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THE TEACHER.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1872.

ELISHA AND ISRAEL.

SUNDAY, May 19th, 1872.

The Leper Healed.—2 Kings v. 8-14.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"My Father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" vs. 13.

SCRIPTURE SELECTION.—John v. 1-9: vs. 1-15.

SUMMARY.—The king's extremity was God's opportunity. The wisdom of God was to the proud warrior only folly. But that supposed folly was his only salvation.

ANALYSIS.—I. From the king to the prophet. vs. 8, 9. II. At the prophet's vs. 10. III. Off in a rage. vs. 11-13. IV. In the Jordan. vs. 14.

EXPOSITION.—Review.—Our last lesson took us into Syria of Damascus. We found the Syrian government nominally at peace with Israel, yet winking at predatory incursions into Israel's country. We were introduced to the little maid whom the raiders had stolen from her home, and very likely given as a bribe to the commander-in-chief of the Syrian armies. This hero, Naaman, conqueror of Israel's army under Ahab, high in favor with king Ben-adad, we found a leper. We heard the maid's wish for his recovery by Elisha, saw him start with the king's letter, and, arrived at Samaria, give it to Jehoram, and mark the latter's distress, and his suspicion that Syria was seeking occasion of war.

Verse 8.—From ch. ii. 1, and iv. 38, it would seem that Gilgal was Elisha's place of residence. If this was the Gilgal it would be most natural to regard him as there when Naaman visited Samaria. This Gilgal was not that mentioned in Josh. iv. 19, which was "in the end of the east of Jericho," but was about fifteen miles east of north from Joppa, and nearly as far west of south from Samaria. Elisha, whether there, or at Samaria, or wherever else, would be speedily notified of the Syrian's purpose and the king's trouble. He at once returned favorable answer to Jehoram, to his great relief. God had shown Elisha that he would heal the general. "That he may know," etc. Not for Elisha's honor, but for God's. The Syrian general and the Syrian nation, shall learn that Israel is still God's people, because in Israel is God's prophet. The honor of Christ, of his ministers, and of his people, is one honor, such and so close is the connection between them. This should at the same time inspire and humble us. Responsibility matches privilege.

Verse 9.—"Come." If to Gilgal it was a short trip through beautiful scenery of mountain, vale, and plain,—a part of the way near, if not over the road that Jesus travelled, on the occasion mentioned in John iv. 3, 4. Sychar, where Jesus talked with the woman by the well, was a little to the left and east of a direct line from Samaria to Gilgal. "Horses and chariot," also an attendant retinue befitting his station. vs. 13. We can imagine the wonder and eager interest of the people, old and young, as the splendid pageant moved on. "Stood at the door," etc. Grandeur at the door of the prophet's house.

Verse 10.—The prophet knew the station of his visitor, yet he did not make haste to pay him court. He staid in his house. Whether he waited till Naaman, by his messenger, made application for help, or anticipated him by sending his command, is not said. Why this reserve of Elisha? Not from lack of courtesy, nor to keep up the show of dignity, but to bring the general to see and to feel that, as before God, the high and the low are alike, that God's mercy is not at the command of either money or station; that in this matter of recovery he was a man, not a hero,—a beggar, not a conqueror. "Go and wash," etc. As usual, the person receiving the blessing has something to do to test, exercise, and show his faith. Disease, and especially the foul leprosy, is a fit symbol of sin. Is. i. 5, 6. Water is a cleansing element, and hence symbolizes God's spirit and Christ's blood. "Thy flesh shall come again." The white leprosy often ate off or consumed the flesh. Leprosy was both naturally and ceremonially unclean. The number seven, says Keil, "is the signature of the covenant." The Jordan was specified because that was the river of Palestine,—of the country of God's people.

Verse 11.—"Naaman was wroth." With whom? With Elisha and Jehoram and the little maid, and all Israel. Why? Oh, he was now sure that he had come on a fool's errand. Dignity was at stake, and dignity was insulted. "Behold," said Naaman, "I thought." Yes, he had a plan of action for God. There was one evil. He was not ready to leave all and let God do as he would. How many are there still just like him. They have their way, they think no other is right. A bad spirit. What did Naaman think? This, that the cure would be wrought with much parade; that Elisha would surely come out, call on Jehovah and make sundry passes of his hands over the leprosy body. He doubtless took his notion from the incantations and fooleries of the heathen magicians, and, besides, his pride was wounded. So is the gospel, in its simplicity, its lack of stately ceremonial, its refusal to minister to human pride, a great offence. Men become "wroth," and, like the general, go away to invent a ceremonial. But the lepers remain uncleaned.

