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INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Fourth Quarter, Lesson IV Oct. 23 '98

ISAIAH CALLED TO SERVICE.—ISAIAH 6: 1-13.

Read Ezekiel, Chapters 2 and 3.

Commit Verses 5-8.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.*—Isa. 6: 8.

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time of this vision, in the year of Uzziah's death, B. C. 759, or, Rev. Chron., 737.

Contemporary Prophets.—Hosea was contemporary in Israel with Isaiah, and Nahum and Micah in Judah. Possibly also Joel in Judah, and Amos and Jonah in Israel may have been still living, old men, in the early days of Isaiah.

Contemporary History of Israel.—At the time of the vision Israel was rapidly hastening to its end amid great disorders. The end came about the middle of Isaiah's prophetic work.

Contemporary History, Secular History.—Rome founded, B. C. 753, not far from the time Isaiah began to prophesy. Rise of Corinth, 745. Syracuse founded, 734. Numa Pompilius at Rome, 716-673. The Assyrian empire renewing its strength.

ISAIAH AND HIS TIMES.—His name means "The salvation of Jehovah."

His home was in Jerusalem.

His lineage. We only know that he was the son of Amos (1: 1). The Rabbins have a tradition that he was cousin to King Uzziah, and of the royal blood.

His wife is called the prophetess. From this we must infer, that she, also, was endowed with the gift of the prophecy.

His children. Two children are named, and both names were given as prophecies to the people; Shear-jashub, "A remnant shall return," and Maher-shalal-hashbaz, "Speed-spoil-hurry-prey."

His writings. In addition to the book which bears his name, he was the author (2 Chron. 26: 22; 32: 32) of a history of the reign of Uzziah, and of a work containing an account of the reign of Hezekiah.

Period of Prophesying. Isaiah prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. His prophetic ministry extended over sixty years.

Historical Circumstances. Isaiah begins his ministry after half a century of great outward prosperity, but a prosperity which brought the people into perilous relations with the idolatrous tribes of the East. The claims and prerogatives of Jehovah were forgotten and dishonored; the worship of Jehovah was largely departed from. Assyria was again coming into prominence, and had already attacked the northern kingdom and was hastening it to its end. The great issues of the world's secular history were then being fought out by three great world powers—Assyria, Babylon, Egypt. Midway between these powers on the northwest and southwest, in a narrow region, lay Palestine.

Isaiah's Death. "Isaiah's died with the gospel on his lips." His death was probably in the earlier years of the reign of Manasseh, at the advanced age of between 70 and 90 years. Manasseh inaugurated a bitter persecution. This gives color to the tradition that Isaiah died a martyr in this persecution. The story is that he was placed within a rifted cedar tree, and then tree and prophet were sawn in two lengthwise.

ISAIAH'S VISION.—Vs. 1 4. *In the year that king Uzziah died.* Isaiah, to enforce the previous prophecies, refers back to his call to his work. *I saw* in a vision. *The Lord sitting upon a throne.* Isaiah describes no face, but only a presence and a session. *High and lifted up.* Far above all kings, all nature, all powers and principalities,—in goodness, in power, and in glory. *And his train.* His royal robes, an expression of his glory. *Filled the temple,* or palace. *Above it.* Above and around this Royal Presence. *Stood the seraphim,* "flame bearers," "burning ones." *Each one had six wings.* Suggesting readiness and swiftness to carry God's commands. *With twain he covered his face.* In reverence and awe. *With twain he covered his feet.* The whole lower part of his body, in the same feeling of reverential fear. *And with twain he did fly* as an eagle floats in the air. *And one cried unto another.* Some of them commenced and others responded. *Holy, holy, holy.* The word is repeated for emphasis. *The Lord of hosts.* Of the whole universe. Jehovah is Lord of lords, and King of kings. *The whole earth is full of his glory.* Every part shall manifest his glory. *The posts of the door.* The foundations of the thresholds. *Moved at the voice.* Trembled, vibrated, as we have felt in a church at the sound of the great organ. *The house was filled with smoke.* Of the incense of praise.

CONVICTION OF SIN, AND FORGIVENESS.—Vs. 5-7. *Woe is me, for I am undone.* I am lost. *Because I am a man of unclean lips.* The natural expressions of his heart, were sinful. *I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.* He partook of the sins of his people, even when he did not sin by direct act. *For mine eyes have seen the King.* His conviction of sin arose (1) from the contrast of his own soul with the thrice holy King. (2) He felt the contrast between himself and the singing seraphim. Even they veiled their faces before the King, how much more should he! (3) The light shone through him, and revealed his own heart. (4) He was in the presence of the fact that God hates sin with his whole being. *Then flew one of the seraphim.* God's messenger. *Having a live coal,* used in the temple service for carrying fire. *He laid it upon my mouth.* His unclean lips. *Thine iniquity is taken away.* The assurance of forgiveness from God accompanied the visible expression of forgiveness, not only for himself, but in behalf of the whole people. *And thy sin purged.* Cleansed away.

