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BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1874.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, May 31st, 1874.

The Smitten Rock.—Num. xx. 7-13.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ." 1 Cor. x. 4.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 7-11.

SUMMARY.—Moses smote the rock, and the waters gushed forth for rebellious Israel, but his unholiness provoked God's just displeasure and rebuke.

ANALYSIS.—I. The command, vs. 7, 8. II. The deed, vs. 9-11. III. The rebuke and prediction, vs. 12. IV. The memoria, vs. 13.

EXPOSITION.—The interval.—Last week we met Israel at Kadesh, in the Wilderness of Paran, by the south border of Canaan. They had just arrived, about two years from their start from Egypt. We saw that their distrust of God, and their causeless rebellion against Moses, called down upon them the righteous judgment that doomed them to thirty-eight years more of desert life. To-day we meet Israel at the same place. The thirty-eight years are nearly passed. Moses is now a very old man—120 years. Aaron is three years older. A new generation is about them; for probably comparatively few remain who were twenty or more years old on leaving Egypt, as of these only Joshua and Caleb are to survive to cross into Canaan. And yet, by the bite of the serpents (xxi. 6), "much people died;" and by the subsequent plague (xxv. 9) there died twenty and four thousand; and of these a large proportion may have been old men, for whose death Israel had been waiting during the thirty-eight years. We need not suppose the Israelites to have spent those years like roving vagabonds, but rather as nomads, in the same manner as did other inhabitants of the unproductive pastures—lands known as deserts. With their camp and cattle they betook themselves to a place of pasturing, and, when necessary, moved to fresh pastures—probably not remaining compact together, as during the march, but dispersed to some extent through the country. That the people, during this time, were far from being what they should have been, appears from such passages as Ex. xx. 15, ff.; Amos v. 25 ff.; Hosea ix. 10. But almost nothing is recorded of the history of those years. They were waiting for the death of the rebels, and for the growth of a new generation. The death of the evil spies by the plague, the disastrous battle with the Amalekites, in which the ark of God and Moses both remained in the camp (xiv. 40-45), the revolt of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, with "two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly," against Moses and Aaron, with intent to establish for themselves at least equal authority with Moses and Aaron in the government and priesthood, the destruction that overwhelmed them (chap. xvi.), and the blossoming of Aaron's rod, in proof that God recognized his and only his priestly authority (chap. xvii)—these are the chief events recorded. At length, all are gathered at Kadesh again, as thirty-eight years before. There the aged and honored Miriam, sister of Aaron and Moses, died and was buried; and in the absence of water, the suffering people became restless, and again broke out in much the same spirit and language of wicked and rebellious complaint against God and Moses, as thirty-eight years before had been uttered here, and had since been so signally punished. Moses and Aaron "fall on their faces," in earnest supplication to God to spare the people, and the wondrous glory of the cloud at the Tabernacle shines out, to show that God hears and abhors. Va. 1-6.

Verse 7.—The Lord spake unto Moses. In answer to his supplication for the rebellious nation.

Verse 8.—Take the rod. Which seems to have been laid up in the ark. Vs. 9. This was the well-known rod of Moses, with which so many wonders had been wrought (vs. 11); not "Aaron's rod that budded" (xvii. 8-10). This, as we have learned, was the recognized symbol of Moses' authority over the people, as conferred by Jehovah—his sceptre. Speak ye unto the rock before their eyes. Some familiar and prominent rock or cliff in or near Kadesh. It was thenceforth to be, like the one in Rephidim (Ex. xvii.), a type of Christ. And it shall give forth his [its] water. It was to be let forth. So

shall thou give the congregation and their beasts drink. God does not always refuse us our desires because they are wrong, or gratify them when they are right.

Verse 9.—As he commanded him. Moses obeyed God in part—in part he disobeyed. Verse 10.—Before the rock. The people seem already to have been assembled (vs. 6). He said unto them. Ah, Moses! Not to them were you bidden to speak, but to the rock. Hear now, ye rebels. Said in wrath, and probably from a feeling of personal resentment. Must we fetch you water out of the rock? This should be translated, Shall we fetch, etc. He seems to put himself and Aaron forward before the people, and thus failed to keep God in the foreground; as he would have been, if Moses had only spoken to the rock.

Verse 11.—And Moses lift [lifted] up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice. How graphic! Taken with his previous words, how vividly it sets forth his vexation and resentment! Why smite, when he was only to address? And the water came out abundantly. Not because there was any power in either the rod or the man who used it—not in token of the approval of the act. But though the Lord's servant had erred and sinned, the Lord's blessing should not fail to come to his people. There have been rich, deep, mighty revivals in spite of the blundering sin and the sinful blundering of Christians; though usually God requires the faithful obedience and the obedient faith of Christians, in order to such a work. And the congregation drank. Ready enough to take the gift, though insulting the Giver. Men are often glad when they are not grateful. The water which Christ gives makes the drinker both glad and grateful.

