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The Sabbath-School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Fourth Quarter—Lesson XII.—Dec. 20.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.—Matthew 2:1-12.

CHRISTMAS LESSON.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.*—Luke 2:10.

WHO JESUS WAS BEFORE HE CAME.—John 1:1-4; Heb. 1:2-3. The Word who became Jesus on earth was the eternal Son of God. He was with God, and was God. He came to the world, as the highest expression of God's love, to take upon himself our human nature for the salvation of the world. Jesus from his personal knowledge could tell us about God and his infinite love, his readiness to forgive sins, and about heaven and the way to reach it. Only the Son of God could possibly make atonement for sin. Only he could have power to save us, to be our ever present friend, our infallible guide.

PROPHESIES OF HIS COMING. He came as part of a great divine plan. He was foretold, promised, typified from the very beginning. There was a promise to Adam (Gen. 3:15); to Abraham (Gen. 22:18); to Jacob (Gen. 49:10); to David (2 Sam. 7:12-16); by Isaiah (9:6-7; 11:1-9) by Daniel (9:24). The sacrifices typified him. More frequently still were foretold the blessed times he would bring.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS.—V. 1. *N. w. when Jesus was born.* Jesus, the divine Son of God, became man by being born of the Virgin Mary. In Bethlehem of Judea, probably about Dec. 25, B. C. 5. It is not told in Matthew how Jesus came to be in Bethlehem. For that we turn to Luke. In the days of Herod the king, Herod died April 1, B. C. 4, at Jericho at the age of seventy, so that the visit of the wise men must have been a few weeks previous.

THE WISE MEN FROM THE EAST.—V. 2. *Saying, where is he that is born king of the Jews?* The Magi expected, no doubt, to find him in the capital city and in the royal palace.

The Expectation of the Messiah in the World. We are informed by Tacitus, by Suetonius, and by Josephus that there prevailed throughout the entire East, at this time, an intense conviction, derived from ancient prophecies, that ere long a powerful monarch would arise in Judea and gain dominion over the world. Virgil, who lived a little before this, owns that a child from heaven was looked for, who should restore the golden age and take away sin. Confucius, in China, had prophesied the appearance of such a deliverer, and a deputation of his followers, going forth in search of him, were the means of introducing Buddhism into China. Zoroaster taught the Persians concerning Christ. He declared that in the latter days a pure virgin should conceive, and that as soon as the child was born a star would appear, blazing, even at noonday, with undiminished luster.

The Need of the World. If we ask ourselves what we need in a real Saviour, we will find in the answer those things which all men need.

1. The forgiveness of sins and assurance from God as to the conditions on which they can be forgiven.
2. Light upon the future, upon the certainty of a future life, upon heaven, its character, and the way to reach it.
3. A new heart, a disposition that loves what is right, to which goodness, purity, love and all the virtues are natural.
4. Every possible motive that can uplift and inspire us to live the right life.
5. An example and guide, to show us what our own possibilities are and how we may reach them.
6. Divine power, the Holy Spirit of God, as the wintry fields need the warm spring sun.
7. A divine Saviour, with power to save, omnipresent, so far above us that we can always look up to him.
8. A human Saviour, who can sympathize with us, to whom we can draw near in personal love and friendship.

THE STAR IN THE EAST.—*For we have seen his star in the east.* This must have been a miraculous star, for it went before them, and stood over the exact place where Jesus was with his mother. It is natural that a miraculous being should be heralded by a miraculous star. His birth was a miracle. The angels sang at his birth. Miracles accompanied his life, and crowned his death with the resurrection. And are come to worship him. To do homage to him.

Why Should the Star Lead Them to Think of the Messiah? (1) Such appearances were continually regarded by the sages of those days as signs of some great event. (2) The general expectation of the

Great King at this time would cause the wise men to think of him when they saw the wonderful star. (3) They were doubtless pious men, looking for the hope of the world. And (4) God may have made some communication to them, as we learn from verse 12 that he actually did afterwards.

Practical. Those who feel their need of a Saviour will make every effort to find him.

They are wise who thus earnestly seek the Saviour.

God gives all needful guidance to every earnest seeker.

SEEKING AND FINDING.—Vs. 3-11. *When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, agitated, disturbed, lest he should lose his throne and his power.* He was old and wicked. He knew he was hated by his subjects. *And all Jerusalem with him.* Those in power would be afraid of anything that shook the throne. The progress of religion, the coming of Christ, is always a source of trouble to the wicked, for they mean the dethroning of their idols, the overthrow of their hopes. *And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes.* The chief priests were probably the heads of the twenty-four courses into which the sons of Aaron were divided. The scribes were the interpreters of the law for the most part pharisees. *He demanded of them where Christ, the Messiah, the official title of the promised Deliverer, should be born.* What do your scriptures say? *And they said.* The answer seems to have been given without any hesitation, as a matter perfectly well understood and settled by divine authority. *Thus it is written.* What is quoted in the next verse. *By the prophet (Micah, in chap. 5:2.) And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, shall come a Governor.* A leader, guide, or ruler. *That shall rule;* more correctly, shall be the shepherd of. *Then Herod... called the wise men.* Privately, for he was already hatching his malicious plot. *Inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.* That he might know what was the exact age of the infant whom he wished to slay. *He sent them to Bethlehem, a short six miles from Jerusalem.* Search diligently. So far as the mission became known, it would impress the people with the belief that he, too, shared their hopes, and was ready to pay his homage to the new-born king. It was something like the kiss of Judas. *Lo, the star.* Unexpectedly the star they had seen in the east (it was not now in the east, but in the south) appeared to them in the evening as they went toward Bethlehem. *Stood over where the young child was;* i. e., over the house, not merely over the village of Bethlehem. *When they saw the star, guiding them, and pointing out the place.* They rejoiced. Because their search was successful. *When they were come into the house.* This could scarcely have been the stable where our Lord was born. Joseph and Mary remained for 40 days in Bethlehem, and would find temporary lodgings.

