

The Christian Messenger.

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BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1875.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES. Heroes and Judges.

SUNDAY, March 28th, 1875.—Review. God's Mercies to Israel.—Josh. xxiv. 1-13.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men." Psalm cvii. 8.

ANALYSIS.—I. Assembly at Shechem, Vs. 1. 11. God's goodness reviewed. Vs. 2-13.

NOTE UPON SHECHEM—Joshua now assembles the tribes before him at Shechem, between Ebal and Gerizim, a city thronging with ancestral associations. Here the first recorded promise of Canaan was made to the seed of Abraham. Gen. xii. 6, 7. Here Jacob buried the gods of the heathen under an oak (Gen. xxxv. 4), giving similar directions to those, Joshua, centuries after, repeats. Joshua xxiv. 23, 26. Here the bones of Joseph and of his brethren were to be laid to rest. Josh. xxiv. 32; Acts vii. 16. Here the tribes had solemnly entered into covenant with God upon their entrance into Canaan. Josh. viii. 30-35. It was a fitting place for the aged Joshua to engage Israel to review their history.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 1.—Gathered all the tribes of Israel. As represented in their officers with as many others, doubtless, as saw fit to attend. This seems to have been a different occasion from that considered in the last lesson. It was, however, apparently at about the same time, and like that, was for matters of great national moment. Hence, "all the tribes" were gathered. They presented themselves before God. Usually, the phrase, "presented themselves before Jehovah," means before the sanctuary. It is possible that the ark was taken to Shechem for this special occasion.

Verse 2.—Unto all the people. As represented in the assembly. God's revelations are for all men. Thus saith the Lord [Jehovah] God of Israel.—Joshua speaks as a prophet, simply giving a message which was not less truly and fully God's than his own. Your fathers. Forefathers, many generations ago. See the family record in Gen. xi. 11-32. This "flood" was the river Euphrates. The father of Abraham and the father of Nachor. From Nachor were descended Rebekah, Leah and Rachel. Gen. xxiv. 47; xxix. 10. They served other gods. Their forefathers did, and probably Nachor and Abraham also. Abraham and his family were chosen of God's free and sovereign choice, of election. See Paul's comment in Rom. iv. 1-4, and the fuller statement of the doctrine in Rom. ix. 6-33.

Verse 3.—I took your father Abraham, etc. This means not simply that God guided him to Canaan, but that it was God who sought and found and took for himself from the common mass Abraham, and made of him a friend and heir. Throughout all the land of Canaan. See Gen. xii., &c. Gave him Isaac. Isaac, was, in a very special sense, a gift, as he was not only specially promised, but born of Sarah in old age. Gen. xvii. 21.

Verse 4.—Gave unto Isaac Jacob and Esau. See Gen. xxv. 24. They were twins. I gave unto Esau Mount Seir. Gen. xxxvi. 8. South of the Dead Sea. Jacob and his children went down into Egypt. This was immediately a favor to them all, for it saved their lives and gave them place and time and facilities for rapid and extensive multiplication.

Verse 5.—I sent Moses and Aaron. He passes over the intermediate years, because it is only the striking proofs of God's gracious and sovereign care of the nation that he wishes to present. Plagued Egypt, etc. Naturally mentioned, for it was a signal evidence of God's grace, because of the mighty power of Egypt, the utter helplessness of the Israelites, and the terrible and wondrous nature and magnitude of the plagues. Afterward I brought you out. "I brought you"—most manifestly, because so manifestly were the plagues from God.

Verse 6.—The Egyptians pursued, etc. The deliverance was due not to God, in spite of Egypt's strength and hostile determination.

Verse 7.—When they cried unto the Lord, etc. When Israel cried. No hand but that of God could then save. Brought the sea upon them and covered them.

Destroyed by no human hands, but by the flood. Your eyes have seen, etc. Seen by the fathers, it remained ever a thing seen, and as good as seen by the children. So we have seen Christ and the mighty works wrought by him. Ye dwelt in the wilderness. This was in two ways a reminder of God; for in chastisement he refused them immediate entrance into Canaan, and in favor he miraculously supported them in the desert, and trained them for the national life to follow.

