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THE TEACHER.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1873.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES. SUNDAY, August 24th.

The Two Foundations.—Matt. vii. 21-29.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded."—1 Peter ii. 6.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 24-29.

SUMMARY.

"On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand, All other ground is sinking sand."

ANALYSIS.—I. The rejected professors. vs. 21-23. II. The wise builder. vs. 24, 25. III. The foolish builder. vs. 26, 27. IV. The astonished hearers. vs. 28, 29.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 21.—Not every one, etc. That is, some, but not all—a part only. That saith unto me. Words are cheap, although in the long run, and on the whole, it is "out of the abundance of the heart" that "the mouth speaketh"; and hence, by one's words he will be justified or condemned. A hypocrite's words may be the opposite of his spirit. So may his deeds; for Judas betrayed Jesus "with a kiss." Lord, Lord, as showing zeal, earnest devotion. Shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. [Or the heavens.] There, and in the next verse, Christ's mind seems to be on the kingdom as it will be in its completed glory, and not as it is in its earthly state and stages—a work of grace, going forward toward completion. But he that doeth the will, etc. Not that the works earn heaven as a merit; we are saved from sin by Christ's merit, which we in faith accept, and trust as ours. But faith in God works his works, and a soul born of God acts as a child of God, in purity, integrity, love. Where works fail to appear, there is no evidence of living union with the Lord. We work because we have been saved; not in order that we may be saved. Our virtues do not first lead to God; they come from him. My Father. Jesus here indicates his Headship in the Christian family, and intimates that all others have their sonship "in him," and through his sonship.

Verse 22.—Many. So common is false profession, especially in times and circles where the Christian religion becomes popular. Will say. Not necessarily in words, but it will be shown to be the heart's thought and feeling. In that day—of judgment—the last day, when Christ comes to judge the world. Then the results of all other days are revealed, and destiny, as determined by all preceding days, entered upon. Prophesied—i. e., spoken—God's Word. There were true prophets who were wicked men. Such was Balaam. See also 2 Cor. xiii. 1, 2. So there are Christian teachers who are not Christians. They know the truth and teach it, but do it not. In thy name. Or rather, by, i. e., by means of thy name.

Verse 23.—And then. "In that day"—at the last, when their course of false professing is ended. Will I profess. They have had their time of "professing" as to Christ; his time of "professing" as to them now comes. They professed, "We know him." He professes, I never knew you. These words are explained by John x. 14. The shepherd knows his sheep as being his—is acquainted with them, as having them in his flock, under his care and keeping, gently fondling them. Christ as truly knows who are not his, as who are; but he does not know them as he does his own. And very often, in Scripture, the word "know" is used of a loving relationship, a friendly knowledge. Depart from me. Christ cannot but reject those who finally reject him—who reject him in spirit, however in words they accept him. Ye workers of iniquity. A phrase describing the real character concealed under the garb and guise of piety. It does not refer to gross sins—breaches of common morality—but to a life which has not been ruled by the Spirit of God. Thoughts and feelings are works.

Verse 24.—Therefore. Since such is the end of "the workers of iniquity," as contrasted with the end of those bearing good fruit. Whosoever. The ungodly will be judged on the same principles with others. Hearth these sayings of mine. These words of this sermon, which was a kind of summary of the law of his kingdom. And doeth them. To hearing must be added doing. We must not only hear, but also heed, the Gospel. Truth does us

good when it is vital in our souls, food digested, and so life giving. I will liken. Will, in the future, or, rather, do now assure you, that he will be found to be like. The Lord's mind goes on to that future issue of actions, which gives vividness to the comparison. Hence the future tense. A wise man. More exactly, "a prudent man," i. e., a man who skillfully and aptly adapts means to chosen ends. He is wise who discerns and chooses the best ends; and prudent, who makes the best use of the best means to attain those ends. Upon a [the] rock. A solid, immovable foundation. Here the first reference is to "these sayings," as being "the Word of God," and hence, like the rock, "abiding forever." But the Word that literally "liveth and abideth forever," was and is Jesus Christ; and he is the one only foundation than which no other can be laid.

