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THE TEACHER.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1872.

ELISHA AND ISRAEL.

SUNDAY, June 16th, 1872.

Hezekiah's Prayer.—2 Kings 20: 1-11.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Behold, I will heal thee." vs. 5.

SCRIPTURE SELECTION.—Isaiah xxxviii.

SUMMARY.—Through prayer, by sovereign grace and power, to the anguish of death succeeds the joy of new found life.

ANALYSIS.—2 Death in prospect. vs. 1-3. 2 Recovery promised. vs. 4-7. 3. The sign given. vs. 8-11.

EXPOSITION.—Transition.—From the last lesson to this is a long step, going over about one hundred and seventy years. Elisha, brave, holy prophet, has gone, his body to dust, his spirit to God. The men and women whose acquaintance we made on the last ten Sabbaths, all of them long since took their last view of earth, and went to their long home. Ben-Hadad and his counsellors, and his armies, Jehoram, and the elders, the besieged Samaritans, lepers and all, Naaman and the little maid, the Shunammite and her twice given son, the poor widow and her sons, yes, and Gehazi and his timid successor, these and the believing Jerichoites and the mocking Bethelites, and the sons of the prophets who called Elisha their father, died generations before to-day's lesson, as we all shall in a little while hence. Corrupt, idolatrous Israel, after many a change has been conquered, not by the Damascus Syrians, their old dreaded foes, but by the Assyrians from the remoter north-east. These carry captive the inhabitants, and send colonies of another speech to settle the country. ch. xvii, and xviii. 9-12. To-day we are not in Israel, but in Judah; not in Samaria, but in Jerusalem; not with Jehoram, but with Hezekiah; not with Elisha but with grand old Isaiah.

Verse 1.—In those days. Described in the two previous chapters,—dark threatening days for Judah. The Assyrian nation, terrible for its might and its conquests, destroyer of Israel, and of many another nation, turned now to little Judah with proud and wrathful words, determined to crush it. See especially chs. xviii. 28-35; xix. 9-14. See also Hezekiah's prayer, ch. xviii. 15-19. Hezekiah reigned twenty-nine years. ch. xviii. 2. Of these fifteen followed the events of our lesson. vs. 6. Hence the time within the dark days is fixed by chs. xviii. 13; Is. xxxvi. 1. "Hezekiah," a godly, brave, energetic king, one of the best that ever sat on David's throne, a vigorous reformer, the very opposite of his father Ahaz, whose history, like that of so many other kings, summed up in the negative assertion, "He did not do that which was right in the sight of the Lord," ch. xvi. 1, while the noble record of the son is, "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did." ch. xviii. 3; compare vs. 4-8, and xix. 15-19. This king was "sick unto death." Surely at such an hour Judah cannot spare such a king! What shall become of the nation if its head be gone? Probably, too, there was no heir to the throne as yet, for Manasseh was born three years later. Ch. xxi. 1. Yet he must die; the disease, unknown to us, was incurable.

Isaiah,—the writer of the majestic book which bears his name, at this time well advanced in years and honors, a noble supporter of the noble king, to whose guiding counsel and influence under God was largely due Hezekiah's wise, virtuous, and successful administration of affairs. Is. i. 1. Came to him. Free access was given to the holy prophet, by the virtuous king, doubtless, at all times, but in this critical hour there were special reasons, both personal and public, why he should be near. This time he comes, sent of God to deliver a message unwelcome, yet needful to be known. "Set thy house in order," literally give commands in respect to thy house, make arrangements for thy family, which here included also arrangements for the kingdom, a weighty responsibility. "For thou shalt die and not live," the end of kingly hope, for the prophet's word was God's word, and that is never broken.

Verse 2.—"To the wall" of his chamber, not of the temple. Grief craved secrecy. Alas for his family, alas for his beloved kingdom! Ruin impended. What could the poor man do? "Set thy house

in order." How? No light, not a ray. He turned in anguish to the wall; no not to the wall, but as every pious heart does at such hours, to God, to pray.