Verse 8.—The triumph over the powerful Amorites is recorded in Num. xxi. 21-25. They fought against you. It was not Israel that provoked the war. Israel requested a peaceable passage, and the Amorites chose rather to fight them. The Lord identified himself with his people just so far as they obeyed him, and hence the attack against them was an attack on him. They that be with the obedient disciple are more than they that be against him.

Verse 9, 10.—See this most extraordinary history in Num. xxi-xxiv. Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and warred against Israel. He did not actually bring on the war, because his subtle scheme was thwarted by Jehovah. "He warred," so far as a spirit, purpose, plot and endeavor were concerned. But I would not harken unto Balaam, etc. We have here a new and strange exhibition of Divine power in Israel's behalf. It would not be strange that God did not grant the request of a bad man. A bad man, he was yet a true prophet. This was in many respects, a more wonderful display of God's power than that by which he caused the ass to speak and rebuke his master. There are many references in Scripture to Balaam and Balak. Deut. xxiii. 4, 5; Micah vi. 5; 2 Peter ii. 15; Jude 11; Rev. ii. 14.

Verse 11.—He went over Jordan, etc. This brings us to the events embraced in the study of this question. The crossing of Jordan was one of those splendid and manifest proofs of God's favor which clearly deserved mention along with the plagues of Egypt and the passage of the Red Sea. Joshua, however, says not a word about the miracle. It was enough to mention the fact. Came unto Jericho. The resistance began at Jericho. I delivered them into your hand. Jehovah was the Captain and the Conqueror. Joshua shows not the slightest disposition to take to himself the credit.

Verse 12.—I sent the hornet before you. Some think this should be taken literally, as there the hornets are sometimes so numerous as to become a scourge. Others, more naturally, understand by it that fear, or terror on account of the Israelites which caused them to flee, as boys, with good reason, flee when they have stirred up a hornet's or wasp's nest. Ex. xxiii. 28; Deut. vii. 20. Not with thy sword or with thy bow. Mark how the whole address, in both its form and substance, its affirmation and implication, is designed and adapted to take from the nation all ground of self-confidence, boastful pride, arrogant haughtiness, and to humble it before Jehovah.

Verse 13.—I have given you a land for which you did not labor. Israel entered into an old and settled country, and had not to spend years in bringing it under control, and making for themselves comfortable homes. Achan was Israel's troubler, at Shechem, were the blessings and curses pronounced, Caleb was Joshua's companion, Levi settled in forty eight cities throughout Israel, six of them were cities of refuge, and east of Jordan were the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh.

QUESTIONS.—What great promise was made in Shechem? Gen. xii. 6, 7. Whose bones were buried here? Josh. xxiv. 32; Acts vii. 16. What meeting had been held here since entering Canaan? Josh. viii. 30-35.

Vs. 2. What "flood" is referred to? Do you think Abraham was an idolater?

Vs. 3. Does the doctrine of election make man any the less a free agent? See Matt. xxvi. 24.

Vs. 4. Why give Mount Seir to Esau?

Vs. 5. How many plagues did God send upon Egypt? Which was the last?

Vs. 7. How long a season? Who died in this time? Who lived by special favor?

Vs. 8. From what region was Canaan at last approached?

Who troubled Israel in the fall of Jericho? Where were the blessings and curses pronounced? What noble man has been companion to Joshua all these years? Where did the tribe of Levi settle? How many were cities of refuge? What tribes dwelt east of the Jordan?

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, April 4th, 1875.—Israel's Promise.—Joshua xxiv. 14-18.

Youths' Department.

THEY DIDN'T THINK.

FOR A LITTLE CHILD.