Verse 12.—Still more complaint. Nothing right. To wash at all, he thinks, is folly, is not at all the thing,—but of all places the Jordan is the last. We have better rivers at home. I have not come thus far to go into a stream not half as excellent as our own. Those rivers were clear, cool, fine streams. The Abana, now called Barady, rises in Antilibanus, divides into five branches, and flows through Damascus. The Euphrates was similar in the character of its water, while the Jordan was warmer, and its water less clear. He does not yet see that not the water, but God is to heal. He cannot think that the power is not in the instrument. So is he who trusts in men, or in ordinances. "So he turned and went away in a rage." Throwing away his one only hope of salvation. Counting God's word and wisdom folly.

Verse 13.—He had prudent attendants, who saw more clearly, and gave respectful and judicious counsel. God's Spirit inclined him to hear and heed. "My Father." One speaks, expressing the common judgment, and in "a confiding respectful form of address." "Some great thing." Naaman would have submitted to great hardship,—done any work fitted to the magnitude of the favor. So is it with the sinner, he will do and suffer to earn heaven,—to gain it by his exertions,—but just to give up, to humble himself, to let God take his own way, to do some little thing, this is an offence; he will not. These attendants wish their lord to be healed, they would have him try. It will do no harm to try. Perhaps Elisha was right. Oh, that this wisdom were current; to take God at his word, to lose no chance of the blessings; to let salvation slip from us through no disregard perhaps. Go to the prayer-meeting, talk with the Christian friend, kneel in prayer, rise and ask for prayers, do anything that the Spirit of God seems to demand as a test, an act, and a sign of readiness to receive the blessing. Is it a little thing? Let not pride cost you your salvation. "Much rather" the little? "Wash and be clean." Look to Jesus. Trust him.

Verse 14.—I will, said Naaman. To the Jordan, the retinue move. He no longer quarrels with God or his word. The hope of salvation fills his soul. So they reach the Jordan, the despised Jordan. Down he goes into the water, and dips himself seven times. Everything just as the prophet bade him. Right, Naaman, right. Now, now, oh, joyful moment, now the hated leprosy goes. You are whole and clean, a new man! Sinner, behold in type the way of salvation for you. Go to Christ just as you are, let him save you. Obey God and be saved.

QUESTIONS.—State briefly the story of our last lesson? vs. 1-7. Where did we leave Naaman? Where was Elisha at this time? ch. iv. 38; compare v. 3. What did he hear? vs. 8. What message did he send to the king? Why? What did Naaman do? vs. 9. Had he attendants? vs. 13. Were the prophets wealthy? ch. vi. 1. What did he do? What message did he send? To what is sin likened in Isaiah i. 5, 6? In Matt. ix. 12? What cleanses from sin? 1 John i. 7. What Christian ordinance symbolizes this cleansing? Acts xxii. 16. What feeling did Naaman show? vs. 11. What did he do? What had he expected? Why angry? What did he say about Jordan? vs. 12. Can a sinner be saved in any other than God's way? What is that way? Acts iii. 19. What did Naaman's servants say to him? vs. 13. What effect had their words? vs. 14. What was the result of Naaman's obedience? Would he have been cured if he had not obeyed? What keeps a sinner from Christ? John v. 40. Was it the water of Jordan that cured the leper? Is Christ yours?

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. Scripture Catechism, 41.

SUNDAY, May 26.—Gehazi's Sin. 2 Kings 5: 20-27.

Youths' Department.

WHEN I SAY "NO."

No is a very little word; In one short word we say it, Sometimes 'tis wrong, but often right— So let me justly weigh it; No I must say when asked to swear, And No when asked to gamble; No when strong drink I'm urged to share, No to a Sunday ramble. No, though I'm tempted sore to lie Or steal, and then conceal it; And No to sin when darkness hides, And I alone should feel it. Whenever sinners would entice My feet from paths of duty, No, I'll unhesitating cry— No, not for price or booty.

God watches how this little word By everyone is spoken, And knows these children are his own By this one simple token. Who promptly utter No to wrong, Says Yes to right as surely— That child has entered Wisdom's ways, And treads her path securely.

THE BABES IN THE CLOUDS.

You have often heard wondrous tales of the ways in which God has preserved His children from great perils, but it is not every day that one hears of his steering two little babes safely through the clouds.

It is a true tale which I am about to tell you, and took place about fourteen years ago. Perhaps you may have heard that in the year 1858 a large comet appeared in the sky. A comet is a star with a long tail of fire. In appearance this was something like a large stationary rocket, and looked a very bright and pretty object after nightfall. It attracted the attention of all star-gazers, and many were the conjectures of those who saw it blazing so brightly, as to whether there was any danger to our globe from a collision with it.

