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THE TEACHER.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1872.

JESUS, AFTER HIS ASCENSION.

SUNDAY, February 11th, 1872.

To the Churches in [Smyrna] and Pergamos.—Rev. ii. 8-17.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matt. v. 10.

SCRIPTURE SELECTIONS.—Heb. xi. 32-40; xii.

SUMMARY.—The sharer of Christ's sufferings shall be a wearer of Christ's crown, but the corrupter of Christ's word shall be a victim of Christ's sword.

ANALYSIS.—I. Letter to Smyrna. vs. 8-11. (1) Description of the author and the church. (2) Encouragement, special, general.

II. Letter to Pergamos. vs. 12-17. (1) Description of the author and the church. (2) Warning, special, general.

EXPOSITION.—Smyrna.—"Thirty miles north of Ephesus on the bay or gulf that sets inland thirty or forty miles," is one of the principal cities of Western Asia, and now has a population of 120,000 or 150,000 inhabitants.

"The angel."—There is some reason for thinking that Polycarp was pastor of the church in Smyrna when this letter was written. He was burned at the stake A. D. 168, and testified that he had served Christ eighty-six years. If the Apocalypse was written A. D. 96, Polycarp would then have been fourteen years a Christian. Irenæus, who knew him, says he was personally acquainted with John, and according to Eusebius that he was appointed bishop of the church in Smyrna by the apostles. He was a sincere, lovely, loving, faithful minister.

The self-testimony.—vs. 8. The church was hard pressed and in such straits that it seemed to be abandoned and doomed. Its great Head comes forward before it, saying, "I am the first and the last," i. e., the eternal changeless One, not failing my persecuted flock, even though I seem to fail them,—"Which was dead and is alive." I too have gone into depths, into deeper depths than yours, into death; but I live.

The condition.—vs. 9. (1) Christ knows it. Blessed truth is this. (2) It is affliction. The words "thy works, and," ought not to appear. They came into the manuscript from which our common version was made, by a mistake in copying. We thus have a triplet of trials, (a) "Tribulation," i. e., oppression or persecution from the civil power, which was pagan. (b) "Poverty," i. e., in worldly goods and hence in influence and power for self-defence. (c) "Blasphemy," i. e., from unbelieving Jews, whose hatred was intense enough to have killed Christians. (3) The church is "rich." Compare Matt. vi. 20; Luke xii. 21; Romans ii. 4; xi. 12; Ephesians iii. 8, 16; Hebrews xi. 26. Christ's view of what makes a church rich, strong, great. Not money, but purity, holiness, faith, the grace and fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Satan's Synagogue.—"Satan" and "Devil," meaning Adversary and Traducer, are two names of the same person,—the Prince of Evil. The former is the Hebrew name and hence is here used in connection with the Jews. The latter the Greek; and hence used in connection with the Pagan power. The word synagogue designates either a Jewish assembly or a Jewish house of worship,—here the former as an organized body; once (James ii. 2), of a Christian assembly, like the word church. The Jews in rejecting Christ accepted Satan as their head, (compare John viii. 48, 49), and hence their assembly and worship take name and character from him. The Satan church. Merited reproach as their blasphemy proved. The letter of this church, written after the death of its pastor, Polycarp, states that "the Jews were specially eager in hastening his death by collecting wood for his fire, and that even after he was burnt they tried to prevent the Christians from gathering up his remains for burial."

Trial ahead.—vs. 10. (1) It is foretold. Christ doesn't coax men to serve him by promises of ease and pleasure. (2) It comes from the devil. Wicked men, Jews or Gentiles, are his slaves, doing his will. (3) The nature of the trial is persecution by the civil power, imprisonment, etc. We have seen that the pastor of the church

was burnt to death some years after. In the letter of the church on his martyrdom it is said; "The procurator urged him to deny the faith, . . . saying, 'Swear by the fortune of Caesar.' 'Repent and say, away with the atheist [i. e., the deniers of idols or Christians]. 'Swear, and I will release thee; reproach Christ.' 'I will cause thee to be devoured by fire unless thou shalt repent.' Polycarp answered; 'Thou threatenest me with fire that burns for an hour, and in a little time is extinguished, for thou knowest not the fire of the future judgment, and of that eternal punishment which is reserved for the ungodly.' The trial as designed by Satan, was to make the Christians deny the Lord; as designed by the Saviour, it was to raise them to a more glorious life, and through them to bless the world. So are Satan and Christ always at cross purposes. (4) The time, ten days, not literal,—a considerable time.

Encouragement.—(1) Fear none of those things, not even the worst. They can torture only till they kill the body, no more. (2) The positive side,—"faithful," like Polycarp, "unto death," not here till death, but though death be the result. (3) Reward,—"the crown of life."

