

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1880.

THIRD QUARTER.

Lesson XI.—SEPTEMBER 12.

TRIAL OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH. Gen. xxii. 1-14.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 11-14.

The birth of Isaac is the chief event of the interval between this lesson and last. Several minor events of Abraham's history are also recorded.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Now I know that thou fearest God."—Gen. xxii. 12.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

- M. Trial of Abraham's Faith, Gen. xxii. 1-14. T. Isaac the Favored Son, Gen. xxi. 8-21. W. God Tempteth no Man, Jas. i. 1-17. T. Abraham's Working Faith, Heb. xi. 17-19; Jas. ii. 20-24. F. Jephthah's Vow, Judges xi. 29-40. S. God's Only-Begotten, John iii. 5-18. S. The Substitute, Isaiah liiii. 1-12.

PARALLEL TEXTS.

With vs. 1: 1 Cor. x. 13; 1 Pet. i. 7. With vs. 2: Heb. xi. 17; 2 Chron. iii. 1. With vs. 6: John xix. 17. With vs. 9: James ii. 21. With vs. 12: 1 Sam. xv. 22; Mic. vi. 7, 8; Gen. xxvi. 5; James ii. 22.

THE TRIUMPH OF FAITH.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. The Only Son, vs. 1, 2. II. The Appointed Offering, vs. 2-10. III. The Provided Substitute, vs. 11-14.

QUESTIONS.—How old was Abraham when he came out of Haran? (Gen. xii. 4.) At what age was a son born to him? (Gen. xxi. 5.)

I. Vss. 1, 2.—How had Abraham shown his desire for this child? (Gen. xv. 2.) How had he shown his love to the child? (Gen. xxi. 8.) What three titles are applied to Isaac in vs. 2? In what respects does Isaac resemble Jesus? II. Vss. 2-10.—What command concerning Isaac did God give? Why did God command this? (vs. 1.) What does "tempt" mean? Describe Abraham's starting. What took place on the third day? What evidence of wavering does Abraham show? How is his course explained in Heb. xi. 17-19?

III. Vss. 11-14.—Who called to Abraham? What did he forbid? On what ground did he forbid it? What substitute for Isaac was just at hand? By what name did Abraham commemorate this deliverance?

EXPLANATORY NOTES.—Verse 1.—After these things. An indefinite note of time. The time is during Abraham's prolonged stay at Beersheba, in the land of the Philistines. Compare chap. xxi. 34, and chap. xxii. 10. Did tempt. "Tried," tested, "put to proof." There is, of course, no implication of inducement to do wrong. It would be false and foolish wisdom to refine upon the simplicity of the story, as the story is here told. We are to understand that God spoke with an audible voice, (or with some perfectly intelligible equivalent outward sign), and that Abraham so replied. One great part of man's need was to have the idea of God's being and personality impressed on mind and heart, and there was no other conceivable way to this so good as for God to talk with a select representative of the race, just as he is said to have talked with Abraham.

Verse 2.—Thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest. "Thy son, thine only, whom thou lovest, Isaac." Get thee. "Go." Land of Moriah. 2 Chron. iii. 1, names the hill on which the Temple stood as Mount Moriah. One of the mountains that I will tell thee of. The same indefiniteness as to place with that which tried Abraham's faith when he was called to make his emigration to the promised land.

Verse 3.—The fact that Abraham was to go a journey for the purpose named, made obedience seem a little less hard. Abraham's faith was tried—1. In believing that such a command could truly proceed from God; 2. In believing that the promise which depended on Isaac, (Gen. xxi. 12), could yet be fulfilled, though Isaac were slain. His obedience was tried—1. In surrendering his fatherly affection for his only son, to let him

die; 2. in actually crucifying his fatherly affection, to become himself the slayer of his only and beloved son. Rose early in the morning. Noting the Oriental habit, as well as Abraham's promptness in obeying.

