

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1880.

THIRD QUARTER.

Lesson VII.—AUGUST 15.

ABRAM AND MELCHIZEDEK. Gen. xiv. 12-24.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 18-20.

After Abram's settlement at Hebron he made a defensive alliance with Mamre, Eshcol, and Aner, chieftains of his neighborhood. Lot found himself in a troubled region over which war swept, terminating in his captivity and the confiscation of his goods.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Jesus, made a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."—Hebrew vi. 20.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

- M. Abram and Melchizedek, Gen. xiv. 12-24.
T. The Embattled Kings, Gen. xiv. 1-11.
W. Melchizedek a Type, Heb. v. 1-10.
T. Greatness of Melchizedek, Heb. vii. 1-22.
F. The Warrior Equipped, Eph. vi. 10-18.
S. Enduring Hardness, 2 Tim. ii. 1-14.
S. A Veteran's Farewell, 2 Tim. iv. 1-8.

PARALLEL TEXTS.

- With vs. 12: Gen. xiii. 12.
With vs. 13: Gen. xiii. 18.
With vs. 14: Gen. xiii. 8; xv. 3; xvii. 12, 27; Eccles. ii. 7; Deut. xxxiv. 1; Judg. xviii. 29.
With vs. 15: Isa. xli. 2, 3.
With vs. 17: Judg. xi. 34; 1 Sam. xviii. 6; Heb. vii. 1; 2 Sam. xviii. 18.
With vs. 18: Ps. cx. 4; Heb. v. 6; Mic. vi. 6; Acts xvi. 17.
With vs. 19: Ruth iii. 10; 2 Sam. ii. 5; Matt. xi. 25.
With vs. 20: Gen. xxiv. 27; Heb. vii. 4.
With vs. 22: Ex. vi. 8; Dan. xii. 7; Rev. x. 5, 6; Gen. xxi. 33.
With vs. 23: Esth. ix. 15, 16.

THE NOBILITY OF FAITH.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Bravery, Vss. 12-16. II. Piety, Vss. 17-20. III. Disinterestedness, Vss. 21-24.

QUESTIONS.—From what two men was the last lesson named? What led them to separate from each other? Where did each settle? What great battle was fought near Lot's home? (vs. 8, 9) What was the immediate issue of the battle? (vs. 10, 11) What is the title of the present lesson? What noble qualities of faith are named in the outline?

I. Vss. 12-16.—By whom was Lot taken prisoner? After what great battle? How did Abram learn of this capture? What new title is given him? What does it mean? Where did he dwell? What three confederates had he there? For what had they allied themselves? When Abram heard of the capture of Lot, what steps did he take? Point out Dan, and trace his probable route. How did he attack the captors of Lot? What was the result? How had Lot treated Abram? Why should Abram care to rescue Lot?—What characteristics of Abram does this conduct show?

II. Vss. 17-20.—What two kings went out to meet Abram on his return? Of what city was Melchizedek king? What other office did this king fill? What special honors do the Scriptures put upon this man? (Ps. cx. 4.) What was Abram's opinion of Melchizedek? (Heb. vii. 4-6.)

III. Vss. 21-24.—Which king first met the returning Abram? Where? What did Abram refuse? What did he accept?

We see Lot beginning to reap the consequences of his choice of an abode in the plains of Sodom. The child of God who mingles with the world, as of the world, always suffers serious loss.

In xiii. 12, Lot is said to have "pitched his tent toward Sodom."

Lost his testimony, his liberty, his goods.

A fugitive took word to Abram, who determined to rescue his nephew, and succeeded in doing so.

Picture the triumphant return of Abram and his heroic band, hailed by the cities of the plain as their deliverer. The mysterious king, Melchizedek, type of Christ (Ps. cx. 4; Heb. vi. 20); greater than Abram (Heb. vii. 4), for Abram "gave him tithes."

Abram's Temptation is subtle, strong, and, in what seemed proper to be done. His triumph is through a solemn, prayerful vow; by calling on "the Most High God."

EXPLANATORY NOTES.—Verse 12.—And they took. That is, the confederate kings mentioned in vs. 9.

Verse 13.—Abgam the Hebrew. Abram is named "the Hebrew" as being "one from beyond," that is, from beyond the river Euphrates. Eber was the common ancestor of the two great branches of the Shemitic stock, the Abrahamic, and the Arabic. (See chap. x. 25). The Abrahamic took their name of Hebrew [Ebrew] not directly, however, from Eber as ancestor, but from the circumstance of their immigration into Canaan from a region beyond, that is, east of the Euphrates. The fact of the fugitive survivor's betaking himself to Abraham with the news, indicates at once Abraham's well-known kindred sympathy with Lot, and his possession of princely power. Abraham had allies also in the Amorites, named in this verse.

