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THE TEACHER.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1872.

JESUS, AFTER HIS ASCENSION.

SUNDAY, February 25th, 1872.

To the church in Philadelphia,—Rev. iii. 7-13.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out." vs. 13.

SCRIPTURE SELECTION.—John xvii.

SUMMARY.—Him that keeps Christ's word in time, Christ will keep both in time and in eternity.

ANALYSIS.—I. The Introduction. vs. 7. (a) Direction. (b) Description. II. The Letter Proper. vs. 8-12. (a) Privileges. (b) Conquest. (c) Deliverance. (d) Honor. III. Conclusion. vs. 13.

EXPOSITION.—*Philadelphia*.—"Philadelphia" was about 30 miles S. E. from Sardis, 80 from Smyrna, and about 70 from Ephesus. It still exists as a Turkish town, covering a considerable extent of ground, running up the slopes of an irregular hill, with four flat summits, and containing a population of 12,000 or 14,000 inhabitants. There are few ruins, but in one part there are still found four marble pillars which supported the dome of a church. The dome itself has fallen down, but its remains may be observed, and it is seen that the arch was of brick. On the sides of the pillars are inscriptions and some architectural ornaments in the form of the figures of saints. One solitary pillar has been often noticed as reminding beholders of the remarkable words in the Apocalyptic message to the Philadelphia church: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out."

Adaptation.—We have seen in each letter thus far that the Son of Man presents himself in a character just suited to the condition of the church to be addressed and to the message dictated. This is true here, and he comes before the Philadelphians in a new character because their state and needs were unlike those of the others. We shall find them as a body sincere Christians, but tried sorely in faith by the Jews, mainly if not solely, who blasphemed Christ and his faith, and sought by ridicule, persuasion, reason and artifice to turn the church from its faith, as they had formerly done to the Galatians. Gal. iii. Justin Martyr, writing in the second century, still charges the Jews of that time with being the chief authors of prejudice against Christ and his people. He represents them as saying to Christians, "This Christ of yours was without honor or glory, so that he fell under the severest curse of the law of God, for he was crucified. You have lent your faith to idle reports and imagine to yourselves a Christ, for love to whom you foolishly perish."

Self-witness.—vs. 7. (1) "Holy." Compare Luke i. 35. The character of Christ as holy is the foundation of all confidence in him, in his word, and in his work. If he be not inherently bad he is all that he claimed to be, Son of God, Saviour of sinners, Head of his church. We must choose between making him a bad man and owning his full claims,—an easy choice. Here, as elsewhere, the thought is that he is holy, not merely with a creature's holiness, but absolutely, with an original and divine holiness. John i. 14. (2) "True." The word so rendered does not mean simply truthful, i. e., truth-telling, but genuine as opposed to counterfeit, real as opposed to imaginary. "He that is true." The real one, gracious witness, or Saviour, spoken down to us. (3) "The key of David." See ch. i. 18: A Jew-ward witness. David as king was the glory and pride of the Jews, and the type pre-eminently of the expected Messiah king. 2 Sam. vii. 12-29. The key is the symbol of power. Thus the key of David is the whole kingly power promised in type by David's rule. Our Lord thus witnesses that he is the expected King of Israel. Comp. Is. xxii. 20-22: Ps. cx. He is both "the root and the off-spring of David." His true subjects, therefore, were the true Israel and his opponents the real heathen. This is the bearing of the words. (4) "Openeth" and "shuteth." The kingdom of David was in type the kingdom of Christ, and this is the kingdom of God, and this is supreme, in authority above and over all men and all power. The Jews thought to

exclude both him and his, and especially the Gentile converts, who doubtless formed the main part of the Philadelphia church. The apostles, as empowered by the Holy Spirit to teach and work Christ's will, are said to have the power of the keys. Matt. xvi. 19; xviii. 18. This was not, however, in their own name and power, but in Christ's.

He wrought through them, especially in speaking.

The open door.—vs. 8. The door opened by the key just mentioned. Jesus was the Son of man, and not simply of the Jews, and he opened the kingdom of heaven to man,—all men. This door the Jews wished to shut, to keep shut.

Commendation.—vs. 8. "A little strength." They are praised, not because they have only a little, but because they have even a little. "Hast kept my word," or rather *didst* keep, i. e., in some past trial. "Hast not denied [didst not deny] my name." The opposite of keeping the word. To this denial the Jews sorely, terribly tempted them.

