

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1881.

FOURTH QUARTER.

Lesson V.—OCTOBER 30.

NADAB AND ABIHU.

Leviticus x. 1-11.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 1-3.

After the order of sacrifices and offerings had been fully settled, arrangements were made for consecrating the priests for their work.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Ye shall be holy; for I am holy.”—Leviticus xi. 44.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

M. Nadab and Abihu, Leviticus x. 1-11.

T. Unholy Service, Isaiah i. 1-20.

W. Unholy Service, Matt. vi. 1-18.

T. Unholy Service Punished, Num. xvi. 1-33.

F. Unholy Service Punished, Acts v. 1-11.

S. How to Serve God, Luke ix. 51-62.

S. Unholy Service Condemned, Lev. x. 1-11.

UNHOLY SERVICE CONDEMNED.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Unholy Service Condemned by Penalty, Vss. 1-3. II. Unholy Service Condemned by Separation, Vss. 4-7. III. Unholy Service Condemned by Precept, Vss. 8-11.

QUESTIONS.—How did God show his approval of the beginning of the tabernacle service? (Lev. ix. 23, 24).

I. Vss. 1-3.—Who attempted unholy service unto God? What was the nature of their service? What penalty did God visit upon them? From whence did the fire come? (See also Chap. ix. 24.)

II. Vss. 4-7.—What near relatives of these slain men stood by? What three prohibitions did Moses at once issue to them? What three reasons for this did Moses give? Who carried them out? Who were permitted to bewail them?

III. Vss. 8-11.—What new command did the Lord give to Aaron? What was probably God's reason for giving it at this time? How long was it to be observed? What two reasons for it are given? What lessons may preachers and teachers now learn from these precepts?

The ninth chapter ends with a scene of holy rejoicing as, Moses and Aaron came out and blessed the congregation, and the “glory of the Lord appeared to all the people.” At that moment, the sacred fire from “before the Lord” fell upon the great altar, and consumed the burnt-offering.

NOTES.—I. The Sin, (1).

Nadab and Abihu were the eldest of the four sons of Aaron and Elisheba (Ex. vi. 23), the others being Eleazar and Ithamar. All the four were associated with their father in the priesthood. Their position was one of great honor and privilege. 1. As priests, and Nadab as the eldest son, the natural successor of Aaron to the high-priesthood. 2. They had just been consecrated to their office, and had been assisting Moses and Aaron in the sacrificial offerings. 3. They had been chosen to go up with Moses and Aaron and the seventy elders to the top of Mount Sinai, where “they saw the God of Israel,” (Ex. xxiv. 8, 10). The censor, or “fire-pan” (Ex. xxvii. 3), was a small, shallow, metal vessel, made to hold coals of fire from the great altar, upon which incense for burning was sprinkled to produce a fragrant smoke. See xvi. 12. Offered strange fire. There is much discussion as to the precise act referred to here. What was the sin? The supposition that these young priests were beclouded in their minds, or excited to rashness by intoxicating drinks, seems natural as we read the solemn warning to the priesthood: “Do not drink wine nor strong drink.” Some suppose the fault

was in the time and manner of offering incense. The regular period was in connection with the morning and evening sacrifices (Ex. xxx. 7, 8), and the incense was to be burned by a single priest. Others suppose that they ambitiously encroached upon the functions of the high priest, and rashly intruded into the Holy of Holies. But the great majority of expositors explain the offence in the manner which seems most natural, as the use of common fire in their censers, instead of taking the sacred and supernatural fire which had just fallen upon the brazen altar. This sacred fire was afterwards used in burning incense (xxi. 12; Num. xvi. 46); and, though no command to this effect is recorded, it may have been given, and most likely was; for we read that they “offered strange fire” which he commanded them not; that is, which God had expressly forbidden. The phrase, before the Lord, here seems to refer to the court, as their death occurred outside the sanctuary, (vs. 4).

II. The Penalty, (vs. 2-7.)

Verse 2.—Fire from the Lord. As in ix. 24, where it consumed the sacrifices. There, a sign of acceptance; here, an instrument of vengeance. Devoured. Slew. Thus the sword is said to devour, (2 Sam. ii. 26). They were killed as one is slain by a flash of lightning. The question of their eternal salvation is not raised. We simply see God acting in government in the midst of this people.

Verse 3.—Moses explains the matter to the afflicted father: This is that the Lord spake. Not the very words, but the substance of them. See Ex. xix. 22; xxix. 44. I will be sanctified. Or, rather, “I will glorify myself.” In them that come nigh me. The priests, whose office it was to minister in God's dwelling place. God will glorify himself before all the people, either in grace or in judgment. Held his peace. Acknowledging, even in his terrible bereavement, the righteousness of God.

Verses 4, 5.—Neither Aaron nor his two remaining sons could leave their ministrations to bury the slain ones (compare Luke ix. 59, 60); and besides, to touch a dead body would defile them, (Num. ix. 6). Therefore, the cousins of Aaron, the nearest relatives not priests, were commanded to carry the bodies from before the sanctuary, that is, in the court out of the camp, and bury them.

Verse 6.—Aaron and his surviving sons were forbidden to indulge in signs of mourning common among the Israelites. The Orientals were given to extravagant expressions of grief. See case of Mephibosheth in 2 Sam. xix. 24. This prohibition was put upon Aaron and his sons, lest they should seem to question the justice of God in this judgment, and so participate in the sin. Lest ye die. Wrath to themselves and to all Israel would be the effect of disobedience.

