

The Christian Messenger.

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BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1875.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES. Heroes and Judges.

SUNDAY, January 24th, 1875.—Preparation for Conquest.—Joshua v. 9-15. B. C. 1461.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." Hebrews xii. 2.

ANALYSIS.—I. Reproach rolled away. Vs. 9. II. Renewal of Passover. Vs. 10. III. Eating old corn. Vs. 11. IV. Cessation of manna. Vs. 12. V. Visit of the angel. Vs. 13-15.

HISTORICAL CONNECTION.—Matters of religion are to be attended to before business. For upward of a generation God's chosen people have been suffering his displeasure in the wilderness, the tokens of which have been the discontinuance of the rite that pledged them nationally to Jehovah, as also of the festival of the Passover, that reminder of divine deliverance from Egypt. Having now entered Canaan, God restores to them both rite and festival, the observance of which anticipates the conquest.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 9.—This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. This reproach was doubtless that cast upon them by Egypt, which was indeed a sort of heavy weight or burden laid and kept on them by Jehovah thus far under which they had groaned. Egypt, they knew, hoped they were led out into the wilderness to destruction; not to be, as the fugitives claimed, God's favorite children to receive blessing, but as miserable wretches, accursed, to perish under the curse. And sure enough, what they hoped they seemed to see; and so exultantly the taunt and reproach would be uttered, "they perish accused." Ex. xxxii. 12; Num. xiv. 13-16; Deut. ix. 28. They had been under a curse, and had for thirty-eight years, from the day of the murmuring at Kadesh, been moving about as Nomads, awaiting the death of the arms-bearing men who were twenty years old and upwards on leaving Egypt. Num. xiv. The Passover was celebrated at Sinai (Num. ix. 1-5); and why should not the initial ceremony of circumcision be performed also? The two were co-ordinate, having an equally close relation to the covenant. Doubtless they were both continued till the Kadesh murmuring, both then suspended till the passage of Jordan, and both resumed at Gilgal. By this renewal God is said to roll off from Israel that old reproach, because thus renewed it was the sign and seal that the ban was removed, and the covenant relation restored. They were already in the land of promise, and its conquest was assured to them. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal [the Gilgal, that is, the rolling] unto this day. If the place retained the name for fifteen or twenty years, it would thus be secure permanently.

Verse 10.—Encamped in Gilgal. This here means that they continued there in camp, for it was only the tenth day of the month when they first encamped. iv. 19. Kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even. "Passover" here of course means the Paschal Supper which preceded and introduced the Passover as a seven, day festival. On its origin and law see Ex. xii; Lev. xxiii. 4-8; Num. xxviii. 16-25; Deut. xvi. 1-8. In the plains of Jericho. Remember that Jericho was at the west border of the valley of the Jordan, in the plain, and Gilgal was thus on the plain a little to the east of Jericho. iv. 19.

Verse 11.—They did eat of the old corn of the land. "Corn" here, as currently in the Bible, means grain. It is specially noted that it was "of the land," because this was the earnest of the fulfillment of their long fond hope that here they were to live. This land was to be theirs. On the morrow after the Passover. In the Hebrew idiom, "the morrow of the Passover." It would seem to be on the fifteenth of the month, as it is in Numbers xxxiii. 3. But from Lev. xxiii. 10-14, it seems that on the sixteenth, "the morrow after the Sabbath" (the Sabbath of the feast was on the fifteenth); a burnt offering of the flour of the grain of that year was to be presented, and that not until then was it lawful for the people to eat of the grain. Unleavened cakes and parched corn. Unleavened cakes were eaten all through the feast, including the evening of the fifteenth. Ex. xii. 8. But the unleavened loaves and cakes eaten before the sixteenth were not to be made of the new grain. Leaven is the emblem of

evil. Matthew xiii. 33 is an exception. From Ruth ii. 14, etc., it seems that it was usual to eat "parched corn,"—grain—wheat and barley. It is still in the East. Tristram thus describes the process as seen by himself: "A few sheaves of wheat were tossed on the fire, and as soon as the straw was consumed, the charred heads were dexterously swept from the embers on to a cloak spread on the ground. The women of the party then beat the ears and tossed them into the air till they were thoroughly winnowed, when the wheat was eaten without further preparation. The green ears had become half charred by the roasting, and there was a pleasant mingling of milky wheat and a fresh-crust flavor as we chewed the parched corn." In the self-same day, "that very day," it was an important day as closing one era and beginning another—an epochal day.