On a pleasant Saturday afternoon at this time two little boys and a girl, the children of a farmer named Mr. Harwood, were playing together in the garden around their home, a farm situated in the neighborhood of a large market town, in one of the Western States. The eldest boy was about ten years old; Jenny, the little girl, eight, and Johnny, the youngest, only three. They would have found no lack of amusement this evening had they only had their usual toys to play with; but a strange event occurred, which astonished not only themselves, but their parents and the laborers employed on the farm. A curious object made its appearance in the sky, seeming at first scarcely more than a small speck, but growing momentarily larger and larger. It could not be the comet arriving earlier than usual, for it was dark, not fiery. At last it descended on the farm itself, and proved to be a balloon.

Mr. Harwood and all the farm laborers assembled around it, and began eagerly to question the aeronaut (as a man who travels in a balloon is called) about his voyage, and the way in which he managed to pilot the balloon through the clouds. While he was satisfying their curiosity, the balloon was kept from rising merely by a small anchor and a rope, which the owner held in his hand. It was much out of wind, and the farmer, as he observed it swaying backward and forward lazily in the air, was far from suspecting what a dangerous thing it could prove were it rashly tampered with. He told the owner he thought he could "litch it in his fence," and with his permission took possession of it, while the aeronaut continued to answer the numerous questions addressed to him.

The children of course eagerly followed their father, anxious to see as much as they could of the wonderful strange monster. They then made the request—the first which always occurs to children in their circumstances—to be lifted inside the big basket, and to be allowed to sit on the pretty red cushions. Not dreaming of danger he readily complied, putting in first the eldest boy, then Jenny, and lastly Baby Johnny. Holding on the rope he allowed them to mount up in the sky, higher than the tops of the houses and the trees, greatly to their delight. At last Mr. Harwood drew them down again to the ground and lifted out the biggest boy. The relief of his weight unfortunately proved so great that the balloon rose immediately; with a wild bound it jerked the rope out of the farmer's hand, and sprang into the air. Utterly useless did the anchor prove to keep it to the earth.

It caught for a moment in the fence, then tore away, and dangled down vainly from that side.

What could have been the father's feelings, and the poor mother's, who at the alarm came hurrying to the spot, as they saw that dark, cruel object carrying away their darlings, whose faces grew momentarily more indistinct, and their piteous cries to papa and mamma to help them fainter and fainter. They turned to the aeronaut, who had discovered their imprudence when too late; but, alas! he was powerless to assist them. The only consolation he had to offer was that the balloon could not travel more than thirty miles farther.

But where would it descend? Perhaps in the middle of the sea, or river, or in the centre of a dense forest where the unfortunate little ones might perish with hunger undiscovered. Even if it should alight in a favorable situation, there was the fear that the eldest child would step out first, and the sudden relief would cause the balloon to spring up with the younger one into the air.

"Oh, that I do not fear for a moment," exclaimed the poor mother, with a faint ray of hope; "dear little Jenny would never stir from the car without Johnny in her arms."

When the last vestige of the balloon had disappeared, the poor father sank down helpless and speechless; but the mother, nearly frantic with grief, still stretched her arms towards heaven, and call wildly after her darlings.

In the mean time how did it fare with our poor little friends in the balloon? Fortunately Jenny was a good little girl, and had been well instructed by her parents. Although each moment she knew left home farther and farther beneath them, was not God in the sky above them? It seemed almost as though they were nearer to him now than when on earth, although of course God is everywhere. She told Johnny of all this, and in trying to comfort him comforted herself.

The balloon passed directly over the market-town. Many people were in the streets, and the children seeing them stretched out their hands and cried to them for help, which of course they were powerless to afford. They saw the strange apparition, and the bright little heads, which looked almost like cherubs in the sky, but their voices did not reach them.

It grew darker and darker. When night set fully in, the little wanderers in the clouds felt still more forlorn. However the bright comet shone out to cheer them a little. Johnny was afraid at first that they would be driven close to it, and it would burn them up, but his sister told him that "it was more than twenty miles away, and that God would not let it hurt them."

"I wish he would come a little nearer, if he would not hurt me, then," said Johnny, "so I could warm myself, I'm so cold."

On hearing this Jenny took off her apron and wrapped it around him. "This is all sister has to make you warm, darling," she said; but she'll hug you close in her arms, and we will say our prayers, and you shall go to sleep."

"Why, how can I say my prayers before I have my supper?" asked little Johnny.

"Sister hasn't any supper for you, or for herself, but we must pray all the harder," was Jenny's answer.

Johnny then did as he was told. The two clasped their hands, repeated "Our Father" and the evening hymn they were accustomed to use:

"Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep; If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take."

"There's God heard that easy; for we are close to him up here," said Johnny, when he had ended.