Once a trap was baited With a piece of cheese; It tickled so a little mouse It almost made him sneeze. An old rat said, "There's danger; Be careful where you go!" "Nonsense!" said the other, "I don't think you know!" So he walked in boldly— Nobody in sight; First he took a nibble, Then he took a bite. Close the trap together Snapped, as quick as wink, Catching "mousey" fast there, 'Cause he didn't think.

Once a little turkey, Fond of her own way, Wouldn't ask the old ones Where to go or stray. She said, "I'm not a baby Here I am half-grown; Surely I am big enough To run about alone!" Off she went, but Mister Fox, Hiding, saw her pass; Soon, like snow, her feathers Covered all the grass. So she was a supper Ere the sun did sink, 'Cause she was so head-strong That she wouldn't think!

Once there was a robin Lived outside the door, Who wanted to go inside And hop upon the floor. "O, no!" said the mother, "You must stay here with me; Little birds are safest Sitting in a tree." "I don't care," said robin, And gave his tail a fling; "I don't think the old folks Know quite everything!" Down he flew, and Kitty seized him 'Fore he'd time to blink; "O!" he cried, "I'm sorry, But I didn't think!"

Now, my children, You who read this song, Don't you see what trouble Comes of thinking wrong? And can't you take a warning From their dreadful fate, Who began their thinking When it was too late? Don't think there's always safety Where no danger shows; Don't suppose you know more Than any body knows. But when you're warned of ruin, Pause upon the brink; And don't go over headlong, 'Cause you didn't think.

THE HOUSE TOP SAINT.

BY MRS. J. D. CHAPLIN.

"Yes, yes, sanny, I's mighty fo'-handed, and no ways like poo' white trash, nor yet like any of dese sanctified col'd folks dat gr-b deir liberty like a dog grabs a bone—no thanks to nobody!"

Thus the rabble, queenly Sibyl Melvor ended a long boast of her prosperity since she had become her own mistress, to a young teacher from the North, as she was arranging his snowy linen in his trunk.

"I'm truly glad to hear of all this comfort and plenty, Sibyl; but I hope your treasures are not all laid up on earth. I hope you are a Christian?" asked the young stranger.

Sibyl put up her great hands, and straightened and levated the horns of her gay turban; and then, planting them on her capacious hip, she looked the beardless youth in the eye and exclaimed with a sarcastic smile, "You hope I'm a Christian, do you? Why, sonny, I was a 'spectable sort of Christian afore your mammy was born I reckons! But for dese last twenty-five years, I'se done been a mighty powerful one—one o' de kind dat makes Satan shake in his heels—I is one of de house-top saints, sonny!"

"House-top saints? what kind of saints are those?" asked the young Northerner.

"Ha, ha, ha! laughed Sibyl; "I thought like's not you never even heard tell on 'em, up you way. Dey's mighty scarce any whar; at de Lor's got one on 'em, to any rate, in dis place and on dis plantation!" replied Sibyl, triumphantly.

"And that is you?"

"Yes, sonny, dat's me!"

"Then tell me wat you mean by being a house-top saint?"

"Well, I means at I's been t'rough all de stories o' my Faer's house on arth, from de cellar up; and now I's fairly on de ruff—yes, on de very ridge pole; and dare I sits and sing and shouts and sees heaven—like you ner see it t'rough de clouds down here."

"How did you get here, auntie?"

"How does you get from de cellar to de parlor, and from de prior to chamber, and

from de chamber to de ruff? Why, de builder has put sta'rs thar, and you sees 'em and puts your feet on 'em and mounts, ha?"

"But there are the same sta'rs in our Father's house for all His children, as for you; yet you say house-top saints are very scarce?"

"Sartin, sonny. Sta'rs don't get people up, 'less dey mounts 'em. If dere was a million 'o sta'rs leadin' up to glory, it would'n't help dem dat sits down at de bottom and howls and mourns 'bout how helpless dey is! Brudder Adam, dere, dat's a blackin' of your boots, he's de husband o' my bussum, and yet he's nothin' but only a poor, down-cellar 'sciple, sittin' in de dark, and whinin' and lamentin' 'cause he ain't up sta'rs! I says to him, says I, Brudder—I's allus called him Brudder since he was born into de kingdom—why don't you come up into de light?"

