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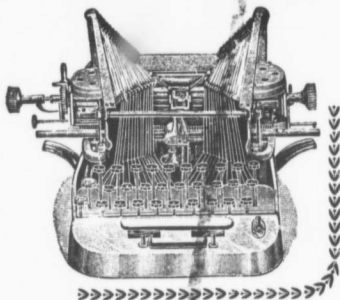
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# SUNDAY SCHOOL BANNER

for

## TEACHERS

AND

## YOUNG PEOPLE.

Vol. XXXIII.

OCTOBER 1899.

No. 10.

### The Master's Questions.

Have ye looked for sheep in the desert,

For those who have lost their way?

Have ye been in the wild waste places,

Where the lost and wandering stray?

Have ye trodden the lonely highway,

The foul and darksome street?

It may be ye'd see in the gloaming

The prints of wounded feet.

Have ye folded home to your bosom

The trembling, neglected lamb,

And taught to the little lost one

The sound of the Shepherd's name?

Have ye searched for the poor and needy,

With no clothing, no home, no bread?

The Son of Man was among them,

He had nowhere to lay his head.

Have ye carried the living water

To the parched and thirsty soul?

Have ye said to the sick and wounded,

"Christ Jesus makes thee whole"?

Have ye told my fainting children

Of the strength of the Father's hand?

Have ye guided the tottering footsteps

To the shore of the "Golden Land"?

Have ye stood by the sad and weary,

To smooth the pillow of death,

To comfort the sorrow-stricken,

And strengthen the feeble faith?

And have ye felt, when the glory

Has streamed through the open door

And flitted across the shadows,

That I had been there before?

—Selected.

### Methodist Magazine and Review for September.

A well illustrated article on Holland and its people is of special interest at a time when the world's attention is focused on the Hague. The remarkable secret history of Prince Bismarck, with engravings, is concluded. "In the "Balearics" is a well illustrated account of Spain's last island possessions, save the Canaries. "Lowell and His Friends" has exquisite portraits of the poet and his accomplished wife. No less than three articles are devoted to Ruskin and his message to our age, with copious quotation and excellent portrait. "Mobilizing the Forces of Methodism," by Hugh Price Hughes; a vigorous article by Dr. Sutherland, on "Our Great Forward Movement—Shall it Succeed?" "The Influence of Jesus Christ in Civilization," by Dr. Hillis, are noteworthy papers. An illustrated story of the days of Wesley, the World's Progress, and other articles, make up a notable number. Eight articles are illustrated.

A prominent Dutch gentleman, who travelled for years in the Dutch East Indies, speaks thus of his approach to the village bordering on Toba Lake, where the missionaries have established churches: "To be welcomed in the land of cannibals by children singing hymns; this, indeed, shows the regenerating power of the Gospel."

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## Sunday School Banner.

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

TORONTO, OCTOBER, 1899.

### Planning the Campaign.

The Rev. Dr. Potts, Secretary of the Twentieth Century Fund, is making thorough preparations for a vigorous prosecution of this grand campaign. Sunday, October 8, is the day appointed for the simultaneous presentation of this important subject throughout the length and breadth of the Dominion. Dr. Potts very truly remarks: "We should aim at having every member, adherent, and friend a subscriber to this monumental and thanksgiving fund, also every member of our Sunday-schools and Epworth Leagues." The Cornish people have a stirring motto, "One and All," which has often proved a rallying cry in the time of peril or need of special effort. That should be the motto of Methodism, especially in this greatest effort of the century. It is only by reaching the last man, the last woman and child in our connexion that the great result desired can be achieved.

Many touching incidents have occurred in Great Britain and Ireland, showing

the intense interest of even the poorest members of British and Irish Methodism to contribute to this fund. Some very old people, who fear they might not live to the end of the century, have already sent in their guineas. Some very poor people are seeking to lay by a few pence a week that their names, and those of the members of their family, may be written on the historic roll.

We hope that the young people, for whom we specially write in these papers, will see that they have their full share in this glorious movement. It is for their benefit more than for that of any others. Most of them shall live throughout many decades of the glorious twentieth century, when their elders shall have passed away. Those who so grandly built and toiled during this nineteenth century from the mount of vision of its close may, like Moses on Mount Nebo, behold the goodly land of the future. But many of them may not enter therein, and most of them shall do little more than cross its borders. But "the young and strong, who cherish noble longings for the strife," shall dwell in the good land and enjoy its rich fruition. Let those who are "the heirs of all the ages, the foremost in the files of time," determine to have their full share in this grand work. Let them begin at once to save, to practise self-denial, to lay by in store as the Lord prospers them, to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive;" to walk "in his steps," who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, to give his life a ransom for many.

It is a happy coincidence that one of our Sunday-school lessons in the near future is that on the Joy of Giving. Its Golden Text is, "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver." That word literally means a hilarious giver, one who gives with joy and gladness. Let us seek to enter into the spirit of that generous, joyous giving for the glory of God, the extension of his kingdom, the upbuilding of his cause in the earth. Great and blessed will be the reward. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the

Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed : for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the Lord of hosts."

Let us learn to give in the spirit of Rose Terry Cooke's noble poem :

Give ! as the free air and sunshine are given ;  
 " Give ! as the morning that flows out of heaven ;  
 Give ! as the waves when their channel is risen ;  
 Lavishly, utterly, joyfully give :—  
 Not the waste drops of thy cup overflowing,  
 Not the faint sparks of thy hearth ever glowing,  
 Not a pale bud from the June roses blowing ;  
 Give, as he gave thee, who gave thee to live.

" Pour out thy love, like the rush of a river,  
 Wasting its waters, forever and ever,  
 Through the burnt sands that reward not the giver ;  
 Silent or songful, thou nearest the sea,  
 Scatter thy life, as the summer showers pouring  
 What if no bird through the pearl-rain is soaring ?  
 What if no blossom looks upward adoring ?  
 Look to the life that was lavished for thee !

" Almost the day of thy giving is over ;  
 Ere from the grass dies the be-haunted clover,  
 Thou wilt have vanished from friend and from lover ;  
 What shall thy longing avail in the grave ?  
 Give as the heart gives, whose fetters are breaking,  
 Life, love, and hope, all thy dreams and thy waking,  
 Soon heaven's river thy soul-fever slaking,  
 Thou shalt know God, and the gift he gave."

### The Home Department.\*

It may not be known to all Sunday-school and church workers that the Home Department and the Christian Endeavour movement were born to the

church and the world the very same year.

But lack of knowledge does not change the truth, and the truth about it is that Father Clark and Father Duncan, in the year 1881, sired a pair of moral and religious twin ideas which are both so strong and vigorous and helpful at eighteen years of age that it is difficult to tell which of the twain will, in the long run, prove the greater blessing to the church and the world.

But, thank God, the Home Department is so absolutely unselfish and unsectarian that it can go into the homes of Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, Congregationalists, and all the rest of them. Aye, more than that ; it can even go into the homes of sinners and infidels with the open Bible in hand and behave itself so graciously that no one ever thinks of asking it what denomination it belongs to.

Is it only a temporary visitor, or has it come to stay ? My answer is that, just so sure as the Primary Department of the Sunday-school has come to stay, just so sure has the Home Department come to stay.

For the first dozen years of its life it came slowly. As compared with Christian Endeavour, it was a weak and puny child. As soon as it was born, Father Duncan held it up on its feet and tried to start it going. But it seemed to have weak ankles at first, so it clambered back into its cradle and stayed and stayed and stayed.

Fortunately, Father Duncan was a good nurse. He had faith in the child and thought it was surely worth raising, so he rocked the cradle and nourished the child on "the pure milk of the Word." From time to time he called in some of his denominational friends to look at the baby, but somehow they did not at first seem to recognize the worth of the child. They did not see the giant in it. For ten or more years the different denominations, as such, almost ignored it.

One day Father Duncan took the child, while it was still very young, to the International Sunday-school Convention, and showed it to the Executive Committee, and they all said : " Fine baby. Hope it will live ;" but they did not do anything to help it live.

Time moved on, as it always does. Baby grew a little and began to look more healthy. International Sunday-school Convention took another look at it, and this time it said : " Splendid

\*From an address by CHARLES D. MEIGS at the International Sunday-school Convention, Atlanta.

baby. Hadn't we better adopt it?" But the Executive Committee looked wise, shook its head and said: "No, we had better not adopt it; but we will recommend it."

And they did.

Then, of course, the different States and provincial associations heard of the baby, and took a look at it, and they said: "What a grand baby! Look at the head on him! There is good, hard sense in it! Look at his feet! Why, he has 'religion in the soul,' sure enough"—and they spelled it "s-o-l-e." "And just feel his pulse once. What a heart he has! Let us help nurse him; let us rock the cradle; let us adopt him as an association measure and push him to the front."

And they did.

Well, time moved on, as it always does, and so did the baby.

One day one of the "leading denominations" went out for a walk, and so did the baby. They met each other in the road, and Mr. Leading Denomination stopped and looked at the child; then stepped forth and said, "Who are you?" The child made answer:

"I am the son of Dr. W. A. Duncan, of Syracuse, N.Y. I am travelling through the country, not for my own health, but for the health of the churches and the Sunday-schools. I advocate the open Bible in the home, the study of the regular Sunday-school lesson every week in the home by persons who either cannot or will not attend the main school."

"What is your name?" asked Mr. L. D.

"My name is Home Department of the Sunday-school."

"Well," said Mr. L. D., "you have a good name, you are good-looking, and you are in a good business. Come along with me. We need you. I want to introduce you to our Conference."

As that was just what the sturdy youth had long been waiting for and hoping for, he went right along; and when the Conference got a square look at him they saw the beauty of him, the power of him, and felt the need for him, and they said, "Let us adopt and recommend him, and urge our Sunday-schools to use him, and send in reports of his work."

And they did.

Long live the Home Department! I verily believe it is destined to do as much good in the world as its more lively and precocious twin sister, "Christian Endeavour"—by whatever name she may now be called.—Pilgrim Teacher.

## Don't Close the School.

The season approaches at which a few of our rural schools close for the winter. The reasons usually given for this step are that the weather is cold and the roads are bad. Having had some experience and observation in this very matter, we are inclined to believe that in many cases these are not the true reasons. They furnish good occasions for other causes to operate, but they are not themselves the prime causes.

The principle cause leading to the close of a Sunday-school for the winter is that it was a poor school through the summer. If there is maintained throughout the spring and summer a deep and genuine interest on the part of teachers in the work of rearing a generation in the knowledge and love of God's word, the teachers will be relied upon for the continuance of that work throughout the year. If this spirit and this work have been duly responded to by the pupils, so that they have worked faithfully and have felt the dignity of enlarging knowledge and the joy of a growing religious experience, the pupils will be unwilling and even ashamed to desert such engagements for the slight discomfort caused to vigorous young life by the weather and the roads. These same young people, if they were denied the pleasure of assembling in midwinter parties of a social kind because the weather was bad and the roads rough, would wonder why they are required to do a thousand and one other things with greater exposure in the same kind of weather and over the same rough roads. And does any superintendent or parent suppose that these young people fail to see the logic of the course pursued in regard to the Sunday-school? What we need is to be thoroughly honest with ourselves in this matter. If on any Sabbath the weather and roads are actually too bad for us to encounter, then for that day stay in the house and use the time for further study of the lesson and in preparing the lesson for the next week. In this way the staying at home will be providential, will need no explanation, and will do no serious harm. But when parents and teachers agree to deliberately abandon this kind of work for a whole season for fear the weather and the roads may interfere, we fear there is something in that community colder than the weather and rougher than the roads.

The best country school we have ever known has run all the year round for about twenty years under the same superintendent. But few of the people live nearer than a half mile. The superintendent lives nearly two miles from the church, and the roads are not much better than the average country roads. Yet since we have known this school that same superintendent has brought up a generation of young people with such a knowledge of the word of God as is seldom found.

Moreover, we have had the confession of many schools, after they had quit the pernicious habit of closing for the win-

ter, that there never was any good reason for it, and that after the change the school became positively better in winter than in summer. Getting more people out is one thing; doing more good is quite another. You can get more people out in summer, but if you can do more good in winter, why not do it? Beware of the man who watches the clouds in the doing of his religious work, or who is afraid there's a lion by the way. We commend this subject to the prayerful consideration of thoughtful men among us who are, or may be, in a situation to influence our schools in this respect.—S. S. Magazine.

### Lessons and Golden Texts.—Studies in the Old Testament.

LESSON

- I. October 1.—JOY IN GOD'S HOUSE. Psalm 122. *Commit vs. 6-9.* (Read Psalm 84.) GOLDEN TEXT: I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Psalm 122. 1.
- II. October 8.—HAMAN'S PLOT AGAINST THE JEWS. Esth. 3. 1-11. *Commit vs. 5, 6.* (Read chaps. 1-3.) GOLDEN TEXT: If God be for us, who can be against us? Rom. 8. 31.
- III. October 15.—ESTHER PLEADING FOR HER PEOPLE. Esth. 8. 3-8 and 15-17. *Commit vs. 15-17.* (Read chaps. 8-10.) GOLDEN TEXT: Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass. Psalm 37. 5.
- IV. October 22.—EZRA'S JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM. Ezra 8. 21-32. *Commit vs. 21-23.* (Read chap. 7, and 8. 15-36.) GOLDEN TEXT: The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him. Ezra 8. 22.
- V. October 29.—PSALMS OF DELIVERANCE. Psalms 85 and 126. *Commit Psalm 126.* (Read Jer. 31.) GOLDEN TEXT: They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. Psalm 126. 5.
- VI. November 5.—NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER. Neh. 1. 1-11. *Commit vs. 8-10.* (Read chap. 2.) GOLDEN TEXT: Prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day. Neh. 1. 11.
- VII. November 12.—REBUILDING THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM. Neh. 4. 7-18. *Commit vs. 15-18.* (Read the chapter.) GOLDEN TEXT: Watch and pray. Matt. 26. 41.

LESSON.

- VIII. November 19.—PUBLIC READING OF THE SCRIPTURES. Neh. 8. 1-12. *Commit vs. 1-3.* (Read the chapter; also Luke 4. 16-22.) GOLDEN TEXT: The ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. Neh. 8. 3.
- IX. November 26.—VOES OF INTEMPERANCE. Prov. 23. 29-32. (Temperance Sunday.) *Commit vs. 29-32.* GOLDEN TEXT: Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise. Prov. 20. 1. 1
- X. December 3.—KEEPING THE SABBATH. Neh. 13. 15-22. *Commit vs. 15-17.* (Read the chapter. Compare Isa. 56. 1-8; Jer. 17. 19-27.) GOLDEN TEXT: Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Exod. 20. 8.
- XI. December 10.—LESSONS IN GIVING. Mal. 1. 6-11 and 3. 8-12. *Commit chap. 3. 10.* (Read chap. 1; also 2 Cor. chaps. 8 and 9.) GOLDEN TEXT: God loveth a cheerful giver. 2 Cor. 9. 7.
- XII. December 17.—FRUITS OF RIGHT AND WRONG DOING. Mal. 3. 13 to 4. 6. *Commit vs. 16-18.* (Compare Mal. 3. 1-6; also Matt. 11. 7-15.) GOLDEN TEXT: Whosoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. Gal. 6. 7.
- XIII. December 24.—CHRIST'S COMING FORETOLD. Isa. 9. 2-7. *Commit vs. 8, 7.* (Read Isa. 11. 1-10.) GOLDEN TEXT: Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. Luke 2. 11.
- XIV. December 31.—REVIEW. GOLDEN TEXT: Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. Psalm 103. 2.

### Order of Services.—Fourth Quarter.

OPENING SERVICE.

- I. SILENCE.
- II. RESPONSIVE SENTENCES. [Psalm 121.]
 

SUPT. I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

SCHOOL. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.

SUPT. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved; he that keepeth thee will not slumber.

SCHOOL. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

SUPT. The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.

SCHOOL. The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.

ALL. The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.
- III. SINGING.
- IV. THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, OR THE APOSTLES' CREED.
- V. PRAYER, followed by the Lord's Prayer in concert.
- VI. SINGING.

LESSON SERVICE.

- I. CLASS STUDY OF THE LESSON.
- II. SINGING LESSON HYMN.
- III. RECITATION OF THE TITLE, GOLDEN TEXT, AND OUTLINE by the school in concert.
- IV. REVIEW AND APPLICATION OF THE LESSON by Pastor or Superintendent.
- V. SUPPLEMENTAL LESSON. [Special lesson in the Church Catechism may here be introduced.]
- VI. ANNOUNCEMENTS (especially of the Church service and the Epworth League and week-evening prayer-meetings).

CLOSING SERVICE.

- I. SINGING.
- II. RESPONSIVE SENTENCES.
 

SUPT. My son, forget not my law: but let thine heart keep my commandments: for length of days, and long life, and peace shall they add to thee.

SCHOOL. The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.

# INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS.

## FOURTH QUARTER: STUDIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

### LESSON I. JOY IN GOD'S HOUSE.

[Oct. 1.]

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

#### AUTHORIZED VERSION.

[Read Psalm 84.]

#### Psa. 122.

[Commit to memory verses 6-9.]

- 1 I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.
- 2 Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Je-ru-sa-lem.
- 3 Je-ru-sa-lem is builded as a city that is compact together :
- 4 Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Is-ra-el, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD.
- 5 For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of Da'vid.
- 6 Pray for the peace of Je-ru-sa-lem : they shall prosper that love thee.
- 7 Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.
- 8 For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee.
- 9 Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good.

#### REVISED VERSION.

- 1 I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of the LORD.
- Our feet are standing Within thy gates, O Je-ru-sa-lem ;
- 3 Je-ru-sa-lem, that art builded As a city that is compact together :
- 4 Whither the tribes go up, even the tribes of the LORD,
- For a testimony unto Is-ra-el, To give thanks unto the name of the LORD.
- 5 For there are set thrones for judgment, The thrones of the house of Da'vid.
- 6 Pray for the peace of Je-ru-sa-lem : They shall prosper that love thee.
- 7 Peace be within thy walls, And prosperity within thy palaces.
- 8 For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee.
- 9 For the sake of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good.

**Time.**—Probably after the return from exile. The second temple was dedicated B. C. 515.  
**Place.**—In view of Jerusalem and the temple.

#### Home Readings.

- M.* Joy in God's House. Psa. 122.  
*Tu.* Songs of gladness. 2 Chron. 29, 25-31.  
*W.* Longed for. Psa. 84.  
*Th.* A good thing. Psa. 92.  
*F.* Come ye! Isa. 2, 1-5.  
*S.* Christ's example. Luke 4, 14-22.  
*is.* Heavenly worship. Rev. 7, 9-17.

#### Lesson Hymns.

No. 281, New Canadian Hymnal.

Jesus, blessed Jesus,  
I would follow thee.

No. 284, New Canadian Hymnal.

Sweet is the work, my God, my King,  
To praise thy name, give thanks and sing.

No. 285, New Canadian Hymnal.

Children, loud hosannas singing,  
Hymned thy praise in olden time.

#### QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR SCHOLARS.

##### 1. Delight in God's Kingdom, v. 1-5.

- What was the invitation given to the psalmist?  
Why was he glad to hear it?  
Why should we be glad to hear it?  
What are the reasons people give for nonattendance on religious worship?  
What are the advantages of attendance?  
How was Jerusalem "compact?"  
What were the "tribes of the Lord?"  
What was their twofold purpose in going to Jerusalem?  
What is meant by "the testimony of Israel?"  
What is meant by the "thrones of judgment" in verse 5?

##### 2. Praying and Working for God's Kingdom, v. 6-9.

- What is the peace of Jerusalem spoken of?  
What is the relation of prayer to peace?  
What was promised to those who loved Jerusalem?  
How could prosperity come to those who love the city?  
How does prosperity come to a nation because it has peace?  
When, if ever, should national peace not be the first consideration?



Why did the psalmist love the house of the Lord?

What reasons have we for loving it?

In what ways could the psalmist seek the good of the city?

How can we seek the good of our Church?

Give the keynote of this psalm. GOLDEN TEXT.

#### Teachings of the Lesson.

1. We should be glad to be invited to worship God in the church services. We should be more than scholars in a Bible class in Sunday school. We should be a part of the congregation to hear the word preached.

2. We should pray for the peace and prosperity of the church we attend. We should do our part to promote both.

3. We should work in and through the visible Church for the good of our fellow-men. We may work outside, but our best work should be inside. Such work is permanent and effective.

#### QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE SCHOLARS.

##### 1. Delight in God's Kingdom, v. 1-5.

What invitation made the psalmist glad?

What was the most precious thing in Jerusalem?

Why had Jerusalem been destroyed?

What sort of men rebuilt its temple and its walls?

Why was Jerusalem more compact than other cities?

Why did the tribes of Israel go up to it two or three times every year?

Why are they called the tribes of the Lord?

What is the meaning of "the testimony of Israel?"

What were set in Jerusalem besides the temple?

What stands in the stead of Jerusalem and the temple for us?

Who go up to the house of the Lord in modern times?

Are Christians glad when the hours of worship come?

What reasons have we for loving the house of the Lord?

##### 2. Praying and Working for God's Kingdom, v. 6-9.

Do those that love the Church prosper?

Is there as much reason to pray for the Church in our day as for the temple in old Jerusalem?

Is it right to have discord and quarrels in the Church?

Is it right to let the church suffer for want of repairs when the homes of its members are comfortable?

For whose sake should we be liberal to the cause of God?

Why did the psalmist love Jerusalem?

What is the GOLDEN TEXT?

#### Practical Teachings.

Where in this lesson do we learn--

1. That it is a delight to worship God?
2. That they that love God most are most loved by him?
3. That nobody can truly love God without being willing to make sacrifices for his cause?

#### QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.

Who was David? **A great and good king of Israel.**

What was the city of the king? **Jerusalem.**

What was in the city? **The temple of God.**

What did the law of God command? **That all the people should worship at the temple.**

How many great feasts were there?

What were they?

What did David say made him glad?

Did David want others to be glad? **Yes, and so he wrote this beautiful hymn.**

Why should we be glad to go to God's house?

**Because he tells us to go there.**

Whom may we always find there? **The great God himself.**

What does the holy city mean to us? **The Church of God.**

For what should we pray? **The peace of Jerusalem.**

Who shall prosper? **Those who love God and his house.**

What should we all try to seek? **The good of the Church.**

#### THE LESSON CATECHISM.

(For the entire school.)

1. What does the GOLDEN TEXT say? **"I was glad when they said unto me,"** etc

2. For what were the Jews to pray? **"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem."**

3. How was Jerusalem builded? **"Builded as a city that is compact together."**

4. Why did the psalmist seek the good of the city? **"Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good."**

#### NEW CHURCH CATECHISM.

##### 3. What is religion?

Religion is faith, love, and filial fear towards God, and the service of God in all the relations of life.

Deuteronomy x. 12. And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul.

## THE LESSON OUTLINE.

BY J. L. HURLBUT, D.D.

## A Pilgrim to Zion.

## I. A HAPPY PILGRIM.

*I was glad when they said.* v. 1.  
Rejoice in the Lord. Phil. 3. 1.  
Your joy may be full. John 16. 24.

## II. A WORSHIPING PILGRIM.

*Into the house of the Lord.* v. 1.  
Worship the Lord. Psa. 29. 2.  
My soul longeth. Psa. 84. 1, 2.

## III. A GRATEFUL PILGRIM.

*To give thanks.* v. 4.  
A good thing. Psa. 92. 1, 2.  
What shall I render? Psa. 116. 12-14.

## IV. A PRAYERFUL PILGRIM.

*Pray for... Jerusalem.* v. 6.  
Prayers... for all men. 1 Tim. 2. 1.  
Praying always. Eph. 6. 18, 19.

## V. A LOYAL PILGRIM.

*Prosper that love thee.* vs. 6, 7.  
Our citizenship. Phil. 3. 20. [Rev. Ver.].  
Affection on things above. Col. 3. 2.

## VI. A LOVING PILGRIM.

*For my brethren... sakes.* v. 8.  
Love the brotherhood. 1 Pet. 2. 17.  
We love the brethren. 1 John 3. 14.

## EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

Most of the lessons of the fourth quarter are studies of the religious life of the Jews in the years following their return from exile. Psalm 122, which we study to-day, could hardly fail to be popular at such a time. Precisely when it was written is uncertain, and its author is unknown. The meaning of its superscription, A SONG OF DEGREES OF DAVID (which occurs in the Hebrew text, but is not found in the Septuagint), is not plain, and many reverent scholars believe that the psalm was inspired and written soon after the temple and walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt. Of the one hundred and fifty Hebrew psalms, fifteen, which stand side by side, are entitled "Songs of Degrees," which phrase the Revised Version alters to "Songs of Ascents." From all directions the journey to Jerusalem was an "ascent;" and it has been conjectured that most of the psalms so designated (numbers 120 to 134) were used on the way from Babylon to Jerusalem by the band of singers organized to accompany the return. From this the habit would naturally arise among the Jews (accustomed as they were to make three journeys each year to Jerusalem) to "beguile the tedium of the way and cheer the nightly encampment" (Van Dyke) by the singing of these hymns. Psalm 122 has been a favorite in all the centuries of Christendom. Love for the house and people of God, and the blessed consequences of that love, have never been expressed more beautifully than in these verses.

**Verse 1. I was glad.** "My face was joy-lightened." **When they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.** At the beginning of the great annual feasts the people of Jerusalem were accustomed to flock out from the city to welcome the earlier pilgrim caravans. The meeting of the two multitudes was one of the sights of Jerusalem; they hailed each other with enthusiastic expressions of joy and triumph. It was such an occasion that our Lord used as a background for his triumphal entry. Songs of welcome, which included blessings on those who came in the name of the Lord, and invitations to participate in the temple ceremonies, were responded to by such songs as this: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." The text suggests several truths: 1. *True worship is a joyous worship, inducing praise and song.* The pilgrims to Jerusalem are typical of penitents coming to the Saviour. 2. *Many a penitent would rejoice if, with overflowing hearts, Christians said to him, not "Go to church," but "Let us go."* 3. *The house of*

*the Lord is the center of all religion, intelligence, and beneficence.*

**2. Our feet shall stand** ["are standing" or "have stood"] **within thy gates, O Jerusalem.** We have traveled a great distance to reach the Holy City; now at the entrance we pause a moment in sheer delight.

**3. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together.** Imagine a modern metropolis with front yards and back yards and spaces between houses closely builded upon, no spaces open to the sky except tiny courts surrounded by the solid masonry of private houses, no parks and no avenues, most of the streets covered and in many cases builded over for tenements, and you get some conception of the solidity of Jerusalem. If any of the citizens owned gardens, they lay beyond the city walls; for Jerusalem could never overleap the valleys of the Kedron and Hinnom; it was shut in, and the population so doubled on itself that Dr. Ederheim tells us that in the time of Jesus there was a considerable underground population. The

psalmist's delight in this compactness is largely due to his contrast of the new and stately buildings with the ruins which had lain there so long. But in this passage Jerusalem is chiefly regarded as the type of the Church of God in heaven and on earth. The happy man who wrote these lines and the happy folk who sang them may not have had our clear conceptions of the Church, either militant or triumphant. But by them, as by us, the capital city of Jewry was revered not because of its granite and marble (even where those materials were wrought into the walls of God's house), but because of the religious forces of which it was the center. Through all ages Athens stands for wisdom, Corinth for delights, Rome for government, Bagdad for romance; but Jerusalem was the type of the Church of God. And we have only to follow the ecstatic discovery of the seer of the New Testament to perceive that it is also the type of the forces and the joys of heaven.