Verse 3.—Now follows his prayer, short but earnest. It almost seems at once boastful and reproachful, opposing to his own integrity God's forgetfulness. Be sure, that was not its spirit. Rather it was a firm grasping of God's promises and purposes concerning Judah, and the sincere, honest assertion that he was now as he had been, wholly and heartily in union with those purposes. The salvation of his beloved nation was the burden of his heart and his prayer, and as he has lived for it, so he longs still to live for it. The past is a pledge for the future, a token also of present sincerity. See for prayer containing like reference to past life. 2 Sam. xxii. 21-24; Ps. vii. 8; xxv. 21. May we not also see in Hezekiah a type of Christ? Heb. v. 7.

Verse 4.—This statement is omitted in the briefer narrative in Is. xxxviii. It shows how speedily came the answer to the prayer, how quickly God heard, and God is so near us, and he can move so suddenly, though he also may wait so long!

Verse 5.—"The captain of my people," God's word, and intended as commendation. The king was thus truly, as in his prayer he affirmed, and this title may indicate that the king's prayer and grief were not selfish, but for the people of God, intercessory in fact, though personal in form. What a welcome message for Isaiah to give, for Hezekiah to receive. "I have heard," "I have seen," "I will heal." Now was the king glad, for here was pledge, not of mere recovery, but of recovery for the sake of his nation, the chosen of God, the beloved of his heart. It was to him as the shout of national victory, of triumph over the mighty Sennacherib, the mocking Rabshekeh. Tears of joy now, where just before the tears of grief flowed. Then follow definite, exact statements of time and circumstance. "On the third day thou shalt go up into the house of the Lord," to acknowledge in public worship and thank-offerings his restoration.

Verse 6.—Hezekiah was now thirty-nine years old. See ch. xviii. 1. Mark how in the message blessing to Judah is the prominent idea, and also the emphatic assertion that this was for his own sake, and for David's, for David's not as in himself, but as the chief type of Christ, in his kingly character.

Verse 7.—The method of recovery is stated. As usual, in miracles there is a certain natural basis. Figs are remedial, but the figs did not work the cure. So, too, as usual, there is a test of faith, something to be done. "The boil," singular and not denoting the nature of the malady, as a boil or "inflammatory ulcer," might have resulted from any one of several diseases. "He recovered," not, however, before the time fixed. The statement is inserted here by anticipation. Some may ask how could God say to Hezekiah, "thou shalt die and not live," if he purposed to spare him, and how if his purposes are eternal he could change this purpose for another. The answer is easy. The first message was not intended to be absolute and unconditional, a statement of what was certainly to be, whatever else might be or might not be. It was like Jonah's message to Nineveh. Jonah iii. 4. As to the purpose of God, this and a hundred other passages teach us that we must not think of God as being chained and fettered by his purposes, but rather as being just as free to hear and answer the believing cry of a soul, as though he never had a purpose, as free as is our father or our mother to meet our changing wants.

Verse 8.—The request for a sign does not indicate unbelief. After the first message, while his disease remained, and especially in view of the extreme importance of the case he naturally sought the surest, amplest grounds of confidence.

Verse 9.—Mark how God adjusts his mercies to human wants and weaknesses, his condescending fatherly kindness.

Verse 10.—The word rendered "degrees," is the same as that rendered "dial," in vs. 11. It means steps as of a stair-way, and the belief is that "the degrees were really stairs, and that the shadow (perhaps of some column or obelisk on the top) fell on a great or smaller number of them, according as the sun was high or low. Clocks were unknown.

Verse 11.—Again prayer brings the blessing. We must reject every explanation which makes the change merely natural. We should also reject the idea that the revolution of the earth was stayed for a time. The miracle was special, connected with

one instrument, one man, one place. How it was done we do not know, and need not know. How much time a "degree" or "step" represented, is not known. In Christ's time the day had twelve hours. John xi. 9. Perhaps it was so in Hezekiah's and the degree stood for an hour. On the subsequent ingratitude of Hezekiah, see 2 Chron. xxxii. 25, 26.

