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SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Lesson IX—First Quarter, For March 1, 1914.

THE INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

Text of the Lesson, Luke xii, 13-34. Memory Verses, 15—Golden Text, Luke xii, 34—Commentary Prepared by Rev. D. M. Stearns.

In the last verse of the previous lesson He said, "The Holy Ghost shall teach you." On the last night that He was with them, ere He suffered, He said, "The Comforter, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things. He will guide you into all truth. He will show you things to come. He shall testify of Me (John xiv, 26; xv, 26; xvi, 13), and many other things. He said of the Spirit of Truth, But we are blind and deaf and so slow to perceive or hear spiritual things.

Well might He say of each of us, "I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing" (Hos. viii, 12). When He spoke of false teaching even the disciples thought He referred to bread for the body, and now here is a man, one of the company, so little impressed by the great truths of our last lesson and the solemn things of the future that he is more concerned about a bit of earthly property.

Is it not so still, and are not men, with rare exceptions, so occupied with things temporal that they can scarce find time to give a thought to things eternal? How weighty and heart-searching the Master's words, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (verse 15). Since "covetousness is idolatry" (Col. iii, 5), how much we need the words, "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." "Trust not in uncertain riches, but in the Living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (I Tim. vi, 6-8, 17).

How aptly and forcibly our Lord set forth the truth in the parable of the rich poor man who could only talk with himself about the smallness of his barns and the abundance of his fruits and his goods, and if he had larger barns what an easy, merry time he might have for many years to come. He seemed to have no thought of God, who had caused his ground to bring forth plentifully, nor of the poor, with whom he might share his goods. There was no one to be considered but himself. "He knew nothing of the love of God and therefore had no love for God nor for his fellow men. "But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee" (verse 20).

Now what were barns and fruits and goods to him? He had to leave all and went out of the world poor indeed, like the rich man of Luke xvi, 19-26. How often we read of one who died at his desk in the office or sitting in his home or taken by an accident, and the words come to mind, "Thy soul is required of thee," and the great question is, Was he saved? and then, Was he rich toward God? It is possible to be saved as by fire and have no rewards for service, no crowns to cast at His feet (I Cor. iii, 11-15; Rev. iv, 10).

A true believer may still be so blinded by the god of this world as to fail to see the advantage of treasure in heaven and so lay up treasure for himself in this world which must all be left behind when he is called out of the world. From verse 22 He speaks to His disciples, truly saved men, all but Judas Iscariot (John xiii, 10, 11), and teaches them that since they are now children of God there is no room for anxiety about food or raiment. The kingdom is made sure to them (verse 32), and if they will now live to hasten its coming by living only unto God and winning souls to Him He will see that all things necessary for this life are given to them.

The teaching of verse 31 and Matt. vi, 33, is not that of seeking our souls' salvation, for the words were spoken to saved men, but it teaches saved people that as such their first aim in life should be the coming of the kingdom for which we pray when we say from the heart, "Our Father, who art in heaven, Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as in heaven." There is no use talking of extending the kingdom, for there is no kingdom to extend. It was at hand when our Lord was here, in their very midst in the person of Himself, the King, but when they cried "We have no king but Caesar" and killed their Messiah they caused the kingdom to be postponed till He shall come again.

See carefully Luke xix, 11-15; Matt. xxiii, 29; Acts iii, 20, 21. We are in the age between the postponement of the kingdom and its coming at the second coming of Christ, the mystery hid in God from the beginning of the world, but specially revealed to Paul (Eph. iii, 9-11; Rom. xvi, 25-27). Seeking the kingdom seems to me to mean "counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord" (Phil. iii, 8) and making the supreme object in all church life, social life and business life, to make known in all nations as quickly as possible His great salvation for "whosoever will" that His body, the church, may be completed, this age end and the kingdom come.

Thus we may learn painful lessons from the ravens and the lilies and become rich toward God. As one has said, "Make them His service thy delight; He'll make thy wants His care." It is no part of His service to entertain or amuse people, but the one great thing is to save souls.

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