Verse 12.—The manna ceased on the morrow, etc. This shows that up to this time it had continued, as need required. Its continuance was a sign and a reminder that as yet they were not in possession of the promise, had not as theirs the land of plenty "flowing with milk and honey." It was a badge of destitution not less than of divine protection. See the statement in Ex. xvi. 35.

Verse 13.—And it came to pass. This introduces the account of Joshua's interview with the angel, which extends to vi. 5. This account is the introduction to and explanation of Jericho's fall. Behold there stood a man over against him. The appearance was that of a man, though in fact the Eternal Son of God. Va. 15 With his sword drawn in his hand. Fit emblem that God called and led them to the conquest in war, and that now was the time—a drawn sword. This may seem to some an unfit aspect for Jehovah to wear. But God destroys not less than he makes and keeps alive. Diseases, tempests, earthquakes are his swords. He has both "severity" and "goodness." He is just not less than kind. If he saves so also does he punish. In him are wrath and mercy, not cruelty, but righteous retribution. The nations of Canaan were wicked exceedingly, the measure of their wickedness full. The time had come when the hand of holiness had need to smite, the New Testament insists upon the retributive justice of God as emphatically as the Old Testament. Read Matthew xxiii. 13-39; Rom. ii; Rev. vi. xx. We must at the very threshold of this work of conquest on which with Joshua we now enter, come to a clear and full view of this two-fold aspect of God, this completeness and balance of his character. Joshua went unto him. Not as yet suspecting who he was. Here was valor such as was shown by Joshua at Rephidim and at Kadesh, such as made him fit to be the leader of Israel at this time. Art thou for us or for our adversaries? The question of a soldier, bravely asked. On which side art thou?

Verse 14.—Captain of the Lord's host. This "host" was not simply Israel, the Lord's people, though Israel is called "the host of the Lord." Ex. xii. 41. It was rather the heavenly angelic host. 1 Kings xxii. 19. So in the common phrase "the Lord [Jehovah] of hosts." Compare Ps. cxlviii. 2. Joshua fell on his face to the earth and did worship. Valor matched by piety. What saith my Lord, etc. Joshua is now in presence of the Supreme Head of the army. He now asks orders.

Verse 15.—Loose thy shoes, etc. The usual token of respect and reverence in the East. And Joshua did so. Prompt, willing, perfect obedience. Then follows the message which the angel came to bring. It could not be given till there was readiness to receive it. So it is now and ever: "he that doeth shall know." "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." What the message given was will appear next week.

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 9. How did the Egyptians treat Israel while in the wilderness? Was this "the reproach" rolled away? What rite had been discontinued in the wilderness? What is the meaning of Gilgal?

Vs. 10. What did the festival of the Passover commemorate? How many times had it been observed since leaving Egypt? Where was its first observance after the exodus? Numbers ix. 1, 2. What does Paul call Jesus? 1 Corinthians v. 7.

Vs. 12. Why did the manna cease? Where was it given for the first time? Exodus xvi. 3, 4. What bread is everlasting? John vi. 51.

Vs. 13. Who stood before Joshua? Who was this angel? In what act does Joshua's bravery appear?

Vs. 14. In what do we see Joshua's reverence?

Vs. 15. In what his obedience? Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, January 31st, 1875.—Jericho Taken.—Joshua vi. 12-20.

Youths' Department.

WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT.

If you've any task to do, Let me whisper, friend, to you, Do it.

If you've anything to say, True and needed, yea or nay, Say it.

If you've anything to love, As a blessing from above, Love it.

If you've anything to give, That another's joy may live, Give it.

If you know what torch to light, Guiding others through the night, Light it.

If you've any debt to pay, Rest you neither night nor day, Pay it.

If you've any joy to hold, Next your heart, lest it grow cold, Hold it.

If you've any grief to meet, At the loving Father's feet, Meet it.

If you're given light to see, What a child of God should be, See it.

Whether life be bright or drear, There's a message sweet or clear, Whispered down to every ear: Hear it.

TOO MUCH GOLD.

"Now, papa, you must tell me an ambitious story to-night."

Minnie Percy had seated herself, without help, in her papa's lap. He was sitting in a large arm-chair pretending to be asleep. He had his hand over his eyes, his elbow resting on the arm of his chair. Minnie knew well enough he was playing "possum," so she had climbed up and curled herself down for a good-night story. Her father laughed. "An ambitious story—I don't understand," he pinched her pink cheek, and pulled a curl one side, then the other, and after two or three "creepy mouses," Minnie recovered from her glee enough to say—

"Why, you know, papa, what that means: it's a story, that isn't true—it's all explained in one of the Rollé Books you read me."

