

The Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, N.S., FEBRUARY 8, 1875.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1875.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES. Heroes and Judges.

SUNDAY, February 7th, 1875.—Achan's Sin.—vii. 19-26.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Take heed, and beware of covetousness."—Luke xii. 15.

THE CONNECTION.—In the preceding lesson we saw how God taught the Israelites that he abhorred the sins of the heathen; in this the Israelites are taught that he is equally strict with them, visiting upon them their iniquities in fearful judgments, and permitting them to conquer their foes only so long as they were faithful to his covenant.

The walls of Jericho having fallen, the two men who had been concealed by Rahab, when they visited the city as spies, were instructed to enter her house and bring her forth safely, together with all her relatives. They did so, and found a large group of her kindred assembled and waiting for deliverance from the destruction which raged without. After the deliverance of Rahab and her kindred, and the slaughter of all the other inhabitants of Jericho, it was burned with fire. To furnish to all generations a monument of warning against idolatry and opposition to Jehovah, Joshua uttered, doubtless by divine inspiration, a solemn rebuke upon the man who should attempt to rebuild the fallen fortification, vi. 26. Two persons disregarded the solemn devotement of Jericho to Jehovah; and both did it to their cost. One was Hiel, a citizen of Bethel, who lived five centuries subsequently, in the reign of Ahab, 1 Kings xvi. 34. The curse, it seems, did not forbid the erection of houses on the site of the ruined city; the Hebrew word rendered build frequently refers merely to fortifications, 1 Kings xv. 17; 2 Chron. xi. 6; xiv. 5. Hence the curse speaks of "setting up gates," referring to the walls. The other one, who ignored the devotement of Jericho and all which it contained, committed his crime immediately after the warning words of Joshua were uttered, and while all others were engaged in the work of destruction. Achan took of the devoted thing, Josh. vii. 1; and his sin was discovered by the falling of God's judgment upon the people with whom he was associated.

EXPOSITION.—6. Rent his clothes. An act expressing extreme grief and horror. The rent extended usually but a few inches. In most instances the outer garment alone was rent, Job i. 20; ii. 12; sometimes only the inner was injured; but occasionally both were torn, Ezra ix. 3. Fell to the earth upon his face. Standing was the usual posture of the Israelites in prayer, Ex. xxxiii. 10; 1 Kings viii. 14, 22; 1 Sam. viii. 26; Luke xviii. 11. But when special humiliation was expressed, they bowed on the knees, Ps. xcv. 6, or fell prostrate, 2 Chron. xx. 18; Ezra x. 1; Matt. xxvi. 39. Joshua assumed the attitude of extreme anguish and most importunate supplication. Before the ark of Jehovah. It is probable that by this time the tabernacle was reared in Gilgal, and the ark placed in the holy of holies, so that, though Joshua in his prostration fell before it, he did not have it in sight. Until the eventide. Probably many hours. The elders. This term is sometimes employed in the Bible as a designation of household or civil officers in general, Gen. i. 7; 2 Sam. xii. 17; Ezek. xxvii. 9. Sometimes it is used to designate men to whom great respect was paid, whether officers or not, Gen. i. 6. The elders were not identical with the heads of tribes but are distinguished from these, Deut. xxix. 9. They always appear as the representatives of the people, Ex. iii. 16, 18; xii. 21; xvii. 5, 6; xviii. 12; xix. 7; xxiv. 1, 9, 14, so much so that elders and people are occasionally used as equivalent terms, comp. Josh. xxiv. 1 with 2, 19, 21; 1 Sam. viii. 4 with 7, 10, 19. Moses selected from them his assistants in his administration of affairs, Ex. xxiv. 1; Num. xi. 16, 17; Ex. xix. 7; Deut. xxxi. 9; Ex. xvii. 5. Israel. A name used here, as frequently elsewhere, as a designation of the whole people; it is equivalent to the sons of Israel. Put dust upon heads. Expressing the deepest sorrow, 2 Sam. xiii. 19; xv. 32; Josh. vii. 6; Esth. vi. 1, 3; Jer. vi. 26; Job ii. 12; xvi. 15; xlii. 6; Isa. lxi. 3; Rev. xviii. 19. Their mourning was most sincere and profound, not so

much by the loss of about thirty-six men, as by the loss of God's favor which the defeat made evident.