QUESTIONS.—Where is the scene of to-day's lesson? ch. xviii. 2. How much time passed between the last lesson and this? What had become of Israel? ch. xviii. 9-12. Is the story of Hezekiah's sickness told elsewhere in Scripture? Is. xxxviii; 2 Chron. xxxii. 24.

Who was Hezekiah? ch. xviii. 1-5; 2 Cor. xxix and xxx. At what time did he become sick? vs. 1. Compare vs. 6; ch. xviii. 2, 13. What do you know of Isaiah? Is. i. 1. What message did he bring to Hezekiah? Explain the words "Set thine house in order."

What was the effect of this message? vs. 2. Was the king a man of prayer? When do we most feel our need of God's help? What was his prayer? vs. 3. Does he boast of his good deeds? Why does he thus speak of his past life? 2 Sam. xxii. 21-25. Why was he so earnest to live?

How soon was Isaiah commanded to return? vs. 4. Does God always hear and answer prayer thus immediately? What was the message given him? vs. 5, 6. For what did God spare the king? vs. 6. Why would the king go to the temple on his recovery? What did Hezekiah write about his recovery? Is. xxxviii. 9-20.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. Scripture Catechism, 48, 49.

SUNDAY, June 23.—Judah carried Captive. 2 Kings 24: 10-16.

Youths' Department.

A WORD OF ADVICE.

My little lad, I will tell to you What things to do, what not to do, If you want to grow up fine: Arise when the day is breaking sweet, And earn your breakfast before you eat, And go to your bed at nine.

When you are called to meals, take care To wash your face and comb your hair; And neither slur nor shrirk, But have your bat upon its peg, Your stockings straight upon your leg, And don't make eating work.

Say "Thank you," when you take your bread, Or smile at least, or nod your head, And for coffee and tea, likewise, Or slice of toast, or Johnny-cake— In short, for anything you take; And "be excused" if you rise.

Don't talk and laugh and make rude jokes, In presence of the older folks, But speak both little and low; And don't get angry, and don't swear At anybody, or anywhere— No matter where you go!

Whenever you know a thing is right, Go and do it with main and might, Nor let one murmur fall, For duty makes as stern a claim As if an angel called your name, And all men heard the call.

—Alice Cary.

WHO SENT HIM!

Little Johnnie Rawson had just run over the hill after a butterfly—such a large yellow one, with brown on its wings—and nobody noticed that Johnnie had gone. His father and mother were starting for a drive, and Rover, the great, black, shaggy dog, stood ready to run behind the carriage, as he always did.

Johnnie ran after the butterfly till he was tired of running, and the creature was tired of being chased; then it flew high up in the air, and the little boy gave up all hope of catching it.

As he turned to go home, he spied a beautiful pond-lily growing in the brook, so near the bank that he thought he could get it with a stick. So he found a crooked stick, and reached out with it to catch the pond-lily. He was such a little boy, and he had such a little stick, that he could not reach far enough to catch the flower, but he reached far enough to throw his weight over the edge of the bank, and down he went into the water.

In the mean time his father and mother had driven off, and Rover ran behind, as he always did. After they had gone a little way, Rover left the carriage and ran back, no one knew why. He ran down the hill to the brook, and jumped in, just as Johnnie screamed for help to the people half a mile off, who could not possibly hear him.

Rover was a strong dog, and he took hold of the little boy's clothes, and pulled him up on to dry land, before he had been hurt at all. He cried a little, because he was frightened, then he went back to the

house for dry clothing, and was not a bit worse for the wetting.

Who sent Rover back, just in time to pull Johnnie Rawson out of the water? Who takes care of all of us every day?

PAPER AND BOOKS.

