

The Christian Messenger.

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BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1875.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.
Heroes and Judges.

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

GOLDEN TEXT.—"The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey."—Joshua xxiv. 24.

In the first part of his address, which we considered in the last lesson, Joshua recites the benefits which God had conferred upon the people. In the present lesson he proceeds to apply his argument. He tells them that it is their duty, in return for such undeserved and distinguishing blessings, to fear and serve Jehovah, and to put away all other gods. The people are deeply moved by his appeal, and solemnly promise that they will not forsake Jehovah or serve other gods.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 14.—*New therefore fear.* It was not a slavish fear that Joshua commanded the Israelites to entertain; but a reverential awe. The mercies which Israel had received had been attended by judgments upon his foes and upon the rebellious of his own people. Many of the displays of God's power had been awful, as in the destruction of Jericho. There was occasion in remembering the history of the chosen people, for both love, ch. xxiii. 11, and reverential fear. *Serve him in sincerity and truth.* Not in outward forms, merely, but also in the heart and the life, John iv. 23, 24. *Put away the gods which your fathers served.* We thus learn that idolatry lurked among the Israelites, and that it was that form of idolatry which had been known in the family of Terah of old, vs. 2. It must have existed among the Israelites in every generation, a traditional evil, for there had been no recent opportunity to learn it anew. It had been so far repressed, usually, by the sentiment of the better class, that it kept itself in secret; but it had not been wholly destroyed. We find many traces of it where we should little expect them, Gen. xxi. 19, 30-35; xxv. 1-4; Deut. xxxii. 16; comp. Lev. xvii. 7 with Ex. xx. 7 ff.; xxiii. 3, 8, and Amos v. 26. In Egypt it probably became somewhat gross, Ex. xxiii. 3, 8; Acts vii. 42, 43. But the experiences of the wilderness tended to suppress it, and the form in which it existed in the time of Joshua was probably more refined. With a belief in Jehovah was combined the idea that he could be worshiped better by the aid of an image to represent his attributes to the senses. Similar ideas are found among the more intelligent of the heathen to day. Thus, the golden calf was probably regarded as a representative of the true God, Exodus xxxii. 4, 5; 1 Kings xii. 27-33. But this refined form of idolatry encouraged the grosser superstitions and cruelties of heathenism and even tended to degenerate into them, as the worship of the golden calf was attended with immorality, Ex. xxxii. 6. Even David's household was not free from the sin here rebuked, 1 Sam. xix. 13, 16. *In Egypt.* The family of Jacob, probably without his knowledge, had carried their images to Egypt, where they had been worshiped secretly or openly. *Serve.* True religion is a free and glad service, and not that of slaves.

Verse 15.—*If it seem evil.* All true service of God is the result of free choice on the part of the soul. The decision must be with themselves. *Choose you.* The danger in their cases was that they would make no decided choice, but indolently suffer corruption to creep in, lukewarm towards all forms of religion. Joshua's object was to press them to a decision, while there was the best prospect that it would be favorable to his wishes. Many souls are lost through indecision and indifference. *This day.* So the gospel demands that we decide at once, 2 Cor. ii. 6. *But as for me and my house.* When, in view of both mercy and judgment, they clung to Jehovah—he renewed the covenant, vs. 21-28. No orator ever displayed greater skill. My household, my wife, children, and servants. Every husband and father is largely responsible for the character of his household. *We will serve the Lord.* A noble resolution. Each person must die alone, and be judged alone, we should be determined to serve God alone, if all the world should forsake Him and despise us.

Verse 16.—*The people.* Probably, upon

the sides of Ebal and Gerizim, vs. 2. *God forbid.* An expression of horror at the thought of forsaking Jehovah. We must remember here that the people had really begun to fall into idolatry, vs. 14. Joshua did not call them together without a reason. Their answer shows, however, that they could still be touched with an appeal in the name of Jehovah.

Verse 17.—*He it is that brought us up.* This answer shows that Joshua had succeeded in awaking their gratitude and love, Ex. xx. 2; Deut. v. 6.

