

The Sunday-School

FOURTH QUARTER,
LESSON XIII.—Dec. 25.

THE PRINCE OF PEACE.

ISAIAH 9: 1-7.

A CHRISTMAS LESSON.

Read Luke 2: 1-20.

Learn by heart Vs. 6, 7; Isa. 60: 1-3; Dan. 7: 27.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.*—Isa. 9: 6.

HISTORICAL SETTING.—*Time.*—Of this prophecy, probably during the reign of Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah, B. C. 735-726.

The Group of Prophecies.—It is probable that Isa. 7-12 are a single prophecy.—*Professor Beecher.* It is well to read carefully Isa. 7: 14; 9: 1-7, and 11: 1-10, which all refer to the same subject, together with Isa. 40, 52-55, 60-62.

IN THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH.—This prophecy was spoken during the reign of Ahaz. To understand the conditions of sin, darkness and desolation into which this wicked king had brought his nation, we must turn back to the beginning of Isa. 7, and read 2 Kings 16: 1-8; 2 Chron. 28. The result was the desolation of his country.

THE PROMISE AND THE VISION OF BETTER TIMES.—Vs. 1-5. *Nevertheless.* However dark the times, yet there were rays of light and hope. *The dimness shall not be such.* The thought here is that as the lighter afflictions failed to bring the people to repentance, the desolating forces became more terrible. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time hath he made it glorious. Here is the beginning of the prophecy of the redemption to be wrought by the Messiah. *By way of the sea* (of Galilee, the country west of the sea), *beyond Jordan* (the country east of the Jordan), *Galilee of the nations* (the northern border of Palestine). These three districts were the ones most exposed to attack, and suffered most. *The people that walked in darkness.* The people of Judah were under darkness, moral and physical. *The land of the shadow of death.* They dwelt where death cast its shadow over them. *Have seen a great light.* The great light began to shine.

First. Within three years both the allied kings would be destroyed, as they were by the Assyrians.

Second. There came a larger fulfilment about two centuries later at the close of the Jewish exile, according to the promise in Isa. 11: 1-10.

These were but the beginnings and foreshadowings of the coming of the Messiah's kingdom.

Thou hast multiplied the nation. So he saw it in his vision. The little kingdom of God, represented by the Jewish nation at that time, has already become the dominant power of the world. *And not increased the joy.* Most scholars think that this should read with the R. V., "Thou hast increased their joy." The whole sentence is a prophecy of the good times referred to in V. 2. *They joy before thee,* the giver of the joy. *According to the joy in harvest,* when men see the fruits of their labors. *As*

men rejoice when they divide the spoil, triumphant over enemies and rich in goods. *For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden.* First, of the Assyrians, who had oppressed the land. Second, the yoke of sin, the oppressor Satan. *The staff of his shoulder.* That part of the yoke which rested on the back of the neck and shoulders. *As in the day of Midian* (Jud. 7: 1-23). A total rout, by a small body of selected men, by unusual means, through God's help. *For every battle,* etc. All that belongs to war shall be swept away with fire.

Note.—1. These promises were a great comfort. The promise was that the "remnant," however small, of the true worship of God, should triumph over all enemies, and their cause should fill the whole earth. The light from Jesus Christ shone back on Judah all through the seven hundred years that lay between.

2. So to-day the hope of heaven cheers and uplifts us.

THE POWER THROUGH WHOM THE PROMISE CAN BE FULFILLED AND THE VISION REALIZED.—Vs. 6, 7. *For unto us a child is born.* The prophet is unrolling a picture of the future. There has only one child ever been born to whom the following description could apply. In his vision the prophet saw afar off the redeeming Messiah appearing upon the scene. The promised times of peace, deliverance, holiness, and blessing can come only through him. *The government shall be upon his shoulder.* That is, he should be the ruler, the king. *And his name.* A name stands for all that is in the man, his character, his principles, and his property. *Wonderful,* because his nature was wonderful, being human and divine; his coming was a wonderful manifestation of love; his deeds were wonderful, miracles; his words were wonderful; his atoning love was wonderful; the kingdom he set up was wonderful. *Counsellor.* Jesus was the embodiment of the kingdom of God. He is our Counsellor, guiding us by the best ways to the best ends. *The mighty God.* Jesus is truly divine, so that he can save to the uttermost, from all sin. *The everlasting Father,* expressing the divine love and pity for men, a love that is everlasting. *The Prince of Peace.* The prince who rules in such a way that peace and prosperity abide in his kingdom. *Of the increase of his government* in numbers, and power, and re-velopment. *And peace, prosperity,* absence of all disturbing elements, blessings. *There shall be no end.* They are inexhaustible. *Upon the throne of David.* Jesus was the descendant and heir of David, and his kingdom is the development of the kingdom of David. *To order it, govern, rule it. Establish it, make it enduring. With judgment,* just decisions, and *justice,* all manner of right between all classes. *From henceforth even for ever.* Only such a kingdom can endure. *The zeal,* intensity of desire to accomplish its loving purposes. *The Lord of hosts,* who has all created beings.