**4. Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord.** Most of those who returned from Babylon were members of the tribe of Judah; but probably every tribe was represented, and pilgrims to Jerusalem came every year from every part of the Holy Land. Just here is a practical lesson which Mr. Spurgeon beautifully deduces: As Israel, divided by tribes, was, nevertheless, one people, so, *4. Christendom is essentially one, though divided into Methodist, Presbyterian, and other tribes.* And as all were tribes of Jehovah, whether Judah, or Benjamin, or Manasseh, or Ephraim, so, *5. All the Churches may be, and should be, equally the Lord's own.* **Unto the testimony of Israel.** The Revised Version, "For a testimony unto Israel," makes the meaning plainer. ~~The law which ordered all males to appear before the Lord each year was a "testimony"~~ to Israel of God's covenant with it. ~~Just~~ as the annual observance of the First of July as Dominion day is an historic evidence of the organization of the Dominion, so the pilgrimage customs were evidences and testimonies of a religious compact made between God and Israel. Here again is a lesson for us. The temple, and all its ceremonies, and the annual journeys to it, were no more of a testimony to the Mosiac religion than are our Sabbath day and our regular participation in public and private worship to the religion of Christ. *6. We are God's witnesses;* and even to pass through the streets on Sunday with a Bible or a hymnal in one's hand is an appreciable testimony unto the world. **To give thanks unto the name of the Lord.** Testimony to God brings sincere thanksgiving, for God's dealings with us have been kind beyond computation. *7. The*

*true Christian finds attendance upon worship an occasion of delight and of praise.*

**5. There.** In Jerusalem. **Are set thrones of judgment.** Israel was to be preeminently the people of God, and it became necessary that the capital of the nation should be the center of religious worship. In our own land we have much reason to thank God for the separation of Church and State; nevertheless, *8. Church and State should always be, as Matthew Henry says, near neighbors and good neighbors who greatly befriend one another.* Imaginative coloring may be brought to this verse by remembering the majestic throne of ivory on which the kings of Judah sat. Wrought into the form of a bull with its head turned over its shoulder, it was approached by steps on which were six lions of gold. The bull was, it is supposed, the emblem of Ephraim and the lions the emblem of Judah. The psalmist here not only glances back historically to the time before the partition of the kingdom, when Jerusalem was the splendid city of the **thrones of the house of David**, but prophetically he thinks also of the future Israel united forever under one scepter. *9. To the ends of the earth great David's greater Son will yet bear sway.*

**6. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.** Although living long before Christian times, the author had a near enough vision of God not to pray for success of armies, but for peace. Conquests, with hardly an exception, are curses to the nation that makes them. Peace, the peace that passeth understanding, is the choicest gift of God to man. Jerusalem means peace. The Christian Church stands for peace. Pray that her condition may verify her title. **They shall prosper that love thee.** Whoever intelligently loves Jerusalem loves what Jerusalem stands for: God in the world, goodness in life, spiritual and intellectual enlightenment, the dawn of Christianity. These great forces eventually will dominate the earth; therefore all that are in harmony with them have the basis of permanent prosperity.

**7. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.** As a capital city Jerusalem was palatial, and walls outside walls surrounded it. The psalmist, in grouping its homes in his mind so that they might be prayed for at once, thinks of them as a collection of princely mansions.

**8. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee.** "This man wanted a blessing not for himself merely, but for all," says an old writer. His prayers were not selfish; his benediction was an earnest prayer for others.

**9. Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good.** Here is the keynote of the whole psalm. To the psalmist's mind the city existed for the temple, and the temple for God. In manufacture and merchandise, in architecture and works of defense, many an original capital surpassed Jerusalem, but in religious force it was unequalled. "It existed for pilgrims. Twenty thousand priests were needed for the conduct of its worship. Levites in greater numbers and scribes skilled in the Scrip-

tures and traditions did their religious work; the first of a physical sort, the second deeply intellectual and spiritual. In later days there were four hundred and eighty synagogues in Jerusalem, where the rabbis read and the people heard the word which God had spoken. The city was indeed in a sense the religion of Israel incorporated and localized, and the man who loved the one turned daily his face toward the other." So writes Dr. Fairbairn. What Jerusalem was to the Jew the Christian Church should be to us.

### CRITICAL AND HOMILETICAL NOTES.

This psalm is the third in the collection (120-134) known in the Authorized Version as "Songs of Degrees," and in the Revised Version, "Songs of Ascents." The Hebrew word "Maaloth," translated "degrees" or "ascents," is from the verb "atâh," to go up, or "ascend." Several explanations have been offered to the term; of these we mention: 1. "Degrees," that is, steps, because according to tradition one of these songs was sung on each of the fifteen steps leading from the court of the men to that of the women in the temple. The tradition is not well founded. 2. "Ascents," that is, a progressive, steplike, ascending rhythm. Such style of composition is noticeable only in two or three of these psalms. 3. The word "ascents" is used in the sense of "anabasis," or going up of the exiles on their return from Babylon. (See Ezra. 7. 9.) Psalms 122 and 134 speak against this view. 4. The term "ascents" refers to the going up of the Hebrews from their homes throughout Palestine to the three great annual feasts at Jerusalem. This is certainly the most plausible explanation. In favor of this we might cite the fact that to this day pilgrims sing or chant hymns on their way to the holy city. The psalm which we study to-day is well adapted for a pilgrim song. We can almost hear the slow tread, the joyous shout, and the glad music of the happy Hebrews as they file into the streets of Jerusalem.

**Verse 1. I was glad.** The language is that of one who in after life recalls vividly the thrill of joy which passed through his heart when requested by his neighbors to join them on the march to the annual feasts at Jerusalem. These gatherings were occasions of social enjoyment as well as of deep religious culture. How many good old Methodists have told us of the grand old times in the old-fashioned Quarterly Meeting! What joy the anticipations of a pilgrimage to Mecca affords the faithful Moslem, or a journey to Rome the loyal Roman Catholic! **Unto the**

**house of the Lord.** The tabernacle or the temple where Jehovah manifested himself in a special manner. Though God's presence is not limited to temples made with hands, yet no heart filled with the Spirit of God will neglect his house. The most spiritual, as a rule, is the most punctual upon the services of the Church, the regularly appointed means of grace.

**2. Our feet are standing.** The first verse pictures the joys before leaving home, the joyous feeling in anticipation of a visit to Jerusalem, the city of the great king; this verse recalls the ecstasy of the pilgrim as he with myriad others entered the religious and political capital, and joined the multitude in praising Jehovah.

**3. Jerusalem that art builded.** Those who make this psalm post-exilic would render "bānâ" (builded), "rebuilt" or "restored" (after the return from Babylon). The verb, however, does not justify such a rendering. **Compact together.** The topography of Jerusalem is well known. Standing on an elevated ridge, or, rather, on several hills of the same range, and cut off on three sides from the other elevations, thus almost completely surrounded by deep ravines, the necessity of compactness of building becomes evident. Others would make this compactness refer to the well-built conditions of the city, without gaps, breaches, or exposed places anywhere.

**4. Whither the tribes go up.** The attendance upon the feasts was not voluntary. The law reads: "Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose" (Deut. 16. 16). **Tribes of the Lord.** The chosen people of Jehovah. **Testimony unto Israel.** Or, rather, This is the law for Israel. They must attend the feasts. **To give thanks.** One of the chief objects of the Jewish feasts—and should be of all religious gatherings—was to remind the people of their dependence upon God. This could be best accomplished by having them recall his goodness to them in their individual and national

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life in the past. **Unto the name of the Lord.** The word "name" is one of God's titles, and is often used in the Old Testament as the equivalent of Jehovah or God.

**5. Set thrones for judgment.** Not only was Jerusalem the seat of worship, the central place of all religious work, but it was also the seat of government, the place where men resorted for final decisions on questions of law and justice. (See 2 Sam. 15. 2, and 1 Kings 3. 16.) **Thrones of the house of David.** This probably refers to the successors of David on the throne of Judah. Others refer it to sub-judges appointed by David to assist in administering the government and the laws.

**6. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.** There is a play upon the words "shalom," "shalvah," and "shalaim," translated respectively, "peace," "prosperity," and "(Jeru)salem," which cannot be imitated in our language. The second part of the word Jeru-salem signifies peace, and the whole word, according to many, the city or abode of peace. **They shall prosper that love thee.** The blessing of God shall be upon those who love him. Indeed, man's love to God can be shown in no better way than by loving his house and his people. This is as true to-day as it was when this psalm was written.

**7. Thy walls, . . . thy palaces.** Walls and palaces stand for the entire city. The walls were the outer defenses, the palaces were the strong buildings, the royal residences, and the citadel within the city walls.

**8. For my brethren and companions' sakes.** For the sake of entire Israel. This is patriotism lifting itself up high above all selfish ends.

**9. For the sake of the house of the Lord.** The dwelling place of the Most High, where God was present in a special manner. The pious Jew loved the house of God, and his language was: "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of Jehovah."

### Thoughts for Young People.

1. *If we have faith, we shall have joy.* Practical faith includes calm confidence in the triumph of God's cause. Why should we weep and mourn over temporary discouragements when our ultimate triumph is certain?

2. *If we are truly religious, we should be spontaneously social.* The true Christian wants no lonely heaven and no select Church. Let us go, he says; our feet are within the gates; for my brethren and companions' sakes I bless the Church. Nothing could be farther removed from the

traditional old self-centered, make-believe Christian who prayed:

God bless me,  
And my wife,  
My son John,  
And his wife;  
Us four,  
And no more.

3. *If we love God and goodness, we will love their types and emblems.* If a man seeks to be a Christian outside of the Church, his heart may be right, but his head must be wrong. He would be like a soldier who refused to don the uniform and obey orders, like the patriot who had conscientious scruples against singing "God Save the Queen" or saluting the flag. We pray for what we want, and if our spontaneous prayers are for peace, we already have the marks of the Spirit of Christ.

5. *One cannot be religious without being moral.* One cannot rejoice in Jerusalem's temple without rejoicing in her thrones for judgment. Every true revival of religion is a revival of righteous living.

### Orientalisms of the Lesson.

BY J. T. GRACEY, D.D.

The whole concept of this psalm is that of the pilgrim companies going up to a religious center to worship on some festal occasion; a concept which is ingrained in the religious thought of all the nations of western and southern Asia. Professor Palmer admits the depth of this sentiment among the tribes of Arabia when he says it is "very ancient," and "Mohammed could not if he would have abolished it." The idea of pilgrimages is common to Buddhism, Brahmanism, and Mohammedanism, as well as to the Hebrews throughout their history. Dr. Trumbull, in *Studies in Oriental Social Life*, treats of this subject at considerable length. He tells us that the modern Jews make a sevenfold circuit of the synagogue in procession on the day following the great festival occasion of the year, and call the ceremony "Rejoicing in the Law." The Christian pilgrims at Jerusalem at the Easter festival make the circuit of the Holy Sepulcher seven times. The Mohammedan pilgrims at Mecca make a circuit seven times round the Kaaba, and Dr. Trumbull quotes Sir Monier Williams concerning Buddhists in India: "One common way of showing piety is by walking round temples, monasteries, stupas, and sacred walls, from east to west, keeping the right shoulder toward them, and even occasionally measuring the ground with the extended body." The same custom is mentioned by Hue in regard to pilgrimages in Tibet and Mongolia.

The pilgrimage of the Mohammedans to Mecca is of the same religious character as that of the old-time Hebrews to Jerusalem. It is the duty of every Moslem in the world to visit Mecca at least once in his lifetime, or he becomes an infidel accursed. Those of unsound body and not of full age or too poor to provide for his household during his absence are alone excused. No less than eighty thousand pilgrims still assemble annually on this sacred spot. They come from interior Africa, all parts of India and Malaysia, central and western Asia, and western Europe.

The Hindus exhibit a similar devotion to many sacred places, as Hardwar, where the sacred Ganges issues from the Himalaya mountains, where annually the crowd of pilgrims numbers from two to three millions, and every twelfth year the assembly is greatly augmented.

But neither Mecca, Hardwar, nor even Jerusalem is to-day a civil or political as well as a religious capital. Jerusalem of the times of this psalm had "thrones of the house of David." The splendor of the Hebrew throne has deeply and permanently pervaded the East. The Medes had their capital at the northern Ecbatana, at Takht-i-Suleiman, the "Throne of Solomon," owing to the popular idea that Solomon, king of Israel, here held court, with the "divs" and "jinns" to do his service, and the birds as his messengers. The Hebrews used the term "throne" for any elevated seat occupied by a person in authority. Solomon's throne was approached by six steps; it was very costly, being composed of ivory overlaid in parts with pure gold. On the steps were pairs of lions corresponding to the number of the tribes. The seat or chair itself was probably after the form found in Assyrian tablets, and the king arrayed in his royal robes on state occasions granted audiences or administered justice. To "sit upon the throne" was to exercise regal power; so when the great company of pilgrims of which we have spoken went to Jerusalem they were awed by the holiness of the place and by the historical memories of the "judgments," and the "statutes" which had emanated here, which bound all Israel to the ends of the earth and through their generations.

### By Way of Illustration.

BY JENNIE M. BINGHAM.

*The pilgrim psalter.* As the captives gathered in little groups in Babylon, as the pilgrims journeyed to Jerusalem, they would sing or recite these songs of the fatherland. The Pilgrim Psalter has been the storehouse of many wanderers and exiles. The Waldensians, on their return

from Switzerland to their native villages in 1689, marched to the music of these psalms, chanted by thankful lips. The Covenanters in hiding in Scotland, in the dens and caves of the earth, sang together these precious words which acted like a tonic to their weary souls. The French Huguenots, scattered and persecuted, chanted these psalms day after day as they marched in exile or huddled in prison together.

*Joy in God's house.* This testimony was heard in a love feast: "I would rather be in God's house than to be king on any throne, or a guest in any palace of earth." On Old People's Day in a church where many were brought to the service who had been for a long time deprived of church-going, it was remarked by the pastor that he had never seen such happy faces anywhere as the uplifted faces of those saints who were spending an hour in God's house.

*A traveller's psalm.* That person is a public benefactor who can sing or recite the heart hymns of the Lord's house. B. F. Taylor writes about being on a train bound for California. Night drops down, and the passengers get tired, cross, and homesick. A plain-looking woman begins to sing:

"I will sing you a song of that beautiful land,  
The far-away home of the soul,  
Where no storm ever beats on the glittering strand,  
While the years of eternity roll."

The clear tones grew rounder and sweeter. Some left their seats and came nearer. A brakeman, who had not heard a "psalm tune" since he was a little boy, dropped down in a seat and wiped his eyes. The car was a wakeful hush long before she had sung through all the verses; it was as if a beautiful spirit was floating through the air. The "home of the soul" was brought very near to everybody. None that heard will ever forget. The singer's name, home, and destination no one learned; but the thought of the listeners follows her, with an affectionate interest. She is surely singing wherever she is. She charmed and cheered the November gloom with carols of the celestial city.

The modern Church, like the ancient, calls to its service the choicest, human, and divine gifts. The missionary carries with him to the rude church on the frontier, the forest, or the coral island a spiritual experience which is richer in splendor than that of the worshiper in ancient Zion. The glory of that now forsaken spot has been scattered into humble churches throughout the world. Coan says of the revival season in Hawaii in 1838, "Thousands on thousands thronged the courts of the Lord." One thousand seven hundred persons were baptized in a single

day. The temple, however, was but a huge shed of brush and poles, without floor or seats, the ground being beaten hard and covered with fresh grass each week. Not alone people's tabernacles and ivy-covered Gothic shrines are acceptable to our Maker. Sometimes churches are barracks, and at other times hospitals, in each of which Christ is honored and served. The Protestant "Stations of the Cross" are the desks of the pulpit, Sunday school room, and infant class. Her leaders might well pray for power to descend on those under their charge, instead of making pilgrimages or going on their knees from shrine to shrine.—*W. R. Campbell.*

### Heart Talks on the Lesson.

BY MRS. J. H. KNOWLES.

As I read with you this beautiful psalm many thoughts press upon my mind and heart. The word of God is very wonderful in the far-reaching vistas of truth it opens before us. As we look into the heavens on a clear night, stars beyond stars are revealed in the distant space. So, as we think upon this word, thoughts are stirred—thoughts that we cannot fully comprehend, as we cannot the handiwork of God in the sky, but which gladden and ennoble us with their grandeur even though dimly perceived.

This is a prophetic psalm, and a psalm of experience. It has both a literal and spiritual interpretation.

I think if you read it carefully with the references to the prophecies which you will find in the margin of your Bible, you will see that there are great things yet to be fulfilled in the kingdom of Christ upon earth. But we have been talking heart to heart in former lessons of the rebuilding of the temple of our spiritual nature, the preparing of the heart to be the dwelling place of God. If you have this experience, other knowledge does not so much matter. This psalm is called a "song of degrees," or of ascent. It is a song of the ascent of the soul to heights of worship and praise. Some one has said the motto of our reading should be, "Go up, my soul, go up." Rise, even to the heights of standing with the worshipers within the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem!

There is joy in the rebuilt temple. I can think of nothing so desolate as a human soul in ruins. No altar of sacrifice; no trust in a Redeemer who takes away the guilt and burden of sin; no ark of the covenant; no harmony with the law of God, no hidden manna—that sweet comfort and strength which God gives to the heart in which he dwells; no holy of holies where he talks with us as friend with friend. I cannot tell you so

that you will understand, unless you have this experience yourself. But believe me, there is no real joy except in the heart where God dwells. Other kinds of joy last such a little while and have sooner or later a touch of bitterness.

This joy is not only sweet itself, but it sweetens things that are bitter. It is like the river flowing from the temple in Ezekiel's vision; it runs over into all the experiences of life and makes everything beautiful wherever it flows. This is not fancy, nor theory. It is experience. I was glad years ago when the rebuilding of the temple of my heart was begun with the foundation stone of faith in Jesus. That was a happy day, but not so happy as this later day when the river of peace and joy, breaking forth from the secret place where God is, has become "waters to swim in;" waters that "go down into the desert," and "whithersoever they come everything liveth." All experiences, the sad, the perplexing, the mysterious, the glad, the sweet, the bitter, bring not death, but life; for all that grows beside this river is "for meat and for medicine" because they are waters of joy from the fountain of life and joy. Is your heart God's house? If it is, "your heart shall rejoice and your joy no man taketh from you."

### The Teachers' Meeting.

The best treatment of this lesson is to enlarge on its pictorial setting and to emphasize its religious truth. The joy of the return from Babylon, the enthusiasm of the resumption of religious services, the zeal of the pilgrims, the gladness of their reception, the symbolism of the city and its temple, the interweaving of spiritual goodness and moral propriety, and the characteristic touches of that region and time give us a glowing background for the spiritual truths that the psalm inculcates.... The modern church, like the old temple, represents God's dwelling among men. This psalm is a song of the glory of the house of God, and five interesting facts are taught concerning it which apply with even more force and beauty to the Church of Christ: 1. It is a place of joy. God's people are the happy people; God's house is the house of happiness. 2. It is a place of unity. All the tribes were invited to the feasts of the Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. The house of God should be the center of acquaintance and of friendship. 3. It is a place of power. David's throne was established upon religion; the very foundation of government is the religious life. 4. It is a place of prosperity. Success in life depends partly upon other traits besides that of godliness, and partly upon opportunities very

unevenly distributed. Yet as a class godly people have comforts. He who is without restraints of conscience is not likely to win success in the affairs of life. 5. It is a place of peace. He who in spirit dwells in the house of God dwells in peace.

### OPTIONAL HYMNS.

All people that on earth do dwell,  
Jesus, where'er thy people meet.  
Lord, this day thy children meet.  
With joy we hail the sacred day.  
Safely through another week.

Lord of the worlds above.  
Within thy house, O Lord our God.  
How sweet the place of prayer.  
O thou to whom in ancient time.  
Lord, in the morning thou shalt hear.

### Library References.

BY REV. S. G. AYRES, B.D.

The list of commentaries on the Psalms is a very long one. The best are those by Perowne, Delitzsch, Kirkpatrick, Murphy.

### SERMONS ON THE LESSON.

Verse 1.—Farindon, Anthony, "The Object of David's Delight," *Sermons*, vol. ii, page 634. Burrell, D. J., "Why We Love the Church of God," *Spirit of the Age*, page 51.

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Logan, John, on "Love of our Country," *Sermons and Expository Lectures*, page 109. Adams, William, "Christian Patriotism," *Thanksgiving*, page 220.

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### Blackboard.

BY THOMAS G. ROGERS.



God invites us to go into his house, for it is a place of peace, and there we may engage in prayer for our wants, and praise him for the blessings of life. This is why David expressed his gladness, and rejoiced in giving thanks to the Lord and testifying to his goodness and mercy. They that dwell in God's house will be still praising him, until their feet shall stand within the gates of the new Jerusalem, the house of the Lord not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

## LESSON II. HAMAN'S PLOT AGAINST THE JEWS.

[Oct. 8.]

**GOLDEN TEXT.** If God be for us, who can be against us? Rom. 8. 31.

**AUTHORIZED VERSION.**

[Read chapters 1-3.]

**Esth. 3. 1-11.** [Commit to memory verses 5, 6.]

1. After these things did king A-has-u-e-rus promote Ha'man the son of Ham-med'a-tha the A'gag-ite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him.

2 And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Ha'man: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mor'de-cai bowed not, nor did him reverence.

3 Then the king's servants, which were in the king's gate, said unto Mor'de-cai, Why transgresses thou the king's commandment?

4 Now it came to pass, when they spake daily

**REVISED VERSION.**

- 1 After these things did king A-has-u-e-rus promote Ha'man the son of Ham-med'a-tha the A'gag-ite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him.
- 2 And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed down, and did reverence to Ha'man: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mor'de-cai bowed not down,
- 3 nor did him reverence. Then the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, said unto Mor'de-cai, Why transgresses thou the king's
- 4 commandment? Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Ha'man,



unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Ha'man, to see whether Mor'de-cai's matters would stand : for he had told them that he *was* a Jew.

5 And when Ha'man saw that Mor'de-cai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Ha'man full of wrath.

6 And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mor'de-cai alone ; for he had showed him the people of Mor'de-cai : wherefore Ha'man sought to destroy all the Jews that *were* throughout the whole kingdom of A-has-u-e-rus, *even* the people of Mor'de-cai.

7 In the first month, that *is*, the month Nis'an, in the twelfth year of king A-has-u-e-rus, they cast Pur, that *is*, the lot, before Ha'man from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that *is*, the month A'dar.

8 And Ha'man said unto king A-has-u-e-rus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom ; and their laws *are* diverse from all people ; neither keep they the king's laws : therefore it *is* not for the king's profit to suffer them.

9 If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed : and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring *it* into the king's treasures.

10 And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Ha'man the son of Ham-med'a-tha the A'gag-ite, the Jews' enemy.

11 And the king said unto Ha'man, The silver *is* given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee.

to see whether Mor'de-cai's matters would stand : for he had told them that he was a Jew. And when Ha'man saw that Mor'de-cai bowed not down, nor did him reverence, then was Ha'man full of wrath. But he thought scorn to lay hands on Mor'de-cai alone ; for they had showed him the people of Mor'de-cai : wherefore Ha'man sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of A-has-u-e-rus, even the people of Mor'de-cai. In the first month, which is the month Nis'an, in the twelfth year of king A-has-u-e-rus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Ha'man from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month which is the month A'dar. And Ha'man said unto king A-has-u-e-rus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of thy kingdom ; and their laws are diverse from those of every people ; neither keep they the king's laws : therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them. If it please the king, let it be written that they be destroyed ; and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those that have the charge of the king's business, to bring it into the king's treasures. And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Ha'man the son of Ham-med'a-tha the A'gag-ite, the Jews' enemy. And the king said unto Ha'man, The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee.

**Time.**—Perhaps between 485 and 425 B. C.  
**Place.**—Susa.

#### Home Readings.

- M. Esther made queen. Esth. 2. 15-23.  
Ta. Haman's Plot against the Jews. Esth. 3. 1-11.  
W. The decree of death. Esth. 3. 12 to 4. 3.  
Th. Sorrow in the palace. Esth. 4. 4-17.  
F. Pride discomfited. Esth. 6. 1-11.  
S. The enemy punished. Esth. 7.  
S. Danger of pride. Prov. 16. 5-19.

#### Lesson Hymns.

- No. 52, New Canadian Hymnal.  
The Lord's our Rock, in him we hide :  
A shelter in the time of storm !
- No. 51, New Canadian Hymnal.  
How firm a foundation, ye saints of the  
Lord,  
Is laid for your faith in his excellent word !
- No. 56, New Canadian Hymnal.  
I am trusting thee, Lord Jesus,  
Trusting only thee.

#### QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR SCHOLARS.

##### 1. Hatred, v. 1-7.

- What did the king do to Haman ?  
Why did the king's servants bow to him ?  
Why was Mordecai an exception ?  
How far should we respect those in authority ?  
How far is criticism of our rulers right ?  
Why is the king's gate spoken of ?  
Why did the servants tell Haman of Mordecai's conduct ?  
When is it right, when wrong, to report the failings of others ?  
Why did they dislike the Jews ?  
Ought we to dislike the Jews ?  
What service has the ancient Jewish race given to the world ?

##### 2. Revenge, v. 8-11.

- What was the chief sin of Haman ?  
What did he purpose to do ?  
For what purpose was the lot cast ?  
When is it right to resort to the lot ?  
What is the precise evil of the modern lottery ?

What reason did Haman give for his proposed cruelty?

Was it his real reason?

Why did he give a wrong one?

Why did he promise to pay talents of silver?

For what purpose was the ring given to Haman?

What noble utterance did Paul make? GOLDEN TEXT.

#### Teachings of the Lesson.

1. An unworthy man may be promoted to high office, but office cannot change him. A small, mean man will still be small and mean. A man with pride will have his pride inflated. Office is good for one who is worthy, but character is better.

2. Haman was "full of wrath" over a small matter. A proud man is entirely too sensitive. One ought to be happy even if everyone does not bow. Have the favor of God, and be not too anxious for the homage of men.

3. If pride is boundless, the cruelty which springs from it may be also boundless. Unlimited power is not a blessing to anyone. The best of men need the restraints of divine and human law.

#### QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE SCHOLARS.

##### 1. Hatred, v. 1-7.

Whom did King Ahasuerus promote?

What did all the king's servants do when they saw Haman?

Why did they do this?

What exception was there?

What question was asked of Mordecai?

Who was told about Mordecai?

Why were they also interested in Mordecai's fate?

How did Haman feel when he heard about Mordecai's conduct?

How did he propose to revenge himself?

In what superstitious way did he try to find out the best time for his plot?

##### 2. Revenge, v. 8-11.

What did Haman say to the king about the Jews?

Were they in all the provinces?

Were their laws diverse from all people?

Was it unprofitable to have them prosper in the kingdom?

What did Haman ask?

What did he offer to pay for the privilege?

What did the king give to Haman?

What did that mean?

What did the king say to Haman?

What sort of a king was this?

What comfort is there in the GOLDEN TEXT?

#### Practical Teachings.

Where in this lesson are we taught—

1. That the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel?

2. That prejudice against race is wicked?

3. That there never is a time so dark that we are justified in losing our hope in God?

#### QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.

Who was the king of Persia at this time? **Ahasuerus.**

What kind of a kingdom was Persia? **Very rich and powerful.**

What did it lack? **The knowledge of the true God.**

To whom did the king give great honor?

What did this cause in Haman's heart? **A great growth of pride.**

What Jew refused to bow down to Haman?

How did Haman feel about this?

What did he want to do?

What did he tell the king?

Who were "certain people" that he meant?