The Egyptians made use of rolls of linen for writing. Their ink was similar to our indelible ink. They afterwards employed sheets made from the inner bark of the reed-papyrus, from which our modern paper is obtained. This invention was made use of in the literary world until about the year 887, when a spirit of rivalry between two kings—Ptolemy of Egypt, and Eumenes of Pergamos—led to the substitution of a better material.

Ptolemy possessed a very fine library, and Eumenes made preparations to have all the valuable works extant copied for himself. But the selfish Egyptian king refused to allow papyrus for the purpose to be carried from the country. But a citizen of Pergamos—one of those enterprising individuals who seem specially raised up in every important emergency—invented a method of preparing sheepskin so that it might be written upon. It was called parchment, afterwards corrupted into parchment.

Ancient books must have been somewhat difficult to read, for they were written without accents or stops, and it was not until the ninth century that copyists began to leave spaces between words. They were also very scarce and dear before the introduction of the art of printing, as their production involved a vast amount of time and labor. It would take four years for an expert writer to make a single copy of the Bible; and when finished, it was equal in value to a large estate. In the year 1400 books were sold at from ten to thirty pounds apiece. But they were beautifully written, as is proved by old Saxon manuscripts still extant. The younger monks in the monasteries were employed in copying a great part of the time. They also illuminated their Missals with exquisite paintings in gold and colors.

Paper, such as is now made, came into general use during the thirteenth century. Printing was invented in Germany about the middle of the fifteenth century. Very appropriately, the first book printed was a magnificent Bible. The type was soon after brought over to England. This was called black letter, and English books were printed in this style for more than a century. It was then superseded by the Roman character now used.

During the reign of Henry the Eighth, Bibles were bound in board and chained to the reading desk in the churches. Here the people gathered on Sundays and holidays to read or hear them read. During the reign of Charles I. books were elegantly ornamented. The clasps and corners were of gold or silver, and some, which were his own private property, were bound in velvet, and their clasps were set with pearls and precious stones. In our day "of the making of books there is no end," and they are so cheap as to be beyond the means of but few.—Am. Messenger.

GETTING RID OF BAD HABITS.

I once heard a minister say, "Suppose some cold morning you should go into a neighbor's house, and find him busy at work on his windows,—scratching away, and should ask what he was up to, and he should reply: "Why I am trying to remove the frost; but as fast as I get it off one square it comes on another;" would you not say, "Why, man, let your windows alone, and kindle your fire, and the frost will soon come off?" And have you not seen people who try to break off their bad habits one after another without avail? Well, they are like the man who tried to scratch the frost from his windows. Let the fire of love to God and man, kindled at the altar of prayer, burn in their hearts, and the bad habits will soon melt away.

M. THIERS, THE PRESIDENT OF FRANCE.

There is something very striking in the spectacle of M. Thiers, as President of the French Republic, holding a grand reception at the Elysee. One of the Paris correspondents gives a paragraph on the subject that is worth transcribing:—

Were he writing his autobiography, M. Thiers could with perfect truth begin with the stereotyped phrase, "I was born of poor but honest parents." He owed his education to a 1793 foundation in the Lyceum of Aix. He came to Paris with a

light pocket, unknown, friendless, and apparently unfit to fight his way from poverty and obscurity to the uppermost stratum of society. A weak frame, a weak voice, weak sight, and a yet weaker exchequer were among the many difficulties with which this supplanter of modern Cæsarism had to contend. And yet he was the man who was destined to inter Legitimacy in 1830; to aid in knocking down the Bourgeois Monarchy in 1848, which he helped to set up eighteen years previous, and to bury the Second Empire, whose first exploit was to lock him up in a prison van, and send him, like any common malefactor, to Mazas. To use a good old Elizabethan phrase, I wondered with great admiration as I looked this evening at the aged, but very lively, President, surrounded with the representatives of the Colosseus of the North, of that Young Giant across the Atlantic, of Great Britain, of Giant Pope, and of Giant Pagan in the person of a three-tailed Bashaw fresh from Constantinople. The Empire was, while it lasted, the triumph of Captain Sword. To-night we witnessed the triumph of Captain Pen. A well-known translator and disciple of Darwin confessed to me that he felt bewildered this evening on seeing a man of M. Thiers' frame, stature, and early antecedents ruling in the Elysee, while the head of the House of Bonaparte is conspiring at Chislehurst.

