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BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1874.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, November 15th, 1874.

Hypocrisy and Piety.—Mark xii. 38-44.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Micah vi. 8.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 41-44.

SUMMARY.—"The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by his actions are weighed."

ANALYSIS.—I. The Scribes' hypocrisy. Vs. 38-40. II. The widow's liberality. Vs. 41-44.

EXPOSITION.—Introductory.—Our last lesson introduced us into the Temple at Jerusalem, and presented to us the last of the concerted efforts there made to confound Jesus. We heard his admirable answer to the Scribe inquiring which commandment of the Old Testament was first, and the hearty approval which the Scribe himself gave to the answer. Mark tells us in verses 35-37, that Jesus then questioned his questioners, as to the character of the Messiah, which they could not answer. The time for this questioning and counter-questioning was now past. The different classes of his enemies had done their utmost and failed. In that wonderful twenty-third chapter of Matthew there is not the least tinge, or tint, or taint of passion, not a shadow or faintest shade of vindictiveness in any one of its words; only the clear and terrible light of eternal justice flashing forth retribution richly deserved. It was in word just that which came in deed when God smote down the holy city, the holy Temple, the holy nation, convicted by Christ's crucifixion of incurable unholiness, and made of these a permanent ruin for a testimony and warning to the whole world, and to all subsequent ages. As we meet him to-day, he has just completed that judicial denunciation, and from the woe-doomed "Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites," has turned to those who had ears to hear, to instruct, warn, encourage.

Verse 38.—He said to them. Specially to his disciples, but in the hearing of that multitude—"the common people, who heard him gladly." Vs. 27. Compare Luke xx. 45; Matthew xxiii. 1. Whether the hostile assailers of Christ after their defeat and denunciation had withdrawn, is left to our conjecture. In his doctrine. "In his teaching," for such is the literal rendering. Some take this to mean in the midst of the speech given in Matt. xxiii, and so forming a part of it. It rather followed, that was addressed to other persons. Beware of the Scribes. Christ never put civility before integrity, nor sacrificed honesty to courtesy. And yet he was always both civil and courteous. He would not speak more severely of, than to, a man or a class. He says not, "beware of every one who is known as a Scribe," but "beware of the Scribes." In two ways they had need to do this. 1. They were to keep clear of their doctrine and principles, "the leaven" of hypocrisy. Luke xii. 1. 2. They were to keep out of their power, so far as fidelity to Christ would allow. Matt. x. 17-23. These instructions looked forward specially to the times just subsequent to Christ's death and resurrection.

Now follows a photograph of the character of the Scribes. Which [who] love to go in long clothing. Literally, and more graphically, "to walk about," that is, on the various public streets, and wherever people would be likely to gaze at them. (1-Chron. xv. 27; John iii. 6); (Luke xv. 22) They wished by these to create an impression of their dignity and special sanctity. From this would come what they also loved, viz., salutations in the market-places. Such salutations were very grateful, as they proved that the robes of office had made the intended impression.

Verse 39.—The chief seats in the synagogues. The front seats reserved for persons of distinction and specially for "the rulers of the synagogue." The uppermost rooms at feasts. A most misleading translation. Literally "the first reclining places," etc. The places of honor at the table, where instead of sitting they were wont to recline.

Verse 40.—Which [who] devour widows' houses, like some savage monster, hungry for wealth, utterly destitute of pity, will swallow the property even of a widow unable to protect and support herself; will swallow even her house, and so turn her

out homeless; nay, worst and wickedest of all, will deliberately gain her confidence by an ostentatious exhibition of sanctity, in order, in a devilish betrayal of this sacred confidence, thus to rob her and drive her out of her home. For a pretence make long prayers. As though it were not enough thus to impose on the public, as though this robbing of God's special wards, the poor, and in particular, the poor and pious widows, were too little, they must needs fill up to the full, and to overflowing, their cup of abomination, by an immediate attempt to practice their hollow impositions and their heartless robberies, directly upon God in his own person. In the way of pretence, they stand and mutter their mumbling mockeries before God, taking care to do it also before men, and so make a compound sham and shame. These shall receive greater damnation. A retribution, greater than that of those more open and flagrant sinners who make no pretence of godliness; the greatest condemnation and punishment ever to be visited on man, for this sort of character is the crowning abomination, the most accursed thing on which the eye of God rests.