Jenny then told him to sit down at the bottom of the car and lean his head against her knee. He did so, and in a few minutes was almost as comfortably asleep as though he were lying in his own little bed at home.

Throughout the long, silent hours of the night Jenny watched patiently while the car floated gently onwards in the still air. Sometimes a falling star shot quickly past and startled her a little. She did not know what her thoughts were at that time. It may have been that God revealed to her some of those mysteries he sometimes deigns to disclose to babes and sucklings. Very likely she continued to pray from time to time for his assistance.

And he answered at last, as he always does each faithful fervent prayer, though he does not always assist his children in

the exact way that they expect. He put it into little Jenny's mind now to examine the balloon more closely than she had yet done. She noticed a cord hanging down, which she had not before seen. Should she pull it gently, very gently, and see what effect it had? So soon as she touched it the balloon began to sink quietly, as though let down by tender hands.

Yet, oh where will it alight? That is now the danger. An angel guided its course, doubtless, to a place where succor was at hand.

The morning twilight had just arrived when the little girl, looking over the side of the car saw, as she expressed it, "the dear earth rising towards them." A strange spot indeed was it on which the balloon alighted. Where do you think? On the topmost branches of a large pear-tree, where it fortunately stuck fast. Jenny felt at first disappointed that it had not descended on the earth, so that they could have got out directly, but when she discovered that the pear-tree was situated but about twenty yards distant from a house, she prepared to wait patiently until the inmates awoke. She roused little Johnny to tell him the joyful tidings, and they hugged one another closely to keep as warm as they could.

They were not required to wait so long as they expected. Somewhere about this time Farmer Barton, the master of the house near the pear tree, became completely aroused from sleep, through some unaccountable reason. He was usually an excellent sleeper, but now, try all he might, he could not rest. First he turned on one side, then on the other, but it was of no use. His restless awake his wife, but she could not help him. At last he said—

"It's no use. I'll just get up and dress, and have a look at the comet."

His toilette completed, he let himself out of the door, hoping the cool air might have a beneficial effect.

But why does he pause on the threshold and stare so fixedly before him? What has happened to that pear-tree? Is it a new strange animal which has settled on the top, or can it be (here a novel idea shot through the farmer's mind) the comet itself, which has fallen to earth, its light extinguished? He felt by no means inclined to encounter so "uncanny" an object alone, so hastily summoned his wife to his side. Somewhat fortified by her presence, they advanced together towards the monster.

When they came within earshot, a very gentle little voice greeted them:

"Please take us down. We are very cold."

A second, still more babyish, chimed in—"And hungry too. Please take us down."

"Why, who are you? and where are you?" exclaimed the farmer and his wife in a breath.

The first voice answered, "We are Mr. Harwood's little boy and girl, and we are lost in a balloon."

"It's us, and we have runned away with a balloon," said the second voice.

Mr. Barton guessed a little how how matters stood. Looking about he saw a rope dangling which he took hold of, and succeeded in pulling down the balloon.

The children then appeared inside. First he lifted out little Johnny, who ran some yards towards the house, then stopped and remained staring wonderingly at the strange creature which had carried them away. He seemed but little the worse, but poor Jenny was so chilled and exhausted that she was obliged to be carried into the house. Kind Mrs. Barton warmed and fed her, and then, though still trembling and sobbing, she contrived to tell her wonderful tale. The farmer immediately sent off a messenger on horseback to the Harwood's home to inform the anxious parents of their children's safety, and later in the day little Jennie and Johnny were taken home in state, driving in a covered hay-wagon, with four horses, music playing before them, and flags streaming. The church-bells in the neighboring town were set ringing. The joy of the father and mother on receiving their darlings again, you can well imagine without further description.—Sunday.

It cannot be too deeply impressed upon the mind that application is the price to be paid for mental acquisitions, and that it is as absurd to expect them without it as to hope for a harvest where we have not sown the seed.

Do not be above your business, no matter what that calling may be, but strive to be the best in that line.

SAINT My dear I have ged in the preparati god suc known, who are have thier a number position t needy Being aidous di in the sec prepared were the from the better th boyhood. epired son- wonder, fore the who, bec pleased o the mos sale has an anxio sale over that it d of Hypo cases of the phys appeared marked successf peculiar strength induces so that a cy upon Liver, I and resty' vit assimila freedom otherwis for a wi My p for using daily ha nent ph spectful estimate I beg to from M extensiv J. I. F Dear of 21st of Hy Syrup l standing those of We hav six hu almost given, faction As if pound- eiples of you wi of a re waned The of Col Baptis ing of The c Cham- sity; y follow Bango though ly spo of Mr took t of Ba A. P. whole music Col perou moun tion i lackin