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INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Second Quarter-Lesson V .- May 5. THE COMMAND TO WATCH .- Mark 13:24-37.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is .- Mark 13: 33.

THE COMING AGAIN OF THE LORD. -Vers. 24-27. But in those days, after that tribulation: the tribulation connected with the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dissolution of the Jewish state and dispensation. The sun shall be darkened. That this and the following expressions do not refer to physical signs, but are illustrative and typical, is plain from Acts 2: 16-20, where Peter applies the same expressions to his time, when no such literal physical signs appeared. Similar figurative, poetical representations of great civil and social commotions are depicted in Isa., Ezek., Joel, Amos, and Micah. The moon shall not give her light: Not only the greater sources of prosperity and joy shall be darkened, but the lesser ones shall fail. And the stars of heaven shall fall. Such predictions were never intended for literal fulfilment, for the simple reason that they are incapable of it. The leaders, the kings and princes that shine like stars, the wealth that exalts itself in glory, the tyrannies, hierarchies, idolatries, slaveries, systems of false religion and philosophy,-all these stars must fall before the kingdom of Christ can shine resplendent in its glory. And the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. This is an expression parallel to the preceding one, and denoting the forces, principles, influences, by which earthly kingdoms retain their power. These are not destroyed, but only "shaken;" for they may be used in some measure by the new kingdom which shall arise over the fall of the worldly powers. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds, with great power and glory. True of each part of his coming,-doubly true of the great last coming. Nothing can be more glorious than the triumph of Christianity over all the powers and nations of the earth. And then shall he send his angels. God's messen gers and influences. And shall gather together his elect. His people, the members of his kingdom. From the four winds. From all parts of the earth. The uttermost part.... uttermost part of heaven. At last, in the Great Day of the Lord, there will be an assemblage of all his peo-

-Vers. 28-31. Now learn a parable of the fig tree. Our Lord spoke this upon the Mount of Olives, where fig trees were growing all around him. Ye know that summer is near. The unfolding fig-leaf is a certain sign of summer. So ye in like manner, etc. What our Lord teaches is that as surely as the fresh green foliage of the fig-tree is a sign of summer, so shall the signs of which he speaks portend the coming of the Son of man. They are the natural signs. They are the first fruits, and whatever produces the first fruits will bring the full harvest. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass (away), till all these things be done: accomplished. There are two explanations: (1) Generation is taken in its ordinary sense of the persons then living. That the word here has this meaning is plain from the previous statement of Christ (Mark 9: 1), "There be some here ... which shall in no wise taste death till they see the kingdom of God come with power." And the prophecy had one exact fulfilment within that generation. (2) "The word translated generation has sometimes the meaning of race or nation; having, it is true, a more preguant meaning, implying that the character of one generation stamps itself upon the race, as here in this verse also." That is, here the prophecy is not merely that the Jewish nation, as a nation, should not pass away, but also that it should not lose its national characteristics; amid all the changes of time it should remain unchanged; and this prophecy has been wonderfully fulfilled in the unparalleled history of the Jews. And the Jews as a race will remain till Christ's kingdom has come in all the earth. Heaven and earth shall pass away. The most solid and substantial of materi things. But my words shall not pass away. They shall be fulfilled to the letter. Never did the speaker seem to stand more utterly alone than when he uttered this majestic utterance. But as we look across the centuries we see how it has been realized. His words

have passed into laws, they have

passed into doctrines, they have

passed into proverbs, they have pass-

THE TIME OF THE COMING IS NEAR.

ed into consolations; but they have never 'passed away.'

Fulfilments. (1) All these things were fulfilled in the first era of Christ's coming (see last lesson), which began on the day of Pentecost and ended with the destruction of Jerusalem. The kingdom was then established. The living, personal Christ was in the church, guiding and ruling it. It had become one great true church. It took place within the generation then living, amid all the signs foretold. (2) It will be more completely fulfilled in the full coming of the kingdom of God on the earth. Christ is becoming more and more visibly present. The commotions and troubles foretold always precede the establishment of Christianity in any nation. False Christs are arising. The Gospel is being rapidly preached to all nations. Jerusalem is still trodden down of the Gentiles, and the Jews are still scattered, but there are signs of their return, of their being again grafted into the tree of God's kingdom. (3) The fulfillment at the day of judgment is in the unknown future, but is the certain completion of the kingdom

of God on earth. THE EXACT TIME UNKNOWN.— Ver. 32. But of that day and that hour: when Christ should come in his kingdom. Knoweth no man. The exact time is uncertain. They could see the signs that the coming was near; but they could not know just when it would take place. It will come as the sun rises on a cloudy day; we cannot mark the moment of its rising, but at length we are conscious that it has risen. No, not the angels: who would be likely to know much more than men. Neither the Son, but the Father. The Son in his voluntary assumption of human nature, with his human mind, in a human body, did not

