

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1878.

SUNDAY, April 28th, 1878.—The Rechabites.—Jeremiah xxxv. 12-19.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 18, 19.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Will ye not receive instruction, to hearken to my words? saith the Lord."—Jeremiah xxxv. 13.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Jeremiah xxxv. 1-19. Tuesday, 2 Kings x. 15-23. Wednesday, Jeremiah vi. Thursday, Jeremiah vii. Friday, Jeremiah ix. Saturday, Luke xvi. 1-12. Sunday, Ex. xx.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Contrasted disobedience of the Jews. Vss. 12-15. II. Their judgment foretold. Vss. 16, 17. III. The Rechabites blessed. Vss. 18, 19.

QUESTIONS.—From whom did the Rechabites descend? What descendant of Rechab was held in great honor? In what work was he associated with Jehu? What obligations did he impose upon his people? Why did he impose them? How were they kept? Where do we find the Rechabites in our lesson? Was their residence in Jerusalem lawful?

Vss. 12-15. What test of the Rechabites has just been made? Why does God try his people? With every temptation what does he provide? 1 Cor. x. 13. Was disobedience ever shamed out of the Jews? Why should we be total abstainers in our practice?

Vss. 18, 19.—With what are the Jews threatened for their disobedience?

Vss. 18, 19.—What blessing does God give to the Rechabites? What is the best pledge of perpetuated family life? Ex. xx. 12.

Was it Rechab or Jonadab who imposed the law of total abstinence on his race? Why are good rules of living the best inheritance? How are the children of this world often-times wiser than the children of light?

THE RECHABITES were a family of the Kenites, and descended from the father-in-law of Moses. 1 Chron. ii. 55; Judges i. 16. Jonadab is supposed to have been the chief of the family in the days of Jehu. He was zealous for the pure worship of God, and was associated with Jehu in the destruction of the idolatrous house of Ahab. In order to preserve their independence as a distinct and separate tribe, he established a rule for his posterity that they should possess neither lands nor houses, but should live in tents, and should drink no wine nor strong drink. In obedience to this rule, the Rechabites continued a separate and peaceable people, living in tents, and removing from place to place as circumstances required. When Judah was invaded by Nebuchadnezzar, they fled to Jerusalem for safety. Here it pleased God, by the prophet Jeremiah, to exhibit them to the inhabitants of Jerusalem as an example of constancy in their obedience to the requirements of a mere earthly father. Jeremiah had over and over again warned the people of the terrible national doom that God would visit upon their disobedience. Now he tries to shame them out of it.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 12.—Then came, etc.—See vss. 1-11. The prophet, by Divine direction, had put wine before the Rechabites, and bidden them drink, not to tempt, but to test them; and the result of the test was to be used to enforce upon Judah God's command and Judah's duty. There were present apparently only a handful, a mere fragment, of the Rechabite family. The hostile armies had probably captured most of the family, according to the ancient prediction of Balaam. Num. xxiv. 21, 22.

Verse 13.—The Lord [Jehovah] of hosts, the God of Israel.—The word here, and usually, translated "hosts," is in the Hebrew, *Tseboath*, and was transferred to the Greek as *Sabaoth*, and in this form appears in our Common English Version, in Romans ix. 29, James v. 4. Its resemblance to the word Sabbath has misled many to suppose that the two words have a like, if not the same, meaning. The word *Tseboath*, or *Sabaoth*, is used for a vast army (1 Samuel xvii. 45), of the innumerable stars (Deuteronomy iv. 19), and of the multitude of angels (1 Kings xxii. 19-21.) Joined with Jehovah, or God, it represents him in the infinite majesty of his power, as able to execute all his purposes, despite every opposing purpose or effect. The word translated God, also designates him as the Strong or Mighty One; and thus, here, God is presented most fitly as able to make

good his promise to feeble Judah, despite all the might of mighty nations; and as having the right to command, and to demand obedience. Instruction. Or, admonition, rebuke—instruction joined with the urgency sometimes even of chastisement.

Verse 14.—The Son of Rechab.—If Jonadab, [sometimes written Jehonadab,] was Rechab's son, and not a later descendant, it had been nearly three hundred years since the commands were first given. Drink wine. There were other precepts, but this is selected because it was the one employed in the test (vss. 6, 7). Unto this day. For so many generations. The permanency of the customs and habits of the nomadic tribes of the East is well known, and these Rechabite customs were in part such as helped to their own perpetuity by securing isolation. Rising early. Represents God's earnest interest and effort, because a man is up betimes when his business fills his mind and heart. But ye hearkened not unto me. Contrasting God's interest for them, and their disregard of him, and hence, really, of themselves.

