

INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

(By E. O. SELLERS, Acting Director of the Sunday School Course in Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.)
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LESSON FOR DECEMBER 24

UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN.

LESSON TEXT—Isaiah 9:1-7.
GOLDEN TEXT—"Unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.—Isa. 9:7.

The Christmas lesson naturally and logically follows the three lessons we have just had from the book of the Revelation where Jesus in his glory had been portrayed, and the ultimate success of his work is foreseen in the new heaven and the new earth. Isaiah saw the vision of his first coming, John saw the vision of his second coming, when what he began the first time shall ultimately be accomplished. The prophecy here spoken was uttered during the reign of Ahaz, B. C. 728. The king of Assyria was attacking Syria. The tribes of northern Israel were carried away as captives. Judah was in danger of invasion. (See II Kings 15:29.) Isaiah was preaching in his home in Jerusalem. His vision of the Messiah Savior was not more than 800 years before John saw the vision of the glorified Jesus.

1. Darkness Versus Light (vv. 1-5). We need to go back into the eighth chapter to get the full historical situation of this part of the lesson. Ahaz, trembling in Jerusalem, had with him the Prophet Isaiah, the wisest and greatest man in his kingdom, yet Ahaz listened not to his words of warning and rebuke. He doggedly pursued his own course and sought help in every other quarter than the right one. This explains Isaiah's words, "The people that walked in darkness." Primarily he may have referred to those of the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali, the Galilee of the nations (John 1:46; 7:52) and the light which shone in Jesus of Nazareth (John 8:12). But there is a larger application in this verse to the whole world which lay in darkness until Jesus came, and the whole world has seen or shall see the great light (Luke 1:78-79). With the coming of light comes the increase of joy (v. 3 R. V.). In Israel there is to be, through Christ, a wonderful increase (Isa. 49:23-25; Zech. 1:17-18).

Christ there is to be great joy, the joy of harvest and of victory. The religion of Jesus Christ is pre-eminently the religion of joy (Acts 8:3; Phil. 4:4; I Peter 1:8) but the Child that was to be born was to be a Deliverer too, for the "yoke of burden" was a tax of \$1,800,000 that had recently been levied by the king of Assyria. It was a night of thick darkness for Israel. Then, even as now, we have the moral darkness. (Read Rom. 1:29-32.) But the prophet saw the joy of deliverance. Jerusalem had been left in peace. Hezekiah succeeded his father, Ahaz, and entered upon a religious revival in the kingdom. The people who had walked in darkness had seen a new light. The prophet saw the dawning rays through the midst of this darkness of ignorance being removed. He also saw the coming of the Light of Men 700 years later, and the multiplication of the nations, the increase of their joy.

2. Unto Us a Son Is Born (vv. 6-7). The greatest joy in Israel in Isaiah's time was in this vision of the Messiah, the promised Savior. Isaiah is looking ahead seven centuries. We are looking back nineteen. He was to be a king over his people. Name and title here is here given. (1) "Wonderful" because of his nature, being both human and divine. The word made flesh and dwelt among us. (2) "Counsellor," one who has the wisdom to guide himself and others. No one guided by him has ever failed of true success. (3) "The Mighty God." He was truly God so that we can trust him to the uttermost. He can also save to the uttermost. (4) "Everlasting Father," expressing his divine loving kindness and self-identification with the Father. (5) He is also "Prince of Peace," the one who rules so that peace and prosperity abide in his kingdom. He brings peace between man and God, and between man and man. He is the peace of the soul as well as bringing peace to the soul. The completeness of this picture which Isaiah saw is the one which St. John saw, of which we have been recently studying. These two verses are marvelous ones, not only because of the clear prediction of Jesus of Nazareth, made more than seven centuries before his first advent, but marvelous also for the fullness and richness of the revelation they contain concerning the person, character and work of Christ.

Our Lord's earth life began at Bethlehem, but he was from all eternity (John 8:56-58; John 1:1-2). As a man is not at peace with God he cannot be at peace with himself or his fellows; but as Jesus restores peace between man and God, he also restores peace to the heart of the individual (Phil. 4:7).