Verses 5, 6.—Saw the place afar off. How far off, it is utterly vain to guess. The general locality of Mount Moriah is discernible at a distance of some three miles on the customary route. If Abraham's place of offering was the vicinity of Jerusalem, as is probable, then the parallel between his act, and the act of God in giving his Son to the cross, is made more striking by coincidence of locality. I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. What Abraham said was to prove literally true, and Abraham's faith may have led him to expect it. Heb. xi. 9, teaches that Abraham's faith was equal to believing that God could raise Isaac from the dead. We are thus left, at least, in some uncertainty as to the true explanation of Abraham's words to his servants.

Verse 6.—Isaac's bearing the wood to be used in making the sacrifice, in which he was himself to be the victim, is a striking parallel to Christ's bearing his own cross toward Calvary.

Verse 7, 8.—My father. How this must have gone to Abraham's heart! A lamb. "The lamb." This talk occurred as the two pursued their way.

Verse 9.—An altar. "The altar"—that is, the altar necessary for the sacrifice—perhaps of earth and turf. Compare Ex. xx. 24. Isaac has been variously estimated to have been now from fifteen to thirty years of age. He was, therefore, in all probability, physically strong enough successfully to resist his father. That he did not, implies a spirit of obedience on his own part, which must have been directed toward God quite as much as toward Abraham.

Verse 10.—The binding of the victim was done; nothing remained but to perform the last dread act. Now he stretches forth his hand, and takes the knife. God's moment has come.

Verses 11, 12.—And the angel of the Lord. "And an angel of Jehovah." Out of heaven. Now, for the first time, the message is said to come "out of heaven." It was startling. It arrested the suspended knife. "Abraham! Abraham!" The obedient soul answered with his obedient word. The angel now appears to be God himself, and he bids Abraham desist from his purpose. His obedience had been found to be perfect.

Verses 13, 14.—As it is said to this day. Implying that what follows had become a proverb. The proverb was drawn from this incident in Abraham's life. In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen. "In the mount of Jehovah it will be provided." "Jehovah-jireh" means, "Jehovah will provide." "In the mount of Jehovah," that is, where Jehovah records his name, (Ex. xx. 24), prayer will not be offered in vain. Jehovah will provide.

"Distinguish clearly between tempting, on the one hand, to test and to strengthen character, and tempting, on the other hand, to undermine character.

It is not unlikely that God, in unrecorded conversation with Abraham, made use of this parallel to disclose to the patriarch his own amazing purpose of grace, thus giving ground for Christ's saying: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; he saw it, and was glad." John viii. 56.

Learn from this story of Abraham to set about obeying at once, when commanded.

Doubt not but, in some wise way, God is also testing you.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

What promise to Abraham should we think of when we see the stars. Why was this promise hard to believe? What did the Lord count it to Abraham because he believed? What is believing God called?

Tell the story of the trial of faith, in vivid detail, calling attention to these points: Abraham was so ready to listen to God, that he always heard. How different from that of Lot! Did not ask to do something else, instead of the one thing which God told him; but even rose early to do God's will. Lest there might be no wood where they were going, he took some all that distance, instead of afterwards making it an excuse.

Dwell on his faith. It was not done in a hurry. He had time to think on his three days' journey. God had promised that from Isaac should come a great nation, countless as the stars, and one of his children should be the blessing of the world. How could this be, if Isaac was to be killed? Abraham did not know; but he did know that he must obey God, and he believed that nothing was too hard for God to do, even if he had to raise up Isaac from the dead. And you must remember that Abraham had never heard of such a thing as that. Isaac, too, believed and obeyed; else the strong young man would not have let his father bind him.

Abraham's faith had its reward. For God not only repeated his promise, but he seemed then to have made Abraham see clearer than he or any one else had done before who was the Lamb that God would provide to take away the sin of the world. How glad he was! (John viii. 56.) Long after, on that very place, God's only Son was—not laid on an altar but nailed to the cross, slain for sinners, that those might not die who, like Abraham, showed their love by their faith and obedience.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Youths' Department.

Bible Enigma.

No. 88.

TEMPERANCE ACROSTIC.

