

The Christian Messenger.

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BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1875.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES. Heroes and Judges.

SUNDAY, May 9th, 1875.—Ruth and Naomi.—Ruth i. 16-22.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." Ruth i. 16.

ANALYSIS.—I. Ruth's request. Vs. 16, 17. II. Naomi's consent. Vs. 18, 19. Public surprise. Vs. 19. IV. Naomi's complaint. Vs. 20, 21. V. Arrival at Beth-lehem. Vs. 22.

The book of Ruth is a connecting-link between the period of the Judges and the Monarchy. The story of Ruth the Moabitess is of exquisite beauty and simplicity, full of personal, domestic, and social virtue. It shows that in the dark days of Israel the lustrous graces of industry, purity, and love here and there remained. It gives us still another chapter of providence, by which the Gentile Ruth becomes, by marriage with Boaz, the ancestress of David and Christ. It verifies the Scripture that "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him."

EXPOSITION.—Introductory.—In the Hebrew Bible this book is placed between "The Song of Songs" and Lamentations. The change from that to its present position was first made in the Septuagint Version. We therefore have it in the same connection in which our Lord and his apostles were accustomed to see it as often as they read that Version. The exact time in the period of judges at which the events of our lesson occurred cannot be determined; but Keil supposes them to have been in Gideon's time, when the Midianites oppressed the whole land, and thus brought the people into such straits as drove Elimelech to Moab. Judges vi. Others put it later—in the time of the Philistines' domination, or in that of the Moabites' oppression. The only clear indication which yet is indelible, is given in iv. 18-22.

The chief design of the book is clearly to bring out the connecting link in the genealogy of David, and so of our Lord, and in such a way as to show the universality of God's grace, even when it wears an exclusive aspect. Of Ruth, who gives name to the book, Hervey says: "As a singular example of virtue and piety in a rude age and among an idolatrous people; as one of the first fruits of the Gentile harvest gathered into the church; as the heroine of a story of exquisite beauty and simplicity; as illustrating in her history the workings of divine Providence, and the truth of the saying, that 'the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous'; and for the many interesting revelations of ancient, domestic and social customs, which are associated with her story, Ruth has always held a foremost place among the Scripture characters. Get familiar with the whole story of Ruth, then the part of it assigned for our lesson can more profitably engage attention."

Verse 16.—"And Ruth said. To her mother-in-law, Naomi, of Bethlehem in Judea, Elimelech's widow. Vs. 2, 3. Of Naomi's two sons, both now dead, Mahlon had married Orpah, and Chilion, Ruth. These were both "daughters of Moab," and were thus left widows with a widowed mother-in-law, a foreigner, now on her way to her own country in the far north and west beyond the Jordan. Vs. 4-7. Ruth loved her daughters, but felt that she could offer them no such prospects with her as they could have at home. They had given each other the parting kiss, tenderly, solemnly, sorrowfully with unuttered memories and forebodings. Vs. 8-14. "But Ruth clave unto her." The entreaty was repeated, now backed by Orpah's example. Hear her: "Entreat me not to leave thee, or [omit this 'or'] to return from following after thee. This is one of those charming love contests. It lets us look into the rich natures of those women of the long ago, one a Jew and one a "heathen," and see how they and we are "of one blood," with natures rich in blessed capabilities. For whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge. The final argument in the controversy. "I will." Of course nothing more could be said. Here is the rebellious, disobedient obstinacy of self-sacrificing devotion. No light thing was it for these two defenceless women in such

regions and times to make the long journey on foot. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. The people of Israel were hated most bitterly, and not without some large cause by the Moabites. If she makes the journey, she must take the people and their God. She had learned of Jehovah. Through wedlock with Chilion she had come to be married to the Lord. The Christian knows that a desert with Christ is a garden, but a garden, without Christ is a desert

Verse 17.—"Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried." It is human to long for death among one's kin, surrounded by faces familiar from childhood, by those who are "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh," and after this to have our bodies buried along side of our own kin. An oath, solemn, deliberate, intelligent, that only death shall divide between her and her mother-in-law. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part me and thee. Such another passage as the speech of Ruth's cannot be found in all the literatures of the world, sacred or profane. The eloquence of woman, and of woman inspired. Fitty is it used to express the resolve of a sinner to join himself to Christ and to his people. Scarcely does this resolve differ from that of Ruth. Alas, that there have been so few Ruths, that there are so few who, in her language, can join themselves to Christ's people.