Verse 15.—All my servants the prophets.—Not additional to the "speaking" mentioned in verse 14, but the manner of that speaking. The early rising is again mentioned for emphasis to impress God's faithfulness. So the word "all" calls attention to abundance of his effort to save. Every man. Sin, and hence repentance, is an individual's act; and a nation in its completeness repents only when every man in the nation repents. Ye shall dwell in the land, etc. What was threatened by the invading army of Nebuchadnezzar, and what had been threatened by Jehovah, was captivity in exile, such destruction of the kingdom as Israel had more than a century before suffered.

Verses 16, 17.—The sons of Jonadab.—His descendants. The Lord [Jehovah] God of hosts, etc. Great emphasis given to the idea of God's sovereign power, and the consequent certainty of the execution of the threatened judgment. All the evil. This "all" is emphatic. No one was to cherish any delusive hope, founded upon a false notion, either of the nation's goodness, or of God's mercy, or of aught else. The word of God, which reveals and denounces judgment, will just as truly, fully, exactly be fulfilled, as that which promises blessing. The obedience of the Rechabites had not made more sinful the disobedience of the Jews; but the obedience of the former made it visible by contrast.

Verses 18, 19.—This message to the Rechabites was a commendation of faithfulness to duty and promise of reward. We must remember that the commendation was for the faithfulness of obeying the precepts, rather than for the wisdom of the precepts; though it seems to be implied that in the circumstances there was that which was commendable also in the prescribed mode of life. This does not imply that the nomadic, isolated, ascetic life should be generally followed, or is to be regarded as normal. It is, however, very certain that their habit of total abstinence from intoxicating drinks is our only and wise course. Shall not want a man, etc. This is a promise of the perpetuity of the family, "so long, at least, as their obedience to their father continues."

Our subject is "The Rechabites," and our Scripture lesson contrasts first their conduct with that of the Jews, and next the future consequences of these contrasted courses.

I. The Contrasted Conduct.—Verses 13-15.—(1.) First comes a solemn appeal for attention. It is urged on the ground of the majesty of God who makes it, by his covenant relation to the Jews. (2.) The faithfulness of the Rechabites is noted. The respects indicated and serving for the contrast are that their obedience was to a merely human law. (3.) Over against this is put the unfaithfulness of Judah. Their obedience was to God's word and will. (4.) God himself seems to be astonished at such conduct, and to expect that every one else on the plain statement of the case will also be astonished.

II. The Judgment upon Judah.—Verses 16, 17.—(1.) Its ground was the aggravated sin of Judah. It was not simply that they disobeyed, but that they thus disobeyed. They left God no option. (2.) The certainty of the punishment was inseparable from the truth

of God. (3.) The extent of the punishment was assured by that same truth. "All the evil" predicted would come. (4.) The punishment was needless, even after the sin. If they would have repented and broken off sin, even then would they have been pardoned.

III. The Promise to the Rechabites.—Verses 18, 19.—God is mindful of faithfulness, even in the lower relations, and whatsoever is lovely has its fit reward.—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, May 5th, 1878.—The Captives in Babylon.—Dan. i. 8-17.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; therefore she is removed; all that honoured her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness: yea, she sigheth, and turneth backward."—Lam. i. 8.

The Story of the Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

There were some people living in Jerusalem called Rechabites. Once the Lord said to Jeremiah, "Go, bring the Rechabites into one of the rooms in the Temple, and give them wine to drink." Then Jeremiah took the Rechabites into an up stairs room, and set pots full of wine and cups before them, and said, "Drink ye wine." But they said, "We will drink no wine; for Jonadab, the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, 'Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye nor your sons for ever.' And he also told us not to build houses nor plant vineyards, but to live in tents; and we have obeyed our father." The Lord had tried the Rechabites in this way to teach the people of Judah a lesson; so now he sent Jeremiah to tell the people about the obedient sons. He said, "They obey their father's commandment, but you do not obey me, though I have spoken to you early and late. I have also sent my prophets to call you to turn from your evil ways, and mend your doings, and go not after other gods. But you have not listened; therefore I will bring on Judah the evil that I have said, because I have spoken, and they have not answered." The Lord made this promise to the Rechabites: "Because of your obedience, there shall always be a man of your family to stand before me."