#### The Jews.

Why did he want to kill them all? **Because he had a wicked heart.**

Did the king know that Queen Esther was a Jewess? **No, he did not.**

What did he say that Haman might do? **Destroy all the Jews.**

Who is strong to deliver his people? **God.**

#### THE LESSON CATECHISM.

(For the entire school.)

1. How was Haman promoted? **Above all the princes.**

2. What filled him with wrath? **"Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence."**

3. How did he resolve to be avenged? **To put to death the Jews in the empire.**

4. What triumphant challenge can God's people utter? GOLDEN TEXT: **"If God be for us, who can be against us?"**

#### NEW CHURCH CATECHISM.

4. Upon what is true religion founded?

True religion is founded upon the knowledge of God and of his will revealed to man.

John xvii. 3. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

ROMANS X. 17.

## THE LESSON OUTLINE.

## God's People and Their Enemy.

## I. THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

1. **Dispersed.** *Scattered abroad.* v. 8.  
Preached to every creature. Col. 1. 23.  
Out of every kindred. Rev. 5. 9.
2. **Peculiar.** *Diverse from all.* v. 8.  
People shall dwell alone. Num. 23. 9.  
Be ye separate. 2 Cor. 6. 14-18.
3. **Hated.** *Not for....profit.* v. 8.  
World knoweth us not. 1 John 3. 1.  
The world hateth you. John 15. 18, 19.
4. **Persecuted.** *Be destroyed.* vs. 9-11.  
Beware of men. Matt. 10. 16-18.  
We are killed. Rom. 8. 35, 36.
5. **Protected.** *Deliverance.* Ch. 4. 14.

If God be for us. Rom. 8. 31, 37.

Not an hair...perish. Luke 21. 16-18.

## II. THEIR ENEMY.

1. **Powerful.** *Above....the princes.* v. 1.  
Wickedness in high places. Eph. 6. 12.  
Your adversary the devil. 1 Pet. 5. 8.
2. **Haughty.** *All....bowed.* v. 2.  
Exalteth himself above all. 2 Thess. 2. 3, 4.  
Earth shall worship him. Rev. 13. 4-8.
3. **Cruel.** *Sought to destroy.* v. 6.  
Trial of....scourging. Heb. 11. 35-39.  
The fiery trial. 1 Pet. 4. 12.
4. **Unprincipled.** *I will pay.* v. 9.  
Of your father the devil. John 8. 44.  
Enemy is....the devil. Matt. 13. 39.

## EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

Sixty-three years after the return of the Jews and forty-three years after the completion of the temple, Esther, a favorite wife of King Xerxes, arrayed herself heroically against a plot made by Haman to destroy the Jews. The book that tells the story of Esther was written, according to Professor Sayce, about B. C. 425, fifty years or so after the event it records occurred; its author was acquainted with the places he describes. Singular testimony to its substantial historical accuracy is furnished by the annual feast of Purim, celebrated by the Jews to this day in honor of Haman's overthrow. There is little question about the identity of the Ahasuerus of this story with the Xerxes of Greek literature. The cruel and superstitious character of Aemestris, who is described by pagan authorities as the wife of Xerxes, cannot be easily harmonized with either that of Vashti or Esther; but Persian monarchs had many wives. It is notable that there is no mention of God in the Book of Esther. There have been efforts made to identify the feast described in the first chapter with the assembly that Xerxes called in the third year of his reign to arrange for the Grecian war. As the result of the feast Vashti was deposed from being queen, and an amusing decree was issued that every man should rule in his own house. Then, if we continue to identify Ahasuerus with Xerxes, followed the invasion of Greece, and great reverses to the Persian arms. After the return of Xerxes from this disaster Esther was chosen queen.

**Verse 1. Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite.** Haman is not known aside from this story, neither is Hammedatha, and there are unanswered questions concerning the meaning of "Agagite." The Septuagint calls Haman "the Bugean," but the meaning of that also is uncertain. Probably both names are local ones, now disused, of the place of Haman's birth. But Professor Adeney thinks that "Agagite" is a nickname of contempt given by the Jews, derived from Agag, the king of Amalek whom Samuel hewed in pieces. **Set his seat above all the princes.** Nearer to the throne, and probably also higher from the floor. This advancement would be understood to be a type of advance of official position. There can be no rearrangement of seats at table in a court without a great social turning down and raising up. **Princes.** Courtiers.

**2. The king's servants.** The king's slaves;

the lower officers of the court, porters and others. **The king's gate.** The open spaces before the palace where the crowds gathered for the administration of justice, and where ambassadors of foreign powers were entertained. **Bowed, and revered Haman.** This was the ordinary oriental practice. **The king had so commanded.** If we are to understand that a special order of this sort was given, we must assume that Haman's advancement was unpopular, and that royal authority was required to enforce the respect which went with his office; but the statement may mean merely that the king had bestowed on him certain dignities which carried with them these marks of honor. **Mordecai.** An elder cousin of Esther, whom he had brought up as a daughter.

**3. Why transgresseth thou the king's commandment?** Why should Mordecai be exempt from a universal rule? Apparently Mordecai's

answer was a statement that the rules of his religion would not permit him to offer religious honors to a mortal.

**4. When they spake daily unto him.** Reminding him of his disobedience of the command they felt bound to obey. **He hearkened not unto them.** Did not change his conduct. **They told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand.** That is, actuated by jealousy, they "informed" maliciously, curious to see whether or not his course would be tolerated. Haman seems not to have noticed Mordecai's disrespect till these fellow-slaves told him. **He had told them that he was a Jew.** Which may even then have caused a prejudice of dislike. (See note on verse 8.)

**5. Then was Haman full of wrath.** Mordecai's course maddened Haman; for if, because he was a Jew, he need not bow, then no Jews need bow.

**6. He thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone.** If Haman had informed the king that one of the slaves had presumed to disobey the royal edict and to insult the court favorite, the king would have said at once, "Put him to death;" but Mordecai had insulted him as a Jew, and Haman was determined that the Jews should pay the penalty. **He sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus.** This scheme to exterminate an entire race spread throughout the great empire is startling; but those who have read history know how the Persians sought to destroy all the Magi, and how even in the Christian era the French Catholics sought to destroy all the Protestants on Saint Bartholomew's Day, and can understand how bitter passions could formulate such a scheme as this.

**7. The first month, that is, the month Nisan.** The first month of the Jewish religious year, which begins near the close of March and covers most of April. **They cast Pur.** A word which the writer goes on to translate as meaning the lot. From it is derived Purim, the name of the feast commemorating the deliverance wrought by Esther. **From day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month.** They shared the superstition about lucky days, and sought to ascertain them as the Romans did in later years by auguries and the flight of birds. Our phrase does not mean that every day of the eleven months they cast lots, but that they cast lots to try the good or ill fortune of each day in the twelve months, and that the result of this lottery was the choice of the thirteenth day of the twelfth month. This result of Persian superstition was advantageous to the Jews, for it gave them time to contravene

the plans of Haman. The "twelfth month" was called **Adar**, and corresponds nearly with our March.

**8. A certain people . . . dispersed among . . . all the provinces.** Here is one of the earliest statements of that terrible hatred of the Jews which has led to odious crimes in all countries, to bitter persecutions in Russia and Austria, to the strange Dreyfus complications in France, and to growing prejudice in Germany, England, and the United States. ~~Perhaps the strongest reason for this prejudice is not vengeance because the Jews killed Jesus, nor dislike of their peculiar traits, nor the ignorance and filth of certain degraded classes of the race, nor jealousy because their superior mental powers make it comparatively easy for them to attain prominent place in almost every branch of activity; it includes all these and more; but back of all these is the fact that they are scattered abroad and dispersed among the people of all the nations, and yet do not mix with any.~~ This empire of the Persian kings was made up of the scraps and fringes of a score of monarchies. Nineveh and Babylon and Persia, one after the other, had churned and mixed up the populations, had transported inhabitants by the hundred thousand from one province to another, had builded cities and populated them with medleys of races. To forward the ends of statecraft they had so pulverized all tribal destinations that hardly any of the nations they conquered retained its individuality at the time of the coming of Christ, except the Jews, who would marry with none but Jews, and whose laws were diverse from all people. **Neither keep they the king's laws.** Probably this was literally true while really false. It is difficult for Jews to keep our Sabbath laws, for instance, and in other ways their beliefs and customs make them objectionable; nevertheless, as a class they are a law-abiding people, and doubtless were in Haman's day. **It is not for the king's profit to suffer them.** Haman does not make any suggestion concerning the profit of the kingdom. He would have been conspicuously out of place as an oriental courtier if the prosperity of the kingdom had been of much account to him; but if he could prove that the king himself was to be advantaged by the destruction of any, destroyed they would be.

**9. Let it be written that they may be destroyed.** (See note on verse 6.) **I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge.** Estimates of the value of great ancient payments and treasures are necessarily uncertain. This sum has

been estimated all the way from ten millions to twenty millions; perhaps seventeen millions is a safe guess. What was the money to be paid for? Notwithstanding the allusion in the close of the phrase to the **king's treasures**, it is probable that Haman knew well that he would not be asked for any money, that he was a sufficient favorite with the sovereign to make such an offer safe; but his was an age when the wicked ruled, and the maxim "to the victors belong the spoils" was nowhere disputed; and if he were given the right to kill the Jews, their treasures would be given to him, so that out of them he could pay this money. **Those that have the charge of the business** refers not to the murderers who were to be employed to kill the Jews, but to the tax collectors, "those who had the charge of superintending, receiving, and depositing the revenues of the kingdom," in Dr. Terry's phraseology.

**10. The king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman.** In those days men did not write their signatures, but stamped them with a signet or seal, from which custom, indeed, the word "signature" is derived. The ring was given to Haman for the purpose of sealing with royal authority letters which Haman was to send to the rulers of the provinces.

**11. The silver is given to thee, the people**

**also.** Xerxes regarded himself as a great monarch, and a great monarch should give greatly. By a thoughtless word, succeeded doubtless by feasting and laughter, the king of Persia, emperor of millions, had consented to the slaughter and pillage of an innocent race. The utter levity of ancient despots is shown by the loan of the signet ring, which reminds one of the old story of the courtier who, being given the royal signet ring for one afternoon, took advantage of his opportunity to sign a warrant for the arrest and death of the king, and reigned in his stead. The delay until the following March was due not to any weakness of the king, but, as we have seen, to the superstition of Haman. There was throughout the great empire a sort of postal system, men on horseback taking messages for miles to stations which had been established in all directions. We can imagine Haman drawing up the decree, sealing it with the king's seal, passing it over to the royal secretaries to duplicate, and then sending it by these postmen along every line of travel. And what was the news? That all the Jews were to be put to death on the day mentioned, and their property seized. And so the plot seemed to be well laid and success certain. Horrible, indeed, are the vices of envy and jealousy! But God sat among the shadows, keeping watch above his own.

### CRITICAL AND HOMILETICAL NOTES.

**Verse 1. After these things.** After the events recorded in the preceding chapter. Ahasuerus began his reign in 486 or 485 B. C. Esther was made queen about eight years later (see chap. 2. 16). The promotion of Haman was subsequent to the coronation of Esther. **Ahasuerus.** Most critics identify him with the Xerxes of Greek history. He was the son of Darius Hystaspes and ruled from about 486 B. C. to 466 B. C., when he was murdered by Artabanus and Aspamitras, two high officers of his court. **Haman.** Mentioned only in this story. Therefore all that is known of him must be gathered from the Book of Esther. **The Agagite.** Both Jewish and Christian tradition, on very meager grounds, however, make him the descendant of Agag, the Amalekite (see 1 Sam. 15. 8). The furious enmity between Amalek and Israel is well known. **Set his seat above all the princes.** The promotion of favorites or the degradation of those who had incurred the monarch's hatred was a common occurrence in oriental courts. The rank of a dignity was represented by the elevation of his seat as well as by his robes of office. Haman occupied the next

highest seat to the king. He was grand vizier or chief minister.

**2. The king's gate.** Either the principal entrance to the palace, guarded by a host of inferior officers, or more probably the place where law was administered and all business requiring the attention of the king or his immediate representatives was transacted (see 1 Kings 22. 10 and Ezek. 11. 1; comp. also Ruth 4. 1.) The government of Turkey is still called the *Sublime Porte* (gate) from the gate near the palace of the sultan, where justice is administered. **Bowed down, and did reverence.** The Jews did prostrate themselves in common with all orientals to men of high rank (see 2 Sam. 14. 4; 18. 28, and 1 Kings 1. 16). They, however, attached no religious significance to the act. In Persia and some other countries it was different. Here kings were regarded as divine, hence prostration before them was construed as worship. **Mordecai bowed not down,** etc. Such an act on his part would be idolatry, and treason against Jehovah, the King of kings. The classical writers also mention instances where Greeks refused to bow before men. Mordecai lived for

principle, not for policy. The world, in all ages, has had a large number of men, grand men, who spurned the favor of the great at the expense of their loyalty to truth and to God. It is not necessary for a good man at any time to do as others do, unless others do right. Better be a Mordecai, holding fast to principle, in danger of disgrace and death, than a Haman, exalted above his fellows, resorting to any means to accomplish ungodly ends.

**4. Whether Mordecai's matters would stand.** "Words" is a better translation than "matters." Mordecai had told them that he was a Jew and therefore would not pay reverence to Haman. Now, these courtiers were curious to know whether such a reason would be accepted by Haman and Ahasuerus.

**5. When Haman saw.** Haman did not notice this apparent disrespect until some meddler had called his attention to it.

**6. He thought scorn.** An unhappy rendering. It literally reads: "It seemed contemptible in his eyes." **To lay hands on Mordecai alone.** "Alone" must be emphasized. The death of one man could not appease the wrath of Haman; the entire Jewish race must be put to death. This is not the only instance recorded in history where entire families or tribes were slaughtered to gratify the angry feelings of a man in power. When Darius Hystaspes ascended the throne there was a wholesale slaying of the Magi. And, alas, how often have the poor Jews been massacred in large numbers even in civilized Europe.

**7. The first month.** The Jewish year commenced with the Passover. The first month would therefore be the end of March or the beginning of April. **They cast Pur.** The word "pur" is Persian, and probably akin to the Latin *pars*, English *part*, in the sense of lot. The casting of lots is of very ancient origin, and was very common among the natives of the ancient world and is still extensively resorted to in order to decide important questions. **Before Haman.** By the astrologers, but in his presence. **From day to day.** It is not meant that nearly twelve months were spent in casting lots, but rather that lots were cast in order to find the most auspicious day. The Persians laid much stress upon lucky as well as unlucky days. **Adar.** The end of February or the first of March, depending upon the full moon. The Jews had nearly a year to mature plans for their deliverance.

**8. A certain people . . . dispersed . . . in all the provinces.** Though many Jews had returned to Jerusalem. Most of them were scattered here and there through the provinces. **Their laws are diverse.** The charge was

true, but had little bearing on the question. **Neither keep they the king's laws.** Therefore dangerous to any government. The same charge was brought against them by the Samaritan chiefs (see Ezra 4, 8 ff.). It is probable that the Jews obeyed all laws except those relating to religion.

**9. Ten thousand talents of silver.** The word "talent," like the word "penny" or "shilling," is a variable term, therefore it is impossible to get at the exact value. If the talent of silver is reckoned at \$1,300, the sum promised by him would be about \$13,000,000; others would make it five or six millions more. Ten thousand talents, in any case, was a large sum, but Haman might have been a man of immense wealth, or he might have hoped to confiscate that sum and more from the Jews. **Those that have the charge of the king's business.** Revenue collectors and treasury officers.

**10. The king took his ring from his hand.** The ring served not only as an ornament, but also as an emblem of authority. It was used as a seal or a signet, and documents bearing the impress of the royal seal were all-powerful. "For the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse" (chap. 8, 8). The transferring of the ring to Haman was in some sense to make him equal to the king.

**11. The silver is given to thee.** This is not as magnanimous as it seems; for the monarch could at any time take anything and everything from any of his subjects, no matter how high in power. **The people also.** He does not take the trouble to inquire into the merits of the case, but blindly gives Haman power over the Jews. Indolent oriental monarchs, to this day, are often only tools in the hands of avaricious, intriguing ministers.

## Thoughts for Young People.

### Lessons Concerning Jealousy.

**1. Jealousy is an unpleasant object for contemplation.** It is always pleasanter to take lessons of imitation from virtue than lessons of warning from vice. The story of Haman's plot is relieved and made entertaining only by the overthrow of the plot, which this lesson does not bring to view. But the first thought we get from its study is that

"Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,  
As, to be hated, needs but to be seen."

**2. Jealousy, like other vices, soon loses its unpleasantness to those who become familiar with it.** Neither Ahasuerus nor Haman was at the outset an unmitigated villain, but they lived so long in

the atmosphere of jealousy and hatred that they became at ease in the midst of the wickedest plottings. So, continues the poet, concerning vice:

"Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,  
We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

3. *There is a force that works for righteousness, in spite of all wickedness, "in spite of dungeon, fire, and sword," in spite of majorities on the wrong side. God never sleeps, and his forces, like the stars in their courses, work for righteousness.*

4. *It never makes a wrong right to license it. The decree which Haman secured from Ahasuerus was essentially wicked. No king or governmental authority could make it right. It was abhorrent to the pure and fair mind to devote a large number of defenseless people to ruin, no matter who signed the license. Is not our government doing worse—giving the right to a few for the sake of money to destroy a large number of men, women, and children? No state can grant such a license without receiving such injury as the destruction of the Jews would have been to Persia. Permission to do wrong ruins the people against whom the wrong is done, ruins the Haman who asks the permission and receives it, and ruins the state which grants it. But against this evil force a few people, backed by the Lord, can array themselves, and those who work against the modern wickedness of license will inevitably succeed as Mordecai and Esther succeeded.*

5. *The test of a man's character is faith. In creed Persians and Jews alike held to the overruling providence of God, but it was only a few faithful ones like Mordecai who, in the midst of apparent triumph of evil forces, could continue to be calm and confide in God for the fitting outcome.*

### Orientalisms of the Lesson.

The Jews keep in memory the events of the Book of Esther to this day. They also maintain in all the places where they live in colonies their own laws and usages just as described by Haman (verse 8), laws, "diverse from all people," and in many Christian countries it comes to pass that their very thrift, health, and success enable them to make such successful competition with all others that it comes to be held that "it is not for the king's profit [the common weal] to suffer them."

The intensest spirit of patriotism of the Hebrews of the present time comes out at the Feast of Purim, an old Persian word meaning "lots," in commemoration of the Jews of Persia from extermination by Haman's plot. It occurs on the fourteenth of Adar, the last month of the Jewish

year. It is preceded by a day of fasting, known as the "Fast of Esther," when it is unlucky to work, though there is no authority for prohibiting secular employments. Even on this fast day the Jewish women are very busily employed in preparation for the feast day which follows. They prepare choice dishes, and "krappelch," a little cake like a fritter, and "Hamantashen," a triangular cake much relished by the children, though the older folk are very fond of it. A great deal of generosity is exhibited at this festival; the "collection for the poor," of which we read so much in the New Testament Church, was specially remembered at this time, it being the custom in the olden time that every Jew should send at this time a half-shekel to Jerusalem or to pilgrims to the Holy Land generally. In the vicinity gifts were sent to the poor early in the morning that they might prepare for the evening feast. Even the poor made presents to each other, and if there were no recognized poor, the money contributions were kept till another time. This custom is still observed. What is known as the Halukah, "Box for Palestine," is faithfully contributed to, and in the distant countries, as we have before pointed out, the itinerant collectors press contributions to this fund.

A writer in *The Jewish Monthly Intelligencer*, of London, in February, 1896, gave a graphic description of the ceremony of this feast, from which we learn that in the evening of the "Fast of Esther" the synagogues are illuminated with candles. "After the usual service the minister offers three benedictions. The first for the command to read the Megilah (Book of Esther), the second for the miraculous intervention which God manifested in those days to their fathers, the third for the preservation of the Jews to the present time. Then the Megilah (the parchment containing the book of Esther) is unrolled and spread out as a letter and read before the people in an intoning voice, different from that in which the law and the prophets are read." This writer tells us that it is incumbent on women and children to be present to hear this reading; the only occasion when women and children are admitted into the congregation with men. When the reader utters the word "Haman," the people all call out, "Yimach Shemo" (Let his name be blotted out, or, The name of the wicked shall rot), or "Arur Haman" (Cursed be Haman), and then they repeat this curse, naming the wife of Haman (Zeres) and his ten sons. At this time they beat on the benches or book boards in front of them, or stamp with their feet. But when the name of Mordecai or Esther is uttered they shout "Barak Mordecai, barak Esther" (Blessed be Mordecai, blessed be Esther); "Berakim kol

Israel" (Blessed be all Israel). The Book of Esther is translated to the women and children, and dramatized before their eyes.

### By Way of Illustration.

*The Book of Esther.* God is not so much as mentioned in the Book of Esther. For this reason many have denied its right to be in the canon. But to most readers the Book of Esther is as full of the divine Spirit and purpose as the Book of Kings, as full as though each page had been emblazoned with the name of the Deity. You see a purple cloud resting in regal glory against the sunset sky in the midst of a vast expanse of golden sheen. Do you say, "I cannot see the sun behind that cloud; therefore I am sure the sun is not there?" Do you not rather say, "I am sure he is there, for I see his light on every side, and even the purple splendors of the cloud itself are the witnesses of his transforming beams?" So with the Book of Esther. It floats midway in the Bible, as upon a sea of gold. Everywhere around it the Divine shines forth.—*C. A. Dickinson.*

*Verses 2-5.* The Persians not only from motives of piety, but from motives of prudence, worship their kings as gods. So that the act or prostration before Haman would be understood to imply worship. Herodotus mentions certain Greeks who, on being introduced to the royal presence at Susa, refused to prostrate themselves before the king because it was not their custom to worship a man.

Dr. W. M. Taylor says, "The difference between right and wrong may be shown in a little matter, but it is not therefore a little matter." The Christian maiden at Athens who was asked to throw a few grains of incense before the statue of Minerva might have reasoned that there could be no harm in a little act like that. But she did not. She knew that it meant that she worshiped Minerva instead of the true God; and although she might have saved her life by doing it, and her lover who had professed Christianity urged her to do it, she was true to her convictions, and died a martyr, but a Christian.

*The end of the plot.* "Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap." The proverbs of all nations reflect this. "Ashes always fly back in the face of him who throws them." "He that sows thorns, let him not go barefoot." "It is a poor rule that does not work both ways."

Southey's ballad of the "Inchcape Rock" tells how the bell put up by the good abbot to warn ships of their peril was taken down by the sea pirate "Ralph the Rover," who a year thereafter

perished upon the same rock "with ships and goods in the righteous judgment of God."

Rome, once the haughty queen of the world, laid the heavy hand of oppression upon her sister nations, and in a few centuries she herself was brought under the heel of the papal power, which has crushed the independence and manhood out of her people as the red wine is crushed from the grape. Spain, who practiced the inquisition, and oppressed and killed her people, is to-day a weak and blighted nation. Everywhere among nations and individuals Haman is hung on his own gallows.—*Monday Club Sermons.*

*A moral boomerang.* Haman's efforts to injure others became a moral boomerang and destroyed himself. An Australian boomerang consists of nothing but a piece of hard polished wood about two feet long, peculiarly curved and flattened on one side. This stick can actually be thrown by its skilled operator in such a manner that it will go straight away for many yards, then gently curve upward, turn in its course, and take the back track and hit the thrower.—*Select Notes.*

### Heart Talks on the Lesson.

We must read the entire Book of Esther in order to get the spiritual teaching of which it is so full. There is more in the story than is written. It is a "song without words" that will sing in your heart, if you learn and listen, God's precious and inspiring truth. It teaches the power of personal influence; how God uses individuals, and overrules circumstances to work out the designs of his providence and his government, although those whom he so uses may be quite unaware of the part they have to do. It teaches that a single impulsive word or act discloses character, and may turn events to affect the good or ill of many persons, yes, even of nations. Vashti little thought her high-spirited refusal to obey the whim of Ahasuerus was closely connected with the salvation of the Jews throughout Persia. A word or act of yours this very week may have an influence of which you do not dream.

Let us be careful. This story illustrates the meanness of envy and covetousness. How soon these passions grew to hatred and murder in Haman's heart! Is there anyone for whose good fortune you are not glad? Anyone toward whom you feel resentment or ill-will? Envy and jealousy are demons of destruction. They are to be feared. Let us get them out of our hearts quickly! Haman seems a very hateful person as we read of him here, but I am afraid his spirit is



not unknown among our own acquaintances—perhaps including ourselves.

This story teaches, too, that every endowment we have of mind or body may be used in doing good. Esther's personal beauty first won the heart of the king and made it possible for her to be used by God in his purposes for his people. "Beauty is vain" if it makes one proud or selfish, but taken simply and gratefully as the good gifts of God, all personal charms and accomplishments are to be prized for the use we can make of them in the Lord's service.

This truth, too, is shown—that beauty of character is better than beauty of person. There were many fair maidens in the palace of Shushan, but there was something in Esther different from the rest. She was not only admired, but she "pleased" the king, and the king's servants, and "all them that looked upon her." We are not told why, but we can guess from those characteristics of true womanhood suggested by her conduct. Esther accepted what was given as her portion with dignified contentment, not with the restless, selfish spirit of the others who demanded all they could possibly get. She seems to have had the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price—a spirit which needs to be cultivated in the unduly-aspiring, self-seeking, overambitious fever of society. This quiet mind is not a sign of weakness, but of force. In every act of this charming young woman we see the self-forgetful, courageous, tactful, patient spirit which belongs to strong character. It is a stimulating and instructive study; we will take it up again next Sunday. Let us put to practical use this week the lessons thus far learned.

### The Teachers' Meeting.

The outline of the story as given in the Book of Esther should be narrated. Note the four types of character prominently presented in the book: 1. Ahasuerus, the king, the type of the man of pleasure. With high rank, imperial power, vast opportunities, he lived for himself. How many follow his example! Not all such sit on thrones, but in our land every man is a king, and some are ruling their realm after the manner of Ahasuerus. 2. Haman, the officeholder, the type of the corrupt politician, the unjust steward. Here is an eminent man. How does he make use of his eminence? To gratify private aims, to wreak vengeance on a rival. Office is not to him a public trust, but a personal property, and he wickedly uses it. When on the verge of success he utterly failed because he had left God out of his calculation. 3. Esther, a beautiful woman,

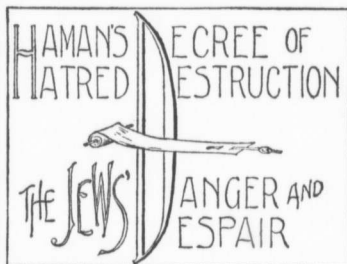
whose power depended on her beauty, using it not to do harm, but to save, to please, and to lift up men. 4. Mordecai, the man of faith. He would not abase himself before man, because he bowed to God. When not a ray of hope shone outside his heart was bright with faith. He believed that Esther had been raised up for this one hour, and that her highest honor lay not in her promotion, but in her danger. What we need is this insight of faith and recollection of God's personal relation to our lives.

### OPTIONAL HYMNS.

Fear not! God is thy shield.  
Precious promise.  
O holy Saviour! friend unseen.  
Dare to do right!  
Am I a soldier of the cross.  
One little hour for watching with the Master.

O sometimes the shadows are deep.  
Breast the wave, Christian.  
In heavenly love abiding.  
Soldiers of Christ, a holy cause defending.