Verse 12.—The Lord [Jehovah] spake unto Moses and Aaron. It thus seems that both had the same spirit. Because ye believed me not. In Psalm cvi. 32, 33, we read, "They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes; because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips." The anger of the two men, and its rash expression in language, are here spoken of as constituting the sin. Of course, smiting the rock twice also showed the anger. But why is the sin said to have been unbelief? There may have been a doubt whether a mere word would be sufficient—whether the potent rod was not necessary. To sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel. Men "sanctify" God when they treat him as being God, and allow him to be revealed in his true character; honor him, when they do not obtrude themselves into his place, and thus turn attention upon themselves rather than on him. Jehovah said—Therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. A sore judgment this on the men whose hearts had been so set on "finishing their course." But soon after Aaron died on Mount Hor, not far from Kadesh, eastward (vs. 23-29). Moses lived to lead the people around the south end of the Dead Sea, and up its eastern side, near to the place where the people were to cross into Canaan. Then he was directed to climb Pisgah, view the land of his life-long hope, and die. Deut. xxxiv. So God was "sanctified" before his people and before the world.

Verse 13.—Meribah. Strife. See Ex. xvii. 7.

Youths' Department.

A CONDITION OF COMPANIONSHIP.

One day a gentleman observed a group of boys, bent on play, strongly urging another boy to join them. He was struck with the very decided "No" which the boy gave to all their entreaties. Anxious to see the result, he stepped into an entry, where he could hear and see, and not be much observed. "That boy has a will to resist the whole band of them," he said to himself. A last effort was made to induce him to come with them. "Now, James, will you not come? you are such a good player?" "Yes," he replied; "but no one condition. Give me your hands that you will not swear, and I will go." They did so, and with joy they all ran off to play. We are sure the game lost none of its interest for want of swearing. Noble boy! not ashamed to show that he was on the Lord's side, even in the face of ungodly playfellows.

THE WAY TO CONQUER.

"I'll master it," said the axe, and his blows fell heavily on the iron; but every blow made his edge more blunt, till he ceased to strike.

"Leave me to me," said the saw; and with his relentless teeth he worked backward and forward on its surface till they were all worn down or broken; then he fell aside.

"Ha! ha!" said the hammer, "I knew you wouldn't succeed; I'll show you the way;" but at his first fierce stroke, off flew his head, and the iron remained as before.

"Shall I try?" asked the soft, small flame. But they all despised the flame; but he curved gently round the iron, and embraced it, and never left it until it melted under his irresistible influence.

There are hearts hard enough to resist the force of wrath, the malice of persecution, and the fury of pride; so as to make their acts recoil on their adversaries; but there is a power stronger than any of these, and hard indeed is that heart that can resist love.

A HUSBAND'S CONFESSION.

"Really, Mrs. Hope," exclaimed a maiden friend to the wife of a Journeyman, "I can't make you out at all. Ever since I've come into the house you've smiled, and laughed, and bustled about, as though some stingy old relative had died and left you a lot of money. Is it so?"

"No, Alice, it isn't; but I'm in good spirits for all that"—and the happy wife smiled again.

"Then what's put you into such an enviable humor?"

Things straight and right, and cuts about like just what she is—one of the best of wives, and a real workman's friend.

Get a helpmate, Harry, and depend upon it, if she's of the proper sort, you'll soon be a better, a richer and a happier man. You may think I'm speaking too warmly on the subject, but I assure you, I feel more than I can put into words. Good wives are our best and noblest reformers, Harry, and though I never told her so to her own sweet face, mine, is worth a little fortune to Jack Hope."

"I dare say what you've told me's all true enough, I heard the man remark, 'but where can I find a gem of the same pattern? They're rather scarce now-a-days.'"

"I didn't hear what answer my husband made, for just then the door near which I had been standing, and which stood a little ajar, was pulled wide open, and I walked into the place as though I hadn't heard a word. On seeing me they both laughed, but I didn't appear to know anything of their conversation."

"And is that all?" asked Alice Paine. "Yes; and if you'd felt as I have many a time," replied Mrs. Hope, "you would know that it was quite enough to fill my heart with gladness. At home my husband doesn't talk much," she continued, "and I used to fancy that, with all my slaving and trying to make him and the children comfortable, he wasn't satisfied. But I know now that he is, and it makes me feel as if I could do anything for my dear John and our own little home."

"Well, if I ever get a husband, Mrs. Hope," said Alice in a whisper, "I'll strive to deserve being called behind my back as Mr. Hope called you."

In a short time the two friends separated. His fellow-workman took John Hope's advice; and without relating particulars, or asserting that the Hopes had nothing to do with what followed, "Harry" chose Alice Paine for a helpmate.—Christian Weekly.

The following anecdote, which we have just come across, of Mr. Spurgeon, is too good to be lost. Some years ago, it may be remembered, the Independents brought out a work on baptism by a Rev. Mr. Thorn, which they regarded as a very able defence of sprinkling. The late Dr. Campbell, the veteran Congregationalist editor, and Mr. Spurgeon met in one of the publishing houses in Paternoster-row, when the former called Mr. Spurgeon's attention to a large pile of the aforesaid work which was lying on the counter, remarking very pleasantly, "The Baptists will find this book to be a 'thorn in the flesh' to them."