Verse 7.—Joshua said. The words of Joshua sound much like the murmuring for which the people of Israel were punished in the desert, Num. xvi. 2, 3. Joshua was actuated (1) by pity for the people, who seemed to be in danger of destruction, vs. 7, (2) by the generous shame of a soldier whose forces are defeated, vs. 8, and (3) by jealousy for the name of Jehovah, vs. 9. It does not detract from this prayer to say that the successive arguments used to move God are eminently human, such as man would address to his fellow. Moses, in his entreaty for his nation, uses the same argument, Num. xiv. 13-19; Deut. ix. 28. Hast thou... brought. The passage of the Jordan was effected at God's command and by his miraculous aid. The Amorites. It is probable, from this mention of the Amorites, that Ai was held by them. The earliest notice, Gen. xiv. 7, represents them as dwelling on the barren heights west of the Dead Sea. They are next found near Hebron, Gen. xiii. 18, comp. xiv. 13. They aided Abraham to rescue Lot, Gen. xiv. 24. Later they seem to have crossed the Jordan, and to have taken from the Moabites the rich pasture-land between the Jabbok and the Arnon, Num. xxi. 13, 26. After the conquest of Canaan, the Amorites utterly disappear from history. To destroy us? His language was that of great anxiety and apprehension in view of the perils which the withdrawal of the divine favor brought near. Would to God we had been content. Joshua seems to fear that the discontent of the Israelites, when they were encamped long in the conquered country of Moab, in sight of the promised land, and impatient to possess it, may have been the sin for which they were now punished. Beyond the Jordan. Where the chosen people had already conquered a considerable territory, which they might have occupied for a time, at least, in peace.

Verse 8.—O Lord, what shall I say. Joshua was conscious of great boldness, and possibly feared that God would consider his words too rash. Joshua recognized the right of God, as the supreme Master of events; to dispose of them as He deems best, while at the same time he boldly uttered his grief. The cowardice and defeat of his forces filled him with speechless confusion. Joshua was a simple soldier, accustomed to deeds, rather than words; while Moses was a man of more complex and lofty genius, possessing the finest literary culture. Israel. Not without some reference to its meaning, "one who strives with God, and, by implication, has power with him," the preacher, Gen. xxxii. 28. The back. Literally, their neck.

Verse 9.—The Canaanites. The Canaanites occupied much of the Jordan Valley, and also the plains along the Mediterranean ocean, Num. xiii. 29. Most of the nations of Palestine were descendants of Canaan, Gen. x. 15-18. The inhabitants of the land. Who were trembling with fear of Israel, Josh. ii. 10, 11; v. 1, and taking measures to learn quickly about every movement of the invaders. Shall environ us round. Forgetting their mutual dissensions in the presence of a common danger, and forming a coalition. It is a part of the soldier's duty to anticipate the probable conduct of the enemy. Joshua here exhibits his singular sagacity in such conjectures. He speaks as a patriot who loved his people. What wilt thou do unto thy great name? We are called by thy name. If we fail, the heathen will mock thy name, and the world will lose the knowledge of thy power and goodness. The name of Jehovah had been made great among the heathen by his wonders in Israel; and character of God had been displayed in them; and should they perish, that name would become a derision, and the world would sink deeper in its forgetfulness of the only object of true worship. The jealousy of Joshua for the honor of God was pleasing to him to whom it was thus expressed.