THE HEART OF THE LESSON.

To-day we are celebrating the coming of the Immanuel child whom Isaiah foresaw; the greatest gift of God to man. It is well to celebrate the day with gifts of love to God, to the poor, to friends.

More than in any past age have we

reason for celebrating the coming of Christ into the world, for more than ever do we see the fruits of that coming. The assurance of a transformed world gives enthusiasm and strength, and readiness to deny ourselves for the salvation of the world.

To all the friends of the paper we appeal to give the paper the benefit of their kind words and work just now. What a help it would be if each present subscriber could send one new name. Many of them can do so, we think, and some can send more than one.

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE.

To some the Bible is uninteresting and unprofitable because they read too fast. Amongst the insects which subsist on the sweet sap of flowers there are two different classes. One is remarkable for its imposing plumage, which shows in the sunbeams like the dust of gems; and as you watch its jaunty dance from flower to flower you cannot help admiring its graceful activity, for it is plainly getting over a great deal of ground.

But in the same field there is another worker, whose brown vest and business-like, straightforward flight may not have arrested your eye. His fluttering neighbor darts down here and there, and sips elegantly wherever he can find a drop of ready nectar; but this dingy plodder makes a point of alighting everywhere, and wherever he alights he either finds honey or makes it. If the flower cup be deep, he goes down to the bottom; if its dragon-mouth be shut, he thrusts his lips asunder; and if the nectar be peculiar or recondite, he explores all about till he discovers it, and then, having ascertained the knack of it, he joyfully sings his way into its luscious recesses.

His rival of the painted wing has no patience for such dull and long winded details. But what is the one? Why, the one died last October along with the flowers; the other is snug and warm in his hive to-night, amidst the fragrant stores he gathered so diligently.

To which do you belong, the butterflies or the bees? Do you search the scriptures or skim them? Let me urge you to store your minds carefully with Bible truths while your memory is young and fresh. As the bee lays up a winter store for his body, so must you stock your minds and hearts. — C. H. Spurgeon.

The pastors will be doing this paper a valued service if they will present its claims to their people, both publicly and privately. A few judicious words from them about the urgent need of quick renewals, and the payment of arrears, where any are due, will, doubtless, have good effect.

THE RESOURCEFUL LIFE.

To those who find all their happiness in this world the teaching of the New Testament that Christians greatly rejoice even in great sorrow and heaviness is absurd. They who have but one spring of gladness, and miserable indeed when that dries up. But the Christian rejoices not only in the good things of this world which God has provided for him, but also in God himself and in a blissful hope of immortality. He has access to both the nether and upper springs, and when the former fail the latter are still open. Floods of blessing pour down from the skies into his soul when all worldly good is taken away. He often is in heaviness through manifold temptations, and at the same time filled unutterably full of glory and of God.

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In fact it is one of the most curable diseases if fragrant healing Catarrhoxone is used. No matter how long you have suffered with catarrh, you can be perfectly cured by inhaling the antiseptic vapor of Catarrhoxone, which strikes at the foundation of the trouble and establishes such a healthy condition in the system that catarrhal germs simply can't exist. "I suffered from catarrh of the nose and throat for years," writes S. H. Downie, of Plattsville. "My nostrils were always stuffed up, and I had a most disagreeable hacking cough. Catarrhoxone cured me completely." Catarrhoxone never fails. Two months' treatment \$1.00; trial size 25c.

Cold tea is good for cleaning varnish. Clean varnish paint with tea which is slightly warm.

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