Verse 14.—His brother. Lot was Abraham's brother, in the sense of being his kinsman. Armed. "Drew out." Three hundred and eighteen. That Abraham, with such a force, should have felt equal to the bold enterprise of intercepting the triumphant return of the four victorious kings, shows, on the one side, Abraham's courage and faith, and, on the other, the small scale of those primeval "kingdoms." Unto Dan. Not, probably, the Dan which marks the northern limit of Palestine, but Dan-jaan in Gilead (see Deut. xxxiv. 1, and 2 Sam. xxiv. 6), southwest of Damascus.

Verses 15, 16.—Abraham did not trust to his own strength, nor to divine help, in such a manner as to neglect skilful plan and disposition. There was a night attack, and there was attack from more than one direction. The result was a victory for Abraham, described by the writer of the "Hebrews" (chap. vii. 1), as a "slaughter of the kings." The pursuit extended to Hobah. There is still a village of this name, two miles to the north of Damascus. On the left, indicates this direction from Damascus. The observer was supposed, by the prevalent usage, to face the east, and the directions were then named accordingly. All the goods and his goods. These two expressions indicate that, besides recovering the property pillaged from Lot, Abraham brought also the other booty which the kings were carrying off. His success was complete.

Verse 17.—King of Sodom. In verse 10, it is stated that the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah "fell." The "king of Sodom," mentioned in the present verse may be the successor of the one that fell, or the falling of the kings may mean only that their forces were defeated. At the valley of Shaveh. "To," instead of "at." The king of Sodom went to this point, there meeting the returning patriarch. The king's date is mentioned in 2 Sam. xvii. 18, as the place where Absalom reared a pillar. According to Josephus, as quoted by Dr. Conant, it was within a quarter of a mile of Jerusalem.

Verse 18.—For the understanding of this incident, the meeting of Melchizedek and Abraham, read Heb. vii. Melchizedek. "King of righteousness" is the meaning of this word. King of Salem. "Salem" was the ancient name of Jerusalem meaning "peace." Bread and wine. Refreshment, in the form of both food and drink. There is no sacramental significance to be sought in the expression. Melchizedek was at once priest and king. Nothing whatever is known of his race or his parentage. His birth and his death are unrecorded. These facts explain the third verse of Heb. vii.

Verse 20.—Here was a priest anterior to the Levitical order, and out of the line of it—a priest, too, recognized by the writer of "Hebrews" as superior to the Levitical priesthood. Melchizedek's superiority as priest was shown, first, in his blessing of Abraham, from whom the Levitical priesthood was derived (and certainly "the less is blessed of the better"); secondly, in his receiving of tithes from Abraham, through whom, as their ancestor, even the Levitical priesthood might be considered to have thus paid tithes, thereby confessing their own subordination. He gave him tithes of all. "He," that is, Abraham; "him," that is, Melchizedek; "tithes," that is, a tenth part.

Verse 21.—The king of Sodom evidently thought that he must make terms with the victorious patriarch, if he was himself to reap any advantage from the

intervention. He was willing to give up the recovered booty, if Abraham, on his part, would let go the rescued captives.

Verses 22, 23, 24.—That I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine. "That not from a thread to a shoe-latchet will I take of all that is thine." Lest thou shouldst say. "And thou shalt not say." Abraham had guarded himself against the temptation to gain by his intervention. He had entered into an oath with Jehovah, "possessor [or founder] of heaven and earth," not to enrich himself with his spoil. He would have no share of the unrighteous mammon of Sodom. He would not entangle himself with the world. What had been consumed in the way of provision, he did not bind himself to make good; and the portion that would rightfully fall to his allies, he did not claim to restore to the king of Sodom. But for himself, nothing.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

The story may be told in the following word pictures:

- 1. Lot carried captive. 2. Messenger arriving in haste at Abram's home. 3. The hasty ride across the country. 4. The surprise at night by three bands. 5. The returning victorious caravan. 6. Meeting with Melchizedek. 7. Meeting with the king of Sodom.

Abram might have been brave enough to meet the enemy, yet might have said, "Lot took his choice, now let him take the consequences. Lot acted very selfishly with me; I would not strive with him, but I'll simply let him alone now."

God has sent some one to bless us, who is also King and Priest. Who is it? (Teach Golden Text and its meaning.) When Aaron, the first Jewish high priest, died, his son was priest in his place; then his son, and so on. But Melchizedek had no one who went before him as priest, no one who came after him. So Jesus is a priest forever; no one will ever take his place; whatever Jesus is doing for us now, he will keep on doing forever.