Place the following described words in order and their initials will form a sentence found in the book of Proverbs:

Nature's beverage; a prophet; a heathen god, taken into Palestine; a prophet who supplied three armies with water; a symbol of prayer among the Hebrews; a general slain by Jael; a city where Joshua was defeated and then victorious; a hill celebrated for its building; a country containing precious metal; an island in the Archipelago on the coast of Asia Minor; a rebellious Levite; treasurer of Corinth; one of the names of Christ.

CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

- No. 87. There were three kinds of trees in the Garden of Eden, what were they? and where are they mentioned? 88. What did the Israelites use for food while in bondage in Egypt? and where is it mentioned? 89. Who made the ointment used in the service of the house of God? 90. Were the priests obliged to have their hair cut, or might they let it grow long?

Answer to Bible Enigma.

No. 87.

CENTRAL ACROSTIC.

Ja S on To W er Om E ga El A th Me R om Jo N ah Na O mi Pe T er Wh A le Sa T an Am A sa Sa L em Si L as

"SWEAR NOT AT ALL."

ANSWERS TO CURIOUS QUESTIONS. No. 85. STAR PUZZLE.



- 1. Sleep—Peels. 2. Warts—Straw. Parts—Strap. 4. Smart—Trams. No. 86. Behead and Curtail: Nain—leaves Ai, Hannah—leaves Anna.

Man too easily cheats himself with taking repentance for reformation, resolutions for actions, blossoms for fruits, as on the naked twig of the fig tree fruits sprout forth which are only the fleshy rinds of the blossom.

The surest method of arriving at a knowledge of God's eternal purposes about us, is to be found in the right use of the present moment.

Three Wishes.

A FAIRY STORY.

Many years ago in Ireland, not far from the city of Cork, lived an old woman and her grandson, Jack, a bright handsome boy of twelve.

They had no other relations, and both worked hard for their food and clothes. The grandmother spent most of her time knitting, while Jack gathered peat, berries and other treasures from the neighboring forest, and carried them to the city for sale.

One evening, as he sat at the door of their cabin, wearied by a day of labor, he was accosted by an aged woman leaning upon a stick who begged him, in the name of charity, for a cup of goat's milk.

She looked many years older than his grandmother, who came briskly to the door and invited her in, while Jack ran to the goat-pen to procure the coveted draught of milk, which she drank as though nearly famished.

She was invited to remain for a comfortable meal, which was soon prepared, and readily accepting their hospitality, the little old woman—who lacked several inches of standing as tall as Jack—taking her stick, hobbled up to the table and partook ravenously of the substantial food.

After she had eaten everything that was set before her she arose, and giving her long nose a pull which seemed to double its length, she said:

"I am a fairy, good people, and for your kindness to me I will allow you to make three wishes for your benefit, my lad. The first two belong to your grandmother, for her care and kindness in rearing you, and shall be granted immediately. The other one you can express and I will grant you on your twenty-first birthday. Do not ask for wealth or fame, for such treasures are not in my power to bestow. I control only the heart and passions of my beneficiary, and can give you traits of character that will enable you to do much good in the world, and also much evil."

The grandmother, who desired her boy to be good, rather than great, said unhesitatingly:

"Grant that Jack may always be compelled to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

"I will," said the fairy; "but remember that perpetual truth-telling may lead him into difficulties and dangers, and even death itself may be the result."

"Then," said the dame, "my next wish is, that the limb which attempts to injure my boy may become paralyzed to its owner until he shall repent and make amends."

"Granted," said the fairy. "And now you shall see me no more until Jack has reached his twenty-first birthday."

Then, raising her stick, she passed it slowly over her head, describing a half-circle, and was gone.

Not long after, as Jack was gathering peat by the wayside, a traveller riding a jaded horse drew rein beside him and said:

"Boy, my horse is nearly exhausted, I have lost my way, but if you will tell me I am on the direct road to Cork, I will give you this silver half-crown which I hold in my hand."

"You are not," said Jack, telling the truth. "You took the wrong branch three miles back, leaving the Cork road to your left. You are now travelling directly toward the Big Forest."

