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[FROM PELOUBET'S NOTES.]

Fourth Quarter.—Lesson 12.—Dec. 19.

THE GREAT INVITATION.—REV. xxii. 8-21.

GOLDEN TEXT.—The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. REV. xxii. 21.

THE TIME IS AT HAND.—Vers. 8-12. And I John saw these things. It is common to his Gospel, Epistle, and Apocalypse, that the truth of the facts recorded should be established by the evidence of hearing and seeing. I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel. Overwhelmed with wonder and reverence at the extraordinary revelations made to him, and filled with praise at the amazing blessedness God has prepared for his children.

See thou do it not. Because it is unlawful and unworthy to worship any being but God himself. For I am thy fellow-servant. One bond of service unites angels and men. Worship is for God alone. And of them which keep the sayings of this book. Those who serve God and obey him are akin to the angels, engaged in the same great work, living by the same great principles.

Seal not the sayings of this book. The events which John had predicted, though in their ultimate development they were to extend to the end of the world, and even into eternity, were about to begin to be fulfilled, and were to be of immediate use in consoling a persecuted church. John, therefore, was directed not to seal up his predictions. For the time is at hand. That is, they are soon to commence. It is not implied that they would be soon completed.

He that is unjust, let him be unjust still, etc. Two pairs are selected to stand as representatives of the good and of the bad; in these four are included all classes of godly and ungodly: those who sin against society, and those who sin against themselves; those who act honorably, and those who keep themselves pure. Is it not the declaration of the ever terrible truth, that men are building up their destiny by the actions and habits of their lives? "Sow an act—reap a habit; sow a habit—reap a character; sow a character—reap a destiny." The words contain that solemn lesson often taught in Scripture, that the revelation of Christ is the final test of the character, and the final arbiter of the fate of man. Under the influences of the Gospel of Christ, we make out our own destinies; we sow the harvest that we shall eventually reap.

Behold, I come quickly. These are undoubtedly the words of the Redeemer himself. To what coming do they refer? They cannot refer to his second coming, if that is limited to his coming at the end of the world, for this saying was uttered almost 1800 years ago, and he has not yet come in that sense. It may refer to his coming in the larger sense of the coming of the Gospel dispensation. Practically to each of us he comes at death. He comes quickly, and there is so much to do before he comes, that the time seems very short. In reference to each individual, the period is near when it is to be determined whether he will be holy or sinful to all eternity.

HIS REWARD IS WITH HIM.—Vers. 12-15. And my reward is with me. There is no delay in his reward, it will be given as soon as he comes. To give every man according as his work shall be. The character is judged but by the conduct (see Matt. vii. 21; xxv. 31-46; Rev. xxi. 8.) Men are never represented in the New Testament as judged on the last day according to their opinions, but according to their lives.

I am Alpha and Omega. Alpha is A, the first letter of the Greek alphabet, and means the same as the BEGINNING. Omega (O) is the last letter, and means the same as THE END, THE LAST. He originated the whole plan of salvation, and he will determine its close.

Blessed... that do his commandments. The doing is the test of character, of faith, of fitness to enter eternal life. It implies allegiance to Christ as our Master and King.

Right to the tree of life. They have a right to dwell where the tree of life grows, and partake of its fruits. Through the gates into the city. The city of God described in chap. 20, and the first part of chap. 22.

For without. Excluded from heaven and the holy city. Sorcerers. Those who are in real or pretended league with Satan to deceive and mislead the people. Whoremongers. All the sensual, corrupt, debased. Idolaters. Disowning the true God. And whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. All deceitful and false persons who do not love the truth. The doctrine of the passage is that broad and evermore true one, None are shut out from heaven save those who are unfit to enter.

THE INVITATION.—Vers. 16-17. Jesus has one last word to say. In every conceivable form of assurance and invitation, he has called sinners. "Stay," the ascended Jesus seems to say: "Put not on the cursing seal till there first be put in one more Gospel assurance and invitation. And make it wide as thought can possibly conceive of it; plain as language can possibly utter it; and cordial as the heart of God alone can give it. Tell them that not only have they leave to come, but every loving voice in heaven and earth pleads and urges them to come. My spirit whispers to the depths of their spirits, saying, 'Come.' My bride, the church, in all her divinely appointed ordinances cries, 'Come! Come!' Nay, more, lest it be in highways and hedges where there should be no church ordinances to reach any one, every sinner that heareth my voice himself is authorized to say to any other sinner, 'Come.' Nay, more, lest there should be no such sinner to invite him, tell any soul that feels the thirst not to stand on ceremony, but self-invited, 'Come.' Nay, more still, lest now some poor, sin-darkened soul should stumble at the word 'athirst,' and doubt if his thirst is real or great enough, say absolutely, 'Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.' I will be the Saviour of any that will have me for a Saviour. Only let him cry in his despair, 'O Lamb of God I come—just as I am.'"

I Jesus. The highest possible authority. Have sent mine angel. As recorded in chap. 1: 1. I am the root. The root-shoot, a growth from the root, equivalent to "offspring." This identifies the speaker as the very Messiah of ancient promise. The bright and morning star. The brightest and most beautiful of stars, outshining all the rest, the harbinger of day. When we see him, we know the day is soon to dawn.