THE CALL.—V. 8. Having been cleansed, he was prepared to listen to the call of God. *Whom shall I send?* To show the way of salvation. *Then said I, Here am I: send me.* The whole vision not only prepared him to do the work, but inspired him to yield to the call.

THE DISHEARTENING WORK TO BE DONE.—Vs. 9-12. *Go, and tell this people.* This is not to be first message to them, as his prophecies show, but is to be his message when they have rejected God's word; a frequent message, but always after they have hardened their hearts to the offers of mercy. *Hear....but understand not.* Go on as you have been doing, hearing the warning as a sweet song, and seeing the signs of coming evil, but only as a dream. *Make.* By preaching the truth, by urging to repentance, by proclaiming the true God, just as God hardened Pharaoh's heart by his works of mercy and power intended to soften his heart. Go on and do your duty even though these effects follow. *The heart.* The source of feeling. *Fat.* Dull. *Their ears heavy.* Dull of hearing. *Shut their eyes.* Spiritual sight. *Lord, how long?* When will there come something better? *Until the cities be wasted.* Describing the captivity which was to come upon Judah one hundred and fifty years later. Why was this sad picture of failure presented before Isaiah at the very beginning of his ministry? (1) To keep him from being disappointed and discouraged when these things came to pass. (2) To show him that it was not his fault that he did not have more immediate success.

FINAL SUCCESS.—V. 13. Then God shows him that, after all, his work is not a failure. There is to be success, though afar off, and in a different form. *It shall be a tenth.* A small portion. The remnant often referred to in Isaiah's prophecies *It shall return.* From the exile as the second part of Isaiah so fully describes. *And shall be eaten.* Destroyed again as before, referring to successive captivities. Yet this is not the end, for it shall be *as a teil-tree.* Terebinth or turpentine tree. These trees were selected on account of their peculiar facility for springing up again from the root, even when they had been completely felled. *Whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves.* They seem to be dead, but they are not, and produce leaves again. This promise shines all through Isaiah's book. Though surrounded by darkness, it opens windows through which is seen a wonderful and glorious future.

PRACTICAL HINTS.

In this chapter we have the gospel in Isaiah,—God, a Saviour, conviction of sin, forgiveness, consecration, a call, volunteer service, a hard mission, final redemption.

The vision of God, holy, great, wise, but as good and loving as he is great, is the beginning of new life, and worthy service.

The burning coal from the altar of Christ's love is sent by God's messengers to those who feel their sin.

"Let us keep saying over and over again this reply of the evangelic prophet: 'Here am I; send me.' Are teachers in demand? 'Here am I; send me.' Do sick people need watchers? 'Here am I; send me.' Are the poor famishing? 'Here am I; send me.'"

In how many ways God calls men. Each prophet and apostle in a different way from the others.

The work of God's servant is often hard and discouraging. The work of ministers and reformers seems often a failure. But there is always certain success in the end, probably in a different form from that expected, but none the less real.

Honoring Parents.

Mother is the grandest word in the English or any other language. Father comes next, then home. The three terms, mother, father, and home, are inseparable, especially home and mother; for show me a good and God-fearing mother and there you will find a home, and if it is not a happy home, then it is not her fault. "Home is the golden setting, in which the brightest jewel is mother, the father's kingdom, the children's paradise, and the mother's world."