The call.—vs. 11. It is general,—to every one. "He that overcometh."

N. B.—A church was organized in the year 1854 by the American missionaries at Smyrna.

Pergamos.—"Sixty-four miles north of Smyrna, thirty miles from the sea, on the north bank of the Caicus, at the base and on the declivity of three high and steep mountains which flank the city on three sides." Two centuries before Christ it had become an extremely wealthy city. "Its prominence; however, was not that of a commercial town. It was a sort of union of a Pagan cathedral city, a university town, and a royal residence." It was "a city of temples, devoted to a sensuous worship, and might not unnaturally be viewed as a place where was the throne of Satan." "When or by whom the church at Pergamos was founded is not known." "It has still a population of about 15,000, chiefly Turks," Mohammedans,—no Christian church.

The sword.—Every word of God must be fulfilled, and as a sword is death to the smitten but deliverance to the defended so must Christ's enemies fear, but his friends take courage in view of these words.

Commendation.—vs. 13. As in vs. 9, and for the same reason omit the words "thy works and." Satan, as in the preceding letter; appears as the author of opposition to Christ. His seat or throne is to be at Pergamos, because their wickedness was as prevalent as though Satan ruled in the community. Martyr means a witness; and one who is put to death for his faith is called a martyr, because he in his death bears such strong testimony or witness to the truth.

The reproof.—vs. 14, 15. "A few things," i. e., compared with the many things for the church. Thus is the reproof tempered. It was no fault of the church or its angel that these wicked men were in Pergamos. The fault was in partially harboring them: "thou hast there them," etc., instead of hating, opposing, and casting them out. On these Balaamites see Num. xxv. 1-3; xxxi. 16. For the clause "which I hate," in verse 15, read likewise.

Repent.—vs. 16. The old call to the sinner. We must keep it sounding till sin ends. We see here that Jesus, though he is love, is yet not mere good nature, too tender to move in wrath and smite down his opposer.

The victor.—vs. 17. "Hidden manna,"—the manna hidden or placed away in the golden pot in the ark of the covenant, which was in the holy of holies of the temple (Heb. ix. 3, 4), a symbol of the bread of heaven hidden with God in Christ for the soul's nourishment. Hidden it is from the eye of sense, but revealed to the eye of faith, and to those who are in and with Christ, especially in glory. Matt. xxvi. 29. The white stone, white in symbol of purity, with a new name known only to its possessor, given by Christ. Some find a reference to the high-priest's breastplate (Ex. xxxix. 8-14), others to the white stone cast into the urn by Roman judges for acquittal, others to the stone or tessera, given by one to another in token of friendship and for admission to hospitality, etc.

QUESTIONS.—What can you tell of Smyrna? What witness does Jesus bear of himself in vs. 8? Compare ch. i. 18. Was this especially fitted to encourage such a church? Why? Why does Christ

say "I know," etc. in vs. 9? What was the condition of the church? Wherein was it poor, and wherein rich? In what sense were the blasphemers Jews and yet not Jews? Rom. ii. 24-29.

Who is Satan, or the Devil? Why is the former name used in vs. 9 and the latter in vs. 10? Why should the blaspheming Jews be called the synagogue of Satan? John. viii. 48, 49; ix. 22. What is predicted in vs. 10? Why is it said that the Devil shall do this? Is the Devil still active in our world? In what ways?

What exhortation is given in vs. 10? What is meant here by not fearing? By being tried? By "ten days"? By being faithful unto death? By the crown of life? Are these exhortations for us? Explain vs. 11.

Where is Pergamos? How does the Son of man describe himself in vs. 12? What in the church calls for this description? Vs. 16. For what is this church praised? Vs. 13. Explain the phrase "holdeth fast my name." What is a martyr? Ought all to have the martyr spirit? Why is Pergamos called Satan's seat? For what is the church blamed? Vs. 14. Compare vs. 6. How should the church have treated these persons? Give the story of Balaam. Explain vs. 17.

Scripture Catechism, 13, 14.

Youths' Department.

SUITED FOR A "T."

"How did your wristbands suit you, Frank?" said Fanny Grey to her brother Frank; a young man just home in his first college vacation. "I stitched them every bit myself on the machine. Were they nice? Did they fit?"

"They were splendid, Fan. I told the fellows they were done by an old lady of seven years. Fit? I guess they did. Fitted to a T. Thank you!"

And Frank Grey pulled his coat-sleeve up a little, and showed the shining linen, fitting his shapely wrist, much to his little sister's admiration.

"Frank," said Fanny, a few moments after, "may I ask you something?"