The Spirit. The Holy Spirit, in the Word, in the churches, in the prophets, in his conscience, in providence, with his own still, small, but penetrating voice. And the bride. The Church as a whole, and as individual members. Say, come. To the city of God, the state and the place of holy blessedness. And let him that heareth say, come. Every one who is obeying the invitation, as he hastens on toward the holy city, say, come, to all within sound of his voice. He can contribute to missions; he can uphold the churches; he can tell his own experience in meetings; he can speak to those with whom society or business brings him in contact; he can live so that his life will be a perpetual invitation and a reinforcement of his words. And let him that is athirst, come. Without waiting for invitations from others. Whosoever will. Making the invitation as broad as possible. God longs for every one to come. They cannot be saved unless they come. The water of life. The salvation of Jesus Christ, the water that satisfies every want and longing of the soul.

THE CONCLUSION.—Vers. 18-21. For I. Alford supposes that the writer, John, now speaks, but if so, it must be because so authorized by Jesus himself, from whom only this warning could rightly come. Testify... if any man shall add unto these things. The reference as above must be to this Book of Revelation only, for at that time the books which we now denominate the Bible were not collected in a single volume. But it is equally true of all the inspired word of God. God shall add unto him the plagues, etc. These "plagues" refer to the numerous methods described in this book as those in which God would bring severe punishment upon the persecutors of the Church, and the corruptors of religion.

And if any man shall take away from the words. To take away is to reject altogether, strike out any part of it, to neglect it so that it has not its rightful power over the mind, or to diminish any of its threatenings, or modify its rewards. Let them stand as the very words of God. His part out of the book of life. The Lamb's book of life, in which were written the names of those who belonged to him (chap. 21: 29). Out of the holy city. The New Jerusalem described before. And from the things which are written in this book. All the joys, victories, blessings mentioned in it.

He which testified these things saith. The speaker is Christ (see chap. 1: 2; 19: 10; "The testimony of Jesus Christ"). I come quickly. There will be no delay. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The epitome of all the prayers that the believer is called upon to offer. Let this prayer never die on our lips while we have breath. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. The benediction from the heart of the apostle; the great blessing the church needs at all times. To this close may be added that other saying of St. John (1 John 2: 28): "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at HIS COMING."

shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at HIS COMING."

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**FAMILY LIFE.**

BY DR. JOHN HALL.

The family is in peril among us. Time was when ministers could rejoice, in a kindly way, that the marriages they had celebrated had turned out uniformly well. Many of them are now unable to make this pleasant boast. The divorce court represents some, not all, of the shipwrecks of homes that are leaving wives and children in desolation, often mixed with disgrace. Marriages made hastily, and from inferior motives—mercenary, or socially ambitious—lawless passions yielded to until the criminals become their slaves; pride, and ill temper, and violence, and intemperance, are bearing their horrid fruit in ruined homes and blighted lives. Legislation can do something here in the way of prevention; healthy social opinion in the way of discountenancing this evil; but the cure must go deeper than law or sentiment can reach.

"The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring for ever." Hearts purified by faith will be loyal to the vows upon them. Members of the family of which Jesus is the Elder Brother will slowly, and only in extreme cases, surrender the marriage ties. Young men and maidens who fear God will grow up with the qualities that conserve and bless a home. God's people—husbands and wives—"dwell in peaceable habitations and in sure dwellings and in quiet resting places." To secure a pure and abiding family life, we must get the community to study Paul to the Ephesians, and to submit to Divine arrangements. It may be said, indeed, that in lands where the Bible is not so honored as in our land, the divorce courts are less occupied than with us. That is true; but the difference is that in these regions—as in France, for example—the home is not constructed, as here, on the basis of legal marriage, and so is not broken up. The lawless inclinations are no less strong, the caprices of passion no less potent and mischievous; but either the forms are never submitted to, or, if complied with, though broken in spirit, allowed to keep their place as dead forms. But comparisons here are of little practical value. Our light aggravates our guilt. We need to fear the Lord and work righteousness. In vain do we assent to the command that shields our neighbor's wife from our covetousness, if there be not in our hearts that love to Christ which finds its true and fit expression in the keeping of the Commandments.

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**BEING A BOY.**

One of the best things in the world to be is a boy. It requires no experience, though it needs some practice to be a good one. The disadvantage of the position is that it does not last long enough. It is soon over. Just as you get used to being a boy you have to be something else, with a good deal more work to do, and not half so much fun. And yet every boy is anxious to be a man, and is very uneasy with the restrictions that are put upon him as a boy.

There are so many bright spots in the life of a farm boy that I sometimes think I should like to live the life over again. I should almost be willing to be a girl, if it were not for the chores. There is a great comfort to a boy in the amount of work he can get rid of doing. It is sometimes astonishing how slow he can go on an errand. Perhaps he couldn't explain himself why, when he is sent to a neighbor's after yeast, he stops to stone the frogs. He is not exactly cruel, but he wants to see if he can out-tem them. It is a curious fact about boys that two will be a great deal slower about doing anything than one. Boys have a great power of helping each other do nothing.

But, say what you will about the general usefulness of boys, a farm without a boy would very soon come to grief. He is always in demand. In the first place, he is to do all the errands, go to the store, the post-office, and to carry all sorts of messages. He would like to have as many legs as a wheel has spokes and rotate about in the same way. This he sometimes tries to do, and people who have seen him "turning cart-wheels" along the side of the road have supposed that he was amusing himself and idling his time. He was only trying to invent a new mode of locomotion, so that he could economize his legs and do his errands with greater despatch. Leap-frog is one of his methods of getting over the ground quickly. He has a natural genius for combining pleasure with business.—Charles Dudley Warner.

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