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BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1872.

JESUS, AFTER HIS ASCENSION.

SUNDAY, January 23th, 1872.

The Glorified Son of Man.—Rev. i. 12-20.

SUBJECT.—Christ reveals himself to the Apostle John and manifests his heavenly glory and majesty.

GOLDEN TEXT.—I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore. Amen, and have the keys of hell and of death.

SCRIPTURE SELECTIONS.—Daniel vii. 9-14; Zechariah iv.

ANALYSIS.—1. A description is here given of the appearance of the Son of God in Heaven. vs. 12-16. 2. What He said to John. (vs. 17-20) first of himself, and secondly his commands to John.

EXPOSITION.—This was a Lord's Day manifestation of Christ. See verse 10, 11. The introduction, vs. 1-3, indicates that the book was written to be read in the public assemblies of the believers, more particularly to the seven churches of Asia.

The earliest Christian writers—Ignatius, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr—speak of the Lord's Day being observed by Christians. Pliny too wrote to the Emperor: "The Christians on a fixed day before dawn meet and sing a hymn to Christ as God."

To see the voice.—To learn whence the voice came and who was speaking.

Seven golden candlesticks, or lamps stands. These first attracted his attention. In Exodus xxv. 31, 32, the seven candlesticks were on branches united in one stand or central pillar. Here they were seven separate stands. Zechariah iv. 2, 11.

The seven churches of Asia were the light-bearers at that time to the world. "Golden" indicating their preciousness.

Verse 13.—John had seen Jesus at the transfiguration and now recognized him notwithstanding his glorious appearance. As the high-priest was in the holy place near the golden candlestick, so Christ was here in the holy place made without hands. Hebrews ix. 24.

Christ was "in the midst" of the candlesticks, indicating his active presence among the churches. In heaven he had also a still more glorious presence. Rev. iv. 2-5.

Son of Man.—Still having his humanity. Clothed &c. As the high-priest was required to wear the appropriate official emblems so Christ had on the robe and girdle. Exodus xxviii. 2, 4, 31. Indicating his kingly as well as priestly character. The angels are represented as clothed in a similar manner. Rev. xv. 6.

The ordinary girdle was placed around the waist or loins, but Josephus states expressly that the Levitical priests wore their girdles higher, about the breasts or paps, in order to give greater freedom and majesty in moving. The high-priest's girdle was interwoven with gold; Christ is described as all of gold.

White like wool, or, more properly, like white wool. Indicating purity and glory, Isaiah i. 18. Not as of age or decay but abundant, even as wool.

His eyes as a flame of fire.—Penetrating so as to discover all the sinfulness of those who should approach him. Rev. xix. 11, 12.

His feet like unto fine brass.—Burnished or glowing brass. Ezekiel i. 7. "Glowing brass as if they had been made red-hot in a furnace."

His voice as the sound of many waters.—Or as the voice of a great multitude coming on to overwhelm their enemies. Ezekiel xliii. 2; Daniel x. 6.

In his right hand seven stars, or a crown of glory studded with seven stars. Isaiah liii. 3. He owns and sustains his servants and disposes of them as he sees fit, or it may refer to his government and control of the material heavens.

A sharp two-edged sword.—His word is compared to a sharp cutting instrument. Eph. vi. 17; Hebrews iv. 12. Some have supposed that this alludes to the Old and New Testaments used for cutting off carnal and spiritual sins. The sword of the Spirit has a double efficacy, cutting down, condemning some, and converting others.

The sun shining in his strength.—In noontday cloudless splendor. Acts xxvi. 13.

Verse 7.—The vision as seen by the aged Apostle was more than could be borne by

unassisted human power. So at the transfiguration. Matt. xvii. 5, 6. Again as then, his touch restored them. Matt. xvii. 7. I am the one that was at the beginning and at the end of all eternity. Christ's eternal power and godhead are plainly shewn.

Verse 18.—Jesus was the living One and the same as died and arose, but will not again need to pass through the grave; having now the power over life and death.

Hell, here is shades or the place of the dead, not Gehenna, the place of torment. Bearing the keys shews his power to deliver those who have passed into that condition. Death is the result of sin. Romans v. 12; Psalm ix. 13, 14; Isaiah xxxviii. 10; Matt. xvi. 18, Verse 19.—It was required of John to write so as to comfort and warn the churches by this vision given to him of the Lord of life and glory. Present and future things were now to be made known to him, and by him to the servants of Christ in all future ages.

