

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1877.

STUDIES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.

SUNDAY, January 28th, 1877.—Elijah the Tishbite.—1 Kings xvii. 1-16.

COMMIT TO MEMORY. Vs. 5-9.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"In famine he shall redeem thee from death."—Job v. 20.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 1 Kings xvii. 1-16. Tuesday, vs. 1; Deut. xi. 10-32. Wednesday, vs. 4; Genesis viii. Thursday, vs. 7; James iv. 10-20. Friday, vs. 9; Luke iv. 16-32. Saturday, vs. 14; 2 Kings iv. 38-44. Sunday, vs. 16; Matthew xiv. 13-21.

ANALYSIS.—I. Elijah threatens a drought. Vs. 1. II. Hides by the brook Cherith. Vs. 2-7. III. Flees to Zarephath. Vs. 8-16.

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 1. Meaning of the word Elijah? Of what land was he? Why was he not afraid to stand before Ahab? See Ex. xxxiii. 14. Had this penalty of no rain predicted by him been foretold? By whom? How long was the drought to continue?

Vs. 2. Did Elijah at first know how God was to provide for him? Of what was his faith, to Elijah, the evidence? Heb. xi. 1.

Vs. 3. Where was the brook Cherith? Why was Elijah commanded to hide himself? Chap. xviii. 4.

Vs. 6. How was Elijah fed?

Vs. 7. How long was Elijah at the brook Cherith? How was his faith greatly tried? Why did he not yield here to hard thoughts of God? Why is it sometimes a part of the duty of faith to wait? Isa. xxviii. 16.

Vs. 9. Where was Zarephath? Of what queen was the land of Sidon the native country? What does Jesus say of this widow? Luke iv. 24-26.

Vs. 12. What shows that the famine had reached Phenicia?

Vs. 13. How would exact compliance with Elijah's request involve a miraculous supply? Compare vs. 12 with vs. 13.

Vs. 15. Was the woman's saving or giving the way to her abundance? Prov. xi. 24, 25.

Vs. 16. What was the miracle wrought? Can you explain it? Would it be a miracle if you could?

In reviewing this lesson, cite the places where Elijah's faith is seen to be remarkable.

EXPOSITION.—I. The Prediction of Famine.—Verse 1.—Elijah.

The name means Jehovah is my God. It may have been given by his parents prophetically, or more likely assumed by him when he became an acknowledged prophet. Our former lesson set before us the wickedest of Israel's kings, and his more wicked wife. In the good and godly Elijah we have the sharp contrast. The Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead. The Tishbite of Tishba a town or village in Gilead. The hilly and mountainous region lying to the east of the Jordan, extending on the north to Bashan, on the east to the Arabian plateau, and on the south to Moab and Ammon. The word means, "a hard, rocky region." Gilead was a country of chase and pasture, of tent-villages and mountain castles, inhabited by a people not settled and civilized like those who formed the communities of Ephraim and Judah, but of wandering irregular habits, exposed to the attacks of the nomad tribes of the desert, and conforming more and more to the habits of those tribes. Said unto Ahab. Mark the abruptness of this introduction of the prophet, and the interview; doubtless the interview itself was abrupt, befitting the vehement nature of the prophet, and the hardness of the king and his wife. It was no time for soft words and easy characters. As the Lord [Jehovah] God of Israel liveth. The most solemn of oaths justified in the circumstances as Elijah was speaking in Jehovah's name, and by his command, and well fitted in itself, and doubtless in the tone and manner of its utterance, to furnish emphasis to Elijah's message, and certainty as to its truth. Jehovah was the special covenant name, while God, as the general name, was also applied to heathen deities. In this oath the very existence of Jehovah is as it were staked on the truth of the prediction. Compare Elisha's formula in 2 Kings iii. 14; v. 16. Before whom I stand. That is, as a servant (i. e.), and so shows Ahab that Elijah is speaking in God's name, and as his ambassador, not in the character of a mere citizen and subject of Ahab's kingdom. A minister of God's word must preach that word in all its strictness and purity to great and small im-

partially. There shall not be dew nor rain these years. On the time, see xviii. 1, and Luke iv. 25. The severity of the drought is shown in this and the next chapter. The design of the drought was the reproof and correction of Ahab and Israel. According to my word. Which was also Jehovah's, and was to be so understood by Ahab.