Verse 18.—*Jehovah drave.* They here confess that their victory was owing not to themselves or to any heathen god, but to Jehovah. *We also.* As well as you and your house. The response of the people to the appeal of Joshua was very hearty and decided. Joshua warned the people that Jehovah was exceedingly strict, and that they might grow weary of His government, vs. 19, 20. The speaker did this not only in fairness to the people, but also in order to render their decision more sober, and take from it any character of mere momentary impulse. The answer of the people to this warning was such as Joshua desired, vs. 21. He however addressed them still more solemnly, telling them that if they departed from God they were witnesses against themselves that they had broken their promise, vs. 22. Having thus won them to Jehovah, he required them to put away, at once, their idols, and turn their heart to Jehovah, in meditation and prayer and worship and service and trust, vs. 23. Of course, the command to put away their idols would not be obeyed literally till they returned to their homes; for these objects would not be brought to Shechem on such an occasion. He renewed the covenant of God with them, as Moses had done in the plains of Moab, Deut. xxix. 1, and as he himself had done, many years before, soon after the crossing of the Jordan, ch. viii. 30-35. A part of the ceremonies are described, vs. 23-27. We do not know whether sacrifices were offered.

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.—God demands not only an outward, but an inward obedience to his law.

We should desire not simply to be saved, but to serve God, vs. 15.

Many souls are lost by their own indifference. They intend to decide for God, but they delay, and are lost, vs. 15.

An immediate decision should be made. *This day.* You should not wait for others, however dear; rather imitate the sublime resolution of Joshua.

Those that lead and rule in other things, should be first in the service of God.

Heads of households should feel not only anxiety, but deep responsibility in respect to those thus intrusted to their charge, vs. 15.

The service of God is nothing below the most distinguished of men. It heightens every other distinction, and makes all honor still more honorable.

—From Heroes & Judges.

SUNDAY, April 11th, 1875.—The Promise broken.—Judges ii. 11-16.

Youths' Department.

WE CAN MAKE HOME HAPPY.

Though we may not change the cottage
For a mansion tall and grand,
Or exchange a little grass plot
For a boundless stretch of land—
Yet there's something brighter, dearer,
Than the wealth we'd thus command.

Though we have no means to purchase
Costly pictures rich and rare—
Though we have no silken hangings
For the walls so cold and bare—
We can hang them o'er with garlands—
Flowers blossom everywhere.

We can always make home cheerful,
If the right course we begin;
We can make its inmates happy,
And their truest blessings win;
It will make the small room brighter
If we let the sunshine in.

We can gather round the fireside
When the evening hours are long;
We can blend our hearts and voices
In a happy, social song;
We can guide some erring brother,
Lead him from the path of wrong.

We may fill our homes with music,
And with sunshine brimming o'er,
If against all dark intruders
We will firmly close the door—
Yet, should evil shadows enter,
We must love each other more.

There are treasures for the lowly
Which the grandest fail to find;
There's a chain of sweet affection
Binding friends of kindred mind—
We may reap the choicest blessings
From the poorest lot assigned.

The habit of being always employed is a great safeguard through life, as well as essential to the culture of virtue.

THE THREATENED BLOW.

I want to tell my younger readers true story about Eddie and Willie; the one eight, the other six years of age. Bright little fellows they were, and loved each other dearly. They would play happily together for hours while their dear mother was attending to the wants of their sweet baby sister. But it happened one day, as they were enjoying their plays, that Eddie, the older brother, did something that exceedingly displeased Willie. In an instant, he raised his little fist and said: "I would strike you, Eddie—*il mother was willing!*" Though he was very angry, the hand fell. The blow was not given. A long pause ensued, but they finally resumed their sports.

How many children, do you suppose, would have been thus thoughtful, when angry, of mother's wishes.

When anything occurs to displease you and your naughty tempers rise and make you feel as if you would just like to strike your dear brother or sister, or any other playmate, remember Willie. Stop and think "if mother" would be "willing." It will save you many a headache.

FOLLOWING JESUS IN THE DARK.

"Mamma," said little Bessie, "I should be afraid to die, 'cause I should lose my way in the dark."

Her mother did not say a word, but just went out and turned off the gas in the hall. Then she opened the door a little way, and said: "Come, dear, it is your bedtime. Take hold of my hand and I will lead you up stairs."

So Bessie put out her little fat hand in her mother's and trotted bravely up stairs in the dark. After she had said "Our Father," and "Now I lay me," and had laid her curly head upon the pillow, her mother said: "You were not afraid coming up, were you, my darling?" "Oh, no, mamma," she answered; "I could'n't be, 'cause I had hold of your hand."

"Well," said her mother; "then you need not be afraid of death; for Jesus is holding out his hand to you, and you have only to put your own in his, and he will lead you safely through the dark."