Verse 41.—Jesus sat over against the treasury. This treasury consisted of thirteen brazen chests called trumpets? because the mouths through which the money was cast into the chests were wide at the top and narrow below. See 2 Chronicles xxiv. 4-14. The money was for the various expenses of the Temple service. And behold. The original is more vivid: "And sitting opposite the treasury he began to observe" [or was observing]. How the people cast [are casting] money into the treasury. "The people," as a whole, as they passed into the Temple. The treasury, it is said, was in the outer court or "court of the women," and the men going into the inner court would pass by it while the women also would have access to it.

Verse 42.—And there came a certain [or one] poor widow. Possibly a previous acquaintance of Christ, and whose circumstances he had well known, and, possibly, one whose house some hungry Scribe had devoured. She threw in two mites, which make a farthing. "A mite was the smallest coin current in Palestine. Luke xii. 59."

Verse 43.—Called unto him his disciples. In order to impress upon them this lesson, so in the line of that just before taught Verily, etc. Marking the great importance of the lesson. Hath cast more in than they all. Than any one of them all, or than all of them put together.

Verse 44.—We have here the reason for the previous statement. For all they of their abundance. Their superfluity, that which was above their needs. She of her penury. Her destitution. All her living. All with which she might buy her "daily bread." The point is not that she had cast in more in proportion to her means. If she had cast in all in a Pharisaic spirit, Christ would not have commended. But she cast it in with a spirit acceptable to God, a spirit of self-sacrifice.

QUESTIONS.—Where did we leave Christ last Sabbath? Where does this lesson find him? What occurred between? Vs. 35-37; Matt xxiii.

Vs. 38. To whom did Christ speak the words of vs. 38-40? Luke xx. 45. Of whom does he bid them "beware"? What need to beware of them? Luke xii. 1; Matthew x. 17-23. What trait of these men is described in this verse? What is here meant by "long clothing"? 1 Chron. xv. 27. By "market places"? Matt. xx. 3. Why should they "love to walk about" in the former? Why love to receive salutations in the latter?

Vs. 39. What were "the chief seats in the synagogue"? Acts xiii. 15. What "the uppermost rooms at feasts"? John xiii. 23-25. Why the preference for these? Is it wrong to receive honors from men? Is it wrong to wish to be honored by men? Wherein consisted the wrong in the conduct described in these two verses?

Vs. 40. What is here meant by the words "to devour widows' houses"? What characteristic of the scribes is thus described? What special fitness in these words to describe it? What kind of prayers did the scribes make? What is hypocrisy? In what consists its great wickedness?

Vs. 41. What is here meant by treasury? Who were casting money into it? For what purpose, think you? Who cast in much?

Vs. 42. How much did the poor widow cast in?

Vs. 43, 44. Why did Christ here use the words "Verily, I say unto you"? How, in his judgment, did her gift compare with those of the rich? What reason does he give? Does Christ still see all who give for God's cause? Does he still judge as he then did? What encouragement in his words? What caution?

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, November 22nd, 1874.—The Anointing at Bethany.—Mark xiv. 3-9.

Youths' Department.

THE DUCKS.

A STORY FOR THE BABY.

One little black duck, One little gray, Six little white ducks, Running out to play; One white lady duck, motherly and trim, Eight little baby-ducks, bound for a swim.

One little white duck Running from the water, One very fat duck— Prouty little daughter; One very grave duck, swimming off alone, One little white duck standing on a stone.

One little white duck, Holding up its wings, One little bobbing duck, Making water-rings; One little black duck, turning round its head, One big black duck—see he's gone to bed.

One little white duck Walking by its mother; Look among the water-reeds, Maybe there's another. Not another anywhere? surely you are blind; Push away the grass, dear, ducks are hard to find.

But I think my wee duck Is the nicest duck of all, He hasn't any feathers, And his mouth is sweet and small; He runs with a light step and jumps upon my knee, And though he cannot swim, he is very dear to me.

One little lady duck, motherly and trim, Eight little baby-ducks, bound for a swim; One lazy black duck, taking quite a nap; One precious little duck, here on mother's lap.