II. The Concealment at Cherith.—Verse 2.—The word of the Lord [Jehovah]. His flight was not from fear, but by divine command. Hide thyself. It has been suggested that this was to escape, not less the impurity than the vengeance of Ahab, who might be urgent for the prophet to intercede for rain, when he saw that it was withheld according to his word. The brook Cherith that is before Jordan. One of the small streams flowing from the highlands of Gilead into the Jordan.

Verse 4.—Upon God we always depend. The more clearly we perceive this, and the more deeply we feel it, the more truthful, faithful, joyful and beautiful will be our life. I have commanded the ravens. The Hebrew word translated ravens might also mean Arabians, or Orbits, and some few have so taken it here, but against the evidence, and mainly because of an unwillingness to admit a miracle, and especially such a miracle. But to deny miracles is to deny revelation; and at the time of Elijah miracles were multiplied in mercy to meet and match the excess of iniquity. Compare vs. 8-16. The command to the ravens was, of course, such an one as they could understand, an impulse like an instinct, put within to cause them to do this unusual thing.

Verse 5.—So he went and did, etc. A pattern of prompt obedience.

Verse 6.—And the ravens brought him, etc. It is a curious, but also an idle, question to ask where the ravens found the bread and flesh. The constancy of the supply is here emphasized, showing both God's faithfulness to his promise, and his ability to make good his promise in the most adverse circumstances.

Verse 7.—After a while. Literally, "at the end of days," which some have taken to mean at the year's end. Because there had been no rain. Showing that the drought and consequent famine extended to the east of Jordan, and also giving the occasion of the prophet's change of residence.

III.—At Zarephath.—Verse 8.—The word of the Lord [Jehovah] came unto him. This "word" fixed the end as it did the beginning of the prophet's concealment, his departure as it did his coming. He was wholly at the divine disposal.

Verse 9.—Get thee to Zarephath. Sarepta in Luke iv. 26. Near Sidon, according to this verse, between Tyre and Sidon, according to Josephus, and identified with the modern Sarafend; it was about the last place to which one would expect the prophet to be sent, as Sidon was the seat of Baal worship, and the city of Jezabel, xvi. 31. Yet this very fact may have helped to his concealment, for who would think to make search for him there? A widow. Hence less able to make provision for herself and family at such time. Gathering of sticks. Showing her extreme poverty. Called to her. No doubt directed by the Spirit, yet not necessarily on that account sure that she was to be his keeper. Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water, etc. There seems not to have been scarcity of water as of food.

Verse 11.—A morsel of bread. A more difficult request than that for water. He was extremely hungry and thirsty, and his requests were to serve the double purpose of testing the woman and securing relief.

Verse 12.—As the Lord [Jehovah] thy God liveth. An oath again, but here too the solemnity of death itself was in her answer. She says "Jehovah," and "thy God" which shows that she, though not a Hebrew, recognized Jehovah as the true God, and Elijah as a servant, possibly as a prophet, of Jehovah. She already had and showed faith. Barrel. Or, rather bucket. Oil was an important product of just this part of the country. May eat it and die. Showing her extremity, and the necessity of declining his request. The famine seems to have been as severe here in the west as in the east.

Verse 13.—Fear not. No mockery, because behind it was a sure promise. Make me thereof a little cake first, etc. This has been used to set forth God's

claim as being first, as though he had a kind of first mortgage on our property. We serve ourselves when we truly serve him, and vice versa. To obey the prophet required of the woman decided faith.

Verses 14-16.—Yet she did obey, promptly; evidently believing the promise of verse 14. This was exactly fulfilled. Many days. See on verse 7. This simple story has imparted faith, hope, courage, strength and patience to many thousands of God's dear children. Its lesson is always new, and always needed. See in Luke iv. 25, 26, the Saviour's use of the incident.

—Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, February 4th, 1877.—Elijah and Ahab.—1 Kings xviii. 5-18.

Youth's Department.

Drowning Daisy.

There was no help for it. Daisy must be drowned—little, gentle, two-months-old Daisy, that was always so good and quiet, and yet so full of life and frolic! Little Katie's heart was quite broken thinking about it. But mamma, who knew best, had said so, and there was no help for it. Three cats took so much milk. And there were so many little human mouths to feed. And milk at ten cents a quart. Poor little Katie. She saw it was best, but it brought grief to her heart.

"If some one would only buy Daisy," she said, clinging to her mother's dress. "People don't buy kitties," said her mother, stooping to kiss the little, flushed, tearful face lifted to hers; "but I wish some one would take her as a gift. You wouldn't mind giving Daisy away, would you, Katie? That would be better than drowning her."

"Yes, indeed; a hundred times better!" answered the child, her face lighting up.