"But how can I take hold of his hand, mamma?"

"By trying to be good every day, and praying to him to help you; he loves little children so well, that they need not be afraid to follow him anywhere."

"I guess he'll take me up-stairs to heaven some day," said Bessie; "I won't be afraid any more, would you, mamma." —*Congregationalist.*

A WILY TEMPTER.

There is an eastern story of a sultan who overslept himself, so as not to awaken at the hour of prayer. So the Devil came and waked him, and told him to get up and pray. "Who are you?" said the sultan. "Oh, no matter," replied the other, "my act is good, is it not? No matter who does the good action, so long as it is good." "Yes," replied the sultan, "but I think you are Satan. I know your face; you have some bad motive." "But," says the other, "I am not so bad as I am painted. You see I have left off my horns and tail. I am a pretty good fellow, after all. I was an angel once, and still keep some of my original goodness." "That's all very well," replied the sagacious and prudent caliph, "but you are the tempter; that's your business; and I wish to know why you want me to get up and pray." "Well," said the Devil, with a flirt of impatience, "if you must know, I will tell you. If you had slept and forgotten your prayers, you would have been sorry for it afterward, and penitent; but if you go on, as now, and do not neglect a single prayer for ten years, you will be so satisfied with yourself that it will be worse for you than if you had missed one sometimes and repented of it. God loves your fault mixed with penitence, more than your virtue seasoned with pride."

HOW ROBERT COLLYER WAS BROUGHT UP.

She never heard a lecture, or read a book about health in her life that I know of; but she had a code of traditions and instincts to which she held always. She whitewashed her cottage from top to bottom with quicklime twice a year, and once a year painted all the woodwork. Twice a week she scrubbed and scoured the floors so that they were as clean as hands could make them; and how many times she

swept them besides, and covered them with white sand, I should be afraid to say. She also rubbed the better sort of furniture with bees-wax and turpentine until it shone like a dusky mirror. We slept on chaff beds; but she always cleared them out in the spring, got new chaff, always had her whole little stock of linen white and pure to wear and to sleep in; and once a week, while we were small, put us through untold tortments with yellow soap and the most intolerable towels. "Who hath red eyes? Who hath contention? Who hath strife?" The boys who have to go into a tub with a woman like my mother to work it. Then she gave us plenty to eat; oatmeal porridge and blue milk in the morning, oatmeal porridge and blue milk at night, a very little piece of meat at noon, with plenty of soup and potatoes, and on rare days dumplings, oat cake—to fill up all the crevices—and wheaten bread about twice a week. Butter we were supposed to have on Sundays, but we all agreed that she scraped more off than she put on. We knew what tea and coffee was, but it never hurt our nerves, or kept us awake nights; and every Spring she made a wonderful specific of brimstone, molasses, and cream of tartar—a kind of infernal sweetmeat—which, with salts and tenna when we were supposed to need some, and a pleasant drink in April made out of new nettles, no doubt in her sure faith preserved our precious lives. Good shoes, and stockings of her own knitting; two suits of clothes warm and stout, with a prophecy in them of the growth we were to attain before they were worn out—one suit for Sunday, the other for week-days, with no distinction between summer and winter; and Hobson's choice of the wholesome fare—that was the way our wise, strong mother gathered her brood under her wings, and bred them into sturdy chiefs and bairdly lizzies.

BROWN, THE MIND READER.

We recently saw an exhibition of "mind reading" wherein not a question was asked, nor a hint given, yet the "mind reader," Mr. J. R. Brown, announced the thought on which the subject had concentrated his mind. Mr. Brown is a young gentleman, twenty-two years of age, slightly built, of a nervous temperament, a native of St. Louis, and born of American and French parents. He came upon the platform in an easy, quiet way, and asked that the subjects, with whom he should operate, would comply with the one condition of concentrating their minds on one object, only.

A committee was chosen by the audience. Mr. Brown went out of the room accompanied by one of the committee, and during his absence a gentleman gave a ring to a person in a distant part of the hall. Brown, blindfolded, took the hand of the gentleman, felt the wrist for a moment or two, rubbed it across his own forehead, rubbed his hand across the subject's forehead, and then at a rapid pace, still blindfolded, led the gentleman down one aisle, across a second, up a third, to the person who had the ring.