### Blackboard.



The king overlooked the service of Mordecai in saving his life, and gave the wicked Haman unrivaled power and honor. But Mordecai despised him and took no pains to conceal it, incurring hatred for himself and his race. Haman then appealed to the king for a decree, demanding the utter destruction of all the Jews in the land, which the king granted. When the danger became known the condemned people were in despair, for the decree could not be changed. Nevertheless, "If God be for us, who can be against us," and prevail?

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## LESSON III. ESTHER PLEADING FOR HER PEOPLE. [Oct. 15.]

GOLDEN TEXT. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. *Psa.* 37, 5.

## AUTHORIZED VERSION.

[Read chapters 8-10.]

Esth. 8. 3-8, 15-17. [*Commit to memory verses 15-17.*]

3 And Es'ther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Ha'man the A'gagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews.

4 Then the king held out the golden scepter toward Es'ther. So Es'ther arose, and stood before the king.

5 And said, If it please the king, and if I have found favor in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Ha'man the son of Ham-med'a-tha the A'gag-ite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the king's provinces:

6 For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?

7 Then the king A-has-u-e-r'us said unto Es'ther the queen and to Mor-de-cai the Jew, Behold I have given Es'ther the house of Ha'man, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews.

8 Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring; for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse.

15 And Mor-de-cai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shu'shan rejoiced and was glad.

16 The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honor.

## REVISED VERSION.

3 And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Ha'man the A'gagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews. Then the king held out to Es'ther the golden scepter. So Es'ther arose, and stood before the king. And she said, If it please the king, and if I have found favor in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Ha'man the son of Hammed'atha the A'gagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are

6 in all the king's provinces: for how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the

7 destruction of my kindred? Then the king Ahasue'rus said unto Es'ther the queen and to Mor'decai the Jew, Behold, I have given Es'ther the house of Ha'man, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand

8 upon the Jews. Write ye also to the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse.

15 And Mor'decai went forth from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a robe of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shu'shan shouted and was glad. The Jews had

17 light and gladness, and joy and honor. And in every province, and in every city, whither

17 And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

soever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had gladness and joy, a feast and a good day. And many from among the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews was fallen upon them.

### Home Readings.

- M.* Esther Pleading for her People. Esth. 8. 1-8.  
*Tu.* Esther Pleading for her People. Esth. 8. 9-17.  
*W.* Deliverance commemorated. Esth. 9. 20-28.  
*Th.* Joy in deliverance. Psa. 31. 14-24.  
*F.* Promise of help. Zeph. 3. 14-20.  
*S.* Safety of God's people. Psa. 91.  
**S.** Trust, and fear not. Psa. 37. 1-17.

### Lesson Hymns.

No. 118, New Canadian Hymnal.

Let him to whom we now belong  
 His sovereign right assert.

No. 58, New Canadian Hymnal.

Thou my everlasting portion,  
 More than friend or life to me.

No. 210, New Canadian Hymnal.

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,  
 Pilgrim through this barren land.

**Time.**—Perhaps between 485 and 425 B. C.  
**Place.**—Susa.

### QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR SCHOLARS.

#### 1. Frustrating Evil, v. 3-8.

- What king is here spoken of?  
 Under what obligation was the queen to Mordecai?  
 What was done to Haman?  
 How came punishment to him?  
 What was the entreaty of Esther?  
 What did extending the golden scepter imply?  
 For what purpose had Haman sent out letters?  
 For what purpose did Esther wish letters sent out?  
 What effect had the king's seal on a document?  
 To whom should we commit our interests?  
**GOLDEN TEXT.**  
**2. Rejoicing in God, v. 15-17.**  
 What kind of apparel did Mordecai wear when he left the king?  
 What did this signify?  
 What effect had his presence upon the city?  
 Why were the Jews glad?  
 Why were those who were not Jews glad?  
 Was the edict given to Haman reversed?  
 How was it modified?  
 What made many of the heathen become Jews?  
 Is fear a right motive?

If so, when is it right, when wrong?

What is the highest motive to prompt to right living?

Point out divine providence in this lesson.

### Teachings of the Lesson.

- The "golden scepter" was held out to one who was loved and who was earnest in entreaty. God loves us, and the scepter of his mercy is ever held out to him who asks for pardon.
- If a law cannot be reversed, it can be modified by another law, so as to take away the sting. If a man can interpose a law, so can God, and he does.
- The queen rendered service to the Jews because she was well trained. Little did she or her guardian know what service she would render. It is good to be trained from early youth in the true faith.

### QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE SCHOLARS.

#### 1. Frustrating Evil, v. 3-8.

- Who was Esther?  
 How was she related to Mordecai?  
 What had she risked to plead for the lives of her people?  
 Was the king favorably disposed toward her?  
 What did she beseech the king with tears to do?  
 What sign did the king show that he was with Esther?  
 What, in verse 5, did Esther ask of the king?  
 What reason did she give in verse 6?  
 To what two persons did the king speak?  
 What did he say in verse 7?  
 What strange order does he give in verse 8?  
 What does that mean?

#### 2. Rejoicing in God, v. 15-17.

- How was Mordecai dressed when he left the king?  
 Of what was that a sign?  
 Were the people of the city pleased or displeased by Mordecai's advancement?  
 What happened to the Jews?  
 How were the people of the land affected?  
 Is our **GOLDEN TEXT** as true to-day as it was in Mordecai's time?

### Practical Teachings.

Where in this lesson do we learn—

- That whatever we have to do we should do thoroughly?
- That God never sleeps?
- That one should never keep a bad promise?

### QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.

What sad fate overtook Haman? **He was hanged.**

What had he planned to do? **Hang Mordecai.**

What had Esther told the king? **That Mordecai had brought her up.**

What did Esther ask more of her king? **That he would save her people.**

What did holding out the golden scepter mean? **The favor of the king.**

What did she ask of him? **Help and favor for others.**

Which of her words show that she had a tender heart? Verse 7.

Whom did the king appoint to carry out his decree?

How did Mordecai go out from the palace?

Who rejoiced with him?

What effect did all this have? **Many believed in Esther's God.**

What does this teach? **To trust God.**

### THE LESSON CATECHISM.

(For the entire school.)

1. For what did Esther beseech the king? **"To put away the mischief of Haman."**

2. What did she say to him? **"How can I endure to see the evil which shall come unto my people?"**

3. What royal permission was given to the Jews? **To stand and fight for the defense of their life.**

4. What is the command and promise of the GOLDEN TEXT? **"Commit thy way unto the Lord,"** etc.

### NEW CHURCH CATECHISM.

5. How hath God revealed himself and his will to man?

God hath revealed himself and his will to man in his works of creation and providence, and in the world's redemption by his Son, as set forth in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

Psalm xix. 1. The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy work.

Hebrews i. 1, 2. God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.

### THE LESSON OUTLINE. A Queenly Character.

#### I. HER LOVABLENESS.

*Favor in the sight of all.* Chap. 2. 15.

Daughters....blessed her. Sol. Song 6. 9.

Favor with God and man. Luke 2. 52.

#### II. HER OBEDIENCE.

*Did the commendment.* Chap. 2. 20.

Obey your parents. Eph. 6. 1-3.

Forget not my law. Prov. 3. 1, 2.

#### III. HER PRAYERFULNESS.

*Fast....I also will fast.* Chap. 4. 15, 16.

Seek the Lord. 1 Chron. 16. 11.

Thy face....will I seek. Psa. 27. 8.

#### IV. HER SELF-SACRIFICE.

*If I perish, I perish.* Chap. 4. 16.

Neither count....life dear. Acts 20. 24.

Lose his life....find it. Matt. 16. 25.

#### V. HER TACT.

*Come....unto the banquet.* Chap. 5. 1-4.

Wise as serpents. Matt. 10. 16.

Unto that which is good. Rom. 16. 19.

#### VI. HER PATRIOTISM.

*Evil....unto my people.* vs. 8, 6.

If I forget thee. Psa. 137. 5, 6.

My brethren, my kinsmen. Rom. 9. 1-5.

### EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

Lesson III is the continuation of the story of Lesson II. Between the two scenes thus selected from the astonishing drama of Haman and Mordecai came a number of rapid events quite equal in interest to those selected for study. The student should read the entire Book of Esther, and pay particular attention to the parts between chapter 3 and chapter 8. Our last lesson told of the decree coaxed from the unscrupulous despot Ahasuerus by his court favorite—a decree which swept off the earth the race of Jews. Susa, the capital city, first heard of this decree, and in every Jewish household there were lamentation and woe. Mordecai, whose character we noted in our last lesson, forsook his office in the king's gate, clothed himself in sackcloth, covered his head with ashes, and sat in a public place in the city walling aloud. In the royal harem, surrounded by servants and lapped in luxury, was the royal favorite Esther. No one had dreamed that she was a Jew, for from all classes and all directions beautiful women were gathered to the palace, and no one spent time in

tracing their genealogies. But she knew, her uncle Mordecai knew, and God knew. And Mordecai asked her a pertinent question, "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" The successive incidents of the strange story arrange themselves with the fullest dramatic effect. The student will recall how Esther became queen, and will note the conspiracy of Bigthan and Teresh to murder Ahasuerus, and Mordecai's disclosure of their plans. Mordecai sent to Esther charging her to go unto the king and plead for her people. There was much danger in doing this, and it was fully discussed. Esther asked for Mordecai's prayers, and ended her last message to him with the memorable words, "And so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish." The story goes on to tell how Esther appeared unbidden and received royal favor; how she invited the king and Haman to two successive banquets; how Haman's jealous hate rankled and festered at the sight of Mordecai, and how at his wife's suggestion he caused a high gallows to be made and planned to hang the Jew on it. That night was a sleepless night for the king. When the chronicles of his reign were read to him, and the conspiracy which had threatened his life was recalled to his mind, he inquired what honor and dignity had been done to Mordecai for that, and as nothing had been done for him, the king ordered the royal apparel to be put upon him and the crown royal to be set upon his head. Then, seated on the king's horse, he was to be taken through the streets of the city by one of the chief princes with the proclamation that this was the man whom the king delighted to honor. At the second banquet Esther made her appeal and Haman was disgraced and hanged on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai, his house was presented to Esther, and the king took the ring which he had taken from Haman and gave it to Mordecai, and Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman. Then comes our lesson. Verses 9 to 14 record merely the fulfillment of the directions given in verse 8.

**Verse 3. Esther spake yet again.** Haman had been overthrown, his property had been given to Esther, his dignities had been given to Mordecai, but there was still a difficulty. The laws of the Medes and Persians must not be altered, and the decree for the destruction of the Jews was still in force. **Fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears.** We need not wonder at the intense passion of Esther, for although she was in high favor with Ahasuerus, she was really, with all her countrymen and women, under sentence of death. Besides, the king was so whimsical and so irresponsible that there was no security how long his favor might last.

**4. The king held out the golden scepter.** This was the recognized sign of royal favor. The scepter was "a long, tapering staff." Woman's tears have always been a strong argument.

**5. Let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman.** Esther was a woman and a Jew, and it is not likely that she knew much concerning Persian law, but she was asking what the king himself could not grant—the royal decree could not be legally reversed.

**6. How can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred.** With great cleverness she disregards the danger to her own life and does not even specify Mordecai.

**7. Then the king Ahasuerus said.** He begins by showing at once his kindly feeling toward Esther and Mordecai, and his inability to do more.

**8. Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh**

**you, in the king's name.** As if he said, "I am prohibited by law from reversing my own decree, but here is my ring and here is my authority; do you devise any counter-measure that you like." A shabbier, more cowardly retreat was never made.

**9-14.** The plan on which Mordecai and Esther agreed was to notify the Jews everywhere to stand in self-defense, and when victorious to take possession of the goods of those who attacked them.

**15. Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel.** He had been summoned to the king's presence because of the honor that Ahasuerus proposed to confer upon him in recognition of his discovery of the plot against the king's life. He had been invested with the insignia of Haman's office, and clothed with the authority of chief minister. He now goes forth to attend to his official duties. **Blue and white . . . gold . . . fine linen and purple.** Purple and white, and blue and white, seem to have been the royal colors. The crown of gold was a coronet, a sign of princely station. The fine linen was the most famous texture of ancient days, and its fineness passed that of our modern silk. **The city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad.** That many Jews were there it is hardly necessary to say, for Jews have always flocked to capitals. It was probably the seat of civilization and order, as well as of royal majesty, and the decree made at Haman's suggestion had never been popular there. (See chap. 3. 15.)

**16. Light.** Happiness.

**17. A feast and a good day.** The first of

a long line of exultant national patriotic anniversaries. **Many of the people of the land became Jews.** Not because they believed in God, but because the fear of the Jews fell

upon them. A most cowardly and wicked act on their part, but an act which displayed, nevertheless, the great work which God had wrought on their behalf.

### CRITICAL AND HOMILETICAL NOTES.

**Verse 3. Esther.** The name Esther is supposed to be from the Persian *stara*, star. Her Hebrew name was *Hadassah*, myrtle (chap. 2. 7). **Spake yet again.** Fully aware of the fickleness of the king and afraid of the influence which might be brought to bear upon him, she, at the risk of the royal disfavor, persisted in her petitions. Her first request (chap. 7. 2 ff.) having been successful, she now has faith to ask more. **Fell down at his feet.** This position of suppliants in the East was not assumed by her the first time. **With tears.** The tears of a pure woman have often accomplished wonderful results. Haman had been executed, but the edict against the Jews was still in force, hence the tears.

**4. Then the king held out . . . the golden scepter.** Persian kings in the pictures discovered at Persepolis are always represented as having the scepter, the emblem of power and authority, in their hands. From chap. 4. 11 we learn that no one dared approach the king unless the golden scepter was held out to him as a sign that he was welcome. Classical writers also bear testimony to the fact that audience with the Persian monarch was very difficult to obtain and granted only to great favorites. This was doubtless a measure of protection.

**5. Let it be written to reverse, etc.** We are not to suppose that Esther was ignorant of the laws of the Medes and Persians, which made the reversal of any law or decree impossible. She simply attempts the impossible. Men of great faith have always acted thus, even mindful that what is impossible with men is possible with God. Esther very adroitly represents the wicked machinations and plots against her people as the sole work of Haman. For the moment she loses sight of the royal seal and the delegated royal power.

**7. Then the king Ahasuerus said.** The king knew well that the decree was irrevocable, nevertheless he spoke words of cheer and comfort to his beloved queen. He tried to make the best possible out of a very bad case. The tyrant is just as visible here as before. He has less regards for the rights of his subjects than for the whims and caprices of his favorites. **Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman.** Confiscation of property almost invariably accompanied the execution of Persian subjects. The Shah of Persia even in our day has little re-

gard for private property. Everything belongs to him. As Ahasuerus had given the Jews into the hand of Haman, so he very unselfishly refuses the silver which might be gained from their property. So now Esther, having triumphed over Haman, all his property is naturally hers. **Hanged.** It is doubtful whether men were hanged till after they had been first put to death in some other way. The object of hanging was therefore to make an example of the criminal and to expose the body as a public warning, and perhaps sometimes to gratify the angry feelings of a mob by showing that the object of their fury had been really executed. **Because he laid his hand upon the Jews.** The king emphasizes this point so as to comfort Esther.

**8. Write . . . as it liketh you, in the king's name.** Here is my seal. You know its power. Use it in counteracting what cannot be directly revoked. My governors, my generals, and my courtiers, having learned the fate of Haman, the arch enemy of the Jews, will not be slow to infer my wishes and their own advantage. This was a virtual annulling of Haman's decree. The laws against Sabbath desecration and liquor selling are excellent in most of our cities, but the saloon-keeper and the lawless know the lack of will and of consistency back of them. The motto of many of our politicians seems to be: "Favor the law, but oppose its execution." **The writing . . . may no man reverse.** Proclaim, therefore, any law you please. What you decree in my name will be just as binding as the first, yea more so, since it will be the best and final word. The ground for the unchangeableness of the Persian law was this: the king was regarded by this people as divine, and consequently his decrees as final and immutable.

**15. In royal apparel.** A great contrast with the sackcloth and ashes (chap. 4. 1). The classical writers also call attention to the magnificent and costly garments of the Persian rulers and their chief dignitaries. Even in our day the Shah of Persia dresses with extravagant elegance. **Blue and white.** "White and purple or violet were the Persian state colors. They have reference to the Persian religious views about the world. White is the color of the light, blue of the sky, purple of the sun."—*Cassel*. **Crown of gold.** The word translated "crown" here is not the same as that so rendered in chapters 1. 11, 2. 17,

and 6, 8. The latter was worn by royalty alone. The tiara of Mordecai was what might be called a coronet. **The city of Shushan shouted.** In chap. 3, 15 we read that Shushan was perplexed at the proposed extirpation of the Jews. Both statements are perfectly intelligible. There were tender hearts even in those days. Few men are so degraded as to rejoice in the undeserved suffering of innocent people, or so callous as not to feel glad when unexpected deliverance comes to the oppressed.

**16. The Jews had light.** Light, in the Bible, often denotes joy and gladness. The dark night of sorrow and gloom had turned to day and prosperity. **And honor.** Those in favor with the ruling powers will usually receive honor from the crowd.

**17. In every province.** Wherever there were Jews. **A feast.** A day was appointed for feasting and thanksgiving. This was the feast of Purim, on the 14th and 15th of Adar (see chap. 9, 17-20). **Many from among the people became Jews.** Mordecai was now grand vizier and Esther queen. Many would turn from policy. But doubtless many were really converted to Judaism. It may be, however, that the passage has no reference to religious views, but simply means that many became friendly to the Jews.

## Thoughts for Young People.

### Lessons from Esther's Career.

**1. On home relationship all morality is built.** When Esther exclaimed, "How can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?" she was swayed by the motive which prompts husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, to be faithful to home and children, and which prompts patriots to be faithful to their country. The family is the first and closest of all the bonds that bind the human race together. Families grouped make villages, cities, and nations, and the same tribal instinct and racial instinct are no more wrong intrinsically than is family feeling. But in the light of our Saviour's teachings we see that no prejudice against any person should be cherished because he is outside. Patriotism is a virtue, but it becomes a vice when it develops hatred and contempt of other races and nations than our own.

**2. It is not easy to undo one's misdeeds.** Surely if anyone could undo the past, it would be a king, but this king, despotic though he be, is powerless. Not more powerless, though, than hundreds of men in their private lives.

**3. By self-sacrifice all victories worth winning are won.** Esther saved her nation's life by risking

her own. "Except a seed of wheat fall in the ground and die, it abideth alone."

**4. Men should recognize God's hand in public and private affairs.** Nothing is said about it in Esther, but it is abundantly recognized in the early historical books, and in Ezra and Nehemiah. Even the actions of men are almost directly attributed to God. God has a greater hand in the management of human affairs than in our practical skepticism, we admit.

## Orientalisms of the Lesson.

It is supposed that the feasts of Esther to the king and Haman were given out of doors and not in any hall. It was customary to erect tents in some one of the courts for such purposes. The inner court, where Esther appeared to implore the king, was between the "King's Gate," whereat Mordecai sat, and the northern terrace wall. The "House of the Women" was situated between the great hall and the citadel, with communication by means of a bridge over the ravine, or a covered underground passageway. It was in front of one of the lateral porticoes that occurred what we read of in Esth. 1. 5, 6, when the king "made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace," of the ornaments of which it is said there "were white, green, and blue hangings, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble," while "the beds were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black marble;" the passion for the mosaic of different colored marbles in flooring still dominates the architectural structures of the Orient. The "King's Gate" where Mordecai sat, was a large hall a hundred feet square, with four pillars in the center supporting the roof. The central hall is believed to have been the largest interior of the ancient world, except that of the great hall at Karnac. The entire group of buildings at Susa is considered to have been very grand from an architectural standpoint. The ruins cover a space 6,000x4,500 feet, and the circumference of the ruins, exclusive of outlying mounds, is about three miles.

The king held out his golden scepter to Esther, which accords with the descriptions of the scepter of the Persian monarchs as "golden," or probably of massive gold; the inclination of it toward a person was a sign of favor, and kissing it was a sign of homage. The royal equipage accorded to Mordecai was after the style of the oriental monarchs, very dazzling and very costly. It is such to this day.

### By Way of Illustration.

*Esther pleading for her people.* The unfortunate clannishness of the Jews may be in part an alloy forced into the purer composition of their patriotic love for one another by years of persecution. A Jew is never seen begging on the street. Hebrews have hospitals and benevolent institutions for their own people. The spirit which was in Moses when he prayed, "Forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book," is seen in the Jewish people. In this lesson Esther bears testimony to the intense love of a Jew for his own countrymen.—*C. R. Brown.*

*Other women who were patriots.* The wife and mother of Coriolanus were patriotic when they dared to go into the enemy's camp and face the angry Coriolanus and plead that the siege against the city should be withdrawn, upon which he ordered his troops to withdraw. "And thus," says the historian, "Rome owed her safety to the tears of a woman."

Those women were patriots who, when the despotism of Charles I was being broken, took part in this great question of the time with flaming ardor. The Cavaliers nicknamed them the "zealous sisterhood," but the historian Knight says: "There is something heroic in the demeanor of that Puritan with the unpoetic name of Ann Stugg, who headed a great company of women and went to the door of the House of Commons and presented a petition which said: 'It may be thought strange and unbecoming our sex to show ourselves here, bearing a petition to this honorable assembly, but we too are sharers in the public calamities.' Pym, the speaker, replied, 'Repair to your houses, O ye women, we entreat, and turn your petition into prayers for us.'"

*Esther's opportunity.* An old Latin motto says, "Opportunity has hair in front, behind she is bald; if you seize her by the forelock, you may hold her; but if suffered to escape, not Jupiter himself can catch her again." A man stood looking at the statue of a fountain where the water trickled through its hand into the basin beneath. "That is the way I have treated my opportunities," he said; "I have let them slip by unused."

*The man or woman for the emergency* is forthcoming, because God, who foresees the emergency, makes ready for it. Many a strange conjunction of history is to be explained by this divine provision. Christianity had its Paul, Protestantism its Luther, English freedom its Cromwell, American history its Lincoln, each in the very hour when he was indispensable.—*Rev. F. W. Ryder.*

*Faith and works, prayer and effort.* God's

promises were never meant to ferry our laziness. Like a boat, they are to be rowed by our oars; but many men entering forget the oar and drift down more helpless in the boat than if they had stayed on shore. President Garfield said, "Luck is like an old United States bank bill, of very uncertain value; but pluck is as good as gold all the time."

*Victory.* God gives everything but punishment in overmeasure. When poor men make requests to us we usually answer them as the echo does the voice; the answer cuts off half the petition. There are not many Naamans among us that when you beg of them one talent will force you to take two. But God's answer to our prayer is like a multiplying glass, which renders the request much greater in the answer than it was in the prayer.—*Reynolds.*

### Heart Talks on the Lesson.

A noble figure stands before us—a queen in rank, queen in beauty, queen in devotion to duty; possessor of that true throne where one reigns indeed; not the throne of royal power, but of loyal service. It was a crisis. Something must be done at the deliverance of God's people. Mordecai put before Esther her providential opportunity. How did she know, he said, but that the place she held in the kingdom was given her for this very purpose? And should she fail to meet the responsibility, her personal loss would be great; God's purpose would be wrought out some other way, but the grand opportunity of her life would be gone.

It is a sermon from life on the words of Jesus, "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." With Vashti's fate before her, it was no light thing to risk the displeasure of the king. But her noble words make us ashamed of our timidity and vascillation: "I will go, and if I perish, I perish." Esther's strength came from a secret source; it was not natural courage. She would not have sacrificed youth, beauty, position, favor, with such calm purpose had she not known and trusted God. A stern duty was before her and she sought his counsel and help in prayer. Three days she fasted with her friends. Fasting implies prayer and that preparation of soul which is found only in waiting upon God.

You have the same source of strength. You are young; great opportunities are before you, great possibilities within you, great responsibility upon you for the use of every gift you possess. All needed courage and strength are at your command, if you seek them, as did Esther, from God. You notice she was not in



haste to carry out her plans. A mind stayed upon him, seeking his guidance, is not impetuous or rash. It waits for the right moment. Many good purposes fail through lack of patient waiting. The grace to hold in is as necessary as the grace to go ahead. Tact is a God-given grace too, and is beautifully shown in Esther's fine management. No doubt the banquet to which she invited the king was most to his liking, and no doubt the fair hostess herself was at her best. Haman was asked, because she would have him quite at her advantage by this royal favor shown him. For some unwritten reason she saw that the first evening was not a good time to present her request. The whole thing might be spoiled by too eager haste, so she gave the invitation to a second banquet, at which with great adroitness yet perfect frankness she made her plea. The composure with which she accused and convicted "this wicked Haman" had far more cutting force than heated words or an excited manner could have had.

A sleepless night may be a necessary part in some plan of God for us. David said, "Thou holdest mine eyes waking." Let us take this comfort some night when we cannot sleep. Ahasuerus was prepared to carry out Esther's request by what had been read to him in wakeful hours the night before, and according to the teaching of our Golden Text last week in all this history we see that if God be for us, nothing can be against us.

The stars in their courses fight for us when he is on our side. The smallest circumstances are woven into the thread of good fortune. If we commit our way to him, he has means beyond our thought to bring it to pass. Acquaintance with persons of high character ennobles us. I am sure we must be better, purer, higher in purpose since our acquaintance with Queen Esther wearing the crown of fidelity to duty and unselfish service for others.

### The Teachers' Meeting.

The central figure in this lesson is Queen Esther, a beautiful woman, who used her beauty to save, to bless, and to lift up men. Her circumstances were strange, quite beyond the reach of the girls and women engaged in Sunday school work. But the four great principles manifested by her will make modern womanhood and manhood as heroic as hers. (1) Faith. Esther was kin to Miriam and Deborah and Hannah and the Shunammite. As a worshiper of God she grew like her conception of God. Because she believed in the God of her father she was willing to do and dare in God's cause. (2) Filial love. Mordecai,

her uncle, stood as father to her. She had been lifted far above him; he could never see her again, but "Esther did the command of Mordecai like as when she was brought in with him." (3) Patriotism. In Esther's case patriotism was closely intertwined, as it should be in ours, with deep religious sentiment. Loyalty to the Jews meant loyalty to the word of God. It was love of the Church. (4) Self-sacrifice. She was ready to die for her people or with her people, as the need might be, and in going before the king uninvited there was every reason to suppose she would be killed. Her life was laid down for her kinsmen.

### OPTIONAL HYMNS.

What a friend we have in Jesus,  
All the way my Saviour leads me.  
Since Jesus is my friend,  
He leadeth me,  
Far out on the desolate billows.

A mighty fortress is our God,  
When in the tempest he'll hide me.  
Jesus all my grief is sharing,  
I am safe in the Rock.  
All the way the Saviour leads me.

### Blackboard.



Employ the design used for the last lesson, inserting first the words from the Golden Text, "God is for us," as reason for the Jews' deliverance under the new decree. Then as the story of Esther is told alter the words, and show how the fate of the Jews was reversed when Haman was hanged, and the second decree of the king issued, saying that the Jews should stand in self-defense against the wholesale slaughter which Haman had planned. Thus they were delivered from death, and feasting prevailed in place of fasting, and joy instead of sorrow.

## Library References.

The same references apply here that were used in last Sunday's lesson.

FREEMAN'S HANDBOOK: Ver. 4, The golden scepter, 395. Ver. 5, Irreversible edicts, 396. Ver. 15, Presents of clothing, 93, 257, 397.

## SERMONS ON THE LESSON.

Verse 6.—Smyth, George H., "Queen Esther's Devotion to Her People," *The Treasury*, vol. viii, page 340. Glover, Richard, "Queen Esther, an Example of Intercession: a Pastor's Plea for India," *The Pulpit*, London, vol. lxxii, page 320.