Verse 18.—"Left speaking to her. Ceased to entreat her to go back."

Verse 19.—"So they two went until they came to Beth-lehem." They would probably make their way up the east side of the Dead Sea, and cross the Jordan, opposite Jericho, where Israel entered Palestine, a journey of perhaps a hundred miles. In imagination we can follow them. Beth-lehem. Meaning house-of-bread. We think of the story of Christ's birth, especially as we remember that Ruth was one of his ancestors. This became "the city of David," who descended from this Ruth. All the city was moved. It had been ten years since her departure. Vs. 4. The fact of her return, and her misfortune, greatly afflicted especially the women of the village. They said. In the Hebrew "they" is feminine, referring thus chiefly or exclusively to the women. The touch is most true to life. Is this Naomi? Can it be the same.

Verse 20.—"Unto them. To the women. Call me not Naomi. A reference to the meaning of her name, "my pleasantness." Call me Mara. This word means, "bitter, or bitterness," and was used as the name of a fountain of brackish water in the peninsula of Sinai. Ex. xv. 23. The Almighty hath dealt every bitterly with me. Whether this was spoken with a rebellious spirit is not quite certain, but it has that appearance. It shows great sorrow and wretchedness. She little thought to what honor and felicity the dark and lonely path led.

Verse 21.—"A continuance of the complaint of vs. 20."

Verse 22.—"They came to Beth-lehem in the beginning of the barley harvest. The barley harvest "takes place in Palestine in March and April." The return was then near the first of April.

QUESTIONS.—Whose wife was Naomi? Where was her home? What calamity had come upon the land? Where is Beth-lehem? What did Elimelech and Naomi do to escape the famine? How many sons had they? Their names? Where was Moab? Whom did these sons take as their wives? What became of Elimelech? What became of Mahlon and Chilion? In what condition was Naomi left? Ans. A widow, with two widowed daughters-in-law. After these three deaths what did Naomi do? Vs. 6. What did she bid her daughters-in-law do? Vs. 8. Which one of the two finally returned to Moab? Vs. 14, 15. To whom is Orpah likened? Matt. xix. 22. Vs. 16, 17. Of whom do these verses remind one? Hebrews xi. 21-26; Psalm cxxvii. 5, 6; Luke xxii. 31-33.

Vs. 20. What is the meaning of Naomi? Of Mara? Where have we met the word "Mara" before? Ex. xv. 23.

Vs. 21. How had God afflicted Naomi? Why does God afflict the best of Christians sometimes very much? Heb. xii. 6; John xv. 2.

Vs. 22. What must we do to be followers of Jesus? Matt. xvi. 24, 25. What was Ruth's reward? Ans. She became the mother of that illustrious line which gave kings to Israel for nearly five hundred years, and from which was born at last, "in the city of David (Beth-lehem), the Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, May 16th, 1875.—A Praying Mother.—1 Sam. i. 21-28.

The more we help others to bear their burdens the lighter will be our own.

CONCERT EXERCISE.

FEED MY LAMBS.

[For a Sabbath School class of eleven little girls, each having the letter prefixed to her part.]

BY MRS. S. A. A. CORTHELL.

SING—Hymn 842, Baptist Hymn Book. F. So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. John xxi. 15.

See Israel's gentle Shepherd stand, With all engaging charms; Hark! how he calls the tender lambs, And folds them in his arms.

E. The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. Psalm xxiii. 1.

Jesus, thou Shepherd of the sheep, Thy little flock in safety keep; These lambs within thine arms now take Nor let them e'er thy fold forsake.

E. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom. Isaiah xl. 11.

Saviour, who thy flock art feeding, With the Shepherd's kindest care, And the feeble gently leading, While the lambs thy bosom share.

D. Feed them also, and lift them up forever. Psalm xxviii. 9.

And now, dear Jesus, I am thine, Oh, be thou ever, ever mine, And let me never, never roam From thee, the little wanderer's home.

M. And I will give you pastors according to my heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. Jer. iii. 15.

Oh, teach them to discern thy voice, And in its sacred sound rejoice; From strangers may they ever flee, And know no other guide but thee.

Y. Feed thy people with the rod, the flock of thy heritage; let them feed in Bashan, as in days of old. Micah vii. 14.

Lord, bring the sheep that wander yet, And let their number be complete; Then let the flock from earth remove, And reach the heavenly fold above.