A book of photographs was handed to a lady. She was requested to select one, and as the leaves of the book were slowly turned, to say, *mentally*, as soon as her eyes rested on the selected one, "that is it." Mr. Brown, blindfolded, took her hand, a member of the committee turned a number of the leaves, when suddenly, Mr. Brown put his finger on a photograph. It was the right one.

A gentleman was asked to select the location of a friend, living at some distance, and to fix his mind on the direction of the point of the compass, north, east, south or west, in which the friend lived. The "mind reader," taking his subject's hand, whirled him round and round several times, and suddenly stopping, pointed south. He was correct. By the aid of large letters of the alphabet, strung out on parallel wires, he then strove to spell out the name of the place, still holding the gentleman by the hand. He was unsuccessful, because, as he said, the gentleman did not keep his mind concentrated on the name. Asking him to tell the name to one of the committee, he took hold of that person's hand and in a few minutes spelled out Abington. It was correct.

Half-a-dozen ladies, they were young ladies, wrote their ages upon strips of paper. Holding the ladies in turn by the hand, Mr. Brown picked out from the several papers the one containing the age of each lady.

One of the most interesting feats performed was the triple test. One person handed an article to a second and left the room; the second handed it to a third and

also left, and the third to a fourth; so that the first and second did not know were the article had passed to. Mr. Brown took the first person by the hand, lead him to the second, the second to the third, the third to the fourth, where the article was found. He also read the mind of one person through the body of a second. A gentleman thought of an object in the room, and took the hand of another gentleman. Mr. Brown holding the hand of the second gentleman, who remained passive, lead them both to the object. He located an imaginary pain, followed a route marked out for him by a gentleman, moving blindfolded at a very rapid pace.

What this peculiar faculty will hereafter teach, whether it will result in the discovery of a new law of thought or preception, or throw light upon a new faculty or sense, that of seeing through, and not with the eyes of another, we do not know. It certainly is extraordinary. Many facts in physical science, were thought to be useless when first discovered, but afterwards turned out of great value. Originally, the telegraph was only a scientific toy. Mr. Brown cannot explain his faculty. He discovered that he had it, when a school boy. He is neither a Mesmerist nor a Spiritualist. He only knows that he sees the objects on which his subjects fix their minds, as though they were reflected in a mirror. The experiments are worthy investigating by scientific men.—*Era.*

LAWS OF TEACHING.

An eminent educator in his advice to teachers, lays down the following rules which are worthy the consideration of both teachers and pupils:

1. Cultivate the Body. All growth of mind must come from material food, properly received and assimilated by one's healthy organs.
2. Cultivate the Mind. All growth of mind must come from true knowledge, properly received and appropriated by one's healthy faculties.
3. Cultivate the Soul. All soul intutions, born with us, must be carefully developed and fixed by lessons in love and duty to man and God.
4. Study your subject: the matter you present and the manner of presenting it.
5. All knowledge of material objects enters the mind through the bodily senses.
6. Teach the pupil to use his own activities of body, mind and soul.
7. Begin with the bodily senses, with presenting the object.
8. Reduce to elements one thing at a time.
9. Proceed step by step.
10. Follow the order of the mental faculties.
11. Have a point to reach in every exercise, to be continued, if necessary. Do not scatter—do not smother.
12. Present first the whole, then the parts, then the name.
13. Ideas before words; thoughts before sentences.
14. Go from the known to the unknown, from individuals to classes; from concrete to abstract; from simple to compound.
15. Nothing by rote; first discover principles, then proceed to definitions or the summary of them.
16. Exercise the pupil constantly in practical application.
17. Review often and in several various ways.
18. Carry the pupil often out into the world of trial and duty.
19. Connect all knowledge with some link with the throne of Almighty Power and Eternal Goodness.

THE BIRDS.

A ship which recently sailed from England for New Zealand, carried 1,200 birds. They are to be let loose in New Zealand, and are to be protected by law. Heavy penalties will be visited on any one who injures them. The New Zealand farmers find that their crops are destroyed by insects, and they welcome the farmers' friends, the little birds. Will not our farmers, East and West, learn a lesson, and protect the birds?

The Pall Mall Gazette remarks:—The vitiated atmosphere inhaled by a family of poor persons sleeping in an over-crowded garret or cellar is not more unwholesome than that of many a London drawing-room crammed at midnight full of members of "good society."

If you have been tempted into evil, fly from it; it is not falling into the water, but lying in it that drowns.

We would gain more if we left ourselves to appear such as we are, than by attempting to appear what we are not.