Verse 20.—What was now "mystery" would thus be made known, or revealed. Stars are made the symbols of ruling angels, Numbers xxiv. 17; Jude 13. The lampstands were the symbols of the churches; not the buildings, but the bodies of believers in different places, from whom should go forth the light to all the world.

QUESTIONS.—Where was John when he saw this vision? verse 9. Why was he there? To what was the voice compared? verse 10. What did he hear before he turned to see who spoke to him? verse 11. What were the objects he saw after he had turned? In what respect did the lampstands differ from the one in the temple? What may we learn by the Saviour appearing in the midst of the candlesticks? What did the dress indicate? What may we learn from the description of Christ's hair? his eyes? his feet? his voice? What does the sharp two-edged sword represent? what does it indicate?

What were Christ's first words to John? What does "the first and the last" refer to? Why should Jesus at that time tell John of his eternal existence? By what means do we overcome spiritual death? John vi. 47-51; John xi. 25. May we also overcome the death of the body? John 5. 29.

Scripture Catechism, 9, 10.

COULD NOT TRUST HIMSELF.

A native of Fribourg presented himself a few days ago at the window of the Post-office at Lausanne, and asked for an order for 100 francs. The clerk asked:

"Who is the sender?"

"Jacques Mathieu."

"What is the name of the payee?"

"Jacques Mathieu, poste-restante at Estavayer."

"Is he your brother?"

"No, it is myself."

"Do you mean to say that you are sending a post-office order to yourself at Estavayer?"

"Yes, I am going there."

"But why can't you take it yourself?"

"Ah! there it is," said the simple fellow. "You see I know myself; and if I were to take the money with me, the probability is that it would never reach Estavayer, while, by sending it through the post-office, I shall be sure to find it on my arrival, where I shall require it."

REMARKABLE CASE.

In the old church-books of the First Baptist church in Stamford, Conn., is the following antique record: "October 8, 1797. Died at Norwalk, Sybill Whitehead, aged 116 years—a member of this church; baptized October 5, 1780, in the 99th year of her age. She lived at Norwalk, where she kept school, and for years frequently came on horseback to Stamford (a distance of thirteen miles from her home) to attend public worship—coming on Saturdays and returning on Mondays. The last time she came to Stamford was in May, 1789, at which time she was 109 years old. She then walked nine miles, and also returned on foot. She was never married."

During Dr. Payson's last illness, a friend coming into his room remarked,

"Well, I am sorry to see you lying here on your back."

"Do you know what God puts us on our backs for?" asked Dr. Payson, smiling.

"No," was the answer.

"In order that we may look upward."

In a recent paper on "Church Music," the writer Dr. Dyke, alleges that Paul and Silas "were singing on their knees;" whence he deduces the duty of singing on our knees at "holy communion." Upon this, a correspondent of the Record puts the very pertinent question—"But how could Paul and Silas kneel, when their feet were made fast in the stocks?"

Youths' Department.

THE USHER'S STORY.

CHAPTER I.

When I was a boy, between eleven and twelve years of age, for one year—and one year only—I was at school, at a village in Somersetshire. The oldest usher in the school on one occasion told me the following remarkable story:

Some years ago there was a thief among us—a systematic, inexorable depredator of books and slate pencils, stationery and toys, cakes and keepsakes. Who he was, nobody knew, excepting always himself and his eye who takes his own time and means to bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the secrets of the heart. At first the missing things were too slight and valueless to make much stir about—odds and ends of school-desk property, which were readily replaced, and therefore less missed. Now and then, however, the boys began to lose their knives and silver pencil-cases. The thefts at length grew too serious not to be referred to the head master. He instituted a rigid search through desk and box, clothes and bed-chambers, and even the bed of every boy in the establishment, but with no result beyond turning out the collections of queer and unaccountable articles of material, quality, and manufacture, which constitute the time-out-of-mind accumulations of a boys' boarding school. Entangled nets of rusty fish-hooks, the flesh of little fishes sticking to them, and savoring strongly of stale fish; odd shapes of stars, fruit, vegetables; schoolfellows' faces cut in book-covers, in old exercises, in slate, wood, raw potatoes, and turnips; mouldy morsels of plum-cakes and ginger-bread, saved for consumption on the sly, forgotten till too dry and hard to be eaten; scraps of letters from home; rude caricatures of masters and teachers; heaps of marbles and spin-tops, with here and there bits of India-rubber, old gloves, and twine-ends mingled among them, like seaweed on a beach; knife-blades without handles, and handles without blades; innumerable leaves of every branch of elemental literature and science scattered about, as if by some kind of school autumn, when their ripe owners had been shaken from the tree of knowledge, and been separated to their calling in life; worn-out sticks and whips beyond count.