L. Then shall the lambs feed after their manner. Isaiah v. 17.

Jesus, I'll try my cross to bear, I'll follow thee, and never fear; From thy dear fold I would not roam,— Oh, take a little wanderer home.

A. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside still waters. Psalm cxxxiii. 2.

Secure them from the scorching beam, And lead them to the living stream; In verdant pastures let them lie, And watch them with a Shepherd's eye.

M. Now the Lord will feed them as a lamb in a large place. Hosea vi. 16. Now, these little ones receiving, Fold them in thy gracious arms; There we know, thy word believing, Only there, secure from harm.

B. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,—and a little child shall lead them. Isaiah xi. 6. Never, from thy pasture roving, Let them be the lion's prey; Let thy tenderness, so loving, Keep them all life's dangerous way.

S. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters. Revelation vii. 17.

Then, within thy fold eternal, Let them find a resting place; Feed in pastures ever vernal, Drink the rivers of thy grace.

—Zion's Advocate.

Youths' Department.

BOB RYAN AND DANDY.

"Never make an enemy, even of a dog," said I to Bobby Ryan, as I caught at his raised hand, and tried to prevent his throwing a stick at our neighbor Howard's great Newfoundland. But my words effect came too late. Over the fence flew the stick, and whack! on Dandy's nose it fell. Now Dandy, a great, powerful fellow, was very good natured, but this proved a little too much for him. He sprang up with an angry growl, and bounded over the fence as if he had been light as a bird, caught Bobby Ryan by the arm, and held him tightly enough to let his teeth be felt.

"Dandy, Dandy!" I cried in momentary alarm, "let go. Don't bite him." The dog lifted up his dark brown, angry eyes with a look of intelligence, and I understood what he said: "I only want to frighten the young rascal."

And Bobby was frightened. Dandy held him for a little while, growling savagely, though there was a good deal of make-believe in the growl; and then tossing the arm away, leaped back over the fence, and lay down by his kennel.

"You're a very foolish boy, Bobby Ryan," said I, "to pick a quarrel with such a splendid old fellow as that. Suppose you were to fall into the lake some day, and Dandy should happen to be near, and he should remember your treatment, and refuse to go in after you?" "Wouldn't care," replied Bobby; "I can swim."

Now it happened, only a week afterwards, that Bobby was on the lake in company with an older boy; and that, in some way, their boat was upset in deep water, not far from the shore; and it also happened that Mr. Howard and his dog Dandy were near by, and saw the two boys struggling in the water.

Quick as thought Dandy sprang into the lake, and swam rapidly towards Bobby; but strange to say, after getting close to the lad, he turned and went towards the larger boy, who was struggling in the water. Seizing him, Dandy brought him safely to shore. He then turned and looked towards Bobby, his young tormentor; he had a good many grudges against him, and for some moments seemed hesitating whether to save him or let him drown.

"Quick, Dandy?" cried his master, pointing to poor Bobby, who was trying his best to keep afloat.

He was not the brave swimmer he had thought himself.

At this the noble dog bounded again into the water, and brought Bobby to land. He did not seem to have much heart in his work, however, for he dropped the boy as soon as he reached the shore, and walked away with a stately, indifferent air.

But Bobby, grateful for his rescue, and repenting his former unkindness, made up with Dandy on that very day, and they were ever afterwards fast friends. He came very near losing his life through unkindness to a dog, and the lesson it gave him will not soon be forgotten.—Christian Weekly.

A RING OF BETROTHAL.

A very touching incident occurred recently in connection with one of the conversions at the Clarendon Street Church, Boston. A ring was found some two months since in one of the boxes which are placed beside the doors to gather money for the poor. It was not known for several weeks to whom it had belonged. After a time a young Scotch woman, an entire stranger, called on Mr. Gordon, the pastor, and told him that she had been converted under his preaching. She then told the story of her three years' anxious search after the Lord, often under such powerful convictions of sin as to drive her almost to despair; of her finding her way into church on that Sabbath morning and hearing a sermon on consecration to Christ; of her desperate struggle to give herself wholly to the Saviour which went on during the whole service, till finally she felt that all had been given up. And then dropped out incidentally the secret of the ring. "The minister," she said, "asked the people to drop in money for the poor as they went out. I instantly thought, 'I have no money; what shall I do?' Then my eye lighted on my ring, the gift of my mother afar off in Scotland, the dearest thing I possessed, and I said, 'Would I be willing to give that if the Lord required it?' And I did not hold back, but took it off and gave it up."