Verse 10.—And the Lord said, &c. At eventide, vs. 6; for Joshua was prostrate until that time; and he is here commanded to arise. God's delay in answering the prayers of his people was well adapted to impress upon them the magnitude of the sin which was among them, and the terrors of his judgment. See the similar instance, Num. xx. 6, 7. Get thee up! The answer is given suddenly and in tones of sharp reproof, expressing the divine displeasure with Israel's sin. Joshua was not rebuked for praying; but only for that tone of doubt and wavering, that shadow of dis-

trust, which mingled with his prayers. Israel has sinned. Why is the sin of Achan ascribed to the whole people, who were ignorant of it? 1. He had been educated among them, and their previous rebellions, Num. xx. 1-11; xxi. 4-9, and the unbelief from which these rebellions sprang, had doubtless encouraged him in a habit of sin; hence the whole people was justly responsible. 2. The Scriptures speak of the nation as an organic unity. 3. In all history we observe that the nation suffers for the wickedness of a few. 4. If the nation were not held responsible for the suppression of crime it would grow lax and indifferent, and permit crime to flourish. 5. We are taught in the whole lesson that when the nation faithfully discharges its duty in searching out and punishing sin, God no longer holds it responsible. My covenant. The covenant of God is his promise of blessing. Its condition was the obedience of the people, Ex. xix. 8; xxiv. 7. Their gross disobedience had now broken it. The accursed thing. The objects taken had been devoted to Jehovah; the sin was therefore that of sacrilege. Dissembled. Lied. Achan doubtless appeared to be a very holy man, and preserved the appearance of innocence.

Verse 12.—Neither will I be with you. God's language is conditional, containing a fearful threat. By destroying him who had devoted himself to destruction, Israel as a nation would cease to be devoted to destruction.

Verse 13.—Up! Arouse thyself, make haste, as in Ex. xxxii. 1. One who has not God's favor should give himself no rest until he has gained it. Sanctify the people. Cause them to perform such ceremonial observances as are used to express sorrow for sin, and also its abandonment, Gen. xxxv. 2; Ex. xix. 10, 14, and exhort them to inward purification. Immediate steps must be taken.

Verse 14.—God did not point out to Joshua the thief; he described the means to be used. In the morning. Early; see vs. 16; and on Josh. vi. 12. There was in the present instance the additional reason of haste to regain the divine favor. The Lord taketh. There were various methods of casting lots. The Hebrew word for lot suggests that small stones, probably white and black ones, were used. These were probably drawn from a chest; hence the expressions used of the lot, that it "came up." Tribes... families... houses. The family was a subordinate division of the tribe, a group of closely-related households. The household was the family in our modern sense of the word, Num. i. 20-43; v. 18, 20, 22, 24, 26. Shall come. The heads of the tribes came to the tabernacle, before which the lot was cast; then the heads of the families of the tribe that had been taken, etc.

Verse 15.—Burnt with fire. After he had been put to death by stoning, vs. 25. All that he hath. The question arises, whether the sons and daughters of Achan were put to death with him. Some have supposed that they were led to the place of execution merely as spectators. It should be presumed that he acted in the strictest justice. To assume the contrary, is to bring an awful charge against the Most Holy One, without the least evidence to sustain it. Folly. Sin is folly in both an intellectual and moral sense; for it is the source of all misfortune and disorder, Gen. xxiv. 7; Deut. xxii. 21; Judg. xix. 23, 24; 2 Sam. xiii. 12; Pa. xiv. 1; liii. 2. Achan frankly and penitently confessed his sin. He had been attracted by a "mantle of Shinar," a splendid garment manufactured in the country of Babylon and Nineveh, famous for such articles, and brought to Jericho by traveling merchants from the far East. He had taken, also, silver coin amounting to about \$125, a considerable sum in an age when money had ten times the purchasing power that it now possesses. After the execution of the divine sentence against the criminals, the favor of Jehovah returned to Israel. The nation was in its infancy, when it was most easily impressed by such events as those related in the lesson.