ELEPHANT AND CHILD.

A troop of elephants were accustomed to pass a green-stall on their way to water. The woman who kept the stall took a fancy to one of the elephants, and frequently regaled her favorite with refuse greens and fruit, which produced a corresponding attachment on the part of the elephant towards the woman. One day the group of elephants unfortunately overturned the poor woman's stall, and, in her haste to preserve her goods, she forgot her little son, who was in danger of being trampled to death. The favorite elephant perceived the child's danger, and taking him up gently with his trunk, carefully placed him on the roof of a shed close at hand.—Palmer's Anecdote of Elephants.

A BIRD WITH A BASKET.

We do not mean a real basket, but something that answers the bird's purpose just as well.

On the shores of the Black and Caspian Seas is found the Pelicanus Onocrotalus, or common pelican. This bird has a long and very strong bill, under the lower mandible of which he carries his "basket." This is a strong, membranous pouch of bright yellow color. The pelican has very long legs, and lives on the small fish which it catches by wading out from the shore. Having satisfied its own appetite, it fills the queer basket with a supply to take home to the baby-pelicans and their mamma. The basket is elastic, so that when distended it will hold a considerable number of fish; but when not in use it resembles only a large bit of yellow, parchment-like skin.—Oliver Optic's Magazine.

A GOOD STORY.

Dr. Cuyler has picked up a new anecdote of Mr. Spurgeon, and has retailed it without delay in one of his letters to America. The pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle was trying to immerse an enormous man who had once been a Methodist local preacher. It was made a more difficult process by the man's interfering with Mr. Spurgeon's attempts to put him under the water. Mr. Spurgeon looked up at the audience in his mirthful way, and said, "You see, brethren, that this brother was brought up an Arminian, and he cannot cure himself of the habit of trying to help."

A SAILOR'S OPINION OF A COMET.

We were told by a celebrated naval officer the following anecdote:—On one of his cruises the sailors saw a comet, and were somewhat surprised and alarmed at its appearance. The hands met and appointed a committee to wait upon the commander and ask his opinion of it. They approached him and said:

"We want to ask your opinion, your honor."

"Well, my boys, what is it about?" "We want to inquire about that thing up there."

"Now, before I answer you, let me know what you think of it?"

"Well, your honor, we have talked it all over and we think it is a star sprung a leak."—Exchange

HONEST AT LAST.

A countrywoman went into a store on Hanover street, Boston, the other day, and putting four dollars on the counter, remarked to a clerk: "There: fourteen years ago, 'twill be fifteen this fall, I bought something next door and gave them a dollar bill, but they couldn't give me the change; so they sent a boy into the next shop, and he brought me back the change for five dollars instead of one dollar. I took it; but 'taint no use, I ain't agoing to keep it any longer; so there it is, all back again." And before the astonished clerk had time to make any inquiries she was gone.

OLD DUTCH PROVERBS.

We must row with the oars we have; and as we cannot order the wind we are obliged to sail with the wind that God gives.

Patience and attention will bring us far. If a cat watches long enough at the mouse nest, the mouse shall not escape.

Perseverance will obtain good cabbage and lettuce where otherwise nothing but thistles will grow.

The plowman must go up and down, and whatever else may be done, there is no other but this long way to do the work well.

Learn to sleep with one eye open. As soon as the chicken goes to roost it is a good time for the fox.

If weary with waking your portion soon will be meagre.

Fools always will ask what time it is, but the wise know their time.

Grind while the wind is fair, and if you neglect, do not complain of God's providence.

God gives feed to every bird, but he does not bring it to the nest; in like manner he gives us our daily bread, but by means of our daily work.

Rise early; then the fishermen finds his worms.

The dawn of day has gold in its mouth. He that lags behind in a road where many are driving always will be in a cloud of dust.

Never set your feet in a dirty and crooked path for the love of money. It is a work that will bring bad interest if you wish to suck honey of thistles.

You will need a long spoon if you wish to eat with the devil out of the same dish.

THE OLD SAILOR.