The experience which she subsequently told on her admission to the church was perfectly thrilling, melting every heart that listened to it. And when the pastor, in her absence, told the church the story of the ring, there were few dry eyes in the assembly. "The ring will be restored to her," he said, but that is a small matter in comparison with what she has already received. For the Lord has said concerning her, "Bring hither the best robe and put it on her and a ring on her finger and shoes on her feet. For this my daughter was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found."—Era.

THE LADDER ON THE CLIFF.

We can never be placed in such straits and difficulties that the Lord cannot help us. Years before the emergency happens, He may have set on foot a train of circumstances that will lead to our relief at just the moment we need it. We should learn to acknowledge thankfully the source from whence the blessing comes, just as we would if He had sent an angel down from heaven to give us help.

One dark and stormy night a vessel was wrecked on a rocky island off the coast of

Scotland. The crew had watched with terror the white waves as they dashed on the stately cliffs, and felt that to be driven upon those rocks was to seal their doom. The cabin was filled with water, and the captain's wife was drowned. The sailors climbed into the rigging, and prayed as they never had before, that God would have mercy upon them. That He could save them from temporal death seemed almost incredible. But the cruel waves drove the vessel on and on, till the very foot of the awful cliff was reached. O, if they could only reach its top! There would be safety, and, no doubt, friendly hands to help them. Just as they struck the rock, they espied on the face of the cliff a ladder. Here was their despair changed to joy. They sprang from the rigging, and climbed the ropes as rapidly as their numb fingers would permit. But they were all rescued, and in a few moments more the vessel went to pieces.

That ladder seemed to them almost a miracle. Yet its presence there was easily explained. It was used by the quarrymen as they climbed up and down to their work every day. Though usually drawn up when they left, the suddenness of the storm that night had caused the workmen to hurry to the shelter of their humble homes, without taking time to remove the ladder. It was God who had ordered this seemingly trifling matter for the preservation of all their lives.

Some writer has well said, "However long the chain of second causes may be, the first link is always in God's hand."

Learn to observe this loving Father's hand in all the events of your life, and it will save you from many dark hours.—Presbyterian.

LONG WORDS.

"Rob," said Tom, "which is the most dangerous word to pronounce in the English language?"

"Don't know," said Rob, "unless it's a swearing word."

"Pooh!" said Tom, "it's stumpled, because you are sure to get a tumble between the first and last letter."

"Ha! ha!" said Rob. "Now I've one for you. I found it one day in the paper. Which is the longest word in the English language?"

"Valetudinarianism," said Tom promptly.

"No, sir; it is smiles, because there's a whole mile between the first and last letter."

"Hu! ho!" cried Tom, "that's nothing. I know a word that has over three miles between its beginning and ending."

"What's that?" asked Rob, faintly.

"Beleaguered," said Tom.—St. Nicholas.

A REMARKABLE PET.

A French journalist met with a strange pet the other day when paying a visit. While he was talking he noticed something moving on the carpet which was neither dog nor cat. On looking again he saw that it was a fine lobster, dark gray spotted with red, and thought it must have escaped from the kitchen. The lady smiled, and said, "I must tell you the history of my pet. Some months ago I bought a lobster, and as it was not wanted for dinner my cook left it in the water in the kitchen. I was going to a ball that night, and, being ready, I sat in an easy chair and fell asleep. Suddenly I sprang up from the pain of a sharp bite in my foot, and saw the lobster biting it. I started up and ran to the kitchen. No one was there, and a cloth in front of the fire had caught fire. It was soon extinguished, but I have kept the lobster ever since out of gratitude." It has its basin of cold water, and seems to recognize its mistress, and is so fond of music that it is always drawn towards the piano whenever she plays.

A Baltimore lady of wealth and piety is said to have remained single until the age of forty years, refusing many offers, because she had resolved to marry no man except a clergyman. A while ago she was wedded to a penniless, but devout pastor of a little church, and the honeymoon was hardly over before he resigned his charge and set up as a broker with her money.

"Herbert," said a perplexed mother, "why is it that you're not a better boy?" "Well," said the little fellow, soberly, looking up into her face with his honest blue eyes, "I suppose the real reason is that I don't want to be!" We think the child gave the real reason why all of us, big as well as little, are not better than we are.