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THE TEACHER.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1872.

JESUS, AFTER HIS ASCENSION.

SUNDAY, *March 24th*, 1872.

Alpha and Omega,—Rev. xxii. 10-17.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Is. lv. 1.

SCRIPTURE SELECTION.—Hebrews i. 8-14; Rev. xxi. 1-7.

SUMMARY.—Wrath impends, mercy pleads, "Come to Jesus."

ANALYSIS.—I. *The Advent Near.* vs. 10-12.

II. *Within and Without.* vs. 13-15.

III. *Mercy's Appeal.* vs. 16, 17.

EXPOSITION.—*The connection.*—The series of sublime prophetic visions granted to John have come to a natural close. vs. 7. John, apparently mistaking the angelic interpreter for the Son of God, had fallen before him in worship and had been corrected. The angel declared himself to be a fellow servant of both John and the prophets, for such is the meaning of the ninth verse. Then follows the Scripture of our lesson, almost the last words of this majestic but mysterious book.

The speaker.—From verse twelve to twenty it is Jesus. See vs. 12, 13, 16. In vs. 9, and before, it was not Jesus, for, as we have seen, Jesus declined the worship of neither man nor angel, whether on earth or in heaven. Besides, Jesus never declared himself to be merely a fellow-servant with apostles and prophets. He was their "Lord and Master." The change of speakers is made either at vs. 10, or vs. 12. It is usually held that Jesus begins to speak at vs. 12, but in that case vs. 10, 11, are to be taken none the less as the word of God.

The sealing.—vs. 10. Here forbidden. In Dan. viii. 25, the prophet was commanded to seal up the prophecy. The sealing of a roll, as we saw in a previous lesson, prevented the reading of it till the seal was broken and the parchment unrolled, when the page would lie open to view. The reason here given for not sealing, is, "that the time it at hand." The visions of the book related to events soon to occur. In Daniel the vision was "for many days," the events very remote. God wishes us to know enough of his purposes to fit us to act our part in the present. He does not care to have us sit still and speculate about the remote future.

The injunction.—vs. 11. This verse is by many misunderstood and misapplied. It does not refer to the future life, but to this life. It is a prophecy that here the unjust and the filthy will exist, and an exhortation to the righteous not to be offended at this, but to stand fast and firm in his righteousness, despite the evil. Comp. Matt. xxiv. 24, 37-44. It is a practical encouragement. The wicked are not here commanded to be wicked, but the imperative is a strong form of prophecy. Comp. Is. vi. 10. Tde prophecy may have taken this form to correspond with the last part of the verse, which is properly a command "Unjust," refers more to wrong-doing. "Filthy," refers rather to the depraved polluted condition of the soul. Heliness thus designates the most thorough inward moral excellence. God wishes us to have pure thoughts and pure feelings, wishes us to be right as well as to do right, wishes us to wrong neither others nor ourselves, wishes us to be free not from some forms of evil, but from all evil, "perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect." Better to have the world against us and God for us, than God against us and the world for us; better with Christ against the many than against Christ with the many; better shame and the right, than fame and the wrong.

Reward.—vs. 12. *For whom?* "Every man," *i. e.*, whose character and work are rewardable, every man belonging to the class of the good who are here in mind and encouraged. As we have seen, the last verse was an exhortation to Christ's servants to be faithful: this is a promise and motive to fidelity. So does our Lord always join command and promise; so are obedience and blessing inseparable. *From whom?* "I come." Surely Jesus here speaks. vs. 20. "*My* reward is with *me*." Christ gives eternal life. John x. 29. Christ is the world's Judge. John v. 22; Rom. xiv. 10. Christ calls it his reward because he gives it; possibly also because it is the reward of his death to reward his redeemed, as he bought them. Is. liii. 10. 1; 1 Cor. vi. 20. *How.* "According to his works." *i. e.*, if he be a disciple he shall receive a disciple's reward, which yet is of grace, not of debt. reward in one view; mere gift, in another? Rom. vi. 23. It is a reward in which there is the pardon of all sin. Blessed reward! Seed time now, harvest then. *When.* "Quickly." For when Christ comes he comes to reward his friends, to punish his foes. 2 Thess. i. 6-12 etc. These words were spoken eighteen hundred years ago. They were, however, meant for the men of that time as well as for us, for though Christ's final coming, his second advent, was remote from them, yet to each individual Christian the promise has been and will be fulfilled.

The Rewarder.—vs. 13. "Alpha," is the name of the first letter of the Greek alphabet, and "Omega," is the last letter of that alphabet. As this book was written in Greek, it was the same as to say in English, I am the A and the Z. The three statements are given to emphasize the one thought, that Christ is the Eternal One, from eternity to eternity. See xxi. 6; i. 8; Is. lvii. 15. Christ is not our Saviour unless he is our Lord, and he is not our Lord unless he is our God, a being on whom and in whom we rest, who has all fulness, and who can give of that fulness.