"Of course you may, little one, I'll answer if I can." And Frank clasped his hands over his head, tilted back his chair, put his feet upon the table, and looked down into his sister's eyes that were saying, just then, "As if there was anything you didn't know, you splendid old fellow!"

But aloud she said, "What did you mean by 'fitted to a T'? I'm sure I don't know; and I want to."

"Whew!" whistled the young man. "What do I mean, sure enough? Well, I mean suited exactly, fitted perfectly, I suppose."

"Yes," said the little girl, in a disappointed tone, "I know that; but I thought, perhaps, it came from something. I don't see the sense of it, I'm sure. 'Suited to a T.' It meant something else in the first place, I know."

"Well, I guess it did, pet," said Frank; "I'll look it up for you, some time."

"He'll never think of it again," said Fanny to herself, "but I do wish I knew. 'Suited to a T.' It is so funny."

The next day Frank came in with a strange sort of ruler in his hand. It had a cross piece at one end, which gave it the shape of a capital T.

"See here, Fanny," said he, "I've been to the carpenter's shop in your behalf. I hope I'll get you 'suited to a T' this time. I failed to satisfy you yesterday, you know."

So Frank placed the cross piece against a perpendicular line which he had drawn, and laid the arm along a horizontal line that formed the right angle.

"You see," said he, "this rule is called a T square, and is often used to test the accuracy of lines and angles, as I have just tested mine. For a wonder, it fits exactly. I never did hit it so well before. And so, you see, it is fitted or 'suited to a T.' And it is altogether probable that the proverbial phrase 'suited to a T' originated in this instrument."

"O Frank, how much you do know! I'm so glad I asked you! I can see the sense of it now," said little Fan, hugging him tight, to the great damage of his flowing neck-tie.

Frank looked as wise as an owl, but he didn't "let on" that he couldn't have told, to save him, till he asked somebody else. That's how I found out what is meant by "suited to a T."

HOW MARTHA'S CLOUDY DAY GREW BRIGHT.

BY MARY A. DENISON.

"I'm just as wretched as I can be, and that's what's the matter, aunt Patsy." The girl having delivered this little

speech with a sob that was truly hysterical, threw herself into the nearest chair, laid her head on the table and cried with a passion that showed how terribly her nature was moved.

Aunt Patsy looked about the disordered room, and then glanced pitifully towards the weeping girl. Half unconsciously to herself she began putting things in their places; restored the books to the little shelves that had been rifled by the children, evened the wrinkled cloth, pushed back the chairs, and lifted Martha's half-empty work-basket to her lap.

"How horrible it must look here, to you, who are neatness itself," sobbed the girl, slowly wiping her tear-filled eyes. "I don't know what you will think of me, but I'm so utterly discouraged."

"No matter what I may think, dear," said aunt Patsy, in her sweet, mellow tones. "Tell me why you are so discouraged, and see if I can't be of some help to you. Are the boys getting unruly? Does father expect too much, or are you not well? You are generally such a nice little housekeeper."

"Martha shook her head.

"I am as well as ever, aunt Patsy, but somehow things go all wrong. Father don't say much, but I know what he expects, and mother, dear mother had such a knack of doing things easily and having them just right. The boys won't mind me as they did her, and Robert hasn't been home for two nights till past ten; of course he wishes me to screen him, but I am frightened at the way he is going on. John expects me to get his jacket done by this evening that he may wear it at a party, and between them the children put me in a passion this morning, and I said some things I'm sorry for. Then I caught Fido stealing, and in springing away he upset the churn, and I've worked myself into a real fever. It used all to be so different. I suppose," she added, "the letter I received yesterday from my room-mate, at school, with whom I should have graduated to-morrow, helped the general unhappiness."

Aunt Patsy smiled.

"That was the little straw that upset you, I suspect, poor child," she said pityingly. "It does seem very hard that you couldn't stay and finish your education. But your mother was called most mysteriously, in the midst of her duties and the prime of her life, and who shall dare say it was not His will? You know you might have stayed at school, your aunt Betsy Moreland would—"

"O aunt Patsy," cried Martha, with a looked of pain, "could I have given the children into her keeping? They would have hated her in a week, with her strict rules."

"Let me be sewing the jacket, dear, while we talk," said aunt Patsy cheerfully. "I'm an old tailoress you know, and I can stay just as well as not. Now don't look anxious, I'm not going to let you get any dinner; you must rest, and I am quite sure I shan't starve. I know just how it is; the children took their dinner and your father took his; we shall do very well on bread and butter and tea, and Johnny shall have his jacket this evening. So you find the burden a little too hard, my poor child?"

Martha looked up with a quivering lip.