"Oh, you mean fictitious; you must be careful when you use long words or you will trip, my puss."

"Yes, that's it—fictitious. I mean something that didn't happen, you know."

The little girl smoothed her little white apron, picked at the ruffles, put her hands in the cunning pockets, sat about five seconds, then asked,

"Are you thinking, papa?"

"Yes, yes, let me see," he replied, rubbing his forehead. The fact was, he had to tell stories so often that it kept him busy, though some stories Minnie liked to hear over and over. "Didn't I hear my little daughter, a while ago, at her play saying, 'I wish I had a gold dress and gold doll, gold dishes, gold bed, gold room, and everything I had was gold?'"

"I guess"—Minnie smiled and dropped her head, so her papa couldn't see her dimples. "I guess I was telling Nellie Weeks that, when we were playing visit."

Then her papa snatched a dozen kisses from her soft cheek and red lips before he proceeded. "Does my little girl think she would be any happier if everything she had was gold?"

"N—no; but it would be nice," she faltered.

"Well, I think I will tell you not only an ambitious"—

"Fictitious, papa. I remember now," said Minnie.

"Well, not only a fictitious story, but a classical one; you are so fond of long names."

"What's classical?"

"I supposed you would ask, so I have my answer ready. It means the best writers. It used to apply only to the Greeks and Romans, who are considered the best models of fine writing; now it includes modern authors of the first rank, those well versed in ancient languages, those who write the most pure, correct, and refined. Your brother's Virgil and Sallust are Latin classical books, and papa's Plato and Demosthenes are Greek. Now, I am going to tell you a very old story, written by one of these classical authors."

"There was once a great king in Phry-

gia named Midas. We know there was such a country, and it is described as being high table-land, abounding in corn and wine, and celebrated for its fine sheep and cattle. It is mentioned in the Bible, for St. Paul travelled over it twice, preaching the gospel. But this king—we are not so sure about him, but the story has been handed down from generation to generation about him. He was very fond of show and power. To have these he must have gold. One time Bacchus, who was god of wine, was having a great jubilee with his followers, when they missed Silenus; he was Bacchus's tutor, and was very old now, and feeble with dissipation. While under the influence of wine he lost his way, and went into the kingdom of Phrygia, and was taken to the king. He made a great feast and kept him ten days, then he took him back to Bacchus, who was so grateful for the return of his foster-father that he told Midas he would grant him any wish he might request. Then what did the foolish king reply.

"Give me," says he—nor thought he asked too much, "That, with my body whatsoever I touch, Changed from the nature which it held of old, May be converted into yellow gold."

He had his wish, and started home. He broke a branch from a tree as he walked along; behold, it turned to gold—then he touched a stone; it turned to gold. He grew more excited as well as delighted; he had only to lay a finger on any object, and it turned to gold. When he went into his palace the pillars were shining gold, where he carelessly touched. Then in his transport he ordered his slaves to prepare a feast of daintiest dishes; so they did, and set before their happy lord; but alas, now see him; he takes a piece of bread—it is gold; a piece of meat—it is gold; he begins to get alarmed, and snatches his wine-cup.

"Ah! no change," he said, "the charm is broken;" he looked relieved.

"The king's cup was gold," said one of his guests.

The king put it to his lips. Ah, the wine was fluid gold as it ran from his mouth. Now he grows sick of his wish, of his power. He is afraid of starving, so he confesses his folly to Bacchus, and begs him to take back his gift. Bacchus bade him wash in the river Pactolus; when he did, all the sand turned to gold; he hated the sight of it, so much so that he would not let his people gather it, so it was washed away. The gold had not made him happy but a very short time.

"Oh papa," exclaimed Minnie, "I'll never, never wish for anything to be gold again; then I couldn't eat grandma's doughnuts, or mamma's orange cake, or Bridget's cookies."

"One would think you live upon cake. I am not sure but cake may be as fatal as gold, though it would take some longer to die from the effects of it than from starvation."

"Oh, I have to be stinted; I can have only just so much; but I have wished everything we ate was cake, I like it so. I see I must not, that would be wrong."

