

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1877.

STUDIES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.

SUNDAY, March 4th, 1877.—The Story of Naboth.—1 Kings xxi. 4-14.

COMMIT TO MEMORY. Vs. 7-10.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord."—1 Kings xxi. 20.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 1 Kings xxi. 1-14. Tuesday, vs. 4; Leviticus xxv. 17-28. Wednesday, vs. 5; Luke xii. 13-31. Thursday, vs. 9; Chronicles xx. 1-12. Friday, vs. 10; Deuteronomy xvii. 6-13. Saturday, vs. 13; Genesis ix. 1-17. Sunday, vs. 14; 2 Kings ix. 30-37.

ANALYSIS.—I. Ahab ill-tempered. Vs. 4. II. Jezebel chides him. Vs. 5, 6. III. Her plot to slay Naboth. Vs. 7-10. IV. Her plot carried out. Vs. 11-14.

QUESTIONS.—Was Ahab reformed by the results at Carmel? How did God continue to show his favor?

How was the domain of the Hebrews divided by the order of Moses? How was the right of holding land for ever secured? What were the evidences of wisdom in this law?

Vs. 4. What had Ahab desired? What commandment had he thereby broken? Ex. xx. 17. In what estimate does God hold covetousness? Ps. x. 3; 1 Cor. vi. 10; Luke xii. 15; Col. iii. 5. Where was Naboth's vineyard? Where Jezreel? Where Samaria? How far were they apart?

Vs. 5. What physician did Satan send to Ahab?

Vs. 7. How does Jezebel show herself to be godless and lawless? What does she say she will do? Which is the more deplorable in this lesson, Ahab's silly weakness or Jezebel's wicked lawlessness?

Vs. 8. Will you now describe the plot of Jezebel in obtaining Naboth's vineyard? How much real religion is there in the fast she proclaims? Was this the last theft of its kind?

Vs. 10. What was the charge gravely brought against Naboth? How was it, if true, punishable?

Vs. 13. Who besides Naboth were stoned to death? Why?

Vs. 14. Who in this lesson dies as a martyr? Who live, as yet, as murderers? Will not the blood they have shed be avenged. 2 Kings ix. 30-37.

After the events of Mount Carmel, Ahab shows little or no sign of reformation; still, God continues his favor; gives him victory in successive Syrian wars. (1 Kings xx.) Yet this does not restore his faith in God. To his conquered enemies he exhibits criminal weakness; he fails to obtain the security of the Holy Land; nevertheless, he is uneasy and covetous in the sight of a neighbor's vineyard.

In the division of the national domain, Moses ordered that "every one of the 600,000 free citizens of the Hebrew race should have an equal part. (Numbers xxxiii. 54). The right was made inalienable, and the estates settled upon each family were to pass down in perpetual succession." Lev. xxv. 23. In this Mosaic law there was great wisdom. It equalized the distribution of property. The few could not revel in immense fortunes while the many were poor. The government watched over all and cared for all alike. The rich could not accumulate all the lands. The law was made to guard the rights of Naboth and to check the covetousness of Ahab.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 4.—Ahab came into his house. At Samaria, which was still the capitol (xx. 43), though he had a palace at Jezreel (vs. 1), probably occupied by him a part of the year. He had been down from Samaria to Jezreel, about twenty-five miles northward, where he had his interview with Naboth, from which he has just returned. See vs. 8, 18. Jezreel was on the eastern border of the plain of Esdraelon, called also the plain of Jezreel, overlooking to the west the whole of this plain. A magnificent site, having in view Carmel, on the Mediterranean Sea, and the mountains of Gilead beyond the Jordan. Heavy and displeased, etc. Sullen and angry. Naboth was one of the 7,000 incorruptible and uncorrupted saints of Jehovah, of whose existence the despairful Elijah was assured, xix. 18. He laid him down upon his bed, etc. In the "sulks," like a spoiled child.

Verses 5, 6.—Jezebel, his wife, came to him, etc. A fit time and occasion for her to gain influence over him, helping him to ends in order the more surely to bind him to her nefarious purposes.

Verse 7.—Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? In the original the word "thou" is made very emphatic—as much as to say, "Well now, which is king in this realm, Naboth or thou?" Thus does she infuse into him her devilish spirit through the channel of his ambition. See vs. 25. Arise [and] eat bread, and let thine heart be merry. Jezebel was so far right, if only it had been right cheer which she brought. I will give thee, etc. He knew her well enough to know two things; first, that she would do it, and second, that she would have no scruples as to means.

