 5-16. *Commit vs.* 7-10. GOLDEN TEXT: As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Matt. 10. 7.
- XII. Dec. 23.—THE PRINCE OF PEACE. Isa. 9. 2-7. *Commit vs.* 6, 7. GOLDEN TEXT: Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. Isa. 9. 7.
- XIII. Dec. 30.—REVIEW. GOLDEN TEXT: Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever. Heb. 13. 8.

A HINT TO TEACHERS.—I write nothing, and read barely enough to keep my mind in the state of a running stream, which I think it ought to be, if it would form or feed other minds; for it is ill-drinking out of a pond, whose stock is merely the remains of the long past rains of the winter and spring, evaporating and diminishing with every successive day of drought.—*Dr. Arnold.*

The Inductive Method of Bible Study.

J. S. JAMES, D.D.

"What is the inductive method?" It may seem strange or commonplace to say that the inductive method invites the student to begin his work with the Bible itself. And yet to do this is its first mission. Neither notes nor comments, dogmas or confessions, topics or moral and religious lessons, form the starting point of work, but the Bible itself. To the Bible for the facts from which to make your induction of any kind. First to the Bible, then to results by induction. Another man's finished work, doctrinal or religious, is not provided. Not oranges picked, packed, and brought to market, but the grove, within every man's reach where ripe fruit hangs on the branches, stands before the student who is to begin inductive study of the Bible.

First of all, you are to turn to the text of the book itself; the setting of the text, historical, chronological, and geographical, it may be; and the whole text as an organic structure. You are beginning the book of Ezra. Begin by reading the book through "without note or comment;" this, if you can, at one sitting. Then do it again, and as often as you can. Your first requirement is to obtain a clear view of the text of the prophecy. Examine it, ply it with questions, cross-examine it with searching questions. Pump out of the well of living water every bucketful of text you can. With the book closed, test yourself as to how much of it you have ground into your thinking.

Proceed in like manner to its historical setting. Who wrote the book? To whom did he write? When did he write? What is there in the land, the people, their customs, religion, character, that has to do with the writing of that book? What relation does it sustain to other prophecies and other books?

You have been studying not scraps from the text, not verses, not sermon texts, but the whole text. You want to discern its structure and purpose, hunt after its analysis; for the structure of the whole is the key to the meaning of each individual part. You must not pause to exhaust yourself with word-study or verse-study. You are not seeking an aggregation of details. You will wish to examine these details only as they constitute the solution from which the crystal comes.

The inductive method objects to the common habit of confining Bible study to chosen passages, "bleeding members torn from the living body," kodak snatches of broken landscape here and there. It wants to map out the whole. It insists on studying the entire book. And all this is but saying that the inductive method views the Scriptures as literature. They are to be studied as any literature is studied, as all literature is studied, in the setting of its times,

by a survey of its structure, and the text of the book itself.

The new method is inductive, by a harmless play on the word in another way. It induces to study. It invites each student to the luxury of doing some studying for himself. The members of a class are not young birds in a nest, with eyes shut and mouths open to take what the teacher has taken pains to gather and drop in. They are chicks to scratch with the mother hen for themselves. They are students in a class-room; students preparing for a class-room. They are more than the victims of an exhorter, or the idle listeners to a sermon or lecture that some other men is sending forth.

The inductive method, however, excludes neither religious exhortation nor practical application and doctrinal deduction. It may be even more truly evangelistic than methods made up of exhortation and application. It does not fear to trust the student with his Bible for practical applications of its own, and it does not hesitate to clinch the lessons that actually come from the text. But it does not begin with them. To the Bible first. There is battle, stern battle, real battle. But the battle opens by getting the men into line of battle.—*Baptist Teacher.*

Book Notice.

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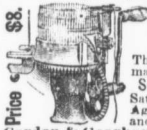
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