"Yes, my daughter; but to return to our story. I wish you to remember it was what you asked for, a fictitious story, though like many of those old stories and legends, it contains a good moral. Be satisfied with what you have, and do not spend valuable time in vain wishes, for many times, if gratified, we should find them as hateful to us as the king Midas did his gold."—Squid Scotch, in The Interior.

"Two things a master commits to his servants' care," said one, "the child and the child's clothes." It will be a poor excuse for the servant to say, at his master's return, "Sir, here are all the child's clothes, neat and clean, but the child is lost!" Much so with the account that many will give to God of their souls and bodies at the great day. "Lord, here is my body; I was very grateful for it; I neglected nothing that belonged to its content and welfare; but as for my soul, that is lost and cast away forever. I took little care and thought about it!"—Flavel.

An old man and his wife who came in by the Central road yesterday morning, saw about thirty hacks at the door of the depot and about thirty hackmen shouting "Hack" at them. The man took it all as a high compliment, and turning to the old woman he said: "I tell you, mother, they think we are something great, or they'd never had all these carriages down here to meet us. I wonder how they knew we was coming."

WHAT A SPIDER CAN EAT.

Some of the smaller animals and insects are said to eat more than their own weight daily. If men ate after the same fashion, a famine would soon prevail, and the race must die out. An exchange compares a spider's daily diet with a man's:

In order to test what a spider could do in the way of eating, we arose about day-break one morning, to supply his fine web with a fly. At first, however, the spider did not come from his retreat, so we peeped among the leaves, and there discovered that an earwing had been caught, and was now being feasted on. The spider left the earwing, rolled up the fly, and at once returned to his "first course." This was at half-past five, A. M., in September. At seven, A. M., the earwing had been demolished, and the spider, after resting a little while, and probably enjoying a nap, came down for the fly, which he hid finished at nine, A. M. A little after nine we supplied him with a daddy-long-legs, which was eaten by noon. At one o'clock a blow-fly was greedily seized, and with an appetite apparently no worse for his previous indulgence, he commenced on the blow-fly. During the day, and toward the evening, a great many small green flies, or what are properly termed midges, had been caught in the web; of these we counted one hundred and twenty, all dead, and fast prisoners in the spider's net. Soon after dark, provided with a lantern, we went to examine whether the spider was suffering at all from indigestion, or in any other way from his previous meals; instead, however, of being thus affected, he was employed in rolling up together the various little green midges, which he then took to his retreat and ate. This process he repeated, carrying up the lots in little detachments, until the whole web was eaten, for the web and its contents were bundled up together. A slight rest of about an hour was followed by the most industrious web-making process, and before daybreak another web was ready to be used in the same way. Taking the relative size of the spider and of the creatures it ate, and applying this to a man, it would be somewhat as follows: At daybreak, a small alligator was eaten; at seven, A. M., a lamb; at nine, A. M., a young camelopard; at one o'clock, a sheep; and during the night, one hundred and twenty larks. This, we believe, would be a very fair allowance for one man during twenty-four hours; and could we find one gifted with such an appetite and such a digestion, we can readily comprehend how he might spin five miles of web without killing himself, provided he possessed the necessary machinery.

"BIBLE FIRST."

The Rev. Peter Stryker, D. D., tells the following little story in the Sunday School Times:

About forty years ago, a Christian man sat at his fireside in Philadelphia. Near by him; playing on the floor, was his only child, a beautiful little boy. It was early in the morning. The day's work had not yet begun; and waiting for his breakfast, it may be, the father took up the daily paper to read. The boy at once climbing up into his lap, snatched away the paper, exclaiming, "No, no, papa! Bible first! Bible first, papa!"

That lesson, taught by a little child, was probably a turning-point in the life of that man. Death soon came and rudely tore away the sweet little preacher; but his morning sermon was never forgotten. The business man, in his loneliness and sorrow, went forth to do his work for Christ, "Bible first, papa," was every ringing in his ears. It became the motto of his life. He was exceedingly prosperous in his business. Wealth accumulated. Business increased. Friends multiplied. But uppermost in that man's heart was the precious Word of God. He read and studied it. As teacher and superintendent in the Sabbath school, he taught it. He did more than this—he practised its precepts.

The gentleman referred to was the well-known locomotive-engine builder, Matthias W. Baldwin, of Philadelphia. Would not the child's cry—"Bible first!"—be an excellent motto for every Sunday school teacher in the land?

Truth being founded upon a rock, you must boldly dig to see its foundations, without fear of destroying the edifice; but falsehood being laid on the sand, if you examine its foundations you cause it to fall.