Bessie's Department.

Bessie's ride with Deacon Fox.

"Please, sir, give me a ride."

Deacon Fox stopped his horse and peered round the side of his old buggy. On the road stood a little girl, the top of her head about even with the wheel of the deacon's carriage, and by her side was a big basket much too heavy for her little arms.

"What's all this, what's all this?" cried the deacon, sharply. "What are you stopping me on the road for, eh?" "I thought perhaps you would give me a ride," said the little girl, looking rather frightened. "We are both going the same way, and my basket is awful heavy; just lift it and see."

The deacon stared.

"May I get in?" she continued, scrambling up, basket and all, and taking the empty seat beside him.

And never a word did the deacon say, but he gave old Dobbin, who had been placidly switching the flies off with his tail, such a sharp touch of the whip, that away they went rattling along the road, and almost bouncing out of the carriage.

Then the deacon turned and looked at his little companion, beginning with the pink sun-bonnet and confiding blue eyes beneath, and ending with the little dusty boots that were resting on the lid of the basket.

"Hum!" said the deacon, "are you one of the school children?"

"Yes," said blue eyes, looking up, "I am Bessie Bly. Don't you remember I missed in the multiplication table when you examined us? But I knew it; it was only because you hurried me so."

"Well, well, well," said to the deacon to himself, "things have come to a pretty pass; and he shook his head sadly. "I wonder what this generation will be up to next."

You see the Deacon had no little girls or boys of his own, and the school children generally crossed the road when they saw him coming, for they all felt an awesome dread of Mr. Fox. It was he who examined them at the end of

school. It was he who punished the naughty girls; and it was he who always asked them terrible questions when he came to call upon their mammas.

So it was a strange sight to see the old deacon, with his keen eyes twinkling beneath his bushy eyebrows and his stern, hard face, driving in his old buggy, with one of the school-children and a market-basket by her side.

They drove along some distance in silence, and then the deacon felt his sleeve pulled by gentle and rather timid fingers. He looked down and two large blue eyes met his.

"Are you cross," said Bessie, "'cos I asked for a ride?"

"Tut, tut! child," said the deacon.

"Then if you ain't why don't you talk to me?" continued Bessie, "and asked me who discovered America? You always ask us that."

"Then it is to be hoped you know by this time," said the deacon. "Do you go to Sunday-school, child?"

"Oh, yes," said Bessie, folding her hands and crossing her thumbs as though she were about to repeat a lesson.

"What do you learn there?" asked the deacon.

"I learn 'to do unto others as I would they should do unto me,' replied Bessie, glibly, "and to love my neighbor as myself."

"So you learn all that," said the deacon. "Well, that's something; and who is your neighbor? Does he go blackberrying with you?"

"Oh yes," said Bessie, laughing, "but then he is my real next-door neighbor, you know. It don't mean I am to love him, for of course I should do that, but it means I am to love everybody. Even you."

"Well," said the deacon, looking down at her, "how are you going to manage about that?"

"Why, I must love you of course," replied Bessie. "Do you mind very much?"

"We must do as the Sunday-school says," replied the deacon, and then he laughed; though what there was to laugh at Bessie couldn't for the life of her think.

On they went, old Dobbin, Bessie and the deacon, now up hill and now down, till they came to a tiny cottage standing under the shadow of a big house.

"Here's where I live," said Bessie, briskly, "and there's where you live. Isn't it convenient?" and she kissed her hand to the deacon and skipped down. He handed her the basket, and Bessie opening the gate and calling out "Good-bye," walked up the little path that led to the cottage door.

On the step sat a dog, a little bigger than Bessie, whistling to himself. "Turn around," he said to her as she drew near, "I want to look at your wings."

"Wings?" repeated Bessie, her eyes wide with amazement.

"Yes, wings. Haven't you been riding with the deacon? I expected no less."

"I have had a very pleasant ride," said Bessie with dignity, and she passed her brother and entered the house.

"Well, Bessie," said her mother, who te-kettle in hand, was busy making the tea. "I am glad to see you back. I have been thinking of you all the afternoon, walking so far with that heavy basket; sit down, child, and rest."

