

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

LESSON VIII, FOURTH QUARTER, INTERNATIONAL SERIES, NOV. 20.

Text of the Lesson, II Chron. xxxiii, 9-14. Memory Verses, 12, 13—Golden Text, I John 1, 9—Commentary Prepared by the Rev. D. M. Stearns.

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9. "So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err and to do worse than the heathen whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel." This is a summary of the previous part of this chapter concerning the sins of Manasseh, who began to reign when he was 12 years old and reigned 55 years in Jerusalem. He shed innocent blood very much till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another (II Kings xxi, 16). He wrought much evil in the sight of the Lord to provoke Him to anger. Then think of the people of God acting worse than the heathen who knew not God, and even worshipping an idol, a carved image, in the house of God where He had put His name and His glory! What a contrast to the conduct of his father Hezekiah, who for the most part wrought good and right and truth before the Lord his God (chapter xxxi, 20). How could such a good father have such a bad son? But it is not an uncommon story. Consider the sons of Eli and of Samuel and of David. How could sinful King Ahaz, because of whose sins the Lord brought Judah low (chapter xxviii, 19), have such a good son as Hezekiah? His mother's name was Abi, the daughter of Zachariah (II Kings xviii, 2), and to her possibly much is due. But Manasseh's mother was Hephzibah (my delight is in her), and if there is anything in a name he, too, may have had a good mother (II Kings xxi, 1). Our Heavenly Father knows what it is to have rebellious children (Isa. i, 2), and when He permits us to have rebellious children it is a ground of fellowship with Him.

10. "And the Lord spake to Manasseh, and to his people, but they would not hearken." Oh, how often the Lord has to say concerning those whom He would love to bless that they would not let Him, they would not listen to Him, they would not come to Him (Isa. xxx, 15; Math. xxiii, 37; John v, 40). If we only would receive His word with meekness, yield fully to Him and be willing and obedient, how much of heaven we might have upon the earth! How earnestly God cries to His people by His servants the prophets, as for example, in Jer. lii, 13, 14, "Only acknowledge thine iniquity; turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you." See also Ezek. xviii, 30-32; xxxiii, 11, etc.

11. "Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns and bound him with fetters and carried him to Babylon." Thus he found some reaping, for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap, and they who sow the wind may reap the whirlwind (Gal. vi, 7; Hos. viii, 7). Affliction is often the best thing that can come to one who is wandering from God. God is not willing that any should perish, and if sinners will not listen to gracious words of love He will seek to win them by chastening, as He has said in Job xxxiii, 29, 30.

12. "And when he was in affliction he besought the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers." It is often the case that only in affliction will a soul turn to the Lord, even as it is written in Hos. v, 15, "In their affliction they will seek Me early." It will be seen on a larger scale some day, for it is written in Isa. xxvi, 9, "When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." Even the fearful judgments of Rev. ix and xvi are intended, if possible, to bring men to repentance. See Rev. ix, 20, 21; xvi, 9, 11. Pride and self will are born in us as the results of Adam's sin, the work of the devil, and all people are either Cains or Abels, the former proudly resisting God and His salvation, and the latter humbly confessing their sins and accepting His way of redemption. The Pharisees when our Lord was on earth were of the line of Cain, religious, but proud and hating God and His way.

13. "And prayed unto Him, and He was entreated of him and heard his supplication and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord He was God." Manasseh was evidently a true penitent, and God's ear is ever open to such. It is always true for such on God's part, "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out" (John vi, 37). It is written in I Chron. v, 20 concerning some of Israel that they cried to God in the battle and He was entreated of them, because they put their trust in Him. Ezra says in chapter viii, 23, "So we fasted and besought our God for this, and He was entreated of us." As to the mercy which is with God for the greatest sinner who with true penitence turns to Him we need only consider the case of the penitent thief or of Saul of Tarsus. But who could be greater in sin than this son of Hezekiah?

14. "Now after this he built a wall without the city of David." The building of this wall and the placing of captains of war in the fenced cities does not imply any lack of trust in God, but is rather suggestive of keeping the Lord's property for the Lord. In Canticles iv, 12, the bride is compared to a garden inclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed; something kept solely for the owner. In Isa. lx, 18, the walls of Zion are called salvation and her gates praise. In Zech. ii, 5, the Lord says He will be unto her a wall of fire round about. Walls and protections of any kind are naught unless they are of God.