Conquest.—vs. 9. To the phrase "the synagogue of Satan" the clause "but he will" is here added. Plain speech. It points to the desperate hypocrisy and dishonesty of the Jews. See this in their intercourse with Jesus, and especially in their mock trial of him. Probably this conquest of the Jews is their conversion to Christianity, typical of their future general conversion according to the promise in Rom. ix.

Deliverance.—vs. 10. "Word of my patience," as requiring patient endurance of trial for Christ's sake. The words "hour," "day," etc., are forcibly used for a limited time, a season, period, etc., and not in their literal, ordinary sense. To keep "from the hour," etc., may well mean from its power of harm by giving needed grace, not from its experience. See John xvii. 15. It is a less favor to take one to glory away from the world's conflicts than to take him triumphantly through them.

The Admonition.—vs. 11. "I come quickly."—in the judgment and trial just mentioned and in the attendant deliverance, not primarily in the so-called "second coming." "Hold fast that which thou hast,"—keep holding fast thy faith, thy gospel, thy Lord. To get the crown from one is to seduce one from the faith.

Final Reward.—vs. 12. Believers are in this verse thought of not as being kings with crowns, (vs. 11) but as together constituting a living temple of God, a temple made up of living souls, souls having not only natural but the eternal life, and filling this temple of holy life is the God and Saviour who is life itself. See Eph. ii. 19-22. Comp. 1 Pet. ii. 5. "Pillars,"—supports, giving stability, and having permanence. The latter thought here prominent, "shall go no more out." That of giving support is not excluded. The idea of high honor is also here. Gal. ii. 9. There is probably a reference to the two great pillars at the entrance of Solomon's glorious temple called *Jachin* (meaning "he will establish") and *Boaz* (meaning "in him is strength") 2 Chron. iii. 17; 1 Kings vii. 21. The pillars are glorified souls written all over in characters of life and glory by the very finger of God.

Where is Philadelphia? What can you tell of the city? Was the church there troubled mainly by Jews or by Gentiles? vs. 9. In vs. 7 does Christ present himself as the true King of Israel? Why should he here rather than in any of the other letters? How were the Jews accustomed to try and trouble Christians? Gal. i. 6-8; Acts vi. 11-12; xvii. 13; Rom. ii. 17-20. What is meant by having the key of David? Comp. Is. xxii. 22. What by opening and shutting? vs. 7; Matt. xvi. 19. What by the open door? vs. 8. Were the Jews trying to close this door? Has it been closed for a time against them as a nation? Why? Matt. xxiii. 38. For what reason is heaven's door closed against any? Why was the door open to the Philadelphians? vs. 8.

What were sons of the Jews to do? vs. 9. What is meant by worshipping at the feet of this church? Are the Jews as a nation to receive Christ at some future day? Rom. xi. 25-36.

What promise in vs. 10? How does Christ keep his people from the hour of temptation? What were the Christians to do in order to be kept? vs. 10.

What in vs. 11, is the coming? What were the Philadelphians to hold fast? Why? Explain the last clause of the verse. What promise in vs. 12 to the victor? What is this temple? Eph. ii. 19-22; 1 Peter ii. 5. What is to be made a pillar in it? See 1 Kings vii. 21; 2 Chron. iii. 17. What is the New Jerusalem?

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. Scripture Catechism, 17, 18.

A mind full of piety and knowledge is always rich; it is a bank that never fails; it yields a perpetual dividend of happiness.

Youths' Department.

CHOOSING A NAME.

What name to give "the baby," has often been a serious question in the family council. The question is not the less serious when the child happens to be the thirteenth:

for the usual roll of Mary, John, William, Ellen, Jane, Thomas, James, Sarah, Elizabeth and Ann, has, by that time become exhausted. The debate in such cases generally ends in calling the new-comer some fine name—some name which its grandmother never heard of, and which has a ring of nobility in it.

I once asked the father of a family of some dozen children, how he managed to find names for them all. "Names, sir?" he replied, "my difficulty is not the find names, but bread."

But our present question is, "What are we to call baby?" Sometimes the mother, in her hour of joy and thankfulness, as a mark of affection for her husband says, "We'll leave it with father." Sometimes the father declines the privilege. In other households it is the custom for the father to name the boy, and for the mother to name the girl. In others, the elder children are consulted, or some rich relations, or some valued friend. So that, it often happens, that much time is spent, and many opinions are advanced, and many suggestions offered, before the decision is made. And when the decision is come to, it is not always the best.