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.—The grief of Joshua should be an example to all ministers and Sabbath School teachers, when those committed to their charge are seen to be resting under the divine displeasure. God permits us to reason with him, vs. 7. But when we array our arguments before him, it should be in humble submission to his higher wisdom. God does not accept a prayer because of its eloquence, or reject it for its broken forms of speech. A jealous care for the honor of God's name is one mark of a true Christian, vs. 9. What wilt thou do to thy great name?

There is a time to pray, and a time to act; to spend in devotion the time that should be given to either secular or sacred business is displeasing to heaven.

The sin of one man is a trouble to the whole community in which he lives; to his family, to his friends, and to all about him, vs. 6-15.

The whole community is in some sense responsible for the offenses of every criminal which it produces or harbors.

The three words occurring in this narrative, 'I saw,' 'I coveted,' 'I took,' strikingly express the rise, progress, and consummation of crime.—Heroes & Judges.

SUNDAY, February 14th, 1875.—Ebal and Gerizim.—Joshua viii. 30-35.

Youths' Department.

A HEN STORY.

I once owned a large flock of hens. I generally kept them shut up. But one spring I concluded to let them run in my yard, after I had clipped their wings so they could not fly. One day, when I came home to dinner, I learned that one of my neighbors had been there, full of wrath, to let me know my hens had been in his garden, and that he had killed several of them and thrown them over into my yard. I was greatly enraged because he had killed my beautiful hens, that I valued so much. I determined at once to be revenged, to sue him, or in some way to get redress. I sat down, and ate my dinner as calmly as I could. By the time I had finished my meal I became more cool, and thought that perhaps it was not best to fight with my neighbor about hens, and thereby make him my bitter, lasting enemy. I concluded to try another way, being sure that it would be better.

After dinner I went to my neighbor's. He was in his garden. I went out, and found him in pursuit of one of my hens with a club, trying to kill it. I accosted him. He turned upon me, his face inflamed with wrath, and broke out in a great fury: "You have abused me. I will kill all your hens, if I can get at them. I never was so abused. My garden is ruined."

"I am very sorry for it," said I. "I did not wish to injure you, and now see that I have made a great mistake in letting out my hens. I ask your forgiveness; and am willing to pay you six times the damage."

The man seemed confounded. He did not know what to make of it. He looked up at the sky—then down to the earth—then at his neighbor—then at his club—and then at the poor hen he had been pursuing, and said nothing.

"Tell me, now," said I, "what is the damage, and I will pay you sixfold; and my hens shall trouble you no more. I will leave it entirely to you to say what I shall do. I cannot afford to lose the love and good will of my neighbors, and quarrel with them, for hens or anything else."

"I am a great fool!" said the neighbor. The damage is not worth talking about; and I have more need to compensate you than you me, and to ask your forgiveness than 'you mine.'—A Kiss for a Blow.

TAKE CARE OF THE EYES.

Multitudes of men and women have made their eyes weak for life by the too free use of eyesight, reading small print and doing fine sewing. In view of these things, it is well to observe the following rules in the use of the eyes:

Avoid all sudden changes between light and darkness.

Never read by twilight, or on a very cloudy day.

Never sleep so that on waking the eyes shall open on the light of the window.

Do not use eyesight by light so scant that it requires an effort to discriminate.

Never read or sew directly in front of the light of a window.

It is best to have the light from above, or obliquely, or over the left shoulder.

Too much light creates a glare, and pains and confuses the sight. The moment you are sensible of an effort to distinguish, that moment stop and talk, walk or ride.

CONSOLATION.

When the Rev. Mr. C— was minister of the U. P. Church in Sanquar, he called one day in the course of his pastoral visitation on a decent old woman who was a member of his congregation. Engaged in friendly conversation with her, he said, "I hear your potatoes are not very good this year, Jennett." "Deed are they no, sir," said Jennett, "they're very bad; but I've reason to be thanfu' that ither folks are as bad as my ain."

Temperance.