That night a little tear-wet face pressed Katie's pillow. The child was offering up her evening prayer. "Dear Father," she said, "please send some one long who wants a kitty. It is so awful to have Daisy drowned, and it hurts so! Please, dear Father, be good to Daisy, and don't let her be drowned"—and here the little voice grew choked, and great tears fell on "the white pillow-slip. Soon, however, she fell asleep: her prayer had quieted her.

"Good-by, Daisy. O! I wish God had thought it best. But he didn't, and you must go"—and Katie turned from her brother Reuben, who held Daisy in his strong arms.

"Don't cry, Katie," said the boy, pausing a moment; "I'll do it real quick; she won't suffer but a minute. I'll tie a big stone to the bag, and it'll be all over in a jiffy."

Poor, blundering Reuben! He meant to comfort Katie, but his words only made her cry the harder.

Reuben walked along far from comfortable. There was the bag in his pocket, and Daisy in his arms, looking up in his face confidingly as though he were the best friend she had in the world. In a few minutes poor Daisy would be struggling in the water, and he would have to go back and face Katie, and tell her it was all over.

"I declare, I can't do it!" he exclaimed half aloud. "I'm going in here to Bill Watson's. Perhaps his folks would like a kitten. Any way, I'll see."

A little girl stood in the doorway. "Hallo, Jenny! want a kitty? I've brought you a beauty; look!"

Jenny's pretty face flushed with delight.

"O mother!" she exclaimed, running back into the room, "may I have this kitty? Reuben has brought it a purpose for me!"

Reuben had to tell his story—how they had two other cats at home, how there wasn't milk enough for them all, and how Katie had cried when mother said Daisy must be drowned.

"Don't say another word," interrupted Mrs. Watson. "Leave puss here. I'm right glad of her."

So Reuben put Daisy into Jenny's arms, and with a heartfelt "Thank you, ma'am, Katie will be so glad," he hurried home to tell his sister the good news.

O! how happy Katie was that evening. "God did hear me; didn't he, mamma? Dear little Daisy! I think God must

love kitties almost as much as he does little girls; don't you, mamma?"

"His tender mercies are over all his works," murmured Katie's mother to herself; then she turned to her little girl and said:

"God loves and cares for everything that he has made, dear child. I thank him that my Katie has a tender, loving heart toward his creatures, and I am glad too that Daisy has found so good a home."—Dumb Animals.

Select Serial.

"Fred and Maria, and Me."

A STORY OF NEW ENGLAND BAPTIST LIFE.

CHAPTER 5.

It cut me to the heart to think I'd kept poor Fred so short of money that he hadn't nothing to give away.

"Well," says I, "You'll soon have the value of the old place, and be out of debt besides. For I'm going where I shall want none of these things."

Just then I looked up, and there was Maria standing in front of Fred, her face white and her lips trembling. She had gone out with the child, and we hadn't noticed she'd come back.

"Do you mean to say you've been borrowing money from this old woman, and have been deceiving me all along by pretending she gave it to you? Look me in the face then, if you dare!"

"What a fuss about a few thousand dollars!" returned he. "Of course I expect to repay her all she has let me have. And you, Maria, are the last person to complain. Was not this house your own choice? And how did you suppose a man of my age could afford to buy it without help?"

Maria made no answer. It seemed as if all her love to him had turned into contempt.

I riz up in the bed, as weak as I was, and says I, "Fred Avery, come here to me, and you, Maria, come here too, and you two kiss each other and make up right away, or I shall die here in this house, and can't have my own minister to bury me, and shall have to put up with your'n. Why, what's money when you come to putting it alongside of dwelling together in unity? Quick, get a paper and let me sign it; and say in the paper it was my free gift and I never lent none of it; and, O, hurry, Fred, for I feel so faint and dizzy!"

"I believe you've killed the poor old soul!" said Maria, and she fanned me and held salts to my nose, and tried to make me lie down. But I wouldn't, and kept making signs for the paper, for I thought I was going to fall away in no time.

"Get the paper this instant, Fred," said Maria, pretty much as if he was one of the children. So he went and got it, and I signed my name, and then I lay back on the pillow, and I don't know what happened next, only I felt 'em a fanning me, and pouring things down my throat, and one says, 'Open the window!' and another says, 'It's no use!' and then I heard a child's voice set up such a wail that my old heart began to beat again, and I opened my eyes, and there was little Fanny, and she crept up on to the bed, and laid her soft face against mine and said, 'You won't go and die, Aunt Avery, and leave your poor little Fanny?' and I knew I musn't go and leave that wail in her ma's ears. And when I know I ought not to do a thing, I don't do it. So that time I didn't die.