CONVERSION OF A JEWISH RABBI IN MOBILE.

Our community have been much excited and gratified recently by the conversion of a Jewish Rabbi. He is a man of intelligence and refinement, and had charge of the Hebrew school in this place, teaching the German and other languages, and instructing them also in the Jewish faith. The gentleman who is principal of the school, and one of the female assistants, are members of the Baptist church, and the other is an Episcopalian. None of these would have ventured to approach him on the subject, so bitterly was he opposed to the Christian religion, but their consistent conduct, doubtless, was not without its effect on him. His joy seems to be unbounded in having "found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write." He has attended several prayer meetings in churches of different denominations, and by request has related his religious exercises. He seems a wonder to himself; for while he was determined not to be influenced by it, he had been secretly carrying about with him a New Testament, and reading it until his mind became completely absorbed in its wonderful revelations. When it was known that he had embraced the Christian religion his people, and even his mother and sister, turned their backs on him, and of course he was turned out of employment. His mother and sister are using all their powers of persuasion to induce him to return to his people, but Christians are praying for him "that his faith fail not," and that these beloved relatives may be converted also. A great crowd were assembled last Sabbath night to witness his baptism. He had already spoken of his exercises before the church, and his reasons for believing immersion the Scriptural mode. The hymn was sung commencing,—

"Jesus, I my cross have taken," after which the rabbi gave a thrilling address to the audience; then, as our pastor, Rev. Mr. Woodin, was leading him into the place of baptism, he uttered the appropriate words, "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block," &c. Those present will never forget the scene.—W. & R.

The ludicrous tautology of law documents is exhibited by the following squib:— Young Capias, who is in the law school, gave his little sister an orange the other day, but took the poor child's appetite entirely away by remarking as he did so— "I give you all and singular my estate and interest, right, title and claim, and advantage of and in that orange, with all its rind, skin, juice, pulp and pips, and all rights and advantages therein, with full power to bite, eat, suck or otherwise eat the said orange, or give the same away, with or without its rind, skin, juice, pulp and pips, anything heretofore or hereinafter, or in any other deed or deeds, or instruments of what kind or nature soever, to the contrary in anywise notwithstanding."

WORKING BACKWARD.—A worthy Scotch couple, when asked how their son had broken down early in life, gave the following explanation: "When we began life together we worked hard and lived upon porridge and such like, gradually adding to our comfort as our means improved, until we were able to dine off a bit of roast meat and sometimes a bolt of chicken (chicken); but our son, he worked backward, and began with the chicken first."

Is the M... rable subs... indescriba... grasped, f... Man th... brain by... rests his i... toratives... When v... ance can... weak min... by Fdl... phospho... the suble... ter, from... supplied... it vitality... preserve t... the Syrup... PR... Will be a... on the fol... In the... Question... Church i... ner con... charged? [The C... Division... Body for... portunity... withheld... simply b... desired w... the adver... missappre... tors] The C... Province... The M... must not... pages of... to be ele... only of t... must be... all ready... ners shou... Each w... or sign... ponding... the outsi... writer's... Partien... their Ma... Scribe o... 1872. The M... the Priz... ed at the... Division... The E... of course... Division... turned to... applicati... The E... awarded... Tract of... May 2... C... The c... young li... connecti... School... the intel... who are... more fr... kind for... of young... to this l... is forwa... The s... this mon... of divin... What is... offering... things a... Christ, ... thankfu... The poe... "Pra... Un... The n... These... been gi... live as... carry u... tears, t... mercy s... glory, i... right ha... interest