People's tastes differ widely on the matter of names. What is very sweet and suitable to old folks, may be very unbecoming and harsh to the juveniles. "Mary" is music itself to many persons: it is plain and common to others. "Mary" is a perfect name. It is never out of place, or out of season, either in the palace or in the laborer's cot. Parents can never be wrong in calling one of their girls "Mary." She will never be ashamed of it. Only, if your bright little girl is to be called "Mary," do not add "Ann;" it stands best alone, as the queen of names, requiring no additional grace.

Then, if the consultation be concerning a boy, is there no name for him equal in fitness and excellence to Mary? I think there is.

But it is not Jonathan, or Isaac, or Timothy, or Nicodemus. In their places these names are good. In the Bible they sound neither strange nor inappropriate. Take them out of the Bible, and immediately they seem to lose their fitness. Let parents exercise a little discretion in adopting Biblical names. Your infants are entirely in your hands; they are unconscious of what is passing. Do not give them names of which they may live to be ashamed. Do not put a stigma upon them which they can never throw off. Remember that their future may be in a measure affected by their very names. It may hinder their advance, or it may promote their welfare.

I once knew a family in which almost every member had a Bible name. The result was, that the sons were called, Lot, Ezra, Jehoshaphat, Amos, Lazarus, and Titus. They were to be pitied, poor fellows. As for Lazarus he would give half he possessed to get rid of his name.

Some of the sacred names are most suitable. We never tire of John, James, Thomas, Sarah, Elizabeth, Samuel, Mary, and Ruth. But we cannot say this of others.

But we have not yet named our little boy. What is he to be called? Have you already a John? If not you cannot choose a better name, if you must have one out of the Bible, "John" never grows old in name though he may in years. It suits either baby or grandfather, king or pauper.

I would, however, make one exception. Is your family name the uncommon one of Smith? If so, do not name him John Smith.

Having made these remarks on naming, and having laid down a few rules for the guidance of fathers and mothers, let me before the topic is dismissed, give a word or two of caution.

Do not give too many Christian names. Our forefathers were generally content with the good old rule of conferring but one name. Gradually their descendants have set aside this wholesome custom, and we are now drifting to the opposite extreme. It is counted rather plebeian now-a-days to be able only to sign your name plain John Brown, or Richard Jenkins.

Be careful not to heap together names. Two good names as Christian names are quite enough.

Do not be too fond of borrowing the names of great men.

Your child is not necessarily great because he bears a great man's name. You may call him Homer Jones, but you do not thereby make him a poet. You may christen him Martin Luther Robinson, but he may prove anything but a reformer either of popery or of his manners.

I would not altogether condemn this practice of handing down the names of great men now gone; but I would keep it under some restraint. We are so apt to notice names of this class; and very often we notice too a distressing disparity between the names and the named.

I will add but one other caution. Do not cling too fondly to family names.

Because your grandfather was called Thomas, it is not indispensable that your son should bear that name. Three or four Thomases in the same family create confusion. John senior and John junior are perplexing sometimes. It is natural for a father to wish his eldest lad to bear his own name; but I would not adhere slavishly to this rule. A change is often an advantage. Too many Abrahams look odd. A succession of Solomons is not always wisdom.

It may be that parents who read my suggestions will not rigidly carry them out. They will, in some cases, doubt my taste, and will, after all, please themselves. By all means do so. Please yourselves; but at the same time try to please others too. In giving names to your children at least avoid oddity, and deary singularity; try to perpetuate good names, and abolish objectionable ones.—Rev. W. Barker.

TREES.

How often has man felt in his heart to thank God for trees! The garden of paradise would not seem half so beautiful had it not been told that "there were trees there." And not least among the attractions of the New Jerusalem is the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of all the nations.

The Lord Himself seems to admire trees, and when He would describe His noblest work a Christian man, He likens him to "a tree planted by the rivers of water." The patriarchs loved to walk, and eat and worship, and live among the trees, and many a weary pilgrim since their day has been refreshed in their shade to start afresh on the journey of life.

The rich man may adorn his home with carved pillars and expensive ornaments, but no architectural skill can give to a residence that comfortable home-like appearance which a few trees will. Time, which makes such havoc among men, deals more gently with the trees. The child will grow to maturity, pass on to the feebleness of old age, and into the grave, while the trees beneath which he played in childhood still stand in their perfection of beauty to shelter his children's children.