Verse 25.—The rain descended. This violent rain not only tests the roof of the house, but, falling on all the country, it soon causes the valleys to fill with water, as it comes rushing in from hills and mountains, and these streams, or mountain torrents, pour and roar along with tremendous fury, uprooting and floating down trees, cutting away banks, sweeping off flocks, and whatsoever else that is movable. Rock, the solid bottom of rock, the foundation of "the everlasting hills," cannot be moved. To complete the test, there come the fierce winds along with the roaring floods, and these beat against the walls or sides of the house. It fell not. The house stands, because it is built upon a rock. These sentences make a picture complete, vivid, true to nature. And what a grand and awful yet true picture of the posture of a child of God in this world of sin, when, at times, for some cause, God allows the elements of evil to combine and pour in upon him their whole fury, to undermine and sweep away his piety, his Christian integrity! Jesus spake from his experience, and to ours. There were but two classes of hearers; and if we are not with the first, we stand with the second.

Verse 26.—Hearth these sayings of mine. Exactly like the preceding, born and reared in the same family or community, just like the others as to the hearing—but doeth them not. Referring, not so much to external conduct as to internal state. Shall be likened. Will be at last seen and proved to be like a foolish man. Imprudent, the opposite of the prudent. His ends or wishes were good, but his means to gain them bad, wretched. And why? Who built his house upon the sand. The rock symbolized God's changeless, immovable Word. The sand is human philosophy, doctrine, speculation—anything which sets itself up as a something as sure and good as that old Word. The great men, whose names are sounded abroad as though the names of gods, how few of them rest their hopes on the pure, simple Gospel—on Christ. The world is their trust, their good, their god.

Verse 29.—The same stormy test will visit the godless as the godly. It fell. Stood while all was fair, but fell at last. The Saviour may have in mind, first of all, the professor who has the form of godliness, without its power; but the principle which he reveals goes far beyond, to all not doing righteousness. Their fall hastens, as time flies. Great was the fall of it. The hopes of an immortal soul—the structure of its immortal hopes—this goes down with such a crash. Lost! Lost! A soul lost! Swept down and away to perdition! Down to hell! Can it be?

Verse 28.—These sayings. This sermon. Were astonished. No wonder. They had heard and wondered. Would they also do? Some doubtless did, and now are blessed. Others doubtless did not, and perished.

Verse 29.—As one having authority. Speaking as knowing well of what he spake, and giving it as certainly God's own message. Here was a Being who was himself the Truth, and from his lips came the truth, pouring forth fresh and clear, like water from a living fountain. The Old Testament, as compared with this sermon, was but twilight to sunlight.

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 21. What is here meant by "entering into the kingdom of heaven?" What class of men say, "Lord, Lord?"

Vs. 22. What "day" is here meant? What is meant by the words, "in thy name?" Acts iii. 16.

Vs. 23. What had they professed as to Christ? What will he profess as to them?

Vs. 24. What "sayings" are meant? What is it to do them? Who do them? Rom. viii. 14. Why is God's Word like a

rock? Chap. v 18. What is Christ called in Ephes. ii. 20? Why so called?

Vs. 25. Why this order, "rains," "floods," "winds"? What, in a hilly and mountainous country, is the effect of sudden, violent storms? What in the Christian's history is here represented by the rains, floods, and winds?

Vs. 26, 27. In what respects are those of this class like the preceding? In what different? When will be the final testing of character? Who build upon the sand? What is here represented by the fall of the house? Why is the fall called great? Matt. xvi. 26.

Vs. 28, 29. What was the effect of Christ's discourse? Did the people probably all become his true disciples? What is meant by "having authority?" Where—in do you suppose Christ's teaching differed from that of the Scribes? Matt. xv. 2-6.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. Scripture Catechism, 136 137.

SUNDAY, August 31st.—Power to forgive sins.—Matt. ix. 1-8.

Youths' Department.

THE HEN AND CHICKENS.

The children were never tired of watching the old hen and her chickens, and the care she took of them; how she would call them to eat before she touched anything herself, and how, when the sun was clouded over and a cold gust of wind blew across the mountain, she would gather them all under her wings, and settle herself down to warm them.

"That is the prettiest sight of all," said they. "Look how the little heads peep out from under her feathers, and one comes running out and then creeps back again to find a warmer place."

The old miller was almost as much delighted as the children.