## LESSON IV. EZRA'S JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM.

[Oct. 22.]

GOLDEN TEXT. The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him. EZRA 8, 22.

## AUTHORIZED VERSION.

[Read chapter 7, and 8. 15-36.]

Ezra 8. 21-32. [*Commit to memory verses 21-23.*]

21 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of A-ha'va, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.

22 For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him.

23 So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was entreated of us.

24 Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sher-e-bi'ah, Hash-a-bi'ah, and ten of their brethren with them,

25 And weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering of the house of our God, which the king, and his counselors, and his lords, and all Is-ra-el there present, had offered:

26 I even weighed unto their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels a hundred talents, and of gold a hundred talents;

27 Also twenty basins of gold, of a thousand drams; and two vessels of fine copper, precious as gold.

28 And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the LORD; the vessels are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the LORD God of your fathers.

29 Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chief of the priests and the Le'vites, and chief of the fathers of Is-ra-el, at Je-ru'sa-lem, in the chambers of the house of the LORD.

30 So took the priests and the Le'vites the weight of the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them to Je-ru'sa-lem unto the house of our God.

31 Then we departed from the river of A-ha'va on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Je-ru'sa-lem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way.

32 And we came to Je-ru'sa-lem, and abode there three days.

## REVISED VERSION.

21 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river A-ha'va, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek of him a straight way, for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.

22 For I was ashamed to ask of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them that seek him, for good; but his power and his wrath is against

23 all them that forsake him. So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was in-

24 treated of us. Then I separated twelve of the chiefs of the priests, even Sher-e-bi'ah, Hash-a-bi'ah, and ten of their brethren with

25 them, and weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering for the house of our God, which the king, and his counselors, and his princes, and all Is-ra-

26 el there present, had offered: I even weighed into their hand six hundred and fifty talents

27 of silver, and silver vessels an hundred talents; of gold an hundred talents; and twenty

28 bowls of gold, of a thousand darics; and two vessels of fine bright brass, precious as gold.

29 And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the LORD, and the vessels are holy; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the

30 LORD, the God of your fathers. Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chiefs of the priests and the Le'vites, and the princes of the fathers' houses of Is-ra-el, at

31 Je-ru'sa-lem, in the chambers of the house of the LORD. So the priests and the Le'vites received the weight of the silver and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them to Je-ru'sa-lem

32 unto the house of our God.

31 Then we departed from the river of A-ha'va on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Je-ru'sa-lem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the

32 hand of the enemy and the liar in wait by the way. And we came to Je-ru'sa-lem, and abode there three days.

**Time.**—About 458 B. C. **Place.**—Crossing the wilderness from the Euphrates to Jerusalem.

### Home Readings.

- M.* The king's decree. Ezra 7. 6-20.  
*Tu.* The king's gifts. Ezra 7. 21-28.  
*W.* Ezra's Journey to Jerusalem. Ezra 8. 21-32.  
*Th.* Ezra's prayer. Ezra 9. 1-9.  
*F.* The prayer continued. Ezra 9. 10-15.  
*S.* God our refuge. Psa. 46.  
*S.* Be separate. 2 Cor. 6. 11-18.

### Lesson Hymns.

#### No. 54, New Canadian Hymnal.

Come, every soul by an oppressed,  
 There's mercy with the Lord.

#### No. 43, New Canadian Hymnal.

All the way my Saviour leads me;  
 What have I to ask beside?

#### No. 44, New Canadian Hymnal.

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
 Let me hide myself in thee.

### QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR SCHOLARS.

#### 1. The Fast, v. 21-23.

For what purpose was the fast?  
 What is the general purpose of fasting?  
 Is religious fasting at the present day obligatory?

With what other duty is fasting associated in the Bible?

Why did Ezra not ask the king for a military escort?

Does God work independently of human agency in rescuing men?

Is character any power in an army of men?

What had been told the king? GOLDEN TEXT.

#### 2. The Commission, v. 24-30.

What was the commission?

Who were appointed to it?

In what sense were those appointed holy to the Lord?

In what sense could the precious vessels be said to be holy?

What is a freewill offering?

Where were the sacred vessels brought?

To whose care given?

#### 3. The Journey, v. 31, 32.

Whither was the journey?

From whom were they delivered?

Who gave them deliverance?

Why did he give it?

How can we approach God in time of danger?

Why should we trust in him?

### Teachings of the Lesson.

1. Spiritual work is to be done by spiritually-minded men. God appoints such. Ezra was a man of this stamp. He was needed, and he was called, and he was helped. Let everyone be prepared for some work for God.

2. Bring that which is of value into the service of God's house. Gold is not too good to offer for the spread of his kingdom. The best offering is ourselves—"a living sacrifice." To make it acceptable it must truly be said of us, "Ye are holy unto the Lord."

3. It is good to have "the hand of our God upon us" if it is upon us in mercy, not in wrath, for then it brings deliverance from our foes.

### QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE SCHOLARS.

#### 1. The Fast, v. 21-23.

To what good man had the king committed the returning Israelites?

What did he proclaim at his first stopping place?

Why was he ashamed to ask the king for protection by soldiers?

What had he said to the king?

Did God hear the prayer of these good people?

What is the GOLDEN TEXT?

#### 2. The Commission, v. 24-30.

Whom did Ezra set apart?

What did he intrust to their care?

Was he particular in weighing and counting these valuable things?

Why was it appropriate that these men should take care of them?

What exhortation did Ezra give them? Verse 29.

#### 3. The Journey, v. 31, 32.

Where did the people start for?

What was upon them?

Who delivered them?

Where did they safely arrive?

### Practical Teachings.

Where in this lesson do we learn—

1. That if we trust in God at all, we might as well trust him thoroughly?

2. That one can never be so religious that one can afford to be unbusinesslike?

3. That God always keeps his promises?

### QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.

Who was Ezra? **A priest and teacher of the law of God.**

Why was he living in Persia? **He was one of the Jews who remained after the captivity.**

Why did he want to go to Jerusalem? **To teach the laws of God.**

How did the king help him? **He told him to take all the Jews with him he wanted to, and he gave him gold and silver, and vessels for the temple.**

What did Ezra call the people to do? **To hold a fast.**

For what did they pray? **That God would take them safely to Jerusalem.**

Why did they need protection? **They had to go through the enemy's country.**

Did they get through safely? **Yes, no harm came to them.**

Through what do we pass in this life? **An enemy's country.**

Who can take us safely through? **The Lord.**

### THE LESSON CATECHISM.

(For the entire school.)

I. What did Ezra know? **GOLDEN TEXT: "The hand of our God is upon all," etc.**

2. What was weighed out? **The silver and gold and the vessels for a sacred offering.**

3. What did Ezra say to the people? **"Ye are holy unto the Lord."**

4. How was God merciful to the returning Jews? **He delivered them from the hand of the enemy.**

### NEW CHURCH CATECHISM.

6. What is the authority of the Holy Scriptures? **The Holy Scriptures, written by holy men of God as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, alone give us certain and full knowledge of God and his will, and are the all-sufficient and only infallible rule of our faith and practice.**

2 Peter i. 21. **For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.**

2 Timothy iii. 16, 17. **All scripture is given by inspiration 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.**

John xvii. 17. **Sanctify them through a thy truth: thy word is truth.**

### THE LESSON OUTLINE.

#### The Man Ezra.

#### I. A LOYAL ISRAELITE.

*This Ezra went up.* Chap. 7. 1-6.

For Zion's sake. Isa. 62. 1.

One body in Christ. Rom. 12. 4, 5.

#### II. A BIBLE STUDENT.

*A ready scribe in the law.* Chap. 7. 6.

Within my heart. Psa. 40. 8.

From a child.... hast known. 2 Tim. 3. 15.

#### III. A BIBLE TEACHER.

*Prepared.... to teach.* Chap. 7. 10.

Ezra.... read therein. Neh. 8. 1-3.

Faithful.... able to teach. 2 Tim. 2. 2.

#### IV. A MAN OF PRAYER.

*Proclaimed a fast.* Chap. 8. 21.

Thy face.... will I seek. Psa. 27. 8.

Seek the Lord.... continually. 1 Chron. 16. 11.

#### V. A MAN OF FAITH.

1. *For good to them that seek.* v. 22.

Nigh unto all.... that call. Psa. 145. 18.

Ask.... it shall be given. Matt. 7. 7, 8.

2. *He delivered us.* v. 31.

Waters.... shall not come nigh. Psa. 32. 6.

I will deliver thee. Psa. 50. 14, 15.

#### VI. A MAN OF BUSINESS.

1. *Weighed unto them.* vs. 24-27.

Provide.... able men. Exod. 18. 21.

Who shall dwell.... holy hill. Psa. 15. 1, 2.

2. *Watch.... until ye weigh.* vs. 28-30.

To do justice.... acceptable. Prov. 21. 3.

Providing for honest things. 2 Cor. 8. 21.

#### VII. A REFORMER.

*Then arose Ezra.* Chap. 10. 1-10.

Not conformed to this world. Rom. 12. 2.

Be ye separate. 2 Cor. 6. 17, 18.

### EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

Between seventy and eighty years after Zerubbabel and his followers had returned from exile to Jerusalem Ezra, one of the greatest men in Hebrew history, started on the same journey. The king who had petted Esther had passed away, and his son, Artaxerxes Longimanus, was on his throne. During the seventy or eighty years of restoration great changes had been wrought in the

deserted land of Judah. More than fifty thousand people had settled in Jerusalem and its environments. In their poverty, but using the gifts of the Persian monarch, these people had erected a new temple. But the first enthusiasm passed away. In spite of encouraging messages from prophets they remained a lethargic and dispirited company, housed among ruins. Their city was not even defended by walls. The promises of the prophets hardly seemed to be realized. "The country was pillaged in open day, and many Jews carried off into slavery by nightly surprises, while the corpses of murdered men were often found on the road."—*Geikie*. The people who had gone to Jerusalem were far worse off than those who had remained in Babylon. Almost of necessity the pagan tribes about were conciliated, and commercial relations and marriage alliances were established. But while the spiritual condition of the Jews at Jerusalem sank from bad to worse that of the exiles in Babylon steadily improved. Surrounded by heathen, they made all the greater endeavor to be faithful to their God. It seems to have been a literary period in Babylon, and the learned men of the Jews began to write, "to copy, to comment, and to recast." Gradually the class known as scribes came into existence, and their influence steadily and surely, though unobtrusively, emphasized the power of the book of the law. One scribe was greater than all the rest. His name was Ezra. A school of disciples had gathered round him in Babylon to spread his Gospel and recommend his example. Ezra, having devoted himself to the Hebrew law, a holy ambition arose in his heart to enforce it among his people, especially those in Jerusalem. There seems to be little question that Jewish influence had become very powerful at the Persian capital. Ezra had asked for the authority to take a band of fresh emigrants to Jerusalem, but he needed money also, and the king's decree, granting all that was asked, is given in Ezra 7. 11-26.

**Verse 21.** On the twelfth day Ezra and his caravan halted at the river Ahava. This is not certainly identified, but Stanley and others believe it to be the spot where caravans now make their plunge into the desert. **I proclaimed a fast there.** He had nearly two thousand people under his control, including heads of families, members and servants, priests, Levites, and temple slaves. Fasting as a religious act was popular among the Jews. **The river Ahava** flows into the Euphrates from the east. At the junction was an ancient city called Ava. **That we might afflict ourselves before our God.** The superficial affliction was the formal abstaining from food and from the bath. The deeper affliction was what all these things were signs of—profound penitence, close communion with God, submission, consecration. **To seek of him a right way for us.** Without the guidance of God they would be adrift on one of the most savage of deserts, but it was not sand and sun only that they must fear. Hostile tribes, especially those who lived on plunder and loot, were plentiful, and there was already political opposition to their plans. **For us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.** We can hardly overestimate the dangers that beset Ezra. No one now would cross from Babylon to Jerusalem with children and treasure if he could possibly help it, and certainly no one would venture without military escort. It was known to many that Ezra was to carry the treasure destined for Jehovah's temple.

**22. I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen.** Ezra knew that he had made a profound impres-

sion on the mind of the Persian king, and he feared that that impression would be neutralized if he now asked for human protection. **The enemy in the way.** This enemy was made up of swarms of nomad tribes who cared nothing for the Persian king or the Persian or the Hebrew gods. That the enemy knew of Ezra's start, and deliberately planned to plunder the caravan, is evident from verse 31. While Ezra continued in the king's undisputed territory he was reasonably safe, but these wild men of the desert cared nothing for the king's authority except as it was manifested by soldiers. **The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him.** This is immutably true. In the midst of all uncertainties God's hand favors those that love him and opposes those that oppose him. It is true that not all true Christians are given worldly prosperity, but God never forgets them. Ezra had every mile of the journey leaned on "the hand of God." In another place he says, "I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me;" and again, "The hand of our God was upon us."

**23. So we fasted and besought our God for this.** To fast would have been hypocritical without the prayer; the prayer was greatly intensified by the fast. **He was entreated for us.** Ezra had the assurance that his prayer had been heard.

**24. I separated twelve of the chief of the priests, etc.** The old Greek translation (Septuagint) gives a more evident meaning, "I assigned twelve of the chief of the priests." That is to say, twelve unnamed leading priests were added to the committee already appointed,

consisting of twelve Levites (Sherebiah, Hashabiah, plus ten). As the vessels had been set apart for God's worship, he desired to set apart certain men who would have no responsibility on this journey but to take care of the vessels.

**25. Weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels.** In spite of the fact that coins were current at this time the Persian treasury kept its wealth in bars or nuggets. We may suppose the vessels to have come originally from Jerusalem. **The offering of the house of our God, which the king, and his counselors, and his lords, and all Israel there present, had offered.** The sacredness of the occasion when these lavish offerings were made impresses Ezra profoundly.

**26. Six hundred and fifty talents of silver, etc.** It has been roughly estimated that the wealth of this verse would be represented by a million and a quarter of silver money and five millions of gold.

**27. Twenty basins of gold of a thousand drams.** Or, as we have it in the Revised Version, "bowls of gold of a thousand darics." A daric was worth about five dollars. **Fine copper, precious as gold.** Not, however, what we would call copper, but a beautiful amalgam made by the ancients, which had almost fabulous value.

**28. Ye are holy unto the Lord.** That is, separated, consecrated. The men themselves by their birth were consecrated men debarred from many of the privileges of other Israelites, because they inherited the sacred duties of the temple. **The vessels are holy also.** They too had been set aside by a formal consecration, and some of them doubtless made for the holy temple. Let the holy vessels be given to the holy men. **A freewill offering unto the Lord God.** Not a tithe or tax of any sort, but the spontane-

ous outpouring of their hearts. **Of your fathers.** Jehovah, the God of your fathers.

**29. Watch ye, and keep them.** As if he had said, "The rest of us will defend you; you defend these sacred vessels." **Until ye weigh them.** Make a definite account of the treasures. **Chief of the fathers of Israel.** The appointed heads of the several communities, as well as of the sacred orders. **At Jerusalem.** In the capital city of the rejuvenated nation. **The chambers of the house of the Lord.** Rooms on each side of the main building, used sometimes for lodgings of the priests, sometimes as storerooms.

**30. So took the priests and the Levites.** The commands of the foregoing verses were all obeyed.

**31. The twelfth day of the first month.** It took Ezra and his company eight or nine days to journey from Babylon to Ahava. **To go unto Jerusalem.** To go straight across the desert which is in the middle of what is now Turkey in Asia. **The hand of our God was upon us.** (See note on verse 22.) **He delivered us from the hand of the enemy.** Whether with or without fighting we are not told. **Such as lay in wait by the way.** (See note on verse 22.)

**32. We came to Jerusalem.** Four words describing a journey which must have been fraught, morning, noon, and night, with picturesque incidents and dangers. The strange sounds that still make that journey a terror to the traveler, the tropical sun, the mirror of sand, the dry, stale food, the want of water, the exhaustion of the children and the aged, the constant fear of wild beasts and wilder men, the endless anxiety of Ezra and his counselors—all these go unrelated. **Abode there three days.** For three days Ezra remained resting from the journey before undertaking to execute the commands of God.

### CRITICAL AND HOMILETICAL NOTES.

**Verse 21. Then.** The Hebrew has "and." **Proclaimed a fast.** Fasting, though not distinctly prescribed in the law of Moses, is of very ancient origin. From the reference to fasting in the Old Testament it seems to have been more common after than before the exile. As gluttony and excess are hostile to communion with God, so fasting and abstemiousness promote genuine piety. **The river Ahava.** There was a district or town of the same name. (See verses 15 and 31.) The exact locality is unknown. Ahava may have been the modern Hit, more than a hundred miles northwest of Babylon. **That we might afflict ourselves.** That is, by fasting and

prayer. (Comp. Lev. 16.29.) **A straight way.** Not "a right way," as in the Authorized Version, but rather a plain, straight road, neither deviating to the right nor left. What Ezra desired was to reach Jerusalem as soon as possible. **All our substance.** Not to mention the special offerings given by the king and other wealthy men, the two thousand Jews composing this company must have had considerable property of one kind or another.

**22. For I was ashamed to ask.** Ezra, no doubt well versed in Jehovah's dealings with his people, and full of faith in his power to deliver and save them, having emphasized this

point in his speech to the king, was now naturally ashamed to ask for a special guard through the desert. **The enemy in the way.** The journey from Babylon to Jerusalem was beset with dangers from marauders and hostile tribes, who made sudden attacks upon travelers. (See verse 31.) **The hand of our God.** The author of Ezra and Nehemiah is very fond of this old Hebrew phrase. (See chap. 7, 6, 28, and verses 18 and 31 of this chapter, as well as Neh. 2, 8, 18.) "The hand of God" is a Hebraism for God's power, and especially his favor and goodness, which guide and support all those who trust him. **His power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him.** Therefore there was no need of a military escort. Blessed is the man who trusts Jehovah. There is no higher or safer guide.

**23. He was entreated of us.** He heard us. He allowed himself to listen to us. The same verb is used actively and passively in Gen. 25, 21, where we read, "Isaac 'entreated' the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord 'was entreated' of him."

**24. I separated twelve,** etc. The exact meaning of this verse is not clear, though the difficulty does not appear in the English versions, unless we read the margin of the Revised Version, where we have "besides" instead of "even." Did Ezra select twelve or twenty-four? Were they all priests or half Levites? From verse 30 it is clear that there were both priests and Levites. It seems also that Sherebiah and Hashabiah were Levites. (See verse 19 and Neh. 12, 24.)

**25. Weighed unto them.** Though the money was weighed, coins of various kinds were in circulation among the Persians and other nations long ere this. The **vessels.** Presents from the king and other well-minded people for the temple at Jerusalem. There is no good reason for saying that these vessels were a part of those taken from Jerusalem by the Babylonians when the temple was destroyed. Those were restored nearly eighty years before by the edict of Cyrus (chap. 1, 7), and taken to Jerusalem by Sheshbazzar (Zerubbabel), prince of Judah. **Even the offering.** The same word is used of the voluntary contributions for the construction and adornment of the tabernacle. (See Exod. 25, 2; 30, 13.)

**26. Six hundred and fifty talents of silver.** As said in our notes on a previous lesson, the exact value of Bible money is not known in every case. But placing the silver talent at the low figure of \$1,300, the entire sum would amount to \$845,000. Ryle says that the silver talent was worth about \$1,800. **Of gold an hundred tal-**

**ents.** Davis in his new *Dictionary of the Bible* places the gold talent at \$29,374.50. Ryle makes it about \$27,540.

**27. Bowls of gold.** Some kind of vessels for temple use. **Of a thousand darics.** A Persian daric was a coin worth about five dollars. **Fine bright brass.** Literally, fine brass glittering like gold. It may have been orichalc, an alloy of copper and zinc.

**28. Ye are holy . . . and the vessels are holy.** To be holy means to be separated, to be set apart for sacred purposes. (See verse 24.) The injunction is that they should regard themselves as well as these freewill offerings as entirely set apart for the service of God. **The Lord, the God of your fathers.** The Hebrews had a glorious history; Jehovah had been especially good to them. Jehovah was the same God that their fathers worshiped. This appeal to their national history, religion, and their descent would have its effect with every patriotic Jew.

**29. The princes of the fathers.** The representatives selected by the fathers or chief men of the clan or families. **In the chambers.** There were rooms alongside of the temple and connected with it for the priests and also for storerooms. (See 1 Kings 6, 5 and Neh. 13, 5.)

**31. On the twelfth day of the first month.** Twelve days after leaving Babylon. (See chap. 7, 8.) It would seem that the general rendezvous or meeting place was some point on the Ahava, and not Babylon.

**32. Came to Jerusalem.** "The journey lasted throughout eighteen days of Nisan, and the three months Zif, Sivan, and Tammuz; in all about one hundred and eight days. As the crow flies the distance from Babylon to Jerusalem is over five hundred miles. But the road followed by Ezra's caravan made a long detour by Carmelish so as to avoid the desert, and could hardly have been less than nine hundred miles." —Ryle. **Abode there three days.** Tired and worn out by the long journey, Ezra, like Nehemiah at a later date (see Neh. 2, 11), rested three days before beginning active operations.

## Thoughts for Young People.

### Enemies in the Way.

**1. You cannot succeed, because the difficulties are unsurmountable.** The desert between Babylon and Jerusalem was almost impassable. The spirit of the Jews was weak. It was uncertain how they would be received in Jerusalem. There were enemies in the way and enemies waiting for them at their journey's end. So it seemed impossible for Luther to reform Europe's

theology. It seemed impossible for Wesley to bring spiritual life to millions in England and America. It seemed impossible for the Czar of the Russias to liberate the serfs, and for Abraham Lincoln to liberate the slaves. But all things are possible to him that believeth.

2. *You cannot succeed, because most of the people on whom you must depend are imperfect Christians, poor, inconsistent specimens.* Ezra we are disposed nowadays to account both a genius and a hero, and a saint too, but he probably had no idea that he was any one of the three. He felt himself to be a man who saw clearly his duty and proposed to do it. But what of the men that went with him? They were no better than those left behind at Babylon, no better than those they were about to greet in Jerusalem, no heroes, with hero's blood coursing through their veins. We talk about heroes as if they were men specially endowed, and of the heroic as if it were far beyond the reach of the ordinary man. The fact remains that the men who have borne the brunt of the world's history have been very ordinary men, and true heroism is made up of the homely virtues.

3. *You cannot succeed, because there is some self-interest bound up with your imperfect plans.* But most good is done by mixed motives. Probably the man never lived, except Jesus of Nazareth, who had not mixed motives, and he who supposes that the right deed should not be done because mixed motives are behind it is making a radical mistake and opening the way for great wrong. Do not despise mixed motives if the governing motive be the love of goodness.

4. *You cannot succeed, because you are narrow.* The Puritan spirit is hard and ungracious. That year has been raised in all ages. But let us not despise the consciousness of the divine guidance, incorruptible conviction of duty, a willingness to die rather than do wrong, because in some cases, owing to the infirmity of human nature, it is linked with sternness against wrong in others and the lack of the tenderer graces of religion.

### Orientalisms of the Lesson.

There is a very graphic oriental picture in this account of the scribes of a government keeping tally as they did of the king's soldiers and of his treasures. Gold and silver were valued by weight; during much of the history of the Israelites there was no coining of these precious metals to indicate their value as currency. But even now it is common and necessary to weigh rather than count current silver and gold in the market places as well as in the king's treasury. The

shekel afforded the commonest standard of values among the Hebrews, though a stone was anciently used as a weight, but the shekel was the most accurate; it was the half-shekel that formed the standard ordered by God to be paid by every Israelite as a ransom. From the time of the exodus there were two standards, one commercial, and one for religious uses; this was the larger of the two. The half-shekel contained twenty gerahs, or literally "beans," a name of a weight, as our "grains" from corn. David had a perfect standard which was expressed by a "shekel after the king's weight." After the captivity only the holy shekel was used.

Dr. Clarke reckons the actual value of the silver and gold as worth \$3,500,000, apart from the twenty basins of gold. It would not be safe for any caravan to-day to attempt to travel in the East with any such amount of precious articles without a most formidable guard of armed soldiers, and it was not in Ezra's time either without "a band of soldiers and horsemen to help [them] against the enemy;" but as Ezra had undertaken this entire movement on the theory of the supernatural intervention of Jehovah for the restoration of his holy temple service at Jerusalem, he had faith that God would protect them on the journey. Escorts are requisite for the commonest traveling party in Bible lands to-day to protect them from brigands and Bedouin plunderers.

### By Way of Illustration.

*Ezra's confidence in God.* If Cæsar could say to the fearful ferryman in a terrible storm, "Be of good cheer; thou carriest Cæsar and therefore cannot go down," how much more may he presume to be safe that has God in his company. Punshon said of the *Mayflower* and its company of Pilgrims, "That little boat could not sink. The destiny of a nation was aboard. God was in and with those Pilgrims who sought to found a country where he could be known and worshipped."

"*Ye are holy unto the Lord.*" "Be ye holy" means to be sound and healthy-hearted; it also means to be set apart to Christ's service. The separation of a genuine Christian is not of condition or daily contact, but of character. All power for good depends upon it. The heaven is separate even when it mingles itself through the whole batch of meal. The different particles of salt are distinct from the mass of food which they season; the salt never loses its saltiness.

Christians never will impress or reform a sinful world by agreeing with it. We never can



save sinners on their own ground; it is only by living on a higher ground, living a separated and Christ-obeying life that we can hope to lift them to a higher, purer, holier, and thus a happier living. Laxity is the Church's peril. The sorest need of the hour is an emphatic Christianity.—*T. L. Cuyler.*

"The hand of our God was upon us," Chancellor McDowell in his baccalaureate address spoke of having given degrees to three hundred and fifty young men and women and of the possibilities of this army of educated young people: "A smaller number than that held the pass at Thermopylae. A smaller number than that captured the heights of Lookout Mountain. This was the number of Scotchmen who marched out with Chalmers at their head to make a free Church. This was the number of Waldenses who fought their way back through incredible hardships to recapture the Piedmont valleys for liberty and truth. It is almost exactly the number of Gideon's band. The charge of the Light Brigade was made by only a few more than this. It is five times as many as the seventy, and twenty-five times as many as the twelve who turned the world upside down and changed the face of the centuries. The *Magnflower* carried only one hundred souls, but they had empires in their brains and mighty nations in their hands."

So Ezra and his people were only a remnant, but they kept pure the faith which has come down to us.

*Ezra, the Puritan.* He has been called a Puritan, and so he was. And this is a title to be proud of. Carlyle, who writes much about Puritans, tells us of those five hundred members of Parliament—Puritans—who, upon the opening day, after taking the oath of office, fell upon their knees and besought God for their country. Afterward they forgot and forgave all wrongs. Then testing each proposed law by God's law, presented their bills.

What if, when Parliament meets, that Puritan scene should be repeated! Our age does not need more tools, luxuries, or comforts so much as it needs righteousness. Two hundred towns and cities of a sister State have this year been blackened with murder.