15. "And he took away the strange gods and the idol out of the house of the Lord." As the children of God we are expected to put away from us all the works of the flesh and to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit (Eph. iv, 22, 23; I Cor. vi, 1). Having received the Lord Jesus, we are looked upon as having died with Him and risen from the dead to walk in newness of life; dead unto sin, but alive unto God, yielded unto Him as His property for His use exclusively

(Rom. vi, 4, 11, 13).
16. "And he repaired the altar of the Lord . . . and commanded Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel. Peace and thank-offerings are associated in the law (Lev. vii, 11, 12) and are in connection with the burnt offering, sin offering and other offerings (Lev. vii, 37). All offerings pointed back to Gen. iii, 21, and on to Calvary, for nothing can take away sin or make peace with God but the precious blood of the Lord Jesus, the antitype of all types, the substance of every shadow. He served God as no one else ever did, and we serve truly only as He lives and works in us. In Manasseh's case, as in the case of Saul of Tarsus, the grace of God was exceeding abundant (II Tim. i, 14). He is ever the same, full of grace and truth.

Tomorrow's Services.

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL MISSION.
Sunday school at 2:30 p. m.
Evening prayer and sermon at 4 p. m.

METHODIST CHURCH.
Sunday school at 9:45 a. m.
Preaching at 11 a. m., and 7:15 p. m.
Epworth League at 8:30 p. m.
M. L. BUTLER, Pastor.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.
Sunday, Nov. 20th, 1898, will be Home Mission Day at the Presbyterian church.

Sunday school at 9:45 a. m.; D. M. Murr, superintendent.
Teachers please be prompt.
Order of service at 11 a. m.

Voluntary.
Doxology.
Invocation.
Hymn No. 11.
Responsive reading, Exodus 35:4-29.
Prayer.
Response.
Announcements.
Anthem.
Sermon.
Offertory for home missions.
Hymn No. 308—Benediction.
Christian Endeavors meet at 7 o'clock; Mrs. Jas. Morning leader.
Preaching at 7:30.
Strangers cordially invited.
W. T. KING, Pastor.

Thanksgiving Services.

Elaborate preparations are being made for Union Thanksgiving service in this city next Thursday and the following program has been prepared:

Order of service. Voluntary.
Doxology.
Invocation by Rev. W. T. King.
Hymn—"Coronation."
Responsive scripture reading, led by Prof. W. A. Caldwell.
Prayer—Rev. M. L. Butler.
Anthem.
Reading of Chief's proclamation—Rev. Coppedge.
Solo.
Sermon—Rev. Thos. Lloyd.
Song—"My Country, 'Tis of Thee."
Benediction.

Let us each arrange our business and domestic affairs so as to attend and take part in this Thanksgiving service. W. T. KING, Chairman.

The Transfiguration.

The beautiful little poem written below was clipped from a Texas paper. As the author is known to so many of our people we reprint it:

On the slope of Mount Hermon,
Full two thousand years ago,
There came a light from heaven
Brighter far than Hermon's snow.
Though a LIGHT, it was a CLOUD
That simply brought into sight
The sacred symbol of God,
Whose very shadow is light.
From the cloud there came a voice,
"This is my beloved Son.
Let the earth hear Him and rejoice
In the great work He has done."
The Son, Himself, was clad in light
Brighter far than Persian day,
His garments were pure and white
When He ceased to kneel and pray.
The glory was not put on,
But came from His soul within.
By divinity He shone,
And not by delegation,
Thus on Hermon He revealed
Glory He had kept concealed.
The great giver of the law
Was beside the greater Son.
He came before his Lord to bow
And blend their great works in one.
He was in light like his Lord,
But his was light reflected
From the blessed holy Word,
By men so soon rejected.
God's great prophet, Elias,
Who called the prophets of Baal,
"Come fight till ye or I die,"
On the heights of Mount Carmel,
There—in splendor like Moses—
Submitted the prophet's crown
To the Holy child Jesus,
God's "well beloved Son."
Then Peter and James and John
On whom the bright light was shed,
Fell by its power overcome,
As men whose spirits had fled.

But Jesus in mercy came
And to them sweetly said,
—As gently he touched them—
"Arise and be not afraid."
Then said Peter to the Lord,
"It is so good here to be,
Let us here make our abode
In new tabernacles three."
For he wist not what to say
In the rapture of that hour,
In the light brighter than day,
Attended by such power.
But the transfiguration
Gave him such heavenly light
That a true recognition
Of the law giver by sight
Was made possible that day,
Though time in his rapid flight
Had borne on his wings away
Fifteen hundred years that lay
Between them who met that day.
Elias was also known
By the same inspiring light,
Though nine hundred years had flown
On time's continuous flight,
From this we learn we shall know
Our loved ones up in heaven
As those who ne'er before saw
Each other till on Hermon.
In the light of Christ they knew
Moses and Elias there.
We shall know ALL the saints, too,
When the light of Christ we share.
B. H. GREATHOUSE.

The doors of Willie Halsell college will be open to all friends next Tuesday evening, November 22, at 7 o'clock and beginning at 8 o'clock there will be a recital by the pupils in elocution and music. d & w tf.

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