A pious man was on his way to church, where divine worship was about to be celebrated for the special benefit of seamen. Just opposite the church, at the door of a public-house, sat an old sailor with a stern and resolute air. With folded arms, and a pipe in his mouth, he was looking with indifference, if not contempt, on those of his comrades who were on their way to public service.

"My friend," said the stranger, approaching him, "are you not coming with us to church?"

"No!" replied he, rudely. His very demeanor might have conveyed the reply to the stranger, who added mildly,—

"You appear to have seen hard days. Have you still a mother?"

The sailor raised his head, and fixed his eyes on the stranger without uttering a word.

"Well, friend, if your good mother were here, what counsel do you think she would give you?"

The sailor instantly arose, and, brushing away a tear, which he vainly endeavored to hide, said, in a stifled voice,—

"I will go."

Such recollections have caused a tide of deep feeling to rush into the soul of many a weathen beaten sailor and soldier. Separated from their native home by rolling oceans, many such men have shared the refined sentiment of the celebrated Hooker: "I would be good, were it only to please my pious mother, and be a comfort to her in her old age and widowhood."

We may judge of men by their conversation toward God, but never by God's dispensations toward them.

LANGUAGE OF INSECTS AND ANIMALS.

Our notice was lately attracted to the labors of a colony of small black ants, which has taken up its abode in a chink in the wall outside our office window. A solitary ant, evidently on a private foraging expedition, suddenly encountered a scrap of bread, which had fallen on the sill several feet from his home. Instead of nipping off a fragment and carrying it away, the insect apparently made a careful examination of the entire piece and then turned and ran at full speed back to the hole. In an instant hundreds of ants emerged and marched directly to the bread, which they attacked, and very speedily, morsel by morsel, transported it to their dwelling.

Another good instance is that of a terrier dog belonging to a friend, from whom we obtained the facts. The animal somehow, it seems, excited the ire of a larger dog, and accordingly received an unmerciful shaking. Shortly afterwards the terrier was seen in close consultation with a huge Newfoundland. The result was that both trotted off together, and found the terrier's assailant, which then and there received a furious thrashing from the Newfoundland, while the terrier stood by and wagged his tail in high glee.

The last case which came under our own observation was that of a brood of very young chickens which, losing their parent, refused to go with another hen but manifested an extraordinary affection for a pair of turkeys almost as juvenile as themselves. The turkeys have assumed all the parental functions, scratching worms for their charges, and gathering them under their wings, while the chicken, appear to comprehend the significance of the turkeys' "peep" equally as well as they did the clucking of their natural mother.

In the case of the ants, it is clear that the single insect must have imparted the news of his discovery to an entire community of his fellows; in that of the dogs, the terrier must have made the Newfoundland understand the circumstances of his misfortune and so secured sympathy and assistance; lastly, between the chickens and turkeys, apart from the singularity of the relation, it is curious to remark that the language of one fowl was understood by others of different species.

EMPHASIS.

Some years ago there was a student at the Theological Seminary at Andover who had an excellent opinion of his own talents. On one occasion he asked the professor who taught elocution at that time, "What do I specially need to learn in this department?" "You ought first to learn to read," said the professor. "Oh, I can read now," replied the student. The professor handed the young man a Testament, and pointed to the twenty-fifth verse of the twenty-fourth chapter of Luke's Gospel; he asked him to read that. The student read: "Then he said unto them, O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." "Ah," said the professor, "they were fools for believing the prophets, were they?" Of course that was not right, and so the young man tried again. "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." "The prophets, then, were sometimes liars?" asked the professor. No, "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." "According to this reading," the professor suggested, "the prophets were notorious liars." This was not a satisfactory conclusion, and so another trial was made. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." "I see now," said the professor, "the prophets wrote the truth, but they spoke lies." This last criticism discouraged the student, and he acknowledged that he did not know how to read. The difficulty lies in the fact that the words "slow of heart to believe" apply to the latter part of the sentence, and emphasis on any particular word entirely destroys the meaning.

A gentleman saw an advertisement that a receipt for the cure of dyspepsia might be had by sending two postage stamps to the advertiser, and the answer was, "Dig in your garden, and let whiskey alone."

When a man is made up wholly of the dove, without the least grain of the serpent in his composition, he becomes ridiculous in many circumstances of life, and very often discredits his best actions.—Addison.