Verse 8.—Wrote letters in Ahab's name, etc. Not the first time, nor done without Ahab's consent. many such a letter we are sure had carried death to servants of God "of whom the world was not worthy." Sealed, etc. It has been the custom in the East from very ancient times to give royal authority to public documents by the use of the royal seal. The impression upon the wax or clay was made by a signet, which bore some device, the king's name, or image, or something else, often connected with a finger-ring, though sometimes not. Egyptian and Chaldean signets have been discovered probably dating back to about 2,000 B.C. On other Scripture references to seals, see Gen. xli. 42; xxxviii. 18; Job xxxviii. 14; Esth. iii. 10, 12; viii. 2; Jer. xxxii. 10, 44; Dan. vi. 17; Matt. xxvii. 66. Sent the letters unto the elders, etc. To the magistrate governing the city, under whose authority therefore, Naboth lived, and who would have been the person to proceed against Naboth, had there been cause.

Verse 9.—Proclaim a fast. This is not advice, but command, and that too from the king, as the seal told. The holding of a fast in case of notorious public sin was a Hebrew practice, 2 Chron. xx. 3; Ezra viii. 21; Joel i. 14; ii. 15; Jonah iii. 5. There was occasion enough for a public fast through the whole realm. This public fast assumed the guilt of Naboth, before his trial, and so to the public put him in advance essentially in the position of a condemned criminal. The plan is artful, but the art is black. Set Naboth on high, etc. For the form of a trial in open court.

Verse 10.—Set two men, etc. This was the least number of witnesses whose concurrent testimony must be given in a capital charge. Num. xxxv. 30; Deut. xvii. 6. Compare Matt. xxvi. 60. "Sons of Belial," is another name for worthless men, "of the baser sort." Deut. xiii. 13. Jezebel must have well-known the character of the Jezreel magistrates, or she never would have ventured to give such a command. She recognizes their sentiment as in harmony with hers, at least so far that they would lend themselves to such iniquity, and only the people at large as needing to be deceived. The rulers were worse than the people. Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. Doubtless the act of refusing to sell the ground was to furnish the basis of fact on which the lie was to rest. The charge was perhaps not of two crimes, but of one crime in two aspects, as the king stood as in some true sense God's representative. See Ex. xxii. 28. There were however other forms of blasphemy. Lev. xxiv. 16. Either blasphemy or treason was punishable with death. And then carry him out and stone him, that he may die. She neither does nor could write to stone him if found guilty.

Verse 11.—Did as Jezebel, etc. Of course, she knew they would—her mere tools. Power always breeds sycophants, but worst and most of all, wicked power.

Verses 12, 13.—Repeating as history what vs. 9, 10 had stated as command. The repetition in the same words impresses upon the reader the fact of the magistrates subserviency. They stoned both Naboth and his sons (compare Joshua vii. 24, 25), in order that there might be no heir to claim the property which, in cases of death for treason, seems to have reverted to the crown. 2 Sam. xvi. 4; xix. 29. It was done outside the city, according to custom. Acts vii. 58. So Christ suffered without the gate. Heb. xiii. 12.

Verse 14.—Then they sent to Jezebel, etc. Thus she was known to be the author of the plan and deed though done under cover of the king's seal. On the issue of this wicked affair see vs. 15-23, xxii. 34-40; 2 Kings ix. —Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, March 11th, 1877. —Elijah Translated.—2 Kings ii. 1-12.

PRIMARY CLASS LESSON.

THE STORY.

Although Samaria was the capital of Israel, Ahab had another palace at Jezreel. Near this was a vineyard, owned by a man named Naboth, which Ahab wanted. He told Naboth that if he would sell it to him he would either give him another vineyard for it or the pride in money. But Naboth said his father had given it to him, and he could not sell it. Ahab went home to his other palace so unhappy that he lay down upon his bed and turned his face, and would eat no bread. But Jezebel his wife asked what made him so sad, and why he did not eat. Ahab told her how he had asked Naboth to give him his vineyard, and Naboth had said, "I will not." Jezebel said, "Are you not a King? Arise, eat, drink, and be merry again; for I will give thee the vineyard." So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with his seal-ring, and sent them to some wicked judges who lived in the same city with Naboth. She told them to get two men so wicked that even she called them sons of Satan, to stand up in a public meeting and charge Naboth with cursing God and the king, and then to carry him out of the city and throw stones at him till he died. All this was done, and the word was sent to Jezebel. Then she told Ahab, "Go, and take the vineyard which Naboth refused to give for money, for he is dead."

Booths' Department.

Little Things.