What can we bring our King and Priest? First of all, our hearts; then, like Abram, let us cast all we gain down at Jesus' feet, like Abram bringing the spoils of victory?

Show the difference here between Abram and Lot. Lot moved to Sodom because he could make money; but Abram would not let these wicked people have the smallest reason to boast that they had helped to make him rich.

Whose conduct would be most likely to make the king believe in the Most High God?

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Boys' Department.

Bible Enigma.

No. 84.

- 1. A city of the ancient Canaanites, whose king was an extraordinary man, to whom Abraham paid honor and reverence. 2. A town of the tribe of Naphtali. 3. A place whose inhabitants were cursed for refusing to do their duty. 4. Something which Paul forbade women to do. 5. A bird pronounced unclean by the Law. 6. An ancient Canaanite city, afterwards called Dan, and still later called Cesarea Philippi.

My primals give the name of a judge in Israel; my finals give one of the places where he held court as he went around on "his circuit from year to year."

—J. R. H. in Watchman.

CURIOS QUESTIONS.

76. Make a column of words, described below, each of which contains five letters, so that the central letters read downwards form an exclamation of praise.

The Sacred Book. Like a child. Garments. A lawyer. Coverings. A disciple. A son of Jacob. A game. A girl's name. Volumes. An animal. A liquid. A species of bird. A luminous body. A noted man. A prophet. A disease. A point of compass. A kind of goods.

77. ANAGRAMS. From the letters in "Draw faster" make a word signifying at a later time.

78. From "the war" make the crown given to the victor.

79. From "the law" make what the lawyer commonly gets.

Answer to Bible Enigma.

No. 83.

- 1. F e w.....Matt. vii. 14.
2. A bedneg o.....Dan. 1:3.
3. I thana r.....Num. iii. 4.
4. T raffic k.....Ezek. xxviii. 1-5.
5. H olines s.....Heb. xii. 14.

FAITH—WORKS. Jas. ii. 17.

ANSWERS TO CURIOS QUESTIONS.

71. Stumbled, because you get a tumble between the beginning and the end.

72. Beleaguered, because it has a league within it.

73. Smiles, seeing that it has a mile between the first and last letter.

74. Orchestra.

75. Funeral.

Brother Harkless Jones.

From Night and Day.

An aged black man appeared one day at the study door of an eminent minister in America, and introduced himself as "Brother Harkless Jones, from Sou' Caliny."

The minister shivered at the thought of another clerical beggar for church money to be spent, as so much of it usually is in the travelling expenses of the applicant.

"Well, Brother Harkless," he asked with a patient kindness, "what can I do for you?"

"You can listen to me, brudder," replied Harkless, with a princely air.

"I'll do that if you'll be short; but my time is very precious, brother," answered the pastor.

"So is mine, brudder!" exclaimed the visitor, with a dignity which almost startled the minister.

"You and I's both servants of the King, and his business always 'quires haste."

"Yes; and your church wants a little help, I suppose. "Well, sir, I am glad they sent a sensible man for it."

"No, sir. My church is de church universal, and dat has got de Mighty One of Jacob for her help, and needn't go beggin' of nobody! I come to give and not to ax, sir."

"Then you've got some money for my church, I suppose?" said the minister smiling.

"No, sir; what I've to give will come closer home to you than your church,"

"Well, what have you to give me then?"

"A little advice and a heap of comfort. I come from my old home 'cause my chil'n and grand-chil'n was bound for to come. I was as near de Lord on de banks of de Great Pedee as I ever 'pects to be up here, and dere was as many souls for to save down dere as dere is up here. But one night it 'peared like I saw a great shinin' finger in de dark cloud pointin' due north. Den said I 'Dat's my pillar o' fire, and where I'm sent I'll go, and de Lord will have my work all laid out ready for me.' So here I be, Sir."

"And you want me to set you to work?"

"Not a bit of it, sir; on de contr'y I want to set you to work! Dat's what I come'd here for dis mornin'!"

The cool composure of the sable guest fairly astonished the gentleman used to so much deference and respect; and he asked in a tone of surprise: "What do you mean, brother?"

"Well, I've been to hear you preach two Sundays, and I've made up my mind dat your'e off de track! You talks like it was a chance anyhow whether we saints gets to heaven after all. Dere was too many 'ifs,' in your sermon. De Master hadn't no 'ifs' in His preachin'. His gospel is, 'Him dat believes shall be saved, him dat comes I will in no wise cast out; come unto Me you dat is tired and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Dere is no condemnation to dem dat are in Christ Jesus. Whar I am, dere shall My people be also; I give eternal life unto as many as My Father gives Me, and none shall pluck dem out of My hands, Isn't dat good gospel, sir?"