REVERENCE AND GIFTS.—Vs. 11, 12. *And fell down.* In the Oriental manner of showing homage and worship. *And worshipped him.* The homage of the Magi is the first and typical acknowledgment of Christ by those who hitherto had been far off; and their offerings were symbolic of the world's tribute. Three acts are here, falling down, worshipping, and offering; the first, the worship of the body; the second, of the soul; the third, of our goods. With these three, our bodies, our souls, our goods, we are to worship him. *Opened their treasures.* Caskets which they had brought with them. *They presented unto him gifts.* According to the Oriental custom in paying visits to royalty. *Frankincense.* A gum resin. Valued for its sweet odor when burnt; used for incense. *Myrrh.* An aromatic gum highly prized by the ancients, and used in incense and perfumes. *Being warned of God.* In a dream, in the same manner as God may have spoken to them before. *Into their own country another way.* They could easily go direct from Bethlehem to the Jordan river, leaving Jerusalem to the north and west. Finding our King. Every one of us needs a king. We need a king in our own souls, to love, to look up to, to guide, to bind in one our complex nature. Some king we must all have. Those who are wise seek the true King, with all their hearts, as men seek the pearl of great price. We shall find him in seeking to do his will, in giving ourselves to him in faith, in studying his Word, in sincere praying.

So rapidly does lung irritation spread and deepen, that often in a few weeks a simple cough culminates in tubercular consumption. Give heed to a cough there is always danger in delay, get a bottle of Bickel's Anti-Consumptive Syrup, and cure yourself. It is a medicine unsurpassed for all throat and lung troubles. It is compounded from several herbs, each one of which stands at the head of the list as exerting a wonderful influence in curing consumption and all lung diseases.

W. C. T. Union.

OUR MOTTO.—*If God be for us, who can be against us.*

[The following from the 'Rain's Horn,' taken from an interview with Miss Jessie A. Ackerman, the round the world missionary of the world's W. C. T. U. is suggestive.]

After the result of your travel and observation, what did you find to be the temperance condition of the world? I next inquired.

I found the temperance sentiment stronger than it has ever been before. But the great, the terrible difficulty we have to cope with in dealing with the drink curse is, that it is an evil entrenched behind the fortifications of Christian legislatures and governments. And we must storm the forts before we can hope to check the traffic in foreign lands.

Why, do you know, she exclaimed, suddenly becoming intensely earnest, that for every heathen converted to Christianity by our missionaries, English opium makes 1,000 opium smokers, and the liquor from other lands makes 100 drunkards. China was compelled to take opium by England at the time when there was a law in the land imposing the penalty of death upon anyone who cultivated poppy and manufactured opium.

If you could sound a bugle blast to the Christians of America regarding the world's temperance work, what would it be? I asked.

I should say that every Christian man is in a measure responsible for all the sin and crime and misery that is the outgrowth of intemperance. The only way to rid the world of this curse is to outlaw the saloon in Christian lands. And how? By voting for principle instead of party!

Amen and amen. Long may this clarion call resound throughout our land from shore to shore, till every foot of earth be cleansed from the filth which issues from the cesspool of crime.

What do you think of the missionary work of to-day and of the outlook for missions in the next century?

I take a very cheery view of missions and their outlook for the future. After the nations have been steeped in heathenism for centuries, the conversion of a single one means more than lips can express.

The greatest hindrance to-day to the spread of the gospel in foreign lands, is the attitude of Christendom toward the heathen world concerning the vices that are a part of our civilization.

So the missionaries will ever fail to reach the thinking men and women in heathen lands, until the liquor traffic is overthrown in America and the opium traffic in England, until the foreigners can see the principles of Christianity exemplified in our governments.

For example, let me narrate the following incident, said Miss Ackerman: the leaders of thought in India were once holding a meeting to present to England a petition for direct representation in the English parliament. At the close of the business portion, I was requested to address the meeting. I took as my theme, what Christianity has done for woman. After recounting numerous things, I told them how it was through the influence of Christianity that I was enabled to go round the world entirely alone and unprotected, while their women dare not appear on the streets unaccompanied, but remain day in and out, shut up in their houses.

As I finished, a brilliant native who had studied English, arose and asked permission to say a few words. He turned to me and said, in the presence of all, that from the doorway of the building he could show me a scene that would at once destroy my arguments. Then he pictured the daily scenes in the barracks of the British soldiery—almost within a stone's throw.

How in the front of the enclosure there stood a person in English uniform dealing out beer and liquors to the soldiers and natives. And how the English government makes a profit on each glass sold. And worst of all, how in another part of the barracks Indian women were publicly placed at the disposal of the soldiery at so much per head. And all this under the protection and license of a Christian (!) government. The speaker declared that his heathen government had never fallen to so low a depth as to publicly license and sell its women.

What could I say in reply? I could say nothing. And no missionary can use arguments that will convert the thinking classes of heathendom until the principles of Christ are practised as well as professed by the Christian governments of the world.

(To be continued.)

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Passengers from St. John for Quebec and Montreal take through sleeping car at Moncton at 19.30 o'clock.

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Express from Halifax.....15.50
Express from Halifax, Campbellton and Pictou.....18.30
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