"How wonderful these strange birds are!" said he, at last. "God's hand is seen in all his works around us, it is true, but when we see anything new, then his power, wisdom, and goodness are still plainer to our eyes. Only think how merciful and wise it is that these little creatures are able to run about and pick up for themselves. If the old one had to bring food in her beak for so many young ones, as the swallows do, it would be endless work; and how wise it is that the nature of the little ones is to follow their mother, and at once obey her call. If they were to run wildly all over the hills, and wander far away from her, she would never be able to collect them altogether again, and they would be lost. Above all, it surprises me to see how brave and fierce the hen has become. How often as I have passed by have I been vexed, and called them silly, stupid things, because they flew away from me, though I never once did them harm or even frightened them; and now the nature of the hen is quite changed, and she will attack any one to defend her young, and I do believe the good creature would die herself of hunger rather than let one of them want food. It is God who has taught her all this boldness, all this love for her young. So tender is he, so watchful over the meanness of his creatures. And shall we then ever be faint-hearted? Will he not much more watch over us? Never be afraid children! God cares for all that he has created—above all, for man, who in his eyes is of more value than all the beasts of the field or the fowls of the air.—Children's Prize.

IS THE WORLD GROWING WORSE?

A few mornings since in a meeting of ministers in the city of Boston, on the part of several of them there was an expression of the belief that the world is continually growing worse.

As I listened to them I was reminded of that passage (Ecc. 7: 10) "Say not thou, what is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this." Now, I confess, that it seems to me the Scriptures are nearer right than these "one-sided praisers of things past." Not only do I understand the Bible to teach that the world is on the whole growing better, but it seems to me a broad survey of the world's history teaches the same lesson.

When are the times that were so much better than these? If you say before the fall I agree, but if since—when? Before the flood? Hardly. In the times of Abraham? But there were also the days of Sodom and Gomorrah. In the times of Moses? Only ten could enter the promised land. Was it in the days of David and Solomon, the best days of the kingdom of Israel? The picture even of the best is such as we would scarcely tolerate in

these days. Was it during the life of Christ on earth? Only the few received him. The many were ready to kill him. Was it in the days of the apostles? The sufferings and death of the men is a sufficient answer. Was it during the early days of the Roman empire? Let the fact that Diocletian dared to proclaim that "the Christian religion which was destroying the republic is everywhere annihilated" answer the question. Was it in the latter history of that empire? Let the work of Julian and the growth of the Roman Catholic Church answer. Was it in the days of the Reformation? The history of the sixteenth century is a black record beside that of the nineteenth. Was it in the earlier days of our own beloved country? These were the days of the alliance of the church and State, the days when unconverted men were admitted to the full membership of the church, and deep, fervent, heartfelt piety was fast becoming unknown. When are there better days, pray? We fail to find them. We know of none like the present. It seems to us that the cause of Christ was never so powerful, never so triumphant as to-day. Italy turning to God, the Bible sold and read in old Spain, Germany throwing off the shackles of Romanism, the other countries of Europe all progressing in Christian civilization. The gospel of Jesus Christ a power for God in India, its influence beginning to be felt in Asia, Japan throwing open her doors and welcoming Christianity to her homes. Is not the heaven working? Are not the prophecies of Christ's conquests already being fulfilled before our eyes.

So far from believing that the world is growing worse and will continue so to do, it seems to me the day has already dawned, whose full perfection will behold all the kingdom of this earth the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ. I do not expect every individual will become a Christian, but I expect that the world at large will be completely christianized, that as a whole it will be Christ's. To this I look forward. For this I labor, and my encouragement is in God's promises and the partial fulfilment already to be seen.

That after that period there may come another fearful struggle with Satan, a final battle before he gives over the contest. I think Revelation also warns us, but we are assured that in that also we shall be victorious, in a word, that "No weapon formed against us shall prosper; and that every tongue that shall rise against us in judgment shall be condemned." (Is. 4: 4-17). This is our heritage, and Jehovah stands pledged to its fulfillment.—Era.

CONVERSATION OVERHEARD.

"What do you think of Rev. Mr.— as a preacher?"

"I think he has the rare faculty of putting the truth before men so that they cannot fail to see and feel it."

"But he is not a popular preacher, I am told."

"I know he is not; for the plain reason that men do not wish to see and feel the truth."

"That is strange!"

"No, it is not strange; for did not Christ say, that men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil?"

—A Clergyman in Davenport, Ia., exchanged pulpits with a pastor in another city a few Sundays ago, and meeting at the railroad crossing, they had a brief chat together. They carried satchels just alike, and when the car-bell rang, each caught up one and started for the train, to find on reaching their destinations that they had exchanged satchels and sermons.