Blessing.—vs. 14. (1) *For whom?* Those doing Christ's commandments. It is just as constantly urged by the Saviour and the apostles that we are not saved *without* obedience, as that we are not saved *because of* obedience. To become a child is to have a child's nature; and that is filial obedience. See Rom. vi. 2. If we love him we shall keep his commandments. (2) *In what.* Their right as above shown; is not founded on their merit, but Christ's, which through their union with Christ becomes theirs. Illustrate. Chickens gathered under the wings of the mother. Matt. xxiii. 37. "The tree of life," a reference to Eden.

"*Without*"—vs. 15. The Bible, unlike Universalists, knows of a "without" as well as a "within." What a contrast! "Throughout the whole East dog is a term of reproach for impure and profane. Phil. iii. 2; Matt vii. 6. In that city, no "dogs," no impure persons, are to enter. It is not here meant that only those guilty of the forms of sin mentioned in this verse are to be excluded, or that only open outbreaking transgressions will meet with punishment.

"*Root*" and "*Star*,"—vs. 16. See vs. 5. "Morning Star," not as giving light, for in this view he is the "Sun of Righteousnes;" but as the bright and most beautiful.

"*Come.*"—vs. 17. Some of the expositors make the twice uttered "*come*," to be a prayer to Jesus to come, as in vs. 20 last clause, where John speaks. The common view seems to be correct, bringing the first and last parts of the verse into harmony. On the view the Spirit, and the Church, and the Lord, all combine to invite sinners to "Come to Jesus."

QUESTIONS.—Who speaks to John in vs. 10, 11? What book or roll is John forbidden to seal? Why? vs. 10. Does God ever command the wicked to continue in wickedness? What, then, is meant by the words, "let him be unjust still?" vs. 11: Acts xxviii. 27. What is said in vs. 11 of the righteous? Is it easy to do right when those about us do wrong?

What motive to fidelity does Jesus give in vs. 12. What is the reward? John x. 28. For whom? Is it given because of their merit? Rom. iii. 24. When does the reward come! Col. iii. 4: Phil. i. 23. How many years has it been since Jesus said to John, "Behold, I come quickly?" Were not those words true for Christians then and now?

Why does Christ call himself the Alpha and the Omega. Could he call himself the first and the last, the beginning and the end, if he were not God as well as man? Isaiah xliv. 6. Could he be our Saviour if he were not God as well as man? Heb. vii. 25.

Who in vs. 14 are called blessed? Who keep Christ's commandments? John xiv. 21. To what have they right? Is it a right in their own or in Christ's name? John xvi. 23. What is meant by "the tree of life?" Does Scripture speak of more than one Paradise or garden of Eden? Gen. ii, 8; Luke xxiii. 43. What city is meant in vs. 14. Rev. iii. 12; xxi. 10. Are all men to enter that city? vs. 15. What does Jesus call himself in this verse?

Scripture Catechism, 25, 26.

SUNDAY, March 13.—Review of the Lessons of the past Three Months.

Those who have suffered much are like those who know many languages; they have learned to understand and be understood by all.—*Madame Stetchine.*

Youths' Department.

MRS. BURTON'S BEST BEDROOM.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JESSICA'S FIRST PRAYER."

If there was any one of her worldly possessions in which Mrs. Burton felt she might justly take pride, that is, if pride of any kind or degree is allowable to a Christian, it was in her best bedroom. It was the largest room in her house, and the best furnished. The Venetian blinds were always kept down, lest the sun should fade the color of the curtains and the carpet. She would scarcely suffer her careless chit of a servant-girl to set her foot in it; never unless she was herself present to see that she did not put her finger-marks upon the polish of the mahogany, or the pure white paint of the casement and the chimney-piece. When it was in use, as it was occasionally, in the event of some distinguished guest visiting her, her heart throbbed alternately with pride and anxiety; and she was never quite tranquil until her visitor was gone, and the key of her best bedroom safely locked up in a drawer in her own chamber.

Mrs. Burton was the widow of a respectable tradesman, who had left her a comfortable income, on which she could live and indulge herself in her numerous acts of charity, without any great carefulness. She was nearly sixty years of age, a hearty Christian, simple-minded and good-natured, but with a hidden heat of temper, which was more frequently kindled to a brief flame by her best bedroom than by any other cause. The temper she mourned over, and confessed, sometimes by an additional indulgence to her servant, sometimes in a penitential conversation with her minister. But the bedroom remained the object of her greatest regard and her greatest pleasure.