Nay, the inventory would emulate the catalogue of the British Museum, if every article were specified. So I dismiss the rest summarily, as presenting something of everything, and nothing without sign of mutilation, rough usage, obsolescence, or decay. The only things perfect and unblemished were the boys' best suits of clothes, which were never trusted to their custody, except for the Sundays and holidays, when the school turned out in full parade. Every boy found something he never knew he had lost, until it was recovered; but not a single loser of any of the late missing articles (the special objects of the search) found one of them. Whoever was the delinquent, he had completed the indictment which charges a prisoner that he "did steal, take and carry away;" but whether he had carried them, or who was the guilty deponent, still remained a myth.

The mystery was almost as annoying as the loss. If they had known the thief, they might have hoped they knew the worst of his thefts; but it was clear he was a cunning as well as unscrupulous knave, and there was no knowing what he might take off next, if he were not discovered and compelled to take off himself. The whole school was uneasy, suspicious, and sensible of a general misgiving and estrangement. There was a general distrust one of another. As we did not know who was the depredator, no one was sure of any one else, that he was not the depredator. Doubt engendered illiberal construction. Particular boys began to be whispered against, watched, misrepresented, and avoided. They, in their turn, conscious of their innocence, and misinterpreting their treatment, suspected those who grew shy of them, as indicating convictions of guilt, which made them ashamed, or afraid, of more intimate relations with their victims. The school was becoming so seriously disorganized, that the master, all other means of detection having failed, offered a reward for the discovery of the dishonest one among us. That failed also; and after an interval he offered a free pardon to the transgressor, on condition of a full confession and restitution before the current week expired. Still no

boy accused himself, though it was known the thief was there, because his depredations continued at intervals, only increasing in boldness in proportion to their impunity. Editions of classics were now added to the booty; then small sums of the boys' pocket money; and finally the French master's silver watch. This was intolerable.

Another and a more rigid search was instituted, and this time not only of all the boys' boxes in the school, but through the kitchen, the servants' dormitories, and through every room in the house, and about the premises, even to the sheds and stables. The master privately set on foot inquiries by the police after any of the missing articles that might be met with in the houses of the village, at the pawnbrokers or the second-hand shops, and dealers in marine stores, but without effect. The mystery was dark and impenetrable as ever; growing darker, like the night, the older it grew. A secret watch was kept over the schoolhouse after hours; and the name of every boy seen to go in or come out of the school, was reported to the master. These boys were every one of them closely examined as to what was their business in the school at such hours; whom they saw there; what they did; how long they stayed; and what they brought away with them; and their answers, carefully compared with the statements returned by the secret watchers, being found generally to correspond, the attempt at detecting in that shape was foiled. Masters, teachers, servants and watchers, and the boys at large, were at their wit's end. Some of the younger ones, prompted by a remark of Mr. Palmer, the usher, began to ascribe the missing articles to supernatural agency, and they were afraid to walk alone after dark, for fear of meeting the school-room ghost.

Another expedient was tried. The master announced that he should confine the whole school to the playground, with no more walks out beyond bounds, and no more half-holidays, until the thief was discovered. He conjured all the boys to cooperate with him in the effort at the detection, for their own sakes, for their honor, more than for the holidays, and made an affecting appeal to the unknown thief, if he had a spark of honor—even of that honor which is said to be among thieves, only he doubted it—to come forward and relieve his schoolfellows from the embarrassment into which the individual youth had involved them.

"Boys," said the worthy preceptor, in a serious tone of entreaty, "I request your help in this disgraceful matter, as a personal favor to your master. If I have in any way won your affection, or deserved in any humble degree your consideration, I ask you to let it be proved on this painful occasion."

There was a dead silence, at length broken by murmurs of generous emotion among the boys; who forgot the forfeiture of the holidays, in their sympathy with their master, whose words were delivered in a tone of soft and gentle entreaty, like a man who threw himself on their candor, and felt he could trust them.