What means it that in many of these little Puritan towns the first hundred years of their history was never so much as stained with the record of a single murder? What means it that these little communities had no poorhouse, no jail, no tramp, no drunkard, and that in 1690 a sheriff in one Puritan community proposed the abolition of his office because in his four years of service he had had nothing to do?—*Dr. N. D. Hillis.*

### Heart Talks on the Lesson.

Wonderfully comforting are these sweet chapters of the dear old book when the Holy Spirit instructs us. I remember one morning having a great desire to get a broader view of the things God had promised to show me, I took up my Bible, asking the Spirit to direct me in reading. Turning the leaves, my eyes rested on the seventh chapter of Ezra. The list of queer names with which it began did not promise much for spiritual refreshment, and what was I to get out of the journey of that long-ago exile back to his own country? or from the letter of a heathen king? But I read on thoughtfully through the seventh and eighth chapters with the marginal references, and if you would like to know what an interesting journey I had with Ezra, stopping at many cheerful way stations, finding charming company, and finally coming to a very restful place where I said, "Lord, it is good for me to be here," you must read these same chapters in the same way and see for yourself to what delightful places they will lead. Do not skip the names. They show that Ezra was honored as the son of a godly ancestry. Christian fathers and mothers may claim God's blessing upon their children. Sons and daughters have a precious inheritance in the prayers and the example of Christian parents. How sweet it is to think of those perhaps in heaven now who so lived and prayed for us!

But Ezra could not have been the man he was simply because his ancestry was good. He had something to do with the making of his own character. He prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord. Such a beginning is sure of a good outcome. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word." David said by doing so he would "walk at liberty." Ezra had an ambition not only to know God's law himself, but to teach it to others. He found out what makes life worth living. He had every facility for being good and doing good, because his heart was set upon both, and nothing really went wrong with him, because the hand of God is upon all them for good that seek him, and all things work together for good to them that love God.

Since there is nothing outside of God's all, we can be very confident and happy in any undertaking if we are quite sure that, like Ezra, we really seek to know and be guided by his will. He was not ashamed to have it known that he depended upon God to find a right way for him and for his little ones and for his substance. He was ashamed to ask help of the king, because it would look as if he doubted God. What a

rebuke to our timid, fearful way of meeting difficulties! Ezra knew how to pray, because through the study of the word he knew the God who hears and answers prayer. He would not dishonor God before the heathen king by distrusting him even in regard to temporal affairs. Why do we dishonor our Father by worry or fret when he said, "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass?"

Prayer is always answered when the heart, like Ezra's, is prepared to know and to do God's will.

### The Teachers' Meeting.

A study of Ezra's character, "the second Moses." (1) He was a diligent student of the Scriptures. The legislators, the chroniclers, the psalmists, and the prophets had written. It was necessary to copy their writings, put them in order and interpret them. It is generally believed that through Ezra more than any other writer we have the Old Testament writings in their present form. (2) He became a pilgrim to Jerusalem, went on a dangerous and difficult journey for the purpose of joining and reorganizing the little band who were restoring the city of Palestine. (3) He was a man of faith and prayer. He who goes on God's errand can afford to trust God. (4) He had sagacity and prudence in business matters. And those qualities are distinctly shown in this lesson. (5) At Jerusalem he showed himself a reformer. (6) He was not only a Bible student, but a Bible teacher.

### OPTIONAL HYMNS.

All people that on earth do dwell,  
Praise the Rock of our salvation.  
How firm a foundation.  
Fear not! God is thy shield.  
Come, ye that love the Lord.

How gentle God's commands.  
Children of the heavenly King.  
Be with me every moment.  
Go forward, Christian soldier.  
Soldiers of Christ.

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FREEMAN'S HANDBOOK: Ver. 21, Fasting, 430. Ver. 24, Chief priest, 717. Ver. 26, Gold and silver talents, 140. Ver. 27, "Drams" of gold, 373.

### Blackboard.

<p>THE HAND OF OUR GOD</p>	<p>IS UPON ALL THEM FOR GUIDING PROVIDING PROTECTING DELIVERING THAT SEEK HIM</p>
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Our first care in every undertaking should be to make sure that the hand of God is with us and not against us. Ezra was carrying out God's purpose and had confidence in his guidance, for he had put it in the king's heart to beautify his house. Since he had provided the gold and silver vessels and provisions, Ezra believed he would protect him from assault in taking them to Jerusalem. His confidence was not misplaced. Although surrounded by enemies and beset with thieves, the journey was accomplished in safety. They who seek the Lord and his glory need not consider the strength of the enemy, but seek and wait upon God, and his hand will also deliver them.

### LESSON V. PSALMS OF DELIVERANCE.

[Oct. 29.]

GOLDEN TEXT. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. Psa. 126. 5.

AUTHORIZED VERSION.

[Read Jer. 31.]

Psa. 85 and 126. [*Commit to memory Psa. 126.*]

1 LORD, thou hast been favorable unto thy land; thou hast brought back the captivity of Ja'cob.

2 Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people; thou hast covered all their sin. Selah.

REVISED VERSION.

1 LORD, thou hast been favorable unto thy land:

Thou hast brought back the captivity of Ja'cob.

2 Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people,  
Thou hast covered all their sin. Selah.

3 Thou hast taken away all thy wrath:

Thou hast turned *thyself* from the fierceness of  
thine anger.

3 Thou hast taken away all thy wrath : thou hast turned *thyself* from the fierceness of thine anger.

4 Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease.

5 Wilt thou be angry with us forever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?

6 Wilt thou not revive us again : that thy people may rejoice in thee?

7 Show us thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us thy salvation.

8 I will hear what God the LORD will speak : for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints : but let them not turn again to folly.

9 Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him : that glory may dwell in our land.

10 Mercy and truth are met together ; righteousness and peace have kissed *each other*.

11 Truth shall spring out of the earth ; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

12 Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good ; and our land shall yield her increase.

13 Righteousness shall go before him ; and shall set us in the way of his steps.

1 When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zi'on, we were like them that dream.

2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing : then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them.

3 The LORD hath done great things for us ; *whereof* we are glad.

4 Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south.

5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

6 He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves *with him*.

4 Turn us, O God of our salvation, And cause thine indignation toward us to cease.

5 Wilt thou be angry with us forever? Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?

6 Wilt thou not quicken us again : That thy people may rejoice in thee?

7 Show us thy mercy, O LORD, And grant us thy salvation.

8 I will hear what God the LORD will speak : For he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints :

But let them not turn again to folly.

9 Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him ; That glory may dwell in our land.

10 Mercy and truth are met together ; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

11 Truth springeth out of the earth ; And righteousness hath looked down from heaven.

12 Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good ; And our land shall yield her increase.

13 Righteousness shall go before him ; And shall make his footsteps a way to walk in.

1 When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zi'on,

We were like unto them that dream.

2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter, And our tongue with singing : Then said they among the nations, The LORD hath done great things for them.

3 The LORD hath done great things for us ; *Whereof* we are glad.

4 Turn again our captivity, O LORD, As the streams in the south.

5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

6 Though he goeth on his way weeping, bearing forth the seed ;

He shall come again with joy, bringing his sheaves *with him*.

**Time.**—Probably after return from exile. The second temple was dedicated B. C. 515.

**Place.**—In view of Jerusalem and the temple.

#### Home Readings.

- M. Psalms of Deliverance. Psa. 85.  
Th. Psalms of Deliverance. Psa. 126.  
W. Promise of deliverance. Jer. 30. 18-24.  
Th. A joyful prospect. Jer. 31. 1-12.  
F. Pardon and restoration. Jer. 33. 1-14.  
S. A joyful city. Zech. 8. 1-8.  
S. The Great Deliverer. Psa. 124.

#### Lesson Hymns.

- No. 175, New Canadian Hymnal.  
Lo! the fields are white for harvest,  
Ready is the golden grain.

- No. 172, New Canadian Hymnal.  
Sowing in the morning, sowing seeds of kindness.  
No. 166, New Canadian Hymnal.  
Now, the sowing and the weeping.

#### QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR SCHOLARS.

1. **Thanksgiving for Forgiveness**, v. 1-3.  
How had the Lord been favorable to the land?  
What was the nature of "the captivity of Jacob?"  
What favors had God shown to his people?  
On what condition does divine forgiveness rest?  
2. **Prayer for More Grace**, v. 4-7.  
What is meant by the petition, "Turn us, O God?"

In what sense is anger affirmed of God?  
 When does it cease toward men or nations?  
 What is meant by "revive us again?"  
 What is the effect of such reviving?  
 What is a "revival" in modern times?  
 How is it brought about?

### 3. The Answer of Hope, v. 8-13.

What is it the psalmist will hear?  
 How can we hear the voice of God?  
 What will he speak to his people?  
 What is meant by "truth shall spring out of the earth?"

What is the relation between divine favor and national prosperity?

### 4. The Blessed Fulfillment, v. 1-6.

What was the captivity of Zion?  
 What effect had the restoration upon the Jews?  
 What did the heathen say?  
 What is said of those who sow in tears?

#### GOLDEN TEXT.

What is the precious seed that religious teachers sow?

#### Teachings of the Lesson.

1. When God does us any favor we should acknowledge it. Gratitude demands this. And with the expression of gratitude should be joined a prayer for further blessings. God's goodness is unfailing, and our prayers do not weary him.

2. "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." So cried the psalmist, and we should echo that cry. The divine words are peace to those who leave the path of folly and turn not into it again.

3. To sow in tears may be to reap in joy. How often this is true in the experience of a child of God! Faith points to the future and bids us hope.

#### QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE SCHOLARS.

##### 1. Thanksgiving for Forgiveness, v. 1-3.

Who brought back the exiled Jews?  
 Of what was this a sign?  
 How had God covered their sins?  
 Had God really turned, or was it they that had turned?

Were they thankful to God for his favor to their land?

##### 2. Prayer for More Grace, v. 4-7.

For what is verse 4 a prayer?  
 Had the Jews all the prosperity of their forefathers?

Why had they not?  
 What great reason for a prayer for revival is given in verse 6?

##### 3. The Answer of Hope, v. 8-13.

When we ask God for mercies is it well for us to listen for his answers?

What will God speak to his people and to his saints?

On what condition?

Where is God's salvation?

What is the true glory of the Lord's land?

Repeat verse 10. What does it mean?

Repeat verse 11. What does it mean?

What is the psalmist's hope in the Lord?

### 4. The Blessed Fulfillment, v. 1-6.

Were the good Jews surprised when God answered their prayers?

Are we ever surprised when he answers ours?

Could they help laughing and singing?

What did the heathen say about them?

Was this true? Verse 3.

What is said about "those that sow in tears?"

#### GOLDEN TEXT.

What is the promise of the last verse?

#### Practical Teachings.

Where in this lesson do we learn—

1. That if we repent God will forgive?
2. That we can never receive so much grace that we cannot have more grace?
3. That God is better to us than our fears and better than our best hopes?

#### QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.

What is a psalm? A sacred song or hymn.

Who wrote many of the psalms? **King David.**

Where had the Jews been in captivity for a long time? **In Babylon.**

Who had brought them back to their own land?

**The Lord.**

Why had they been punished? **For their disobedience.**

What does the Lord want to give to all his children? **Peace.**

Who only can forgive sin? **God.**

How did the people feel when they came back to their own land? **Full of joy.**

What did they say the Lord had done for them? **"Great things."**

What is the great thing God has done for us? **He has given us Jesus.**

Who shall have joy and happiness? **Those who work for him.**

#### THE LESSON CATECHISM.

(For the entire school.)

1. What is the divine promise? **GOLDEN TEXT: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."**

2. What was the prayer of the psalmist? **"Wilt thou not revive us again?"**

3. What promise did the psalmist give? **"The Lord shall give that which is good."**

4. What was the prayer of the ancient Jews?  
 "Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the  
 streams in the south."

#### NEW CHURCH CATECHISM.

7. What is God?  
 God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchange-  
 able in his being and attributes.

John iv. 24. God is a spirit: and they that wor-  
 ship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Psalms cxlvii. 5. Great is our Lord, and of great  
 power: his understanding is infinite.

Psalms xc. 2. Before the mountains are brought  
 forth, or ever thou hast formed the earth, and the  
 world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou  
 art God.

### THE LESSON OUTLINE.

#### The New Israel.

#### I. A RESTORED PEOPLE.

*Brought back the captivity.* Psa. 85. 1.

First year of Cyrus. Ezra 1. 1-3.

Comfort ye my people. Isa. 40. 1, 2.

#### II. A FORGIVEN PEOPLE.

*Forgiven the iniquity.* Psa. 85. 2-5.

As white as snow. Isa. 1. 18-20.

Thou forgavest... my sin. Psa. 32. 5.

#### III. A RECONCILED PEOPLE.

*He will speak peace.* Psa. 85. 6-8.

We have peace with God. Rom. 5. 1.

Work... shall be peace. Isa. 32. 17.

#### IV. A GODLY PEOPLE.

*Hate them that fear.* Psa. 85. 9-11.

Fear the Lord thy God. Deut. 10. 12.

What man is he? Psa. 25. 12-14.

#### V. A PROSPEROUS PEOPLE.

*Lord... yield her increase.* Psa. 85. 12, 13.

I will multiply. Ezek. 36. 30.

Pour you... blessing. Mal. 3. 10.

#### VI. A GRATEFUL PEOPLE.

*Lord hath done great things.* Psa. 126. 1-3.

Offer... thanksgiving. Psa. 50. 14, 15.

Praise the... Lord. Joel 2. 26.

#### VII. A REJOICING PEOPLE.

*Shall reap in joy.* Psa. 126. 5, 6.

Put... trust in thee rejoice. Psa. 5. 11.

Jacob shall rejoice. Psa. 53. 6.

### EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

Our Lesson Committee has brought together for us to-day two psalms which were probably composed in the early days of the return from the exile. The songs of a people sometimes tell their history more accurately than their laws, and these psalms help us much in our study of the created revelation of God. The numbers of psalms have no bearing on the date of their composition. Various authors at various times wrote the psalms that are now frequently called "the Psalms of David," just as for many years the name of "Wesley's Hymns" was given to the collection used by the Methodists of England, which collection had Wesley's hymns as an inclosure. So the name of David, the greatest of psalm writers, was given to the national collection of psalms. Psalm 85 was written to meet the depression and despondency which were crushing the life out of the feeble "Church" in Jerusalem. Above it is written, "To the Chief Musician, a Psalm for the Sons of Korah." Psalm 126 is more spontaneously hopeful. Answers already given to prayer are made the ground of confident prediction that prosperity will permanently succeed the short, sharp time of trial. The approximate date of both psalms is 520 B. C.

**Verse 1. Thou hast been favorable unto thy land.** That is, the divine favor has been restored, "the ban of Jerusalem is removed." To the devout Hebrew Palestine was as really the Lord's land as Israel was the Lord's people. **Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.** A very wonderful change in the government of the world had brought about a new policy, and the Persians seemed to have been as willing to forward the plans of those exiles who wished to return to their native land as the Babylonians were to disperse them over the empire. Jacob stood for all his land.

**2. Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people.** Forgiven their wrong deeds, and, as can be seen from their history, put a new heart

in them, so that from this time on they did not hunger for idols. **Thou hast covered all their sins.** A beautiful figure of speech. That which would call for punishment is covered over.

**3. Thou hast taken away all thy wrath.** As Zeus and Jupiter were pictured hurling thunderbolts, so the psalmist thought of God as one who had been angered by sin and had let loose his wrath upon the sinners, but now that wrath is all turned back. **Thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger.** Shown in the devastation of the land and the absence of the people, in the degradation of the royal family, in the overthrow of the temple, and the cessation for so many years of its regular services. But now God has "turned himself," the

punishment is over. More important in the psalmist's eye than this evidence of God's favor and forgiveness were the favor and forgiveness themselves.

**4. Turn us, O God of our salvation.** Restore us or turn to us. So we have heard earnest Christians thank God for the forgiveness of sins and with the illogicality of actual experience proceed at once to pray that their sins might be forgiven. The phrase means continue and increase thy blessings, and it means even more than this. **Cause thine anger toward us to cease.** The comfort of mercies already received is the ground of prayer for greater. God has forgiven and restored his people, and yet in spite of forgiveness and restoration much is lacking. O for full salvation!

**5. Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations.** Who had sinned, these men or their fathers, that they were so greatly punished? The sin was national, like some of the sins of our own nation, and could not be separated by geography or chronology into individual sins. Manasseh, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, and other bad and wicked kings had led the nation into sin and the punishment which closely followed it. But God has led their children's children back to the holy land; worship has been revived on the ruined altars. Is God's hand in punishment now to be stretched out? Is not the new nation justified in expecting God's favor rather?

**6. Wilt thou not revive us again.** Give us new life. **That thy people may rejoice in thee.** The repeated national festivals gave a particularly joyous character to Jewish worship.

**7. Show us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation.** A prayer repeated during several generations. Offered by the grandfathers, it meant salvation from the soldiery of the Egyptians, Assyrians, and Babylonians; offered by the fathers, it meant salvation from the whimsical tyranny of the Babylonian and Persian monarchs; offered by this psalmist and those who used his psalm in worship, it meant salvation from the temptations and dangers of the restoration in Palestine, where powerful pagans had, for nearly a century, made their home, and where wild beasts prowled amid the ruins of once prosperous plantations.

**8. I will hear.** "Let me hear." **What God the Lord will speak.** God is always speaking, but men through the centuries have been deaf to his voice. No words of the psalmist are better worth our keeping than this text. No command of Jehovah has a more modern application than "Be still, and know that I am God;" no words of the Saviour are more suggestive to his followers to-day than "Make the men sit

down." Men do not take time to be blessed. **He will speak peace unto his people and to his saints.** The bulk of the history of the ancients was war. Peace by contrast carried with it the very perfection of earthly blessedness, and it is not strange that the greeting of the oriental in all ages has been "Peace." **But let them not turn again to folly.** Nearly every person who seeks to serve God has some sin which doth easily beset him. The sin and folly of the Jews had been idolatry.

**9. His salvation is nigh them that fear him.** This is the keynote of the faith of the early dispensation. **That glory may dwell in our land.** The presence of Jehovah was the glory of the Jew. It is true that in large numbers the Jews failed to recognize God in the flesh when he came, but that does not alter the fact that the dream of the nation through all centuries was the presence of Jehovah and his reverent worship.

**10. Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.** Here are four of the chief attributes of God, and therefore four of the chief graces of his children. "Meeting" and "kissing" are in perfect harmony. There can be no lasting mercy where there is not truth behind it, nor can the holiest truth go far without mercy. There cannot be peace without righteousness, nor will righteousness be made practicable without peace.

**11. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.** Here is continued that beautiful variation of the poetic thought of the last verse. As all the green things growing on earth spring up in response to the sun and the rain, so truth shall spring out of humanity as a natural growth when righteousness showers and shines from heaven.

**12. The Lord shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase.** As a general principle goodness makes for true prosperity. As a particular fact the providence of God repeatedly rewarded and punished the Jews for their moral conduct, until the doctrine spread that material prosperity went hand in hand with moral progress. This did not always prove true in detail, and Job and Ecclesiastes express the surprise that it did not. But the principle remains the same.

**13. Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.** Righteousness is the grand marshal of Jehovah's triumphal procession, and his footprints are to be our guide, a mark for us, a way to walk in.

**1. The Lord turned again the captivity of Zion.** The population had streamed in turbu-

lence from Babylon to Jerusalem. Now it seemed as if the rivers of men had turned back in their courses, and the whole population was returning to Zion. **We are like them that dream.** This refers, probably, especially to the edict of Cyrus. We could not believe our own ears and eyes.

**2. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.** Demonstrative orientals could hardly contain themselves in the sudden joy of their return. **Then said they among the heathen.** The heathen themselves said. **The Lord hath done great things.** The thought is Jehovah had done these great things, the God of the Israelites had recognized them and blessed them.

**3.** This verse indorses the wondering comment of the heathen neighbors.

**4. Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south.** In a dry land. The south was a name given to southern Judaea,

a stony place where each winter destroyed every sign of vegetation, but when the rainy season came, and the parched ground was turned into rivers of water, the little rocky channels became at once streams and rivers, and the change was such as astonished even those accustomed to it.

**5. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.** It has been well said that there are tears which are themselves the seed we must sow—tears of sorrow for sin, tears of sympathy with the afflicted Church, tears of tenderness and prayer.

**6. He that goeth forth and weepeth bearing precious seed.** Seed is scarce and dangers are many. The seed-sower must himself be armed, and then the sowing is such discouraging work that it is as much prose as poetry to speak of the weeping of the seed-sower. **Come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.** The gladness of the harvest will chase away all thoughts of sorrow.

### CRITICAL AND HOMILETICAL NOTES.

The exact date of the two psalms selected for our lesson to-day cannot be definitely ascertained. That they were both written after the captivity is the general opinion of commentators, and very probably during the activities of Haggai and Zechariah, or about 520 B. C. (comp. Zech. 1. 12 ff.). Their language is such as to make them especially appropriate to the discouraged remnant, which was trying to build up the temple under many and great disadvantages. The sentiment of these psalms has ever been a source of joy and comfort to the oppressed in every age.

**Verse 1. Thou hast been favorable.** This is the language of every child of God. No more suitable words could come from the mouths of the returned captives. **Thou hast brought back the captivity.** From the frequency of this phrase in the Old Testament it has been inferred that it must have been a common proverb to express deliverance from any misery or misfortune (see Job 42. 10, and often in Ezekiel). Here, however, it should be understood in its literal sense of deliverance from the Babylonian captivity.

**2. Thou hast forgiven.** Literally, thou hast lifted up or removed. Sin is a heavy burden which crushes the soul under its weight. As the bondage in Babylon was a proof of sin, so the restoration to Palestine was clear evidence that the Jews had been forgiven. **Thou hast covered.** The stain or blot left by sin is covered up, so that the judge can no longer see it. The Hebrew word translated "iniquity" signifies a perverseness of nature, while "sin" denotes a missing

of the mark or a deviation from rectitude. **Selah.** This word occurs seventy-one times in the psalms and three times in Habakkuk. It is most probably a musical term. The fact that it is given in its Hebrew form is a clear proof that it has defied translation. It should never be read. It would be just as proper to pronounce the sign for comma or colon in reading as to pronounce selah.

**3. Thou hast taken away all thy wrath.** The calamities and sufferings of the Hebrews were regarded by them as clear expressions of God's anger and indignation (see Jer. 30. 24; Lam. 1. 12).

**4. Turn us, O God.** Not turn to us, as in the margin, but restore us (to thy complete favor). **Cause thine indignation to cease.** Though the Hebrews after a long captivity in Babylon were restored to Palestine, they fared ill for a time. They met much opposition from hostile tribes and suffered many privations. From this they concluded that Jehovah had not fully pardoned them. The memory of this gloomy period accounts for the sudden transition from "exuberant thanksgiving" in the preceding verses to the pitiful wail and doleful supplications of this strophe.

**6. Wilt thou not quicken us again.** Literally, "Wilt thou not return [and] cause us to live?" or, taking the first verb as an adverb, "Wilt thou not revive us again?" **That thy people may rejoice.** No joy is possible as long as one is unconscious of the displeasure of God. **In thee.** The source of joy is in Jehovah, not in fine

crops, full barns, or material prosperity of any kind.

**7. Show us thy mercy.** Thy love and goodness. **Grant us thy salvation.** Safety from all our foes, spiritual and temporal.

**8. I will hear.** Literally, I shall certainly hear, or, let me hear. He has made his supplications, and now, full of faith in the efficacy of prayer, he will wait patiently for the answer, being assured that Jehovah will speak peace unto his people. This shows a high degree of piety and trust in God. For no matter what the answer will be, the believing soul will experience a peace that passeth all understanding. The soul that trusts in God will have peace. This is the promise of our blessed Saviour. **Saints.** Not in the Latin sense of holy or sanctified, but rather in the sense of favored of God, kind or pious, those conscious of Jehovah's protection. **Let them not turn again to folly.** Folly is often used in the Old Testament as the equivalent of sin. Indeed, all willful violation of God's law borders closely upon insanity, for who can sin unless his mental vision is beclouded by a corrupt nature.

**9. That fear him.** As folly is sin, so the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom or true religion. The fear spoken of here is not that which one has before a cruel tyrant, but rather that deep and profound reverence natural to those in the presence of superiors. **That glory may dwell in our land.** The glory of God, or *shekinah*, the emblem of Jehovah's presence. The noun *shekinah* is from the verb *shakan*, to dwell.

**10. Mercy and truth . . . Righteousness and peace.** "The four virtues here mentioned are, as Calvin remarks, the four cardinal virtues of Christ's kingdom. Where these reign among men there must be true and perfect felicity."—*Prouvee*.

**11. Truth springeth out of the earth.** There will be such direct communion between heaven and earth that the latter will produce heavenly fruit. This must needs be the case when the petition, "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth," is fulfilled.

**12. Our land shall yield her increase.** God's approval of the godly conduct of his people will be visible everywhere. It was quite natural for the Hebrews to associate material prosperity with right living (see Lev. 26. 4; Deut. 28. 12).

**13. Before him.** That is, before Jehovah. **Shall make his footsteps a way.** Righteousness will carefully walk in the footsteps of Jehovah—that is, God's people will be so filled with the principles of righteousness that they will se-

lect the path of God as their own way. Christ is the way, blessed are they who walk in him.

**1. Turned the captivity.** The word rendered "captivity" here is not exactly the same as that in verse 4 and Psa. 85. 1, though probably from the same root. For the meaning see note on Psa. 85. 1. **Like unto them that dream.** So sudden was the overthrow of Babylon and the favorable edict of Cyrus, granting the return of the Hebrews, that they could scarcely believe their senses. It seemed like a dream.

**2. Filled with laughter . . . singing.** These were the outward expression of their inner joy. **Then said they.** The nations around, who had noticed this unexpected turn in the condition of Israel. **The Lord hath done great things.** The heathen nations often recognized the hand of Jehovah in his dealings with his people, and perhaps also the fulfillment of prophecy (see Isa. 52. 10).

**4. Turn again our captivity.** Two interpretations are possible: 1. Relieve our misery, restore us to thy favor; or, 2. Bring back our captives from Babylon, not a mere handful of them, but all thy people. **As the streams in the south.** "Negeb," rendered "south," means dry or arid land, and is applied with more or less uniformity to the barren stretch extending from Jerusalem and especially from the mountains of Hebron down to Kadesh and farther, to that portion of the land where the streams used to dry up in summer. The psalmist would see the exiles flow back in mighty torrents, just as the streams of the Negeb after the melting of the snows in the spring of the year. As those mountain streams brought life and verdure to the country around, so may the returned captives bring the land of their fathers under cultivation once more.

**5. Sow in tears.** The ground was hard and parched, the uncertainty of a crop endangered not only by natural conditions, but by hostile invasions also, made sowing a dreary work (see Hag. 2. 3-9, and 17-19; and Judg. 6. 3 ff. Comp. also Gal. 6. 7-9).

**6. Bearing forth the seed.** There is no justification for the word "precious," as in the Authorized Version. The whole verse is only an expansion of the thought in the preceding one.

## Thoughts for Young People.

### Lessons from the Psalms.

**1. God is always kind.** He punishes from kindness, and the rebukes of a tender mother or father are faulty symbols of the inexpressible love manifested even in what are called the judgments of God. But when the penitent cries to him for



mercy, sympathy far outdoes punishment, and the happiness that comes with the smile of the Lord is the greatest known to human hearts.

2. *Past blessings should encourage us to ask future favors.* We see their effect on these psalmists and their devout brethren.

3. *Moral extremes are perilous.* He makes a mistake who tells the truth without mercy; he is equally faulty who would extend mercy disregarding the truth. There is no permanent blessing of the Lord except where mercy and truth have met together. The same thought is expressed in the second clause also of verse 10.

4. *Good living in spite of all "accidents" and individual exceptions makes for worldly success.* Sowing in tears always precedes reaping in joy. It is so in war, it is so in peace, it is so in religious life.