The youngest daughter of Mrs. Burton, who had been born after her parents had begun to prosper, and who had received a more costly education than her brothers and sisters, was one of the few guests for whom the best bedroom was always prepared. She had married well, and was also, in consequence, perhaps, of being the last and youngest of her children, the darling of her mother; and nothing, absolutely nothing, could be too good for Sophia. When, therefore, she sent word that she was coming to spend a short time with her, and would arrive the next day, one of Mrs. Burton's first concerns was to set about a complete "cleaning down," as she called it, of the bedroom.

It was a labor of almost equal love and solemnity. Martha, the servant, put on a clean apron, and left her shoes at the door each time she entered it. Mrs. Burton stood over her as she brushed the carpet, to watch that the brush did not hit against any point of the furniture; and she would not trust her to do any of the dusting. With her own hands she had laid out the snow-white sheets, pillow-cases, and counterpane, touching them fondly as she smoothed them upon the bed where her Sophy was to sleep. When this was done she brought two illuminated texts, printed in many colors, which she had not long since bought at a bazaar, and hung them up, the one over the looking-glass—which she had festooned with muslin and lace—and the other over the chimney-piece.

In hanging the latter her eye rested upon the mantel-shelf, and detected several spots upon its white surface. She could not make up her mind to pass them over; and after a little fuming she despatched Martha to the painter's for his pot of white paint, and then, with great care and diligence, gave the shelf of her chimney-piece a new coat. It was getting near tea-time before it was completed, and the old lady was growing tired with her busy day's work; so, with a sigh of content, and a last look of mingled satisfaction and pride round her best bedroom, she left it, giving strict orders to Martha not to think of entering it again that evening.

Mrs. Burton's house stood in a private street, on the outskirts of the town, and it was considered so secure and respectable a neighborhood, that it Martha went on an errand, she generally left the door just ajar, if she was going to be away only a few minutes. It happened that evening, soon after nightfall, she ran out to return the paint-pot to its owner; and not a minute afterwards a man, staggering along the street in a helplessly drunken fashion, laid his shaking hand upon the handle, found the door open, stepped in, and by one of those unaccountable freaks of drunkenness, walked straight upstairs, without making himself seen or heard—for Mrs. Burton was shut up in her back parlor, and Martha, as we know, was out—and opening the first door, stumbled into the best bedroom. He flung his old battered hat upon the newly-painted chimney-piece, and steadying himself by it, drew off his heavy boots and with all his soiled and dirty clothing upon him, crept in between the lavender-scented, blanched, milk-white sheets and pillows of Mrs. Burton's best bed.*

It was no doubt a happy circumstance that the old lady was far too tired at bedtime to care to take a look at her best bedroom. She contented herself with locking the door and carrying away the key, resolved to see how the paint was drying the first thing in the morning. Before long she and Martha, with their unknown guest, were all soundly sleeping under one roof.

It was early in the morning when the drunkard's slumber was broken by some unaccustomed sound without. He opened his eyes, and stretched himself drowsily; but the next instant he was wide-awake, and his outstretched arm remained outstretched in utter astonishment. The rising sun shone upon the window and its Venetian blinds, and a luxurious green light filled the room. His rough and grim hands lay upon a counterpane of extraordinary whiteness, and his shaggy head rested upon the softest of pillows. He raised himself on his elbow to look round, and sank back again in blank amazement. Wherever could he be? Who was he? Was it really himself, Tom Marshall, whose home was a miserable bare room, in one of the lowest of the back slums? Or was he somebody else, who had a right to be there? How did he come into this place at all? He was so bewildered that he lay still for awhile, trying his best to think. But it would not do. He raised himself again to take a survey, and his eyes fastened upon the illuminated text over the fireplace. He had been brought up as an ornamental sign-painter, and the fanciful letters did not puzzle him. The words did not remove his bewilderment, but they turned his thoughts into another direction. "Thou God seest me!" he read, half aloud. "Thou God seest me!" he repeated. What, did God see him at that moment? He could see himself in the large looking-glass, and he could not turn away his gaze from it. There was he, in the midst of the sweetness, and cleanliness, and purity, a wretched, begrimmed, vile object, not fit for his own eyes to look upon. Wherever his hand fell there was a stain upon the whiteness. The pillow upon which his head had rested—how different it was from the other pillow which he had not touched! He was disgusting even to himself. He wished he could not see his own face and form in that dainty room. And was it true that God saw him—just as he was, degraded below the beasts? Did God see that wretched hole of his, where his poor wife and children lay on straw and rags, while he had been sleeping in such luxury? Had God's eye been upon him last night, when he had made a wager how much beer he could drink? He could not endure the thought of it.