We have received a copy of the following circular with a neat calendar in the centre. The "Reasons" will commend themselves to all right-thinking Christian people. We know not who got it up, but whoever it was, they deserve the thanks of the citizens for doing it. The Calendar would be very handy if it were pasted on a card and hung up in every house. The Reasons would then be often referred to as, they deserve to be.

REASONS

WHY RATE-PAYERS SHOULD NOT SIGN APPLICATIONS FOR LICENSES TO SELL INTOXICATING LIQUORS.

1. The more licenses, the more drinking and drunkenness. Every licensed shop, saloon, bar-room, or other drinking place is therefore a manufactory of drunkards. As drunkards increase, so increase misery, vice, pauperism and crime.

2. Licenses therefore violate the rights of property, by increasing the taxes on the sober and industrious for the support or punishment, of the idle, the diseased, the dissolute and the criminal.

3. Licenses give the appearance of respectability to a traffic essentially and universally demoralising.

4. Among licensed liquor dealers, a large proportion is always found who will evade or violate the most stringent regulations. They are forbidden (a) to sell to a drunkard (b) to a minor; (c) to an Indian; (d) on the Sabbath day; (e) when forbidden by the wife, child, sister, or parent of a person addicted to drink. Let the people of Halifax consider whether these restrictions are not continually violated and disregarded.

5. By the fact of requiring licenses, and otherwise restricting the liquor traffic, the State acknowledges it to be dangerous to the community. If dangerous why extend and sanction it?

6. The liquor traffic degrades and demoralizes those engaged in it. Often themselves and members of their families become victims to intemperance, and do not live out half their days.

7. Every liquor shop, bar-room or drinking saloon becomes a resort of idlers, a temptation in the path of the weak, a barrier to all moral improvement, and a trap-door to perdition.

8. At liquor shops, fathers (and mothers too) often spend in drink the wages which ought to purchase the necessaries of life for their families; the liquor traffic flourishes while homes are made wretched, and children suffer from want, or grow up in ignorance, idleness and vice.

9. Licensed drinking places war against industry. Every master mechanic can testify that one of his greatest difficulties is the drinking habits of those employed by him—habits which are encouraged by the enticements of licensed liquor shops.

10. Licenses serve to extend a trade which lives and thrives at the expense of the baker, the butcher, the tailor, the shoemaker, the carpenter, the mason, the painter, the blacksmith, and every other trade and business which helps to make a community prosperous, moral and happy. Licenses serve to encourage habits which destroy both body and soul. Multiply licenses and you multiply inmates to the poor-house, the jail, and penitentiary. You multiply bloated forms and ruined intellects. You make desolate the homes of the living and fill up the habitations of the dead. Diminish licenses and you diminish temptations to drunkenness with all its evil results.

People of Halifax, the law now gives you power largely to restrain a terrible evil existing in our midst. All licenses for the sale of liquors within the City of Halifax expire in March, and to be renewed require the signatures of a majority of the rate-payers within each licensing district. See that you sign no recommendation for licenses. Let the liquor sellers seek some business which will tend to the benefit, not to the injury of the community, and give your support to the Legislature and the civic authorities in giving effect to a wholesome and righteous law.

"DON'T GO, FATHER."

A gentleman, lecturing in the neighborhood of London, said:

"Everybody has influence, even that little child," pointing to a little girl in her father's arms.

"That's true," cried the man.

At the close, he said to the lecturer, "I beg your pardon, sir but I could not help speaking. I was a drunkard; but as I did not like to go to the public house alone, I used to carry the child. As I approached the public-house one night, hearing a great noise inside, she said 'Don't go father.' 'Hold your tongue, child.' Please, father, don't go.' 'Hold your tongue I say.' Presently I felt a big tear falling on my cheek. I could not go a step farther, sir. I turned around and went home, and I have never been in a public-house since—thank God for it! I am now a happy man, sir; and this little girl has done it all; and when you said that even she had influence I could not help saying, 'That's true, sir.'"