"Is it possible," said the stranger, "that I am wrong again? and but for your honesty, my lad, you would now be enjoying the possession of my half-crown, and I travelling to almost certain death among the highwaymen of the Big Forest!"

"I must speak the truth," said Jack, bluntly.

"Well," said the traveller, "you have lost the half-crown, but I want you to take me to your cabin and let me tarry with you until morning. I am a diamond merchant in the city of Cork. I need a clerk who is strictly honest. I will hire you, and you can earn many half-crowns if you continue always to speak the truth."

So Jack, thanking his intended benefactor, led the way to his grandmother's cabin, where the weary traveller was kindly entertained.

Early the next morning, bidding his grandmother a tearful farewell, he fol-

lowed his new master to the city, and entered upon the light, pleasant duties of a clerk.

He soon became a great favorite with the merchant, who trusted him with uncounted diamonds, knowing that when questioned regarding them, he would always tell the truth.

One day the merchant purchased a lot of paste diamonds, that were such perfect imitations of the real gem that none but a connoisseur could distinguish the difference.

Soon a customer, attracted by their beauty, inquired the price. Finding it far below what he had expected, he immediately purchased a set, without asking any further questions regarding them.

While he was counting out the money to the merchant, Jack approached him. The purchaser said:

"I am buying some diamonds from your master. Aren't they pure and beautiful?"

"They are beautiful," said Jack, "but not pure."

"What!" exclaimed the astonished purchaser. "Do you mean to say they are not diamonds?"

"They are not diamonds," was the cool reply. "We call them paste."

"Paste!" said the offended customer, with a sniff. "I can make paste myself! If I cannot have diamonds for my money, I will have nothing," and sweeping the silver back into his purse, he walked off in high dudgeon.

"There!" said the merchant, angrily, to Jack, "you have spoiled another sale for me! That clown would have purchased the jewels for the trifle I asked for them, and enjoyed the possession of diamonds to the loss of no one. You have already revealed secrets of the trade which I find would have respected. You will ruin my business! So leave my house with your tattling tongue!"

And as Jack turned to obey, the merchant attempted to inflict upon him a parting kick, but the limb was paralyzed on the instant, and the merchant discovered, to his horror, that it was without feeling or power of motion.

Jack fled from his master's wrath, and made his way sadly back to his kind grandmother, who gave him a warm welcome, and cheered him with hopes of better fortune in the future.

But as years passed without any marked change in his fortune, he had almost despaired of ever being anything more than a poor forester, when one day at noon, returning home laden with his gatherings, his attention was attracted by groans near him in the forest.

Following the direction of the sound, he discovered none other than his majesty the king, lying prone upon the ground, and bleeding profusely from a wound in the back.

Jack knelt beside the fallen monarch, who explained that his horse had become unmanageable, and galloped away from his companions in the hunt, and had thrown him upon the ground forcibly, striking his back on a sharp stick.

"But," he added, "I do not think I am badly hurt, and I will give you a hundred pounds if you will assist me to my hunting-box, which is not far away, for I do not wish a gaping crowd of my subjects to gather around and see me, their king, lying here helpless and humiliated in the forest."

The exertion of speaking caused him to turn deadly pale, and Jack, who had been examining the wound and staunching the flow of blood, saw in an instant that he could not be moved without danger.

"I cannot obey your majesty," he said, trying to speak respectfully. "The exertion of walking will cause more blood to flow, and you may die if your wound is not dressed immediately. I gather herbs for market, and know what to use to make you safe and comfortable. I will only call my grandmother, whose cabin is but a few steps from here, to assist me, and she will watch with you while I go to the hunting-box and get your private servant with a conveyance."

Without waiting for a reply, he ran hastily to his cabin, informed his grandmother, and quickly gathered the necessary herbs and bandages.

They soon had the wound neatly and skillfully dressed. Then Jack ran off to inform one confidential servant, whom the king named, and in a short time the wounded monarch was borne gently