"Oh," say he, "Sibby, I's too onworthy; I doesn't deserve de light dat God has made for de holy ones."

"Phoo, says I, Brudder Adam! Don't you 'member, says I, when our massa done married de gov'ness, arter old missus' death? Miss Alice, she was as noor as an unfeathered chicken; but did she go down cellar and sit 'mong de po'k barr'ls and de trash 'cause she was poor and wasn't worthy to live up sta'rs? Not she! She tuk her place to de head o' de table, and war all de lacery and jewelry massa gib her, and hold up her head high, like she was sayin', I's no more poor gov'ness, teaching Col'n Melvor's child'n; but I's de Col'n's b'loved wife, and I stan's for de mother of his child'n, as she had a right to say! And de Col'n love her all de more for her not bein' a fool and settin' down cellar 'mong de po'k barr'ls!"

"Dere, sonny, dat's de way I talk to Brudder Adam! But so far it baint foted him up! De poor deluded cretur' thinks he's humble, when he's only low-minded and grovellin' like! It's unworthy of a blood-bought soul for to stick to de cold, dark cellar, when he mought live in de light and warf, up on de house-top!"

"That's very true, Sibyl; but few of us reach de house-top;" said the young man thoughtfully.

"Mo' fools you, den!" cried Sibyl. "De house-top is dere, and de sta'rs is dere, and de grand glorious Master is dere, up 'bove all, callin' to you day and night, 'Frien, come up higher!' He reaches down His shinin' han' and offers for to draw you up; but you shakes your head and pulls back and says, 'No, no, Lord; I isn't nothin'.' Is dat de way to treat Him who has bought life and light for you? Oh, shame on you, sonny, and on all de down-cellar and parlor and chamber Christians!"

"What are parlor Christians, auntie?" asked the young man.

"Parlor Christians, honey? Why dems is de ones dat gets barly out o' de cellar and goes straitway and forgets what kind o' creturs dey was down dere! Dey grow proud and dresses up fine, like de worl's folks, and dances, and sings worldly trash o' songs, and has only just 'ligion enough to make a show wid. Our ole missus, she used to train 'mong her col'd folks, wuss den ole King Furio did 'mong de 'Gyptians. But, bless you, de minute de parson or any other good brudder or sister come along, how ehe did tune up her harp! She was mighty 'ligious in de parlor, but she left her 'ligion dere when she went out."

"I do think missus got to heaven, wid all her infirmities. But she didn't get very high up till de bridegroom come and called for her! Den she said to me, one dead-o'-night, 'Oh Sibby,' says she—she held tight on to my han';—Oh, Sibby, if you could only go along o' me, and I could keep hold o' your garments, I'd have hope o' getting through de shinin' gate! your clothes and your face and your hands shines like silver, Sibby!" says she. Dear soul, says I, dis light you see isn't mine! It all comes 'flected on to poor black Sibyl from de cross; and dere is heaps more of it to shine on to you and every other poor sinner dat will come near enough to catch de rays!"

"Oh," says she, "Sibby, when I heard you shoutin' Glory to God and talkin' o' Him on de house-top, I thought it was all su'stition and igno'ance. But now, Oh Sibby, I'd like to touch de hem o' your garment, and wipe de dust off your shoes, if I could on'y ketch a glimpse o' Christ."

"Do you b'lieve dat you's a sinner, missus?" says I.

"Yes, de chief o' sinners," says she, with a groan.

"Do you b'lieve dat Christ died for sin-

ners, and is able to carry out His plan? says I.

"Yes," says she.

"Well, den, says I; if you's sinner 'nough, and Christ is Saviour 'nough, what's to hinder your bein' saved? Just you quit lookin' at yourself, and look to Him."

"Den she ketch sight o' de cross, and sho forgot herself; and her face light up like an angel's; and she was a new missus from dat yar hour till she went up. She died a singin'."