### Orientalisms of the Lesson.

Verse 6. The phrase "He that goeth forth and weepeth" is in the Revised Version, "though he goeth on his way weeping." The idea in both possibly is that the former in times of great scarcity has much fear and trembling lest he may starve if the seed shall not produce a crop; but starving though he be when he sows it, he realizes that he must make the venture or he will certainly starve the succeeding year. Dr. Thomson tells us that though he has never seen farmers of the East under these conditions actually weeping while sowing the seed corn, yet he has known them to sow in fear and distress sufficient to cause anybody to cry. The problem is whether he can keep his family alive on the little left to him after taking and possibly throwing away the portion necessary to get next year's bread, if indeed that shall not also be another year of drought and ruin. Dr. Thomson says: "In seasons of great scarcity the poor peasants part in sorrow with every measure of precious seed cast into the ground. It is like taking bread out of the mouths of their children; and in such times many bitter tears are actually shed over it. The distress is frequently so great that government is obliged to furnish seed, or none would be sown." He says Ibrahim Pasha did this more than once to his knowledge, after the manner of his great predecessor in Egypt.

### By Way of Illustration.

*Psalms of deliverance.* Here is a remnant of a once powerful people, returning from bitter exile, aware of their broken fortunes, viewing their desolate land, facing tremendous difficulties and new enemies, yet praising God for their deliverance, and thanking him for his goodness. The

greatest apostle of Christianity, Paul, was always giving thanks when he was in prison or when he was in adversity. The Pilgrims at Plymouth, during that awful first winter, gave thanks fuller and heartier than do most of their prosperous descendants. The sweetest songs of thankfulness have been inspired in troublous times.—G. E. Hall.

"Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me." Paul and Silas sang in the inner prison when their feet were fast in the stocks. The prisoners were listening, and God was listening, and sent the earthquake and aroused the jailer, who cried out for salvation.

During one of Moody's missions at Liverpool an errand boy returning at midnight was singing, "There is a fountain filled with blood." A policeman followed him and joined in the hymn. An unhappy girl in her street wandering heard this strange duet and said to herself, "When I was an innocent child I used to sing that hymn, may I venture to join in it again?" She followed the two and the duet became a trio. She afterward went to the mission and as a true penitent confessed the Saviour. Thus saints' songs have often rescued Satan's slaves. It is easy to sing in sunshine, but when dark clouds cover the sky, when trade is bad, wages low, health declines, death threatens—if Christians can sing then, those who listen learn the secret of praise and God is glorified.—Dr. Newman Hall.

*Deliverance from sin.* They too were taken out of the same lump of depraved nature with ourselves; but as the gem is dull and black in the darkness, but glows and burns and palpitates, restless with living splendor, when it drinks the sunbeams, so our poor souls, dull as they are and base with sin, may be transfigured into glory and loveliness, if emptied of selfishness, they take in God's glory.—Farrar.

A girl in a mission school in India sang all day about her tasks, and when asked why she sang so much and seemed so happy, she said: "I have been redeemed from idolatry and you can never know what that means. It is like stepping suddenly from midnight darkness into brightest moonlight of glory." Jerry McAuley said: "How can I help but praise God. He has brought me from the depths of hell to the gate of heaven."

Verses 5 and 6. A young man said to me recently, that he was brought to Christ by his brother, who spoke to him repeatedly about the state of his soul. He said: "I never answered my brother, but met his entreaties by a stolid silence. I often expected that he would get discouraged and give it up. Many times I was nearer yielding than I cared to let him know."

Discouraged heart, your influence is telling.

The warm sunshine is penetrating below the surface; that friend's heart has often been profoundly moved by your efforts, and some day he will confess it. A missionary who learns a foreign language in the first months seems to be making no progress at all, till suddenly one day the ripe fruit drops into his hand—there is a harvest to reward the tearful sowing.—*F. B. Meyer.*

### Heart Talks on the Lesson.

These psalms are a symphony of praise and thanksgiving. They are like the voice of the birds just before sunrise. They call one to another and to us, "Wake up, wake up and sing!"

Is the spiritual building progressing in your heart? Have you been brought out from the captivity of sin? Then do not forget to give thanks and sing praises. A happy Christian honors God. A doleful, weeping soul, always sighing over shortcomings and tribulations, does not glorify the Lord who has redeemed us, nor recommend his salvation. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion.... then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them."

How can the world say that of us if we do not show that we are rejoicing victors over sin, sorrow, disappointment, and all the trials, great or small, that come to us? If we have no songs of deliverance to sing, they find in us nothing different to themselves. Why should they care for a faith which fails to give us the happiness they are vainly seeking in the world? But if in our faces, words, conduct, and experience we say, "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad," then we honor our Deliverer and recommend his grace. Every Christian should be a "sagacious optimist." He should not be blind to his own failures nor to the sad condition of a deceived and sinful world. But he should never lose sight of the light in the darkness, for there is never hopeless night since Jesus came into the world to save sinners. He is the Light; he that followeth him shall not walk in darkness.

Babylon is the place to weep and hang one's harp upon the willows. Poor exiles! I do not see how they can be anything but sorrowful in the world without God and without hope. But those who have come back to their inheritance as children of God ought to be so glad and thankful that it makes others happy just to see them! There are many such Christians, but there should be more. Instead of depressing others with our burdens and sorrows, we should be so "compassed about with songs of deliver-

ance" that our very atmosphere would inspire with hope and courage.

It is a Christian's business to keep in good heart all who are sad or discouraged. "I feel better every time I look at you," said one invalid to another. "I'm sure I do not know why you should," the other said with a cheerful laugh, looking at her distorted, crippled hands. "O well, crippled hands are nothing when the soul's wings are free," her friend replied.

Let us not talk of failure; let us sing songs of deliverance. Read the thirty-first chapter of Jeremiah. It is the song of a "sagacious optimist," who sees the sure triumph of good over evil and of joy over sorrow. "For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. Therefore shall they come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord.... and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord."

### The Teachers' Meeting.

Here are two pictures of the new Israel just after the restoration. (1) A forgiving people. Sins washed away, God's smile upon them. They were sure of their former sin, of their present salvation, and of their future glory. (2) A helpless people. Few, defenseless, poor, surrounded by enemies. But when God's people are weak then are they strong, for they turn to God for succor. (3) A praying people. Their fathers had prayed to idols, but never again was idolatry the besetting sin of the Jewish nation. (4) A hopeful people. They saw signs of returning prosperity in the favor of their God.

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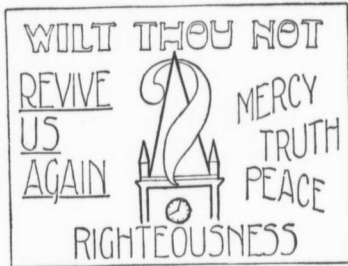
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**OPTIONAL HYMNS.**

How good thou art to me.  
The Lord's my Shepherd.  
Yes! for me he careth.  
We praise thee, O God.  
O scatter seeds of loving deeds.

All glory to Jesus be given.  
Once for all the Saviour died.  
Of him who did salvation bring.  
Sow, ere the evening falls.  
Sowing in the morning.

**Blackboard.**



The prayer and question of David should be ours. Each day we need the reviving power of God, lest our spiritual life recede. When mercy and truth, peace and righteousness, meet each other and are found together in God's house and among his people, his glory will fill the land. Men will know that his salvation is nigh, and say that the Lord hath done great things for his children. As the revival of seed in a full and glorious harvest, so will the Church revive in the favor of God, and his people will rejoice in him.

**Thoughts for the Quiet Hour.**

—If you would have the rivers whose streams make glad the city of our God to run through your hearts you must get into the vale of humility.  
—*Hill*.

—The sight of our sins in their own colors would drive us to distraction if we had not at the same time some sight of a Saviour.—*Henry*.

—God's answer to our prayer is like a multiplying glass, which renders the request much greater in the answer than it was in the prayer.—*Reynolds*.

—We should strike our harps in praising God at the first appearance of a mercy.—*Gurnall*.

—God's promises were never meant to ferry our laziness. Like a boat they are to be rowed by our oars; but many men entering forget the oars and drift down more helpless in the boat than if they had stayed on shore.—*Beecher*.

—God will never raise the siege until we hand out the keys of the city, open every gate, and bid the conqueror ride through every street and take possession of the city. The traitor must deliver up himself and trust the prince's clemency.—*Spurgeon*.

—One ought to talk only as loud as he lives—a rule which would deprive some people of the privilege of shouting.—*Chapman*.

—There is no right without a parallel duty, no liberty without the supremacy of the law, no high destiny without earnest perseverance, no greatness without self-denial.—*Lieber*.

—The best way to bear crosses is to consecrate them all in the silence of God.—*Fletcher*.

—Strike, thou the Master, we thy keys,  
The anthem of the destinies.

The minor of thy loftier strain,  
Our hearts shall breathe the old refrain,  
Thy will be done. —*Whittier*.

—Thank God every morning when you get up that you have something to do that day which must be done whether you like it or not. Being forced to work, and forced to do your best, will breed in you temperance, self-control, diligence, strength of will, content, and a hundred virtues which the idle never know.—*Kingsley*.

—The pure in heart not only see God themselves, but they become a medium for transmitting his thoughts to others. It is at last as if God were thinking through every look and movement of the purified soul.—*Lucy Larcom*.

—He who has the bread of heaven spends his life in the banquetting house of God.—*Parker*.

—We are most firmly bound to God not by our resolves, but by our experience of his all-sufficient mercy. Fill the heart with that wine of the kingdom, and bitter or poisonous draughts will find no entrance into the cup.—*McLaren*.

## PRIMARY TEACHERS' DEPARTMENT.

### Primary Miscellany.

A SIMPLE little song-verse sung or said at the opening of the class is very helpful. Little minds are diverted from other things and led to attention by it. The following is a model of simplicity, and may be used just before the lesson teaching or at the opening of the school:

(Tune, Martyn.)

"Father, bless our school to-day;  
Be in all we do or say;  
Be in every song we sing,  
Every prayer to thee we bring.  
Come and with thy children meet;  
And, while waiting at thy feet,  
May we in the lesson see  
Something teaching us of thee."

A lady who had not for many years attended a Sabbath school was induced to join the Home Department. After studying the lessons for a short time she one day appeared in Sabbath school with her baby in her arms, and said: "I just wanted to come and hear to-day's lesson explained. I don't feel that I get as much out of it at home as I ought." After this she came regularly, and the baby is now a member of the Primary Department.

Mr. Israel P. Black offers some excellent suggestions concerning the much-talked-of "Cradle Roll."

"During the past year the Cradle Roll has been introduced into many primary classes, and has been successful in binding the home closer to the class. This roll is meant to include children who are too young to attend the Sabbath school. Parents or friends are invited to bring the little one to the class on the Sabbath nearest its birthday, and to drop its pennies in the birthday box, one for each year. If the child is not able to come, the pennies can be sent when convenient. Once each month the names of the members of the Cradle Roll are read to the class, and the children are asked to pray for the little ones too young to be present.

"One teacher has a small cradle fitted with mattress, blankets, and pillows, in which are kept the names of the babies of the church and neighborhood. When a new name is sent in it is written on a slip of paper and placed in the cradle. These are prayed for every Sabbath, receive their birthday cards or letters and invita-

tions, through their mothers, to all special exercises, picnics, etc. When a Cradle-Roll member dies a flower is placed in the cradle, and the class is told that the little one has gone to live with Jesus."

There is nothing more pure in heaven,  
And nothing on earth more mild,  
More full of the light that is all divine,  
Than the smile of a little child.

### Little Climbers.

SOME of your scholars are probably too young for school work, but the most of them must already have planted their feet on the wonderful school ladder that slopes across autumn into the months of another year. Is not some boy or some girl in your care just beginning to climb? Take an interest in the fact. In Sunday school mention the day school, public or private. The little climber will need your help. Some things may be seriously wrong in the outside school, and a word from you may help rectify matters. That thought will not be the only good resulting. It shows that you take an interest in everything that interests your flock. The teacher's shepherd arms are seen to reach all around the young life, where paths may be rough, where ways of temptation may beckon, where the shadows fall and the wild winds wail. Don't forget them, poor boys and girls, going out from your care on Sunday into the school life of Monday.

E. A. R.

### The Library.

A BOOK may be a banquet; it satisfies hunger. A book may be a fountain; it slakes thirst. A book may be a guideboard pointing out the right; it leads to heaven. You have in the Primary Department some who handle books so readily that they may be classed as readers. They need the banquet, the foundation, the guideboard. Can your Sunday school library furnish all these helps? We would like to ask, through you, how many books in your library may be adapted to youngest readers? Do not ask if there are any, but how many are there and what are they. See that your department is respected. Insist upon it that it shall be provided for, that you have hungry, thirsty, ignorant ones, and you want the banquet spread, a fountain opened, and heaven's

guideboard set up. Then encourage the children to go where their supplies are. Remember how great may be the influence of one book. How often it may make a corner in the roadway of one's destiny! It may not seem to be a big world that a child tenants, but to the child it is as big a world as yours is to you. Into that big child-world see that the very best books enter to feed and satisfy immortal cravings, to give companionship and lead into the future aright.

E. A. R.

### A Serious Thought.

You are going by a big savings bank some day. You notice the file of depositors streaming in. You catch a clink of money dropping on a counter. Perhaps you look at the windows and notice that there is an iron fence outside. You say to yourself, "What a serious thing it is to take care of all those heaps of money within! And—there may be more danger from a thief inside the iron fence than a thief without!" It is an exceedingly serious thing, you say, this handling of other people's money. Then you have another thought, that you have among your scholars those who will grow up to manage the investment of the money heaps in banks. Alas! if among your boys should be one who some day will become either a thief without the iron fence or a thief inside it. That makes one shiver. And as women nowadays are rapidly widening their activities, every year handling larger and larger sums of money, how chilling the thought that possibly the fingers of one of your girls might make a mistake in after years and slip a bank bill into the wrong place! No one likes to think of these possibilities, but we should think of this fact, that to-day honesty is a great necessity in this nation. That is putting it mildly. Business integrity, like a crystal clear, shining, without flaws, every money market very much needs. And how shall we get business integrity to-morrow unless we train boys and girls in habits of honesty to-day? Begin with the youngest in the class, and don't stop when you get to the oldest, but start with the youngest again, and talk, "Honesty, honesty, honesty!"

### Inattention in the Class.

BY A PRIMARY TEACHER.

This difficulty being overcome will largely do away with that of disorder. The children pay no attention to the lesson, because the teacher presents nothing of sufficient interest to which they can attend.

The teacher should always first secure the at-

tention of the eyes. Always use a blackboard (a large slate, a piece of manilla paper tacked to the wall will serve for a blackboard, if you have none better). No matter whether you can draw or not, do not tell one point in the lesson without making an illustrative straight mark on the board. Or let one of the children, that restless boy, for instance, do the drawing.

Teach by means of pictures. These may be cut from old papers and pinned to the wall or blackboard. Use the large lesson pictures, no matter if they are a year or two old. And, by the way, our city schools might furnish their last year pictures of this style to the country schools.

Illustrate by objects, flowers, wheat, fruit, books, curiosities, burning candles, chains, or anything that will point out a truth in the lesson and keep the eyes of the children.

Inattention results from the half-hearted, uninterested way in which the lesson is taught. The teacher often has not given it sufficient study. She is not interested in the lesson herself, and how can she interest others? She should carefully and prayerfully study the lesson during the week and tell to some child in her home, or to one she has borrowed from her neighbor's home, just what she intends to tell her class on the following Sabbath.

Inattention also results from the inability of the teacher to fill the hour allotted to the teaching of the lesson. No teacher should go into a class without a program. She should know in advance what is to occupy every moment of that time.

Inattention is further caused by the lack of novelty presented in the teaching of the lesson. Nothing unscriptural should be introduced, but the Bible itself is full of variety. Paul became all things to all men; so should the teacher become all things to her class. The program should be changed every week. Tell the scholars that you shall have something new next Sunday. This will excite their curiosity, also their interest. Do less singing one Sunday and let the children recite hymns and religious poems. Keep a full stock of such on hand with which to supply them. Give up half of the time another hour for a little prayer meeting. Again, let some child read aloud a Bible story. Then have a question box. The questions connected with the lessons to be taught should be written at home and brought. At another time pass slips of paper around on which the children can write some kind deed they have lately done for anyone (and consequently for Jesus). No names are to be signed, but the slips are to be collected and read aloud by the teacher.

Yet again, consider your class a miniature Sun-

day school. Have all the officers there that are in the larger room.

Make everything real. Let the children represent the various characters in the lesson each time. And when the name of the person whom each represents is mentioned let each stand.

Vary your method of asking the lesson questions. Tell the boys and girls to study their lessons well, for on the next Sabbath you are to first ask all the questions of one scholar. Then all will try hard to know the lesson thoroughly, not knowing to whom the whole list will come. Or tell them that you are to ask the questions backward, or that you will omit those in the lesson leaf and will use a list prepared by one of the scholars whom you shall choose for this task.

### Filling Up the Ranks.

MR. ISRAEL P. BLACK gives some admirable suggestions in the *The Westminster Teacher* concerning the bringing in of new scholars. These are plans which he has tested in his own class. He says in part: "For many years I have had a system which has resulted in bringing in about one hundred new scholars every year. The most fruitful time for this work has been from September to April. Early in September there are distributed to the scholars Scripture cards with flowers or autumn leaves on them. On the reverse side is the following invitation:

DEAR LITTLE FRIEND:

Do you go to any Sunday school?  
If not, we gladly invite you to our school.  
We have a very pleasant room,  
Nice little chairs to sit in,  
And many beautiful things to show you.  
We will teach you to sing sweet songs about Jesus.

We will also try to teach you how to love Jesus,  
And how to be good and do good.  
We will give you pretty lesson cards  
And nice picture papers to take home.  
The boy or girl who gives you this card  
Will call for you and show you the way  
To the Children's Sabbath Home  
Of the Primary Class,  
In the Church, at —

The children are instructed not to coax their little friends away from other schools, but to hunt for new scholars among those who have never been to Sunday school. One card only is given to each scholar, with the injunction that this is not to be kept, but to be handed to some child who does not attend any school. The plan has taught us that children are more successful in bringing their playmates to school than older people can possibly be.

## INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS. FOURTH QUARTER.

### LESSON I. (October 1.)

#### JOY IN GOD'S HOUSE. Psa. 122.

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

#### Primary Notes.

BY JULIA H. JOHNSTON.

*Introductory.* Opening hymn—verse for lessons of this quarter (Tune, Pleyel's Hymn):

I will hear what God will speak,  
I will listen to his voice;  
Jesus' blessing I will seek,  
In his love will I rejoice.



We are now to have lessons from the Old Testament. We will have praise lessons, helping us to be glad; promise lessons, telling what God will do; prayer lessons, showing us how to pray; and precept lessons—

precepts being rules, commands, or teachings. When mother says, "Mind at once, do just what you are told, be gentle and kind," she is giving you precepts, or rules.

To keep these lessons together we will make a ladder of them, writing above each round letter of the title and two or three words of the Golden Text; on the round, praise, promise, prayer, or precept, whichever sort the lesson is, and also the truth we must remember. A ladder is to help us up; if we learn all the precious truths of the quarter, we shall climb, round by round, nearer Jesus. We will keep the ladder in sight, adding a round each week, going up and up.

[Teacher may have ladder drawn upon board, or upon manilla paper, adding special teaching week by week, reviewing constantly.]

The first lesson is a praise lesson. It is about joy in God's house. [Drill on title and Golden Text.] We will write PRAISE on lower round of the ladder, and below, "Rejoice, and give thanks." We must not only be glad, but we must be grateful, and tell it out in songs and words of praise.

The lesson is a song, or hymn, called a psalm, written by David, that sweet singer, tender shepherd, and good king, who wrote a whole book of psalms. [Recall enough of David's history to emphasize thought of praise, and give an idea of

the writer of the book. Show Book of Psalms.] This joyful song about the Church of God begins with

*An invitation*, and David said it filled him with gladness. "Come, let us go," was what was said, and David was very glad to go, but

*Where?* Unto the house of the Lord. Are you happy when you are asked to come to God's house? Do you come up here with "cheerful feet?" or do you have to be driven and made to go? O no. Surely you love to come.

*Who go to God's house?* David tells us that the tribes of the Lord are there. That means the families, all the households together, who love their Lord.

*Why do they go?* To give thanks and to pray, David says. What do you come to church and Sunday school for? Every day we should pray and give thanks, but once a week is not too often to come together to do it in God's house. And David tells us what to pray for. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem," he says, and that just means the peace of the Church, for the temple was in the city of God—Jerusalem. There should be no quarreling in God's house, nor hard thoughts, nor anything but quietness and love among God's people, little and big. Some Christians in Japan, where the Sabbath is not kept everywhere, used to put out a white flag to show that they were keeping the Lord's day. A white flag always means peace. If one is sent out in the midst of a battle, soldiers on both sides must stop shooting. No one dare fire on a white flag. So, if you pray for peace in this class, you must be careful not to break it by troubling or hurting your neighbor.

*What is there to do?* Our business is not all singing, learning, or even praying. David says



he will seek the good of the city where God's house is, and the good of those who are like brothers because they are children of the same

Father. Will you do that? Will you try to do good to everyone here?

Do we rejoice and give thanks here to-day? Jesus is here, his word is here, peace, rest, help, and comfort are here, and all is gladness.

Long ago sweet silver trumpets called God's people together to give thanks. We will make a trumpet on the board to help us remember that the sound of the church bell, the sound of music and song, all call us to praise God and to be joyful in his house.

### Kindergarten Hints.

BY JULIA E. PECK.

**GOLDEN TEXT:** "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matt. 18. 20.

#### HINTS ON METHOD.

If a lesson on "joy in God's house" can teach little children to be reverent in church, and to feel reverence for all things sacred, we have here a lesson much needed, and of value. Irreverence is one of the besetting sins of the rising generation; and our teaching experience shows us that to command reverence would be as ineffectual as to command obedience, which latter command always rouses open rebellion. We try to gently lead where the children may follow, knowing well that we may take them where we cannot drive them, and that the teacher's reverent attitude teaches far more than words.

#### LESSON DEVELOPED.

Whose house are we in? All the houses in the world are God's houses, though in a different way from this. Of what is your house made? "Wood and stone" we get where? Who made the trees to grow, and piled great ledges of rock mountain high? Who made the clay for our bricks? If we go on, we shall say that God made the skilled hand of the carpenter and the active brain of the man who planned your house, and gave your father skill to earn the home in which you live. The very breath of your life is of God.

When the children decide that their home seems altogether to belong to God, and to be of his providing, and when we show them that the nests of the birds, the dens and caves of the wild beasts, are God's houses given to the creatures his hands have made, and his breath keeps alive, we are ready for the next step.

When you have an honored and loved guest at your house you want other girls and boys to share the joy of seeing, hearing, talking with him. You say: "Come to my house to meet my guest. We have trimmed it with flowers for him. He will show us how to do things we never

heard of. He teaches us how to make things, and goes with us to the woods and fields, showing us new treasures there." The boys and girls will come, and to your own joys and good times theirs will be added.

Do you remember in one of our lessons the prophet reproached the people for making their own houses so pretty, and neglecting to build God's house? That is not the way to do, as our people (ancestors) knew when they came to this country years ago, in the *Mayflower*. One of the first and the nicest houses they built was, of course, their church.

Your fathers and mine have made this church much richer and nicer than the houses we live in. See its colored windows, its rich carving, listen to the rare music.

Why do we give our money and our time, and feel willing to look shabby and go without things, that we may make this church the more beautiful? Is it God's house any more than the houses in which we live?

Who is it that we all meet in this house? Who looks with pitying eye on our bowed heads when we come here in trouble? Who is glad with us here when we are happy? Remember about the loved guest in your house, why you trimmed it with flowers, why you asked girls and boys to come and meet your dear friend, and felt richer for sharing with others his kind attentions and affection. Who is the guest we honor by making for him a house far better than our own? Does not this guest visit your home and mine? Certainly! Do we not speak with him in the silence, when we are alone in the dark? Perchance—indeed it is quite certain—if we build a house for our honored Guest, the Lord Christ, we may carry some of the heavenly joy he gives us in our quiet home into this house which is made for him and for the gathering of his friends. We may share his love and kindness with those who would not know about making him a guest in their own house. We may feel strong by staying here every week with those who know him, and who love him more than life, and who long to share that love with us, and with those who never heard his name.

Why have we chosen an organist, who can make our organ speak like a voice of prayer, praise, thanksgiving? Why have we chosen rare voices to sing, "Jesus, Lover of my soul," and "Nearer my home in heaven?" Why do our pastor's words make us feel "God is here?"

It is because of our Lord's promise, that where his children are gathered together, he will be in their midst. We teach the children that our Lord, whom we honor with our best, who promises to be with us here in his house, says, "I

have hallowed this house which thou hast built, to put my name there forever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually" (1 Kings 9. 3).

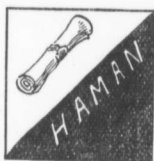
### LESSON II. (October 8.)

#### HAMAN'S PLOT AGAINST THE JEWS.

Esth. 3. 1-11.

GOLDEN TEXT: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. 8. 31.

#### Primary Notes.



*Introductory.* After review, and drill upon title and text for to-day, write upon second round of ladder the word precept, and below "Trust God." Develop the story toward this thought, making it clear why we may and

must trust him, no matter who or what may seem to be against us. Make a vivid word picture of the king's palace in the far-off land where the captive Jews were scattered; the marble pillars; the curtains of white and green and violet, fastened with cords of purple and silver rings; the beds of gold and silver upon a pavement of colored marble, and the drinking vessels of silver and gold. Tell of the great feast, the refusal of the queen to show herself, the choice of the beautiful Jewish girl to take her place, and the devotion of Mordecai, who went daily to the king's gate to see how it fared with the lovely girl he had brought up as a daughter. But all did not stay peaceful and quiet, for now we come to

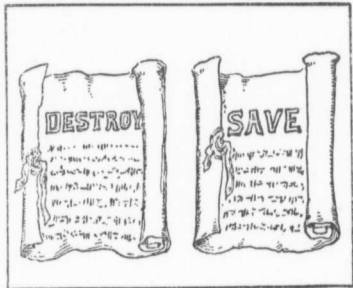
*Haman's plot.* Haman was a man to whom the king took a fancy. He gave him a high place in the palace and riches and power. But Haman was very proud. He wanted more honor and power. Because the king showed him such favor everyone bowed down to Haman as he passed in and out, except Mordecai, the poor Jew who sat in the king's gate. He knew Haman was not worthy of such honor. It made the proud man angry. He made up his mind to punish the poor Jew, but it would not satisfy him to put Mordecai alone to death. No, he would destroy all the Jews in the land. This was his plot. A plot is a plan. It begins in the thoughts with a wish, and then goes on to plan, perhaps in a roundabout way, to do the deed. In carrying out his plot Haman talked to the king against the Jews, saying they were a dangerous people, and offered a great sum of money to pay the expense of sending soldiers to put them to death, leaving a great deal over for the treasury. Mor-



decal was sure to die then, he thought, if all were killed. O, the poor people! Let us think about

*Who were against them?* Proud and powerful Haman and all his money, the king, with all his power, and the soldiers and people, who would as soon as not have them killed.

*Who was for them?* The great God was on their side, no matter who was against them. God is stronger than kings and captains and rich, proud men. God is stronger than soldiers, and money has no power against him. The king and Haman thought nothing of all this. They only looked at the poor captives, and thought how easy it would be to put them out of the way. But it will not do



to forget God and his power. Next week we will see how it all came out. As we learn in this lesson that, if God is for us, no one can really be against us to hurt us, let us make up our minds to trust our Father as never before. But

*We must be on God's side.* Then he will be for us, and strong men cannot harm us, sin cannot, Satan cannot, nothing can hurt us. We may suffer, but it will not make us any the worse; it will make us better if we trust Jesus to bring it out all right. But we must be sure to be on God's side. A runaway soldier who will not stay in his place and do his duty cannot expect the captain to be on his side, to take care of him and to give him a high place, honor and love, can he? Of course not.