Boys like to be trusted. Confidence is pleasing at any stage of life; but in the untried and unshackled feelings of boyhood, it usually works an unreserved response. The boys looked at one another, as if each would say, "There is no resisting that." "Even the thief must give it up now;" and the look passed round the school, like a general mutual inspection. Every boy felt that he could afford to bear it, because the master trusted him; and every boy looked at every other boy, as if of course the other boy thought so too. All looked, but none spoke. Whoever was the thief, he bore the scrutiny without quailing, and the school broke up in moody disappointment that an appeal had failed which every one felt ought to have succeeded.

During the following month, there was no fresh theft. The boys had borne their captivity in bounds without a complaint, or even a petition to be released; and the master could hold out no longer. He yearned with compassion over the patient magnanimity, and removed the suspension of their holidays.

The next day his own gold spectacles were missing, and, after a search through the school-desk, on which he had accidentally left them (to the best of his recollection) it was ascertained that they had followed the fate of the French master's watch. This loss was kept secret for a week from the boys, and the masters discussed among themselves the propriety of subjecting the whole school and premises

to the inspection of a detective from Bristol. This was finally done. Neither his person nor his business was known to any one except the master. The incarnate eye of the law was on the premises night and day, unknown to any one who might be the object of its vigilance. The detective loitered about a week in the neighborhood, searching as he best could in every direction for any tidings of one of the missing articles, of which a list had been furnished him, but without avail. The only thing discovered was the master's spectacles, which were found hanging on a branch of an old tree near the school-house, with one of the glasses broke out. Who hung them there, none could tell.

The detective did his best, gave it up for hopeless, and returned to Bristol. The only effect of his services had been to increase the general discomfortableness, by his repeated assertion that more than one hand was engaged in the business—that the thefts were too numerous, and some of them of such a quality as could not be managed without two or more accomplices.

Then there was more than one thief, if the detective was right—and nobody doubted his dictum; but, if so, who were the accomplices? "That's just what I want to know," quoth the detective; "but I'll stake the valley of the lot stole there's more nor one on 'em in it, and it aint boys' job neither."

There was among the junior masters one whom I will call Palmer, who seemed to feel the disgrace cast upon the school almost as much as the head master. He had been found, like Deborah, not "under an oak," but a palm-tree, in one of our eastern colonies, by a regiment on its march, and, being a white man's child, was roughly, but kindly, fathered by the soldiers, and eventually found his way with them to England, where he had been placed in an institution for foundlings. In his twelfth year, his excellent character for cleverness and progress reached the ears of our master, and he, having no son of his own, and desirous of having some one about his person to trust and attach himself to, chose young Palmer. Nobly had the lad justified his patron's choice; he had now been, partly as pupil, and partly as teacher, ten years in the establishment, and his literary acquirements equalled those of many of his seniors, and considerably exceeded those of his own age. His unremitting devotion to his patron's interests had won the entire affection of the latter, and nothing seemed clearer than that Palmer's heart was full of love and gratitude to his benefactor, and that he would, if needs be, lay down his life to serve him. He entreated the master only to leave the task of unravelling this mystery to him, and to ask him no questions as to whom he suspected, though he admitted he had his suspicions, until he was in a position to state them without injustice to anybody. His patron acquiesced, and there the matter rested for the time.

"I TOLD YOU PAPA PRAYED SO."

In 183—there lived in one of the hill towns of Western Massachusetts, then noted for the intelligence and piety of its inhabitants, a lovely Christian family. The mother being an invalid, a gentle girl of seventeen became the guide and constant companion of a bright little sister of four summers. With almost a mother's fondness she took the darling to her own room, and night after night, as she prepared her for bed, and knelt beside her while the little one lisped her simple prayer, the elder sister heard the words, "O Lord, don't stick us through with a knife!" At first she took no apparent notice of them, lest the little thing should become shy of speaking out her own words. Finding, however, that the little prater always used the same expression, the elder sister said:

"Why does my pet pray so?"

"'Cause my papa does," was the prompt reply.

"Why no, darling; papa doesn't pray in that way."

"Yes he does, sister, I say he does."

A morning or two after, as they were both kneeling by the same chair, while the father conducted the family worship, he said, "O Lord! cut us not off in Thine anger." Instantly the curling head was raised, and an arch glance sent up to the elder sister's face, as in earnest tones the little one whispered, "I told you papa prayed so." —New York Evangelist.

The Quakers are decreasing even in their stronghold. Pennsylvania, within the last forty years, has lost thirty-seven meeting houses of this sect.