"Aunt Patsy," she said, "it don't seem as it did before you came in. I think the dear Lord must have sent you to comfort me. All day yesterday I had such dreadful thoughts. It seemed to me that I had taken things upon me which did not belong to my years. I regretted having left the academy. I almost accused God, for taking mother away. I felt old, and injured, and unwilling to work. That made things go wrong, partly. When the boys came home, I took up every little thing they did, and said, and they grew cross and quarrelled with each other. I went so far as to shake little Nelly when the child cried at hurting herself, and papa seemed uneasy and went out. O aunt Patsy, after all, I don't know but I have my wicked self to blame as the sole cause of all my trouble. You can't imagine how gloomy everything looked this morning."

"Sometimes I think your father should hire a housekeeper, and let you go back to school," said aunt Patsy. "The children might not fare so well, but then it seems a pity, don't it, that you should sacrifice yourself for them?"

Martha caught, aunt Patsy's eye, in which lurked a sad tenderness, and the hot blood rushed to her cheeks.

"Aunt Patsy, I know what you mean. I see it all; life was not given us for self-indulgence, merely. Papa shall have no

housekeeper but his foolish, complaining Martha. Oh, how they would all miss me, careless as I sometimes am, and incompetent. When I forget myself, and strive to walk in the Master's footsteps, they are all so happy and willing to help me. Everything goes smoothly then—at least jars and discords don't trouble me. It is only when I forget and build up the possible castles that might have been, that happiness forsakes me. I have the whole day to work in; the children all help me when they come home; it is all myself, my own miserable selfishness. If I hadn't brooded over my trials a full hour, yesterday, Johnny's jacket would have been half finished. Oh how glad I am that you came in to put me right with myself. I didn't know before that it was such a lovely day; and I'll tidy the room and go beg or borrow some cream, for we must have butter."

"You shall have half of my yesterday's churning," said aunt Patsy. "Here's the key and you know where to find it."

Martha kissed the furrowed cheek and ran out on her errand. Along the way she saw flowers and birds and God's great wealth of shining grain. Nature took on new beauty, and she came back delightfully freshened by the little effort. The old care slipped out of her heart; there was magic in her fingers as she went sitting about the house like a sunbeam.

Aunt Patsy smiled.

"It is the grace of God," she softly whispered.

And after the cosy little dinner, aunt Patsy, still stitching, let drop many a pearl of wisdom into the eager ears that drank in all they heard. So when the children came home, prepared for clouds, they found sweetest smiles and words of welcome. They breathed in the atmosphere of a loving household, of gentleness and refinement, and behaved their best.

Johnny was delighted at sight of his finished jacket, and the younger boy seeing aunt Patsy home promised her on his honor he would not stay out late at night again. Little Nelly kissed her sister slyly and whispered that she meant always to be as good as ever she could.

And that evening as the tired father drew his chair up, with a look of such love and gratitude towards his eldest girl, Martha felt that the possession of kingdoms would not cause a happiness so intense as the sweet satisfaction of living for others.

"For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

ACORN-MURDER.

Ashton tramped into the house with a very loud tramp. He sat down with his cap and muffler on, looking very scowling. "I hate Tommy Down," he said; "I hate him! I do, I do hate him!" and very miserable words they are to fall from a boy's lips, great or small.

"Oh," said Lottie, swallowing her mouthful of apple, "you are committing an acorn-murder, Ashton!"

"What is an acorn-murder?" asked the child.

"And it is just as bad as an oak-tree murder," continued Lottie.

"I do not know what you mean, Lottie," cried Ashton, in a snarling tone.

"You know what an acorn is," said Lottie.

"Of course I do," answered her brother.

"And a great oak-tree grows from a little acorn," said Lottie.

"Yes," said Ashton, "big things come from little things."

"So killing people comes from hating people and getting angry with them," said Lottie; "and wishing to kill is as bad in God's sight as killing people—feeling it is as bad as doing it. The Bible says so. It was my verse last Sunday. 'He who hateth his brother, is a murderer.'"

"Oh!" cried Ashton.

"Wishing it, is the acorn-murder," continued Lottie; "while doing it is the oak-tree murder—big, and out and out, so that everybody knows it. If we have angry, murderous feelings in our hearts towards anybody, that makes us murderers in the eye of God; and the reason is, because if we let these feelings stay and grow, they will by and-by make us real murderers, Ashton."

"Oh," cried the little boy again, "you are hard, Lottie."

I guess it frightened him. One, you see, is a heart-murder; the other is a hand-murder. Oh, let us be very, very careful how we cherish angry feelings. Acorn-murders are very bad for ourselves, even if they do not hurt others.—Child's Paper.