"Yes, and I believe every word of it," replied the minister.

"Is dere any chance, think you, for Satin to slip in by a track and upset de great work of redemption?"

"No."

"Den why don't you tell people so?"

"One sarmon o' your'n was tellin' all 'bout de doubts Satin pushes into de hearts of de Lord's people. Why, dat sarmon was mor'n half 'devil' all through! and another was tellin' de saints dat dey must do dis and dat and t'other to

get peace and comfort here and heaven beyond. If you believe dat Christ died and rose again and dat kase he lives we shall live also, why don't you comfort God's people wid dese words? Let de devil alone for a while if your preachin' (you'll get 'nough o' him without makin' so much on him,) and just preach Christ Christ; Christ! 'Pears like I don't want to hear nothin' else but just only dat dear name while I stays here in de flesh. I'm black, and poor, and old to de eyes of de world; but I'm fair and rich and fresh in his sight; kase I'm in him. All dat He is got is mine, and dere ain't a king on 'arth dat old Harkless would change places wid. No, no, no!

"But while you never doubt God's power to save, you sometimes have doubts of your acceptance with Him; haven't you?" asked the minister, who was by this time seated, meekly taking his lesson.

"No, never; why should I? Dere was a night once, long time ago, when my soul was ceeding sorrowful like de Master's when He was in de garden. I felt like I was helpless for dis life and I had no light on de world beyond. I most hated God for not giving me a better lot. I was out in de canebrake alone a mile away from any livin' creature, I felt like I wanted to kill myself kase my massa done gone and sold my wife's baby! Dat ar night I got a hint in my soul what hell was; and as I sat dere, a thought came into me, and I spoke it out. 'Dere isn't no God,' says I. And dem-words scart me so't I sprung right off de ground whar I was lyin'! I was bewildered, I reckons, for all of a sudden I see a great white hand sweep back de dark night, and a light shined all round bout me. I didn't see nobody, but I felt strong arms about me, and in a minute my poor aching head was leanin' on somebody's breast, and oh, what a place that was to rest on. Den a voice said: 'Come unto me poor tired and heavy laden soul, and I will give you rest.' Den I knowed dere was a God, and dat it was de voice of His Son in my soul. I've been a new man since dat night; but half de time I've been only a common sort of a Christian, like you, risin' and fallin', hopin' and doubtin', such a Christian as puzzles de world to know whether dere is any good in 'ligion or not.

"I was a waiter in dem days, and was a good deal wid de white folks and it was fash'nable 'mong dem for to doubt, and mourn, and whine, when they talk'd 'ligion; and I used to forget dat night in de canebrake, and fell into de fashion of de gran' folks. But it didn't work with me and I got into darkness. Den I'd try to fight my own way out of de swamp; but de more I tried de faster I stuck. Den I tried to hire de Lord to lift me out of de horrible pit and de miry clay, by good works, helpin' de weak field hands or givin' away my pocket money. But we never made a bargain—de Lord and me; He always brung me low, till I was glad to get peace free, and to take away all chance o' braggin' from me. I didn't know what Christ was den. He was in me; but there was plenty else beside Him."

"Come here and sit in this large chair brother; it is more comfortable than that one," said the minister, in a subdued voice, as if addressing a superior. "I want to hear how you got clear of the tempter and filled with Christ at last."

"Oh, well! it isn't no great story, but here it is. Dere was an old col'd sister they used to call Gimsey, a sort of a preacher like 'mong de field hands. Well when she come down to her death-bed, she call all massa's people and de neighborin' black folks round her, kase she said she'd been in heaven a whole hour, and come back to give us a word of comfort. We gathered 'bout her, and she lift up her two hands and pray dis way: 'Lord Jesus, answer dis one prayer' of mine, for dy own name's sake. It is old Gimsey's last prayer. De next word wid me will be praise and hallelujahs. Bring dese poor chil'n into de light like you bring me into de light fifty years ago. Don't let brudder Harkless cast contempt no longer on dy blessed name by doubting of dy word, which is truth.' Den she open her eyes and begun for to preach, and she give each one a separate sarmon all to himself. She den call me. 'Come here, brudder Harkless, and take my cold hand in your'n.' I went, and she said: 'Oh, Harkless, Harkless! you's worse den an unprofitable servant. You's half de time b'arin false witness