Hymn verse for closing. (Tune, Pleyel's Hymn.)

Jesus, Saviour, teach thou me  
Holy lessons from thy word,  
Make me more and more like thee,  
Since my heart thy voice hath heard.

#### Kindergarten Hints.

**GOLDEN TEXT:** "For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish." Psa. 1. 6.

#### HINTS ON METHOD.

Our lesson text leaves the story with a threatened tragedy. We want every primary lesson to be a complete whole, so that our little transients and others who may be with us for the last time shall carry away with them a note of hope and joy. Those who are to remain with us should also be left with lessons which inspire them with ambition and hope, rather than a sad story which seems to them to end nowhere in particular, and, in consequence, leaves the class quite indifferent as to the outcome of a dangerous situation in ages remote. Thus we avoid a sad Bible story unless we can add to it a joyous climax. We had better do this to-day by borrowing from next Sunday's lesson material.

#### LESSON DEVELOPED.

We get our central thought from Psalm 1. A good man (or woman) is like a tree planted by a river, bringing forth much fruit in its season. Bad people are like the chaff which the wind blows away. Their plots for mischief are scattered like chaff by good people who give their whole souls to the undoing of the wrong.

If you or I knew of a man in our city who was planning a hurt to all the French or German people in our land, we should feel distressed. We should want our Premier, whom we always look upon as "the father of our country," to know of this man's plan in order to stop it at once. We would want, and our Premier would want, that these strangers in our midst should find home and protection in our land. If we heard that our Premier's wife had taken a good deal of risk to save these foreigners, we should honor her, and our prayers of thankfulness in our churches when she succeeded in saving the people. Our pastor would teach, "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish!"

Something like this happened (teaching by likeness and difference) many years ago. A bad man was planning a hurt to all the Jews in his country. Jesus was a Jew; but this happened before Jesus came, and while many of the Jews were living in that heathen land to which they had been carried captive [a review thought].

They were right in expecting that the king who ruled over the country should be a father of that country; but a heathen king has his own way too much, and gets flattered and spoiled. This king knew that a bad man had planned a hurt to the trustful strangers in their midst; but he was careless and neglectful about stopping the wrong. He did not know that his beautiful wife was of this race.

Esther's cousin, a leader among the strangers,

said, "You must plead with your husband to save our people." It was exceedingly dangerous to interfere with anything which the flattered king permitted. It was as dangerous to go to him uninvited.

"Pray for me three days, you and all our people, and I will go," said Esther. So the people and Esther prayed. "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous." Nothing should be allowed to hurt the people whom the beautiful Esther loved and longed to protect. "The way of the ungodly shall perish."

Illustrations showing how the courage and faithfulness of one man or woman saves many from death or danger. Bible history is to be preferred, and it is best to use stories familiar to the class, so that the children may help in the telling. Show how the whole world rejoices to honor one who gives himself for many.

From familiar accounts of courage and faithfulness shown in saving others from physical peril, pass on to show the greater courage and faithfulness of those who have sacrificed self to save perishing souls. This, our climax (to be worked out more in detail next Sunday) with the calling to mind how the friends (apostles) of Jesus worked to save souls from death; finally, speaking softly of him who gave his life that all might live forever.

### LESSON III. (October 15.)

#### ESTHER PLEADING FOR HER PEOPLE.

Esth. 8. 3-8, 15-17.

GOLDEN TEXT: "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass." Psa. 37. 5.

#### Primary Notes.



*Introductory.* What is it to plead? It is to ask very earnestly indeed, and to give a reason for asking. In this lesson we find that the beautiful queen is asking something for her people very earnestly. The Golden Text tells us what to do

with all our trouble, and gives us a promise. We will call this a promise lesson, and write under this round of the ladder, "He will bring it to pass." God will make it come about if the thing we ask for is right.

[Bring up the history. Tell of the sending out of the letters to kill the Jews, the grief of Mordecai, his talk with Esther, the rule about the golden scepter, the brave determination to go in to plead for her people, the king's restless night,

the reading of the records, the honor done to Mordecai for the service he had done, the anger of Haman, the feast Esther made, inviting the king and Haman. Make incidents clear, but beware of spending too much time upon them. Emphasize the holding out of the scepter, impressing lesson that our King is always sure to let us come to him with our prayers. His love, like a golden scepter, is always held out to us.]

*Esther pleading.* It was not for herself. When she came before the king and again he held out the scepter to her she begged for the life of her people. She told the king what Mordecai was to her, how he had brought her up, though he was not her father, but a near relation. There was nothing selfish about it; she did not say, "Let me be spared," but "Spare my people."

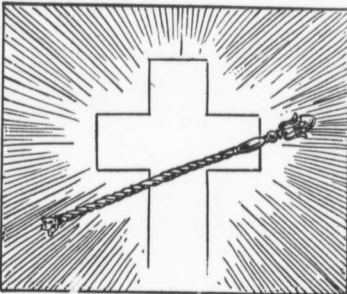
*It came to pass.* The pleading was heard. The king gave the queen what she asked for—the life of her people—and letters were hurried off to carry the king's message by men on horseback, on mules, and on young dromedaries. Mordecai was clothed in royal blue and white with a great crown of gold upon his head, and the city rejoiced and was glad, while everywhere the Jews had light and gladness and a good day, and many became Jews because they saw what God had done for them. Now take the Golden Text in two parts. It fits on to this lesson wonderfully. The trouble was taken to God, and he brought good to pass. First, then,

*Our part.* "O please help me carry this load," cried a tired traveler with a heavy burden.

"Let me take it, then," said the kind friend.

"No, no, I can't let go, but do help me somehow."

And the man refuses still to let go. How can another carry his load? If we want God to help us in any trouble, or to make the way clear for



us when we don't know what to do, we must give up the trouble and leave the way with him. Commit thy way really means to "roll the way."

If you roll a thing away, you have to let go. Then it is gone. Don't take it back. Ask God to help you, and then let him do it. Don't be as sorry and troubled as before you asked his help.

*God's part.* He brings to pass just what is best if we leave it with him. He has promised this and will do it. He is able, trust him always. We will make a scepter, or a rod, such as kings once used, and on it write "Love." It is God's love that makes him ready to help. It never fails. And we will make a cross. It is because Jesus died that the way to God is always open. We plead "for Jesus' sake."

### Kindergarten Hints.

**GOLDEN TEXT:** "I the Lord will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee." Isa. 41. 13. "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." Rom. 14. 7.

#### HINTS ON METHOD.

We reached to-day's climax [Esther's success in pleading for her people] in last Sunday's lesson. To-day we add few historical points, but work out our climax, "brotherly love," more in detail.

#### LESSON DEVELOPED.

After reviewing we suggest that Esther deeply loved her own land and her own race. We call the love which we all feel for our own country and for our own countrymen "patriotism." It is not real patriotism, however, unless it is the kind of love which is willing to take risks and face danger when our help is needed. You all know of heroes in the war with the Moab, who were willing to do this thing. ~~Later a discussion of this heroism, tell that little boys and girls begin very young to love the flag of their country. They are trained to salute it, and when we witness their genuine love and enthusiasm in the salute and in the singing of their patriotic songs we are led to conclude that this love is their inheritance, their birthright.]~~

If you lived, as Esther did, in the midst of a strange people, a wide desert lying between you and your own land, would you feel this same love for your country and for your countrymen? The children are easily led to perceive that their flag would be even dearer to them while exiled among strangers, and that they would take even greater pains to say and do that which should honor their own land and people. Sing at this point,

"I love thy rocks and rills:  
Thy woods and templed hills,"

and let this lead to the thought: We look upon our countrymen as brothers, and upon our dear country as ours and theirs, in trust for God and for each other.

While Esther was pleading for her people God was making ready her country across the desert for the coming of the Lord Christ. Esther, without knowing it, was hastening the time when all things should be made ready for his coming. In her Church, to this day, the people hold a festival celebrating the time when deliverance came to them through her courageous act. Among her children's children are those who welcomed the Lord Christ and learned of him to call men of every land and race "brothers."

Is there ever a call to do things, to give up things, to face danger, for the sake of those who are not of our own land or race? If this country is ours to hold in trust for God and for each other, have we anything to hold in trust for people in strange lands?

Right down through the earth under our feet [pointing] are people [describing their yellow skin and straight black hair] who carry in their pockets little ivory gods. They pray to these gods—when they think of it. They have troubles and dangers we know not of in our safe home. We speak of the way many of them live [showing pictures], using queer little boats as houses, and floating up and down streams, picking up a worse than scanty living. They and their children grow up in ignorance of God our Father. We show homes on land and water, which we could hardly call homes at all.

There are faithful souls in our own land who give up home, the companionship of friends, who sail away across wide seas, and live among these heathen, taking greater risk of life than did our soldiers when they enlisted for battle. These missionaries feel that the God of our country has given them so much that they reach out with both hands and with a full heart to these brothers beyond the seas.

The God of our country is the God of the heathen's country too, but they do not know it unless some one

To fight bravely for freedom is to be heroic.

To live daily and hourly as those who are convinced that "none of us liveth to himself," is to be Christlike.

### LESSON IV. (October 22.)

#### EZRA'S JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM.

Ezra 8. 21-32.

**GOLDEN TEXT:** "The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him." Ezra 8. 22.

#### Primary Notes.

*Introductory.* Sometimes we are told what to do, and that is precept, or teaching. Sometimes we are shown what to do, and that is example. We

have both in this lesson, but we will call it a precept lesson for the teaching or rule in it. The



story is of a good man named Ezra, which means "help." He was sent to help God's people, the Jews, who once were captives in Babylon, but who were allowed to go back to Palestine and to Jerusalem by the king, Cyrus, who conquered

Babylon. Fifty thousand Jews went back and began to build the temple, but were stopped by the heathen who lived then in the homeland. Two prophets afterward came to help them and tell them what to do, and the temple was finished. About sixty years later Ezra with a small company went up, ready to teach them the right way, and to help them put away their bad deeds. Let us see what he did that will help us. First,

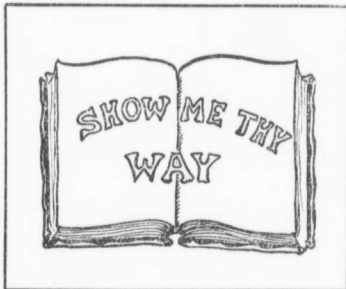
*He got ready for his work.* Before starting he called together the people who were going with him, by the river side and lived in tents with them three days, to see what all knew what they were about. Finding that there were none there from the family or tribe of Levi who were called ministers, because they ministered or served in the temple, he sent for some and God sent him the right ones. Then they held a prayer meeting. The way was long and dangerous and the wives and children were going too. Ezra was ashamed to ask the king to send a guard of soldiers with them, for he had said that God would care for them. So they had this meeting for one special thing. They

*Sought a right way.* How could they know how or where to go without God to guide and keep them? It is the very thing we must do too, so we will write it for our precept on the round of the ladder that is taking us upward: "Seek of him a right way."

How many ways are there? But two—right and wrong. Who alone can show the right one? God. There is a right way to come to the class, to go to school week days, to work and to play. We might even do something good and do it in the wrong way, like the boy who brought a quarter for missions, but said, boastingly, "See what I brought. It's more than any of the rest." A boy started to walk to his grandfather's, where he always had a good time. He knew the way, but he did not seek it, for he chose a side path that looked pleasanter, but which took him into a very dangerous place. Even before we are tempted to do wrong in anything we must seek of God the right way. After doing this Ezra and his company started and went forward on the

long, hard journey. As they went each one had his own duties. The most important duty was given to the priests, who were to carry the gold and silver vessels for the Lord's house. But if it happened to be the duty of a man or woman to look after some little child, and this was done carefully, that was just as well.

*God kept his word.* God's hand was upon them all for good, because they sought him. Over the long way he took care of them, saved them from the enemies that were lying waiting for them by the way, and brought them safe to Jerusalem. What a kind, strong hand is God's hand. How it holds us, leads us, and strengthens us. He has promised to do it—O, how many times he has promised. We will put on the board an open Bible, in which we find what God has said, and over or across it we will write, "Show me thy way," for it is in this book we find God's way and will for us.



#### Kintergarten Hints.

**GOLDEN TEXT:** "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Psa. 119, 105. "And lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them. When they saw the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." Matt. 2, 9, 10.

Some of you studied your lesson at home, and when your mother, as she was beginning to teach it, said, "It is about Ezra's journey to Jerusalem," you thought at once of a man who packed his trunk, went to the railroad station, and bought his ticket for Jerusalem. Ezra could not take a journey in that way. There were no cars, no trunks, no railroad stations, no tickets. Ezra was not even free to go on a journey. He had to ask leave of the king. Who was Ezra? A good man who had collected all the books of the Bible he could find, and had written such parts of the Bible as he knew about but could not find. Where was he living? In the heathen land across the desert, which we found on our outline map

[as suggested last month]. The books of the Bible had been scattered and forgotten. Ezra worked hard to get them in shape to use.

Why did Ezra want to go to Jerusalem? Jerusalem was "home." He knew that the first company of people who had taken that journey back to Jerusalem [lesson of August 27] had found their city in ruins, had rebuilt it with great toil and pains, but were growing neglectful of their new Church, forgetful of what little they knew about the Bible, disobedient and in trouble.

Ezra wanted to go home to carry the books of the Bible which he had collected; to teach this Bible, to teach the people to keep the Sabbath holy and worship the Lord.

When Ezra asked the king if he might go and might have help in getting ready the king was interested, and wrote a letter calling on his officers to help Ezra get off. The king gave Ezra gold and silver, wheat, wine, oil, salt, to take on his journey. How could Ezra travel if there were no cars? Over the desert on the back of a camel, while other camels were loaded with the gifts and treasures of the company—for many friends had decided to go with Ezra. What if they should meet robbers by the way? "I will send armed soldiers with you to protect you on your way," said the king. "I would be ashamed to ask for a band of soldiers to help us against enemies," said Ezra, "because we have already spoken to the king, saying, 'The hand of the Lord is leading all those who are seeking him. We will have a day of prayer, and not take the soldiers, trusting in God to lead the way in safety.'"

After their day of prayer Ezra gave the valuables to twelve chosen men, and said, "Watch ye, and keep them until ye give them up safely at the church in Jerusalem." "These things," said Ezra, "are holy unto the Lord; they are an offering unto the Lord. Watch them, keep them."

Did Ezra safely reach home, even without the armed soldiers to protect his caravan? "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

Ezra lived to teach the word of the Lord in the church at home. The people listened and promised to obey.

Ezra's journey to Jerusalem reminds of another journey to Jerusalem hundreds of years later. We have all seen pictures of three wise men riding on camels across the desert. They were going to Jerusalem to seek some one who had been promised even in the long-ago days when Ezra preached. That promise was written in the very books of the Bible which Ezra carried home.

How did Ezra know the way to carry this glorious hope across the weary miles of his desert journey? "The hand of our God is upon all

them that seek him." "Thy word is a light unto my path."

How did the wise men know the way to where the young Child lay? How could they find the Saviour of the world? "Lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them." How shall we know the way to find the Christ-child? "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

### LESSON V. (October 29.)

#### PSALMS OF DELIVERANCE. Psa. 85 and 126.

GOLDEN TEXT: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Psa. 126. 5.

#### Primary Notes.



*Introductory.* [The review of previous lessons is always understood.] One early spring morning a band of sowers went out to sow seed. Their master gave them seed-baskets and seed, and told them where to go and how to sow. At

first it was pleasant work, but as the day grew longer it grew harder. Some said, "We'll never finish;" others, "What is the use?" but the faithful ones among them all cried out, "Keep on, and be patient. Our Master promised us the sheaves if we would sow, and we must scatter his own seed, as he said." But even these hopeful ones often found the work hard, and many a tear dropped by the way, till at last the long day ended. Then there was a long waiting time, but at last the sowers were called to be reapers, and every faithful one came back with sheaves and with singing, for the word had come true, "They that sow shall reap."

*The lesson.* Our lesson is made up of two songs written to praise God for keeping his word to his people and bringing them back to their own land from Babylon. At the end of one of these psalms is a beautiful promise, and we will call our lesson a promise lesson, writing under this word, "They shall reap."

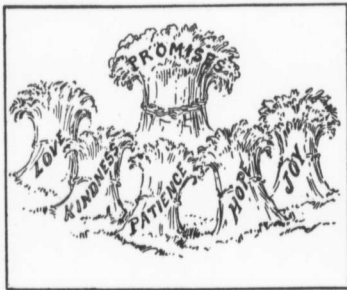
Now, the poor Jews in Babylon had a long sowing time for sowing seeds of sorrow for sin, faith, hope, and prayer. But the reaping time of gladness had come and they were filled with joy. Our sowing and reaping may be like this. We may sow many kinds of seed, and all good if our Master gives it. Let us look first at

*Our seed-baskets.* God our Father gives them. He fills them too. Whenever we have a chance to do good that is a seed-basket, and our Saviour's own words, the story of his love, kind deeds, pleasant and happy thoughts that make others better, may be called good seed. If we put in poison herbs and seeds of weeds into our baskets—that is, if we use the chance to do good in doing harm instead—O, how sad and wrong it will be, for the seeds will grow too. Everybody has a seed-basket, which means that everybody has a chance to do good and help others, and either does this or he hurts them. But by and by comes

*The harvest.* This is something that is perfectly sure. Sometimes a farmer sows his seed all in vain, because something happens to kill it, but we are sowing seed, by what we think, and say, and do, that will surely grow. Our Master says that everything that is done for him will come to something. Then there will be a double harvest. We will reap good in our own hearts and in the hearts and lives of others, if we have helped them. From kind thoughts will come a sheaf of good deeds, and from love-and obedience a lovely sheaf of gladness.

But it may take long for the seed to grow. Never mind. God says we shall reap, and that it will be in joy too. Don't be discouraged, no matter how hard things may be. In heaven we shall know, if not here, and we can wait.

See on the board the sheaves of love, kindness, patience, hope, and joy, and one great sheaf of God's promises, for there are 31,000 of these, and he will keep them all.



#### Kindergarten Hints.

**GOLDEN TEXT:** "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Matt. 6. 13.

#### HINTS ON METHOD.

We teach the meaning of the word "deliverance" by our use of it in illustration. Progress-

ive steps: 1. Deliverance from external evils (temptations, enemies, false accusations, etc.). 2. Deliverance from evils which come from within (evils of thought, purpose, etc.). 3. Delivered from all evil: delivered to "newness of life in Christ Jesus."

#### LESSON DEVELOPED.

When your baby brother seized the scissors, determined to play with them, and you caught them from his hands, you saved him from hurt. Baby did not think so, but screamed loudly for what he thought a charming plaything. Did you leave his tiny hands empty, and his little face quivering with disappointment? Not if you were a wise protector of baby. You filled his hands with a safe and pretty toy, and caught his attention from his dangerous plaything. What you gave him was better than what you took away, so that he felt no loss. That is exactly the way our Father in heaven treats his children. He will take away many a glittering thing that we love, yet which would surely hurt us; and will give us in its place something vastly better. He delivers us from evil thoughts and evil things.

The captives, of whom we have studied for many weeks, were glad to be delivered from their heathen rulers and heathen ways. When at last they were at home praying in their new church their songs and prayers were as full of the thought, "God our Father sets us free, and delivers us from evil," as our songs and prayers on Fourth of July Sunday are full of thoughts of God-given freedom in our glorious country. They tasted "the joys of deliverance" when the Lord took away from them certain heathen things which they liked, and filled their hearts and hands with the good work of making a home and church for themselves. Then they sang, "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad."

Some of us remember a sad time when we were shut in a dark closet because of wrongdoing; and there we had to stay until we were truly sorry. The very minute we were sorry, we were set free from something besides the dark closet. We were delivered from evil, set free from sin. How good the sunshine felt when we were free to run about. Would it have felt in the least pleasant supposing we had come from that closet as bad as before? Suppose we had been innocent of the wrong, and were punished by mistake. Would our imprisonment make us dreadfully unhappy, or would we be rather patient, feeling that all the trouble would soon be smoothed away?

Some time after Jesus went home to heaven,

and left his dearest friends to carry his name and his teaching to all the world, these friends were often unjustly treated, and falsely accused of making trouble. At one time two of them, Paul and Silas, were shut in prison (Acts 16. 20-40). They had been doing their Lord's glorious work, and were only sorry that they had not strength to work twice as hard. Paul and Silas in prison felt their souls free as air; and though their bodies were in chains, their thoughts flew as on wings to the glorious Christ, and they sang for joy that they could do his work. After speaking of the jailer's conversion, we teach that when Paul and Silas were delivered from prison their bodies were free from chains, but their souls had been free before.

Teach that it is possible to be chained fast to sins even when our bodies are free. There are thoughts and things which we know perfectly well are bad and ruinous. We cannot let them alone. Nobody in our home can deliver us from these temptations. When we pray, "Lead us not into temptation," what does that mean? Who can set us free from sins and from temptations that hurt?

When the Lord takes these (seemingly) pleasant things away from us, does he leave us with empty hands and longing hearts? How did you treat your baby brother when you took the dangerous things out of his hands? With what will the Lord fill hands and heart when he takes enticing sins and temptations away?

### Whisper Songs for October.

#### FIRST LESSON.

Sing, O little children, sing,  
You are children of the King,  
And he bids you all rejoice  
In his house with heart and voice.

#### SECOND LESSON.

Sing, O little children, still,  
In his way through good or ill,  
Who shall harm you while the King  
Guards your path and bids you sing?

#### THIRD LESSON.

Little children, trust your King  
Every day for everything.  
He will make the heavenly way  
Bright with sunshine every day.

#### FOURTH LESSON.

Little children, seek your King;  
He his little ones will bring  
Through the desert, through the night,  
To his city of delight.

#### FIFTH LESSON.

Little children, come with songs,  
All your praise to him belongs;  
Take his peace for all your fears,  
Take his joy for all your tears.

### Order of Service

FOR THE PRIMARY DEPARTMENT.

#### Fourth Quarter.

*Teacher.* Why do we come to Sunday school?

*Class.* To learn about God.

*T.* What book teaches about him?

*C.* The Holy Bible.

*T.* The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.

*C.* Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing.

*T.* The Lord our God be with us: . . . let him not leave us, nor forsake us.

*C.* That we may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments.

*T.* Be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

*C.* For this God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our guide even unto death.

SINGING.

Safely through another week,

God has brought us on our way;

Let us now a blessing seek,

Waiting in thy courts to-day:

Day of all the week the best,

Emblem of eternal rest.

*T.* What is it to pray?

*C.* To speak to God.

*T.* Why should we speak to God?

*C.* Because he is our Father, and he wants us to tell him all our pleasures and all that grieves us.

*All.* O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.

*T.* We bring our offering to-day to Jesus.

Why should we give to him?

*C.* Because he gives us all things, and we should love to give what we can to him.

Sing (while offering is taken) "Hear the pennies dropping."

BIRTHDAY EXERCISE.

BIRTHDAY SONG.—Tune, "Precious Jewels."

We praise thee, we praise thee,  
Our dear heavenly Father,

For birthdays, for all days,

The gifts of thy love.

*Chorus:*

Teach us how to spend them,

Begin them and end them,

Thy blessing attend them,

Dear Lord from above.

We love thee, we love thee,

Our dear heavenly Father,

We lift up our voices

Together in song.

*Cho.*

MOTION EXERCISE.

LESSON TAUGHT.

ECHO PRAYER.

CLOSING.

(*Touch finger tips over the head.*)

"As we raise our hands toward the sky above

We remember God's banner o'er us is love.

(*Fold hands in lap and bow the head.*)

And we bow our heads again in prayer,

Giving ourselves to his loving care.

May the lesson learned in our hearts sink deep.

May the Lord between us a loving watch keep.

May we show this wish in our work and play,

That we've learned of Jesus on this holy day.

We pray thee to take each little hand,

And lead us all to the better land. Amen.

## The Nearest Duty.

BY SARAH A. GIBBS.

My soul was stirred; I prayed: "Let me  
Do some great work, so purely  
To right life's wrongs that I shall know  
That I have loved thee surely."  
My lips sent forth their eager cry,  
The while my heart beat faster:  
"For some great deed to prove my love,  
Send me, send me, my Master!"

From out the silence came a voice,  
Saying: "If God thou fearest,  
Rise up and do, thy whole life through,  
The duty that lies nearest.  
The friendly word, the kindly deed,  
Though small the act in seeming,  
Shall in the end unto thy soul  
Prove mightier than thy dreaming.

"The cup of water to the faint,  
Or rest unto the weary,  
The light thou giv'st another's life  
Shall make thine own less dreary;  
And boundless realms of faith and love  
Will wait for thy possessing;  
Not creeds, but deeds, if thou wouldst  
win  
Unto thy soul a blessing."

And so I wait with peaceful heart,  
Content to do his pleasure,  
Not caring if the world shall mock  
At smallness of the measure;  
Of thoughts or deeds or daily life,  
He knows the true endeavour;  
To do his will, to seek his face—  
And he will fail me never.

## A Twentieth Century Church.

No past attainments will be sufficient for the church of the present day. The fathers wrought like heroes. We cherish them, and pay our tribute for what we have and are, to their faithfulness. But in this age of increasing achievement and growing intellectual and ethical light, the workmen of to-day, to be worthy of the fathers, must improve on them. To fall in the improvement will mean to fall behind the spirit of the time. Our Gospel is sure and steadfast. Jesus Christ is King. The heavens have opened to let him through and show us eternal life. But if we are to be true to the blessed revelation given us once for all, we must clothe it in the thoughts and feelings of men and women who live now. The people of to-day do not want

and will not have, the excrescences of a seventeenth century proclamation, but if the preaching of this day of grace is to win and compel men to serve God in newness of life, it must reach them on the plane which now absorbs their thoughts and activities.

Moral homilies will not do. The living ethics and pulsing life of Jesus must be brought to light. One cannot be a Christian to-day and continue a moral reprobate. Christianity, to be anything at all now, must live and move and have its being in practical everyday conduct and life. Empty rhapsodies divorced from vital living will empty the churches. The sweetest and most potent word to-day is that of Jesus. The great, absorbing question is being formulated in the quick, sensitive heart. What would Jesus do? If this vital relation to our Saviour in all the personal affairs of our life is not brought home, it is clearly seen why so much of culture, refinement and intelligence seek a happiness apart from the church, and in the temporary gaieties of a fast age. As sometimes conducted the church is a veritable tomb, imparting feeling to be shunned. There is no life-giving water or nourishment. God's faithful ministers are seeing the need. The greatest era of Christianity is not only here, but it is coming in more revealing power. Men will tire of fads. Dazzling but empty theories will have their day. Every other resource will be exhausted! But meanwhile the fundamental and eternal value of the Gospel of Jesus Christ will become more luminous, and men will embrace it with a readiness and joy not known before. Not that those who have already received it received only a partial recompense; but greater numbers, vastly greater, are to find it the only healer of sore hearts, the only anchor for hope, and the only rest for reason's painful search. In full realization of the demands upon the church, and of its paramount value to the highest interests of men, it must be given right of way. When we will learn its full significance, society, industry, commerce and government will touch it at every point. The time must come when the house of God will be open, like the temple of old, seven days in the week. When no clubs or secret orders will take the place of this primal source of life. When men will learn to see whence their blessings flow, and the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth, as the waters cover the great deep.—Omaha Christian Advocate.



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