We love the trees which have grown beside us from our youth. They have been associated with our past life, have been silent witnesses of our joys and sorrows until they seem like old friends. When, perhaps, after years of absence, we return again to the old homestead, we visit the trees and delight again to sit in their shadow and think of the past. If parents would hold the hearts of their children to the old homestead, they should encourage them to plant and cherish trees.

A gentleman was compelled to sell his home in his old age; he felt greatly afflicted, but bore it bravely till the new owner proceeded to cut down the trees which he had planted and carefully nurtured. Then the old man wept, and gave expression to his indignation in terms stronger than elegant. Unfortunately there are many people who see nothing in a tree but fruit and lumber, and some hardly that.

SPASMODIC RELIGION.

This kind of religion that alternates between the house-top and the cellar—now elated and now discouraged—is not in harmony with the argument of heaven. "Abide in the vine."—not be alternately in and out; but "abide" in Christ. This getting religion, when we are destitute of it, is all right; but it is far better to keep it when we get it, than to get it several times in a year. It is God's will that the Spirit should "dwell in you," instead of paying you an occasional visit. Then the Spirit will ever be present to indite our petitions, and prayer will thus bring us an every-day supply of this sacred influence to stimulate us on our homeward journey. If religion is good at all, it is good all the while. Why not have it?—not the spasmodic kind, but that which gets deep in the heart, and lives there.

YOUNG MEN IN NEW YORK.

The New York correspondent of the *Troy Times*, in his New Year's letter, thus alludes to the chances of young men in the metropolis. Much that is said is equally as applicable to other larger cities as New York: "The immense growth of this city is to a large degree made up of emigration; not only from Europe, but also from the interior of the country. Families are constantly coming in, and thus the demand for dwellings is unabated, while about ten thousand young men and boys annually come hither to make their fortunes. Of the latter, about one out of fifty reach permanent success. A large number become clerks, and make a mere living, while the majority go to ruin. Country boys are so readily ensnared here that the chances are fearfully against them. They are trapped on every side, and those who escape speedy ruin are fain to confess in after life that they would have done just as well had they remained in the country. The rush, however, continues, and by next April several thousand fresh youth will be here, and will learn the same lesson of toil, privation and disappointment which others have gone through. But it is in this way that the city is supplied with fresh food. New York eats up men with the insatiable appetite of a Moloch, and the cries of the victims are unheard in the general tumult."

THE WORKERS WE NEED.

What our churches need most is a class of unobtrusive toilers who work for Jesus from the sheer love they bear to him. Spasmodic piety—that heats up in revival seasons, and blazes for a few weeks like a bonfire—is common enough. It is as cheap, too, as the shavings which boys burn in the streets. We pastors grow weary of it. There is a type of godliness like that of *Calph*, who "followed the Lord wholly," which every pastor rejoices in as a "perpetual feast."

Christians of that stamp are to be found in the prayer-meetings on rainy nights, and even when the spiritual atmosphere is as cold as the wintry storm without. They can swim "up stream" and against strong currents of worldliness. They do not make much noise during their meek, unobtrusive lives, but when they are gone how we miss them!—Rev. T. L. Cuyler, in the *Christian Intelligencer*.

THE END OF THE PILGRIMAGE.

Fear not, thou that longest to be at home. A few steps more, and thou art there. Death to God's people is but a ferryboat. Every day, and every hour, the boat pushes off with some of the saints, and returns for more. Soon, O believer, it will be said to thee, as it was to her in the gospel, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." When you are got to the boundary of your race below, and stand on the verge of heaven, and the confines of immortality, then there will be nothing but the short valley of death between you and the promised land; the labors of your pilgrimage will then be on the point of conclusion, and you will have nothing to do but to entreat God as Moses did, "I pray thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon."—*Toplady*.

CHARADE.

Midst smoke and flame, in terror wild,
For my first thousands prayed;
Once was I called to cleanse the earth
From sin, and I obeyed.

Banded, the ancient Britons sent
My second through the land,
The signal call, To arms, To arms!
Was heard on every hand.

Tinged with prismatic colors,
My whole you often see,
Of weather clear and pleasant,
It is a guarantee.
—Rainbow.

A Good Sign.—Dr. Hogg, who is laboring as a missionary in Egypt, says that the first sign noticed by the natives, among Moslems as well as Copts, that a man was interested in Christianity was his beginning to tell the truth.

TRUTHFULNESS is a corner stone in character; and if it be not firmly laid in youth, there will always be a weak spot in the character.

THE mind, as well as the body, needs its gymnasium. Each faculty should be developed to its appropriate power, and the whole molded into symmetry.