Taking the home, then, I will try and show why we should honor father and mother. Right from our birth and almost until we enter homes of our own, we are under the immediate care of our parents. They carefully watch over us, supply our wants, tend us, work for us, carefully train us, educate us, indeed their very thought is for our interests and welfare. Most fathers and mothers will make any sacrifice for their children, and their careful attention and watchfulness over us is at a time when we are ourselves helpless, and at a critical time of life when our whole manhood or womanhood is taking shape, developing and blossoming into what we are to be in the future. Plenty of parents have worked—yes, slaved—and thereby shortened their own days to give their children advantages in every respect, which they themselves never enjoyed, and in the face of all this is there no recompense for father and mother, are there no kind words, no attentions, no respect? The very least that any of us can do is to honor, respect, obey, love, watch over those parents who did so much for us. They watched over us when we were weak and helpless, and now when they are aged should their children not repay them by seeing that they want for nothing in their declining years. How must a father and mother feel, whose whole life has been devoted to their children, and then find them ungrateful; this is a sad, very sad picture, and both parties in it are to be pitied. One can scarcely conceive of anything so mean, so cruel—yes, inhuman—as a disrespectful or ungrateful young man or woman to aged and infirm parents. What a grand sight to see a son and daughter honor the gray hairs on the heads of those who once watched over their cradles, or to see them watching by the bedside of a sick father or mother. I have sometimes heard young men and women, smart young men and women, speak of their father as the governor, the old lad, the boss, his lordship, Jack, Tom, etc., and of their mother as the lady, the dame, Kate, Jane, etc. Now, to those young men and women I would say, "Try as you will, you cannot find better, more suitable, or more respectful name for your parents than father and mother. Father and mother cannot be bettered, there is a true ring about those two terms that this fast age, or the smart young man or woman cannot improve on.

When we speak to our parents we should address them respectfully, and never in a way to wound their feelings. When we speak of them we should do so respectfully, not in a contemptuous or ungrateful way.

What a beautiful thing it is to hear the little toddler say mamma and papa, and a grand thing to hear the young man or woman speak to or of their parents as father and mother. I feel this very strongly, and cannot emphasize it too much when I say there is something radically wrong about our young people who fail to appreciate and honor the dear old folks at home.

The most critical time in a boy or girls life is when the parent's authority ceases. This time must come, in some soon, in others later, but we should curb the disposition to throw aside parental authority too soon. The world's greatest men, the world's pillars we might call them, are those who had the training of God-fearing parents, and who never failed to honor them, and if they did fail their remorse was great. The Bible, our guide in all things spiritual, has very much to say on honoring father and mother, clearly showing the reward, and also the punishment in the failure of this important duty. Now listen: We should honor our father and mother, so that when we close their eyes in death, we should have no regrets.

Domestic Finance.

I am sure that no question ever makes as much real trouble in the family as that of domestic finance. Why husbands and fathers are so obtuse as not to see that women cannot be treated all their lives like children without great unhappiness, is beyond the power of the average observer to determine. No wife should be obliged to beg for needed money. A wife is supposed to have her husband's true interest's at heart. If this is the case, she will not be extravagant, nor will she spend money in a foolish way. Why not sit down some day when your husband is in a reasonable mood, and talk the thing over with him fairly and squarely? In the end the money is spent for yourself and the children. You are obliged to eat, you must have clothes. Why not sit down with pencil and paper, figure out the cost of running the home, decide what proportion should be devoted to the wife, what amount is necessary for taxes and groceries and fuel—in short, arrive at a businesslike conclusion about the whole matter?

I sometimes think that young women would do well before answering the all important question of the proposal to come to an understanding on this matter of money. Certainly a great deal of unhappiness would be saved if the course were decided upon before marriage. It is not a trouble confined to poor people; rich men's wives are often practically in the position of mendicants. I have personally known the wife of a well to do man, having apparently all that heart could wish, to be unable to buy herself a pair of shoes, and obliged for weeks together to remain at home, to refuse all invitations, and, in short, to live the life of a veiled nun, simply because she was unprepared to encounter wet and cold pavements. This sounds like a fairy tale, but it is true.

Let the positions be reversed, and the husband obliged to go to his wife every time he wished to spend ten cents and ask her for it, and how many husbands would bear the situation patiently? If the wife is not directly the breadwinner, she is still the home maker, and she has her rights in the case, which a chivalrous man will always consider.—Mrs. Margaret E. Sangster.

Stopped at the Right Place.

Mabel, a very circumspect and conscientious young maiden of four, was sent into the parlor to entertain a caller for a few minutes until her mother could appear.

The conversation drifted to Mabel's intellectual acquirements, and the visitor asked, "And do you know the alphabet, Mabel?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Well, will you say it for me?"

Mabel began very glibly; but after three or four letters stopped abruptly and said, "If you please, ma'am, I guess I'd better not."

"Why?" asked the other in surprise. "What makes you think you had better not?"

"'Cause," replied this exceptionally discreet young woman, "that's about all I know, and mamma says I mustn't tell all I know."—Little Christian.

Seven Reasons for Temperance.

During a temperance campaign a lawyer was discussing learnedly the clauses of the proposed temperance law. An old farmer, who had been listening attentively, shut his knife with a snap, and said: "I don't know nuthin' about the law, but I've got seven good reasons for votin' for it."

"What are they?" asked the lawyer.

And the grim old farmer responded: "Four sons and three daughters."

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