"In my han' no price I bring Simple to dy cross I cling."

"But she mought a sung all de way along, if she hadn't forgot de humiliation o' de cellar, and 'bused de privileges o' de parlor. Parlors is fine things; but dey ain't made for folks to spen' deir whole time in."

"What's a chamber-saint, auntie?" asked the young man.

"Chamber saints is dem dat's 'scaped de dark and de scare of de cellar, and de honey-traps o' de parlor, and got through many worries, and so feels 'a-tired, and is glad o' rest. Dey says, 'Well, we's got 'long mighty well, and can now see de way clear up to glory.' And sometimes dey forgets dat dey's on'y half way up, and thinks dey's come off conqueror a'ready. So dey's very apt to lie down wid deir hands folded, thinkin' dat Satan isn't no-whar, now! But he is close by 'em, and he smoooves deir soft pillows, and sings 'em to sleep and to slumber; and de work o' de kingdom don't get no help from dem—not for one while! De chamber is a sort o' half-way house made for rest and comfort; but some turns it into a roostin' place! You know Brudder Bunyan, sonny?"

"No."

"What, never heard tell o' John Bunyan?"

"Oh, yes."

"I thought you couldn't all be so ignorant 'bout 'ligion up in Boston as dat! Well, you know he wrote 'bout a brudder dat got asleep and lous his roll, and dat's what's de matter wid heaps o' Christians in de worl'. Dey falls asleep and loses deir hope."

"And do you keep in this joyful and wakeful frame all de time, auntie?" asked the young learner.

"I does, honey. By de help of de Lord, and a contin'l watch, I keep de head ob de cle sarprint washed under my heel, pretty general. 'Why, sometime, when he rises up and thrusts his fangs out, I has such power gin me to stomp on him dat I can hear his bones crack—mostly! I tell you, honey, 'ho, don't like me, and he's most gin me up for jags.'"

"Now, Sibyl, you are speaking in figures. Tell me plainly how you get de victory over Satan."

"Heaps o' ways," she replied. "Sometimes I gets up in de mornin', an I sees work enough for two women ahead o' me. Maybe my head done ache and my naryes done rampant; and I hears a voice sayin' in my ear, 'Come or go what likes, Sibby, dat ar work is got to be done! You's sick and tired a'ready! Your lot's a mighty hard one, sister Sibby—Satan often has de impudence to call me 'sister'—and if Adam was only a pearter man, and if Tom wasn't lame, and if Judy and Cle'patry wasn't dead, you could live mighty easy. But just you look at dat ar pile o' shirts to iron, 'sides cookin' for Adam an Tom, and keepin' your house like a Christian oughter! Dat's how he 'sails me when I'se weak! Den I faces straight about and looks at him, and says, in de words o' Scripture, 'Clar out and git abind my back, Satan!' Dat ar pile o' shirts ain't high enough to hide Him dat is my strength! And sometimes I whisks de shirts up and rolls 'em into a bundle, and heaves 'em back into de clothes bask't, and says to 'em, 'You lay dar till to-morrow, will you? I ain't no slave to work, nor to Satan' for I can 'furd to wait, and sing a hime to cher my spirits, if I like.' And den Satan drops his tail and slinks off, most general; and I goes 'bout my work a singin'!"

"My Master bruise de sarprint's head, And bind him wid a chain; Come, brudders, hololujah shout, Wid all your might and main! Hololujah!"

"Does Satan always assail you through your work?" asked the young stranger.

"No, bless you, honey; sometimes he 'tacks me through my stummiack; and dat's de way he 'tacks rich and grand folks, most general. If I eat too hearty o fat bacon and corn' cake in times gone, I used to get low in 'ligion, and my hope

failed, at my Christi me! S bacon! keep my and notl Him I break Jesus to 'em has Some for on dat shinin' But, so ain't m Jesus to here da cross, a o' poor ners He to get how de and get one o' him w he's hu Satan to my more t