Just then he lifted his eyes to the wall above the glass. There hung the second text. "God is love!" he read aloud. "What!" he cried; "love! Is God love? Does he love me? Oh no; that would be impossible. I hate myself; the children hate me; Jenny hates me. And they may well hate me. If God sees me, he cannot love me. Oh, if he would but love me, or turn away his eyes from me, that he may not see me! I cannot bear to think that he sees me. 'Thou God seest me!' 'God is love.'" The poor fellow was half distracted with the multitude of his thoughts, and the idea of getting up and making his escape did not once cross his mind. He could not have done it, for the key of the door lay at the bottom of Mrs. Burton's pocket. She was dressing by this time, anxious to see how her painting of the last day was drying; and as soon as she was ready, having scrupulously read a psalm and engaged in prayer, she hastened to her best bedroom, opened the door solemnly, and entered with a careful step.

It would be impossible to describe Mrs. Burton's first emotions. Marshall, who had lain down again, lifted himself up upon hearing the door opened, and met her horrified gaze with one equally aghast. Neither of them could speak for a minute or two; and then she saw him slowly drag himself out of the white bed-linen, and stand trembling before her, the most abject, wretched creature she ever remembered to have seen.

"I do n't know how ever I came to be here," he said; "I know no more than this bed-post; but I'm an honest man, missis, I am, for certain. I do n't mean no harm!"

"Harm!" gasped Mrs. Burton, who had not yet recovered her speech.

"I wish I was n't here, I do," he continued. "I did n't mean to do it, I'm sure. Please to forgive me, missis, and I'll never do it again as long as I live."

"Why!" cried Mrs. Burton, "when did you get in here?"

"I was very drunk last night," he stammered, "and I must have turned in unknownst to myself."

"Drunk!" she exclaimed; "a drunken vagabond in my best bed! Whatever shall I do? I shall never fancy it again. But you shall go to jail for this, I promise you. Martha, Martha! Run for the police."

"Oh no, now!" cried Marshall; "forgive me this once. I've a poor wife and family at home. If you send me to jail they must go into the house, and we shall all be ruined."

"I can't forgive you," said Mrs. Burton, with tears in her eyes; "you've ruined my best room. I shall never have any more pleasure in it. You must go to jail for it, or I sha'n't have a moment's peace. No, no. Do n't speak, you drunken brute, you! Whatever can I do? Whatever can I do?"

"Well," he answered, despairingly, "if I go to jail for it I suppose God'll see me there too."

The heart of Mrs. Burton always echoed to that name, and her conscience smote her. She looked steadily at her strange guest, and followed the direction of his eyes, which were turned upon the text on the wall. "Thou God seest me," she said, half aloud, and involuntarily.

"Is that true?" asked the man.

"Yes," she answered; and her conscience reproached her again.

"Is the other true?" he asked, pointing to the second text.

"Oh yes! that is true," she said, warmly.

"I wish I could believe them!" cried Marshall. "Are they both true for me?"

"Yes, yes!" she exclaimed, "'God is love.' He sees and loves us all. He sees and loves me; and he sees and loves you. Yes, yes; I was forgetting that. It's very hard, very hard indeed, for me to see my best room like that. Yes, it is. He knows it's very hard. I shall never fancy it again. But I wont send for the police. You may go away now."

With a very abject look Marshall slunk down stairs, and out into the streets. He did not care to go home, but he wandered off into the meadows, where the dew was still sparkling on the grass. He could not get his adventure out of his head; though whenever he thought of himself as he appeared in the large looking-glass, he felt a desire to creep away from the miserable grimy creature he had become. To think that God's eye dwelt upon him was almost insupportable; but whenever this thought grew too terrible to him, the other words came back to his burdened mind. The clean, decent old lady, whose house he had made so vile, had told him they were true; and there was something within which also testified that they were true. He did not try to put them away from him, and the two verses passed through and through his mind.

It was soon after mid-day that Marshall presented himself at Mrs. Burton's door, with a paint-pot in his hand. Martha answered his hesitating knock, and opened the door wider for him to enter.

"You're the painter, I suppose?" she said.

"Ay!" he replied.

"And sadly you're wanted," she continued. "There are finger-marks everywhere—door-posts, chimney-piece, and lots of places. To think of such a thing! Missis is almost crazy."

Marshall said nothing, but taking off his boots at the foot of the stairs, followed Martha meekly. Mrs. Burton sat in the middle of the room, a picture of dismay and grief. She uttered a little scream when she saw him enter.

"Please, ma'am," he said, "I'm a painter by trade, and I'll do my very utmost to make it all sweet and clean again. I'm very miserable, ma'am. I'd do anything to make you amends."

* Strange as this incident may seem, it is strictly true, and happened within the writer's knowledge.