Well! it's an easy thing to slip down to the bottom of the hill, but it ain't half so easy to get up again as it is to lie there in a heap doing nothing. And it took a sight of winewhey and calves feet jelly, and ale and porter, and them intertemperate things to drag me a little way at a time back into the world again. I didn't see much of Fred, but Maria would come up and sit in my room and work on a little baby's blanket she was a covering with leaves and flowers, and sometimes she'd speak quite soft and gentle like, and coax me to take my beef-tea, just as if she wanted me to get well. She wasn't never much of a talker but we got used to each other more'n I ever thought we should. And one day—there! I know it was silly, but when she was giving me something, I took hold of that pretty, soft hand of hers, and kissed it. And the colour came and went in her face, and she burst out a crying, and says she—

"I shouldn't have cared so much, only I wanted to love Fred!"

That was all she ever said to me about him after I'd signed that paper, but when folk's hearts are full they ain't apt to go to talking much, and I knew now that Maria had got a heart, and that it was full and more too.

At last I got strong enough to ride out, and Maria went with me, and after a while she used to stop at Stewart's and such places to do her shopping, and I would stay in the carriage until she got through. I wanted to see what sort of a place Stewart's was, for I heard tell of it many a time, but I thought Maria wouldn't want to have me go with her, and that maybe I could go sometime by myself. I asked her what they kept there, and she said, "Oh, everything," and I'm sure the shop looked as big as all outdoors. She used to get into a stage sometimes to go down town, and I watched all she did in, them stages so as to know how to manage, and one day I slipped out and got into the first one that came along, for thinks I, why shouldn't I go to Stewart's if I've a mind, all by myself?

It carried me up this street, and across that, and at last it stopped near a railroad depot, and all the passengers but me got out. I waited a little while, and at last I got up, and says I to the driver, "Aint you going no further?"

"No I ain't," say he.

"But I want to go to Stewart's," says I.

"I've no objections, ma'am," says he, and began to beat his arms about, and blow his hands, as if he was froze. I didn't know what to do, nor where I was, but pretty soon he turned his horses' heads about, and began to go back the way we had come. So I pulled the check, and says I, "I want to go to Stewart's."

"Well, ain't you going?" says he, "and I don't know as there is any need to pull a fellow's leg off!"

"I beg your pardon, I didn't mean to hurt you," says I; and with that I set down, and rode and rode till we got into Broadway, and then I began to watch all the signs on the shops, so as to get out at the right place. At last we got most down to the ferries, so I asked a man that had got in if we hadn't passed Stewart's."

"Oh, yes, long ago," says he.

"Dear me, I must get out, then," says I. "I told the driver I wanted to go there, but I suppose he has a good deal on his mind, a-picking his way along, and so forgot it."

So I got out, and began to walk up the street; and I ran against everybody, and everybody ran against me, and I came near being run over a dozen times, and was so confused that I did not rightly know how far I had walked, so stopped a girl, and says I, "Oh, do you know where Stewart's is?"

"La, it's three or four blocks down there," says she.

"I didn't see no sign up," says I, "and so I passed it."

"I guess you'll have to look till dark if you are lookin' for signs," says she and away she went. I was pretty well used up; I was so tired, but I went back, and this time I found it, and went in. The first thing I asked for was tape. "We don't keep it," says the clerk.

"Do you keep fans?" says I.

"No, fans are not in our line."

"Well, have you got any brown Windsor soap?"

No, they hadn't got any kind of soap. There were some little things I wanted, such as pins and needles and buttons but I didn't like to ask for 'em, for it might hurt their feelings to have people know it if they didn't happen [to have them]. But there was one thing I thought I'd venture to ask for, and that was a velvet cloak. I'd heard Maria say a new kind of spring cloak was uncommon handy, and I had twenty dollars in my pocket a purpose to buy it with. For I kind o' liked Maria, and I pitied her too, for she and Fred didn't seem good friends, and then I had made so much trouble when I was sick.

The clerk said yes, they had some, but says he, "They're very expensive," and never offered to show them to me. Well, I ain't perfect, and I felt riled in my feelings. And says I, as mild as I could, "I didn't say nothing about the price. I asked you if you'd got any o' them cloaks." Upon that he took out one or two, and I liked them pretty well, though when I heard the price I found my twenty dollars wasn't agoin' to help much; but then I didn't care. I don't want no such finery myself, thinks I,