If little falling drops of rain The lakes and rivers fill; If little grains of earth and sand Make mountain, plain, and hill;

If little moments as they pass Make hours and days and years, Then little sins of every kind, Should fill our hearts with fears.

For little sins, if once allowed, To greater sins will grow, And if not stopped by grace divine, Will lead to endless woe.

Great God then fill each of our hearts With love and fear of Thee; And to us all thy Spirit give, That we may holy be.

Whisper Song.

My heart thou canst fill, Oh, Saviour divine; To thee I will look, For I would be thine.

No lack is with thee, But I am so weak; Oh, help me believe, Thine aid I would seek.

If you read just right, the words below, and then live always as they say, you are sure to be happy. Try it, and see.

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The two Hats.

Two hats were once dropped into the water, and a dog was sent for them. He tried to carry them both but could not succeed until he put one inside the other, and then he brought them to land. Do you not think he was a smart dog? —Our Little Ones.

The New Study.

It was near vacation, and the weather was warm, and the girls were languid and excited by turns. The languor affected their lessons, the excitement was only for the coming holidays; and between the two, Miss Cromwell, their teacher, found it rather hard work to keep her class up to concert pitch.

One afternoon, when they were a little more restless and inattentive than usual, a bright idea occurred to her. "The monitor of the slates may collect them," she announced suddenly. "The exercise in arithmetic is over."

The girls stared at her. "Why, Miss Cromwell, we've only just begun!" cried Lilly Henderson.

"Never mind. I'll excuse you this afternoon;" and Miss Cromwell walked up to the blackboard. "I am going to draw a map here, and I would like you to watch me, and tell me what country it belongs to."

The class brightened up. Arithmetic was an old story, but this was something new. All the curly heads, and the heads that weren't curly, too, turned

towards the blackboard, and a score of bright eyes watched Miss Cromwell's fingers as they made little dots here and there with the white crayon.

"What a funny-looking map!" said Lilly Henderson.

"It looks like a tin dipper," said Kitty Carey. "I'm sure I can't guess what country that belongs to."

"It's all made of little stars," said Fanny Lester. "Oh, Miss Cromwell, I can guess what it is!"

"Can anybody else?" asked Miss Cromwell. "Every girl who thinks she knows, may come up to the blackboard."

There were half a dozen heads raised, and as many bright faces came forward. "Now you may speak all together," said their teacher. And there was a little hubbub of voices directly,

"It's a constellation!"

"It's the Great Bear!"

"It's a map of the stars!"

"It's the Big Dipper!"

Miss Cromwell laughed. "You are all right," she said. "Now see if you can tell me what this is."

With a few rapid moves of her crayon pencil, another group of stars appeared on the board; and three voices called out, "Orion!" There were not so many to recognize "the serpent Draco," and Taurus the Bull, and Leo the Lion; but they were all profoundly interested in the odd-looking figures, and in Miss Cromwell's brief account of their names and the places they held in the sky.

None of the class had ever studied astronomy, and if it had been proposed to them as a regular thing, they would have shrugged their shoulders, and considered it much too hard. But Miss Cromwell's way of talking about the stars created an enthusiasm; and that night, when the twinkling points of light began to glimmer in the darkened sky, there were groups of young star-gazers at various open windows in the village. They picked out the constellations she had drawn for them; and fathers, and older brothers and sisters were called upon to give information about Venus and Jupiter and Mars, and the Polar star, and the Dog star, until everybody felt remarkably learned.

The next day there was a petition for astronomy again, instead of arithmetic; and the afternoons, from that time to vacation were much less tiresome to both teacher and pupil. Miss Cromwell took the opportunity, in describing the wonderful works of God, to remind her girls of the love and obedience they owed him in return. She showed them how suns and stars obeyed his law, and did their appointed work in its season; and she made every girl feel that she too had been created for a purpose, and had no right to waste the life which God had given her for his service. The good seed sown in those summer afternoons may some day bear good fruit; and at all events will enlarge the ideas of the class, who have one and all decided to study astronomy next term.—Young Reaper.

A Slight Misapprehension.

Term was over; the coach was full of young Oxonians returning to their respective colleges; the morning was cold, wet and miserable, when a well appointed "drag" drove up to the "White Horse Cellar," Piccadilly. "Have you room for one inside?" asked as pretty a girl as you would wish to see on a summer's day. "What a beauty!" exclaimed one. "Quite lovely!" said another. "Perfect!" lisped a third. "Quite full, Miss, inside and out," replied the coachman. "Surely, you can make room for one," persevered the fair applicant. "Quite impossible, without the young gentlemen's consent." "Lots of room," cried the insides; "we are not very large; we can manage to take one more." "If the gentlemen consent," replied the driver, "I can have no objection." "We agree," said the inside quartette. "All right," responded the coachman.