But, before Bessie could answer, Aunt Jemima rushed in with cap-strings flying. She had been sitting in the window and saw the buggy drive up.

"Sakes alive! sister," she cried, "Bessie's been driving with the deacon, and he handed her the basket with his own hands."

"With the deacon!" repeated Mrs. Bly. "Well, Bessie, what an honor! I hope you thanked him prettily. What ever made him think of inviting you?"

"He didn't," said Bessie, untying her bonnet and sitting down; "I invited him." Mrs. Bly let the tea-kettle almost drop. Aunt Jemima held up her hands and sank speechless into a chair, and Jack standing in the doorway gave vent to a whistle as shrill as a small locomotive.

"Bessie stared from one to the other, "What's the matter?" she said.

"Well!" cried Aunt Jemima, as soon as she had breath enough to speak. "If you're not the forwardest child I ever saw! Asking the deacon, as pert as you please, to give you a ride, as if you didn't know he was the richest man in

town, and didn't see him every blessed Sunday passing the plate."

"I'm a-tonished at you Bessie," said her mother reproachfully. "It will be all over town, next, and what the neighbors will say of you I'm sure I can't think."

"If she were my child she should go to bed without any supper," continued Aunt Jemima.

"Why do you act so?" said her mother. "Any one would imagine, to see you, you hadn't had any bringing up. Now, Bessie, eat this piece of bread and go to bed."

But Bessie couldn't eat. She was very unhappy, and all she could say was, "I had a very pleasant ride, mama."

As this didn't mend matters, she picked up her bonnet and went up stairs. After she had been in bed a few minutes, Jack came in and sat down. The sun was just sinking, and the sky, which the children could see through the open window, was streaked red and gold.

"What made you do it, Bess?" said Jack, who was whistling softly, and looked first at the little face on the pillow and then at the bright sky beyond.

"Do what, Jack?"

"Why, ask for a ride."

Bessie raised herself upon her elbow and looked anxiously into her brother's face. "Was it very awful?" she asked. "Aunt Jemima thinks it was," said Jack.

"It's very queer," said Bessie; "I don't think any little girl would have been afraid to ask father for a ride when he was alive, and all grown people are alike."

"Oh, no," said Jack, sagely; "not at all. That would have been very different. Why, the deacon's worth thousands of dollars, and father wasn't worth anything at all!"

"He was, too," said Bessie, sharply. "He was worth ten-deacons, fifty deacons, a hundred deacons—so there, Jack Bly!" and Bessie turned her face to the wall, and would not say another word.

The next morning when she opened her eyes, they fell upon her mother's face bending over her.

"Get up, Bessie," said Mrs. Bly, "and dress carefully. I have something for you to do this morning."

Bessie had forgotten all about the night before, and skipped out of bed, proceeded to dress and go down stairs in the best of spirits.

"Bessie," said her mother, as she entered the kitchen, "you cause me a great deal of anxiety. I have made up my mind that you must go up to the deacon's and apologize."

"What's that, mother?" asked Bessie, frightened out of her wits.

"That means to ask his pardon for your rudeness of yesterday. You must say you regret your behavior very much and will never do so again; and now you have finished your breakfast, go right along, and be sure you speak prettily."

Bessie put on her bonnet and started towards the big house at the top of the hill. She was a good deal frightened, for "apologizing" seemed to her an awful thing to do, and the deacon much more formidable than the day before.

Nevertheless, her mother had told her to go, and she did not stop until she pulled the bell at the deacon's door. The old housekeeper appeared in answer to the ring and demanded what she wanted.

"I want to see the deacon," said Bessie timidly.

"He is at his breakfast," said the old lady, eyeing Bessie somewhat suspiciously.

"Never mind," said Bessie; "I'll go right in; it's very particular."

So the old lady opened the dining-room door, and Bessie walked in. She had never been in such a big room before in her life, and there, at one end of a large table, with his breakfast before him, sat the Deacon all alone.

"Good morning," said Bessie, standing timidly in the doorway, with her bonnet in her hand, "I have come to see you."

The deacon looked up greatly surprised, and then he laughed as he had laughed the day before, a short, queer laugh.

"Does the Sunday-school tell you to do this too?" he asked.

"No," said Bessie, thinking how she should bring in "her apologize."

"Well, come in, child, come in," he said impatiently, "and sit down."