A train, when moving slowly, was lately stopped on the Rajmahal, India, branch line by an alligator. The cow catcher pierced the animal's body, and in its convulsions the tail twisted between the spokes of one of the wheels and stopped its revolution. Blunt George Stephenson little thought that his adage about the "coc" would hold good in Bengal with respect to an alligator.

A clergyman, now deceased, once said: "He had learned to preach not only so that people could understand him if they had a mind to, but also so that they could not misunderstand him, if they wanted to."

The blossom cannot tell what becomes of its odor, and no man can tell what becomes of his influence and example, that run away from him and go beyond his ken on their mission.

A JOURNEY THROUGH CENTRAL MEXICO.

Once riding along slowly among the Andes of South America, almost overpowered by the very silence of nature, I began to converse with the peon, or servant who, on foot, drove the pack-mule which bore the two trunks, slung across his back. After receiving various pithy replies to several questions, I asked the number of his brothers and sisters. "Senoor," said the poor fellow, in the broad Spanish of those regions, "we are fourteen; seven alive up there in heaven, and seven dead down here on earth." The thought was worthy of the grand scenery by which we were surrounded.

In going to the diligence-office in the city of Mexico, to purchase tickets for the North. I asked a very ordinary-looking man in regard to the roads. "Well sir," said he, "They are such as Nature has given us, there is the engineer—pointing to the sun—that oversees and drains them." From the middle and lower classes of Spanish Americans, as well as ideas, such as the above, at once original and beautiful. In fact, they are an idealistic people. If the enthusiasm which they possess, and the lofty schemes which they map out, were guided by the plain, practical common-sense of the Anglo Saxon, the result might be more satisfactory.

Night-fall brought us to the village of Fula, where, after a most jolting ride over the stones, we were glad to find a comfortable lodging place. A scientific expedition from Mexico intended to follow us within a few days, in order to examine some very interesting ruins of the Aztecs, which are found near this village. Even in the hotel where we stopped, the proprietor showed me, by candle-light, some curiously carved cylindrical stones, which had doubtless once belonged to the colonnade of some Indian temple or palace. They weighed from three to five hundred pounds each, and had been brought from the ruins near the village. The proprietor informed me that there was still among them a large stone, still more highly wrought and with hieroglyphics, weighing at least five thousand pounds; but that the inhabitants of Fula did not possess the means of transporting it, as their ancestors had done.

The next morning we were awakened at three o'clock, and, after a cup of coffee, were off at four. After travelling all day over one of the roughest, stoniest roads that can be imagined, bounding about in the coach from side to side, and from bottom to top, with a child two years old to take care of, we arrived at 12 p. m., sore and exhausted, at the famous city of Queretaro. During this long, long day, we stopped only a few moments now and then to exchange mules, and a short time for breakfast, near 1 o'clock in the afternoon. We now dined at 1 a. m., and grateful for and escort of government soldiers during the latter part of our journey which had prevented us from being robbed, betook ourselves to rest.

A strange feeling began to creep over me on the following morning, as I reflected upon the events which had taken place in this city some five years ago. We visited the cell in the ex-convent of the Capuchins, where the ex-Emperor Maximilian was held prisoner. It was a small, gloomy room, on the second floor, some sixteen feet square, and with but one window. On the right was a similar one occupied by Miramon; and still beyond, that of Mejia, who in Mexico is usually called Don Thomas.

In the central cell of Miramon, we were shown the place where the altar was erected, and all three partook of the final mass. On a desolate-looking hill near the city, where grows only briars and the repulsive cactus, we saw the spot where the three fell, shortly after they had attended upon the last rites of their church. A small heap of stones marks the death-place of Maximilian. Poor man! In three short years he exchanged the crown—emblem of supreme authority—for the prison; the throne for the gallows; the imperial purple for the winding-sheet. As a Mexican writer has said, "The drama commenced in Miramon, on the 10th of June, 1864; closed on the battle-mound of Queretaro, June 19, 1867." It may be a fit subject for kings to reflect upon; but it is also one which could not but make us sad.

The first day's ride from Queretaro was also a very long one. Again we were up at 3 A. M., and again we reached our destination about 12 P. M. On this day, shortly before dusk, we saw the battle ground where the first Spaniards are said to have fallen in an encounter with the Mexican patriots, led on by the father of