"My dear Doctor," replied Mr. Spurgeon, "why do you quote only part of that Scripture? 'A thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet one!'"

A fellow who was nearly eaten out of house and home by the constant visits of his friends, was one day complaining bitterly of his numerous visitors.

"Shure and I'll tell you how to get rid of 'em," said the maid-of-all-work.

A TEMPERANCE TALE.

BY REV. F. B. SLEEPER.

"Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little."

Enough has already been written and said in regard to the fearful effects of intemperance, if heeded, to keep every one from tasting the intoxicating cup. From pulpit, platform and press, warnings have been continually going forth in relation to this terrible evil. No one can go down to a drunkard's grave in this day of gospel truth, except he sin against great light. Logic has employed its strongest argument, eloquence, its most thrilling power, and friendship its sweetest and dearest influence to keep men from entering this fatal pathway. And yet thousands go down to a drunkard's grave, thousands are dallying with the tempter to-day. And so long as Satan works we must work. It may be the same story told over and over again; yet while this accursed power can weave itself into the very texture of men's nature, we must fight it back by all the means in our power.

George Desmore was a mechanic, earning good wages and surrounded by a fine family, a wife and two boys. Possessed of genial qualities of mind and heart, he naturally became a great favorite with all who knew him. He was not a professed Christian, yet he attended church regularly, helped pay for the preaching and was thoroughly upright and honest. If George lacked in anything it was firmness of will; he was too easily influenced by his companions and too free with his money. Every shiftless fellow in the shop calculated that he could fall back on Desmore for a loan of five dollars. Still George was called a noble-hearted fellow and he certainly was so. At home he was kind and affectionate with his family, taking great pride in the growth and education of his boys. And yet George's good nature proved his greatest foe. Had he been less accommodating and free-hearted, it would have been better for him.

He could not resist the invitation of his companions to go into the saloon and take a glass of beer, and step by step, intemperance wove its meshes about him until he was entirely its slave. The same weakness of will that could not keep him from entering its fatal pathway prevented him from throwing off the chains of intemperance when fastened about him. His course downward was very fast. Friends gathered about him and sought to help him; his wife wept and begged of him to stay his course, but it was of no avail. He made fair promises time after time but broke them as often as made. He was not hypocritical, he tried to stop, but the current was so strong that it swept him right along in its deadly course. In a little time his wife was taken suddenly sick and it was soon evident that she must die. Then George seemed to realize stronger than ever his own fearful condition. At the bedside of the languishing wife, the poor, wretched man bowed and sobbed as though his heart would break. He loved his wife, he hated his besetting sin, he wanted to be a man among men, but he was held by a power too strong for his own weak will to overcome. Friends tried to keep him sober until after the death of his wife, but despite their efforts he was often found in the stupor of drunkenness while his wife was hourly expecting the messenger of death.

I well remember the day of the funeral. The officiating clergyman said to me, "I hope Desmore will keep sober to-day, so as to attend his wife's funeral." But he did not. The maddening appetite came on; he was too cunning for his friends, and at a neighboring saloon he procured his usual intoxicating potion. And as the funeral procession wound around the hillside up to the church, and the minister spoke words of solemn truth to his audience, Desmore sat at home dead drunk. It was a sad, sad occasion. Not alone because a loved one had left us, but to think that humanity could sink so low. We followed her to the silent grave, but the burial was unconsecrated by a husband's tear or sigh of grief.

Young man, do you know what lies before you, if you touch the fatal cup? You may think you will not sink as low as Desmore did, but the same brutalizing effects are in the wine cup for you as for him. Be assured of this, that it will destroy your manhood, sap your strength and vitality, frustrate your highest and noblest purposes, and curse your very existence. Step by step will you go down, lose your character, your reputation, your all, and then realize that "at the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder."

Temperance.

"BOY LOST."

"From home strayed this morning Our wee Dickey Moore; Blue eyes and hair golden,— Wore a white pinafore.

"Plaid frock, with boots scarlet, A velvet cap new; Who finds and returns him To Station House 2.

"Shall he well rewarded In dollars of gold; Yes, shining and sparkling, And fifty times told.

"Wilt find him?" cries Gerty, "O say, mamma dear; Just think if 'twas Benny, Or one of us here.

"What makes you so silent, And gaze o'er the way, At the red-lighted palace, Where men drink and play?"

"I'm thinking, my darling, Of that wicked light, A snare and temptation To lost boys at night.

"Lost to home and to parents, To honor and love, And lost to the mansions Of glory above.

"No offered reward for Those lost 'mid the foam If the treacherous winecup— Poor boys, strayed from home!

SUNDAY, June 7th, 1874.—The Serpent of Brass.—Num. xxi. 4-9.

Corr.

MISSIONARY

S. S. C.

The journey ought to be there are so even great control, they begun still lack of lishment. New York for not leave un steamer from on her voyage left on the 3 — the best ships of the to sail possibl from Liver decides the when lol un and "The C have her h until the 19 fine new fro her second made to Ca bone in 31 have lost to them. A s always be e towards the rolling m t

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