Sunday school officers and teachers should realize the difference between the peace with God (Rom. 5:1) and the peace of God (Phil. 4:7). Let us see to it that in the fullest sense our scholars may have the Prince of Peace in their lives.



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Optimistic Thought. It is worse to apprehend than to suffer.

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Origin of the Curfew.

A note by Ruskin Butterfield reminds us that, although Shakespeare speaks of "the curfew bell" and Milton of "the far-off curfew sound," Chaucer more correctly refers to "curfew time," as curfew was originally an appliance for covering the fire. There are examples still in existence, for instance, in the Hastings (Eng.) museum; they look like large tin cowies in metal. They served, as modern use regards, to prevent sparks setting the house on fire, and the house wife heaped the embers together at night and placed the curfew over them to lessen the combustion, and in the morning save the trouble of lighting the fire again.

Beam in the Eye.

Many a child, as well as some older persons, has puzzled over that "beam" in the eye of which the New Testament speaks. It is not always understood that this means a beam of light. But it was to let Solomon Bernhard, in his wood cuts illustrating the Bible, published at Lyons in 1535, to picture this beam as one of wood, rectangular in section, and several feet in length!

"In Rome."

Harvard and Yale men bear one another an ancient grudge if good-natured incident not to be minimized. A Princeton end cost his team a 15-year penalty because he failed to report to the referee when he came into the game to replace another player. The Tigers protested vigorously, but the official was obstinate. "Rump," granted an Ell, who had viewed Harvard's prowess with emotions not altogether amiable, "did the referee expect Wian to speak to him on the Harvard field without an introduction? Absurd!"

GAYETY.

With all disregard of speed limit, Jean Bodin's Parisian Novelty "Puss-Puss," will race along the lanes of fun at the Gaiety theatre, for the week commencing Sunday, December 24, 1916.

Many have the diversions offered by the attractions that have been seen here, but none has such a variety of entertaining features, than this particular one.

Monkey No Longer Bawling. The monkey was fostered about what man has accomplished. "This descendant of mine," he would say, "is the most enlightened animal on earth." He is told of all that man has done, and told it so often that the other animals were sick of listening. Finally some of them induced him to go to a theater. After each act he would say to the other animals: "These people are my descendants and I am very proud of them. None of the balance of you can point with pride to such descendants." At last a man came on the stage alone. He danced on the floor; then he jumped up in the air and danced; he sat down and danced; he got himself in all kinds of shapes; he danced things that no one had ever done before, and a few things that no one would ever dare again. Before the man had finished the monkey got up and left the house, and from that day until this he has never once mentioned his descendants. —Claude Cailan, in Fort Worth Star-Telegram.

Two Uses for Myths.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle said that myths were invented by legislators "to persuade the many and to be used in support of law." Modern scholars think it more likely that early lawmakers found these myths already prevalent and saw how they could be made an instrument for governing men. Such myths appear to be of two kinds: those which are used to lend weight to authority, and those which have been invented by the weak and oppressed to coax or frighten the strong into treating them more leniently.

Unhappy Success.

A prudent man has his moments of depression when it seems as if his wife's running account at the dry goods store must be the trying for the spinning wheel, what is worse, succeeding.—Columbus (O.) Journal.

Pointer for Lawyers.

"Dad," asked the son of a Philadelphian lawyer, "just what is a test case?" "A test case, my son," replied the father, "is a case brought to decide whether there's enough in it to justify the lawyers in working on similar cases."—Kansas City Journal.

Not Hurt by Use.

During his vacation a San Francisco lawyer met an old friend in the city and their conversation drifted to a discussion of the natives. "You're a fine-looking young fellow," said the lawyer, "but what is a test case?" "It's a fine-looking young fellow," said the lawyer, "but what is a test case?" "It's a fine-looking young fellow," said the lawyer, "but what is a test case?" "It's a fine-looking young fellow," said the lawyer, "but what is a test case?"