The fare was paid, and the guard proceeded to open the door, and let down the steps. "Now, Miss, if you please; we are behind our time." "Come along, grandfather," said the dame, addressing a most respectable-looking, portly, elderly man; "the money is paid, get in, and be sure you thank the young gentlemen;" at the same time suiting the action to the word, and, with a smile, assisting her respected grandfather into the coach. "Here's some

mistake; you'll squeeze us to death," cried the astonished party. "Sorry to incommode you," replied the intruder; "I hope you won't object to have both windows up, I'm sadly troubled with a cough. At this moment, "All right, sit fast was heard, and, and the "Defiance" rattled away, best pace, drowning the voices of the astonished Oxonians.

Beautiful Hands.

As a young friend was standing with us noticing the pedestrians on the sidewalk, a very stylish young lady passed us. "What beautiful hands Miss—has!" exclaimed our friend.

"What makes them beautiful?"

"Why, they are small, white, soft, and exquisitely shaped."

"Is that all that constitutes the beauty of the hand? Is not something more to be included in your catalogue of beauty, which you have not enumerated, to make the hand desirable?"

"What more would you have?"

"Are they charitable hands? Have they ever fed the poor? Have they ever carried the necessities of life to the widow and the orphan? Has their soft touch ever smoothed the irritation of sickness and the agonies of pain? Do the poor bless those rosy tipped fingers? Are their wants ever supplied by them?"

"Are they useful hands? Have they been taught that the world is no playground, or a theatre of display, or a mere lounging place? Do those delicate hands ever labor? Are they ever employed about the domestic duties of life—the homely, ordinary employments of the household? Or does the owner leave all that to her mother, while she nourishes her delicate hands in idleness?"

"Are they modest hands? Will they perform their duties without vanity? Or do they pander to the pride of their delicacy and beauty? Does she think more of their display than improvement of her mind and character, and the salvation of her immortal soul?"

"Are they humble hands? Will their owner extend one to grasp the hand of that old schoolfellow, who sat at the same desk with her, and on the same recitation bench but who now must earn her living by her labor? Or will they remain concealed in their exclusiveness, in her aristocratic muff, as she sweeps by her former companions!"

"Are they holy hands? Are they ever clasped in prayer or elevated in praise! Does she remember the God who has made her to differ from so many other girls, and devote her mind, her heart, her hands to his service? Does she try to imitate her Saviour by going about doing good? Or are her hands too delicate, too beautiful, to be employed in good works? These are the qualities that make a hand beautiful?"

The Great Bells of the World.

The great bell of Moscow, called the Tsar Kolokol, or King of Bells, is the largest in the world. It is 19 feet 3 inches high, and measures around its margin 60 feet 9 inches. It is estimated to weigh 443,772 pounds, and the metal in it is valued at more than \$300,000. The bells of China rank next in size to those of Russia, but are much inferior to them in form and tone. In Pekin, it is stated by Father Le Comte, there are seven bells, each weighing 120,000 pounds. One in the suburbs of the city is, according to the testimony of many travellers, the largest suspended bell in the world. It is hung near the ground, in a large pavilion, and to ring it, a huge beam is swung against its side. A bell taken from the Dragon pagoda at Rangoon, was valued at \$80,000. Among the bells recently cast for the new Houses of Parliament, the largest weighs 10 tons. The next largest bell in England was cast in 1845, for York Minster, weighs 27,000 pounds, and is 7 feet 7 inches in diameter. The Great Tom of Oxford weighs 17,000 pounds, and the Great Tom of Lincoln 12,000 pounds. The bell of St. Paul's, in London, is 9 feet in diameter, and weighs 11,500 pounds. One placed in the Cathedral of Paris, in 1680 weighs 38,000 pounds. One in Vienna, cast in 1711, weighs 40,000, and in Olmütz is another weighing about the same. The famous bell called Susanna of Erfurt is considered to be the finest bell metal, containing the largest proportion of silver; its weight is about 20,000; it was cast in 1497. At Montreal, Canada, is a larger bell than any in England, weighing 29,400 pounds; it was imported in 1843, for the Notre Dame Cathedral. In the opposite tower of the Cathedral is a chime of ten bells, the heaviest of which weighs 604 pounds, and their aggregate weight is 21,800 pounds.—Eclectic.