know the exact time of the advent. THE DUTIES OF THE HOUR.—Ver. 33. Take ye heed. Christains are ever to be alert, to understand the signs of the times, to live with open eyes. Watch. What the Saviour enjoins is not curiosity, straining to be the first to see the returning Master, but the wakefulness and diligence that overlooks no duty, indulges no indolence. We watch by serving the Lord as faithfully as if he were ever looking upon us. We watch by being on our guard against every temptation and danger. Pray. Watching alone is not enough; for the dangers against which we watch may be too strong for us. We need the protection of a higher power. Therefore we must pray. For ye know not when the time is. Therefore we must be always prepared, always doing our duty, always ready for the future. The time of our death is uncertain; the time of temptation is uncertain; the time when God will call us to account is uncertain; the time when Christ will come and opportunity is past is

uncertain. THE DUTY OF WATCHING ILLUS-TRATED.—Vers. 34-37. For the Son of man. The whole matter of watching as in the following parable. Taking a far journey. It is as if Christ were far away, and permitting us to go on with our work as if for an absent Lord. Who lett his house: the church, the disciples. Gave authority: the delegated power to conduct his household, and to manage his affairs while absent. To every man his work. The authority being joined with duty. Commanded the porter (doorkeeper) to watch. The porters are the apostles [and ministers of Christ, together with the body of Christains. Watch ye therefore: Ye know not when the master of the house cometh. In all that future which lies before us, these are the only two events of which we are absolutely certain; our own approaching death, our Lord's approaching advent. At even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning. These were the four regular watches of the night. Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping: i. e., unprepared. And what I say unto you (the disciples) I say unto all (to every disciple. great or small, living then, or who shall ever live), Watch. Matthew tells us how the Lord sought to impress these lessons of watchfulness and faithfulness still more deeply by the parables of the "Ten Virgins," and the "Talents" and closed all with a picture of the awful day when the Son of man should separate all nations one from another as the shenherd divideth his sheep from the goats. So ended the great discourse on the Mount of Olives.

PRACTICAL HINTS.

Dark and troublous times, full of change and disaster are yet to come But the Christian is to look upon them as signs and forerunners of the coming of his Lord.

The disciples, in the dark hour at hand, needed to know that the very same Jesus who had taught them for three years was to return and be

their triumphant king. Jesus Christ is surely coming with great power and glory.

The unity of the church is a sign and a fruit of his coming.

We should read the spiritual signs of the times, in the light of Christ's promises and prophecies.

Nothing in the universe is so sure as the Word of God, its promises and warnings.

Rum and Manhood.

A man who had been for a long time a victim of the drink habit, but who finally broke his chains, thus

I would not exchange the physical being, which belong to a man who totally refrains from all that can intoxicate his brain or derange his nervous structure, the elasticity with which he bounds from his couch in the morning, the sweet repose it yields him at night, the feeling with which he drinks in, through his clear eyes, the beauty and grandeur of surrounding nature; I say, air, I would not exchange my conscious being as a strickly temperance man the sense of renovated youth, the glad play with which my pulse now beats healthful music, the sounding vivacity with which the life-blood courses its exulting way through every fiber of my ame, the communion high with which my healthful ear and eye now hold with all the gorgeous universe of God, the splendors of the morning, the softness of the evening sky the bloom, the beauty, the verdure of the earth the music of the air, and of the waters, with all the grand associations of external nature reopened to the five avenues of sense; no, sir; though poverty dog me, though scorn pointed its slow finger at me, as I passed, though want and destitution and every element of earthly misery, save my crime, meet my waking eye from day to day; not for the brightest and WATCHMAKER noblest wreath that ever enciscled a statesman's brow; not if some angel commissioned by heaven or some demon set fresh from hell to test the Watches, Clocks and Jewelry resisting strength of vigorous resolution, should tempt me back, with all the honors which a world can bestaw; not for all that time can give would I cast from me this precious pledge of a liberated mind, this talisman against temptation, and plunge again into the dangers and horrors which once beset my path, so help me heaven, as I would spurn beneath my very feet all the gifts the universe could offer and live and die as I am poor and sober .-Selected.

A Demon's Trap for Boys.

At a meeting in Philadelphia during the week of prayer, one of the

speakers related this incident: A lad was approached by one of those devil's agents of that which deprives men of their property, and dedestroys both body and soul, who Barrister and Attorney - at Law solicited him to come into his place of destruction and take a glass of lemonade. The boy hesitated, but on being assured that he would get nothing but a glass of nice, sweet lemonade he was induced to go in. Sure enough, he was offered and partook of what had Accounts Collected. Leans Negotiated. been promised him, and nothing more. This was repeated several times, till at length the trap having been set, it was now time to spring it. Accordingly the rum-seller began his devilish work by dropping into the glass of lemonade one drop of strong liquor, increasing it so as thus imperceptibly to form in the lad a taste for it. As the boy never paid for these drinks, one of the place asked the landlord why he so favoured the boy. He replied by pointing and saying: "Do you see that fine mansion upon the hill, yonder? That belongs to the boy's father, and will probably soon belong to him, and then in turn it may belong to me."



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