Verse 7.—Ye shall not go out, etc. This anticipates the perpetual ordinance to this effect, in xxi. 12. They were to take no part in the burial, for by so doing they would be polluted by nearness to the dead bodies, and would cease, for a time, their priestly functions. The anointing oil. They were set apart to holy service by the anointing of oil. See viii. 10-12. A fitting symbol of the Holy Spirit, by whom the Lord's people are now anointed.

III. The Warning, (vs 8-11.)

Do not drink wine, etc. As before stated, this injunction, in this connection, is most significant. Total abstinence is commanded on the part of the priesthood in their religious ministrations. Christ's people are “a kingdom of priests.” The spirit of this command would enjoin total abstinence upon all Christians. It certainly teaches that the use of such drinks is inconsistent with the Christian life. See 1 Tim. iii. 3; Prov. xxxi. 5. In 1 Tim. v. 23, Timothy needed a special permit to use wine, even medicinally. Lest ye die. That is, lest being overcome or affected by liquor, ye do that which will be visited by death. A statute forever. Their spiritual perceptions blunted by liquor, they would be unable to put a difference, or distinguished between holy and unholy, or, rather, holy and common things, such as were set apart for sacred uses, and such as were not. Drink would also unfit them for another priestly duty: that of teaching the children of Israel all the statutes. Both priests and Levites were the religious

teachers of Israel. See Deut. xvii. 9; xxxiii. 10; 2 Chron. xvii. 7, 8; Neh. viii. 7. How wise this prohibition of priestly drinking was, is seen by the fearful demoralization to the nation, which came, in after years, by disobeying it. See Isaiah xxviii. 7-9; Hosea iv. 11.

The guilt of disobedience is put in a strong light. These priests were not pretenders, not murderers or adulterers, but they did that which the Lord “commanded them not.”

In the contemplation of the mercy of God, men sometimes forget that he is inflexibly just. Slow to anger and full of compassion, he nevertheless will by no means clear the guilty.

God doesn't admit the plea of intoxication as an excuse for sins which spring from it.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

Moses dressed the high priest. He put on his robe and ephod and girdle; then the breast-plate, the mitre, and holy crown. See Lev. viii. 6-10. Moses poured oil upon Aaron's head and anointed him. That showed to all the people that Aaron was set apart to do God's work in the tabernacle.

Then Moses put the priests' garments upon Aaron's four sons, and anointed them, too.

Now read slowly, with comments, ch. ix. 22-24.

What kind of fire would you call this fire that God sent? It was holy fire. God meant that no common fire should be used, to burn the sacrifices or the incense.

Who were to carry the incense into the Holy Place, and put it on the altar? Aaron's sons. What fire, did God say, must be used to set fire to the incense? Now, I have such a sad story to tell you about Nadab and Abihu.

The very first time that they were going into the Holy Place, to burn incense, they disobeyed God! Can you think what they did? They did not go to the brazen altar for the fire to burn the incense! They took strange fire. Read vs. 1 and 2. God had told them exactly what to do; and they had disobeyed!

Aaron did not find fault with God; he knew that God had done right. His sons deserved to be punished for such disobedience. Perhaps they had been drinking strong drink.

When men are drunk, they do not know what they are doing. Still they must be punished just the same, because they have no right to be drunk.

What was the room called where God's glory rested? The Holy of Holies. What is the Bible called, because it is God's book? What day in the week are we told to keep holy? Why? Because it is God's day.

Now, children, if God is holy, and his house is holy, his book is holy, and his day is holy, how, do you think, he wants his children to be? See what our Golden Text says: We can never enter heaven, if we are not holy.

If the Holy Spirit comes to us, he will help us to grow more holy every day. Ask Jesus to send him to us now.—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Boys' Department.

Scripture Enigma.

No. 142.

- 1. Find the name of a leader in the opposition to Nehemiah to the rebuilding of the temple.
2. Who was the Prime minister in the Court of King Ahasuerus, who plotted to sacrifice the Jews throughout the Persian dominions.
3. To a company of what nation was Joseph sold by his brethren?
4. Who was the son and successor of Jeroboam.
5. A son of Levi.
6. Abraham's steward.
7. Who wrote the letter sent to Darius concerning the rebuilding of the temple.
8. What good king of Judah succeeded Ahaz.
9. A Jew born in captivity, but raised to the honorable post of cupbearer to the king of Persia.
10. A son of Kenar, who married Achsah, the daughter of Caleb.
11. A noble Persian queen, who plead successfully for her nation when decreed to a cruel slaughter.
12. One of the sons of the man who obtained a decree for this wicked purpose.

13. The man who succeeded Jephthah as Judge over Israel.

14. Abraham's nephew. Place these names in order and the initials compose a blessed result from the cultivation of a spirit of love.

CURIOSUS QUESTIONS.

Intellectual amusement.

255. Remove the central letter from a word signifying a blank book, and leave a sour mineral.

Do. From a word meaning a giver, and leave an entrance.

Do. From one meaning a demon, and leave to discover.

Do. From one meaning morning, and leave the principat.

Do. From one meaning course of travel, and leave by memory.

256. Behead a time piece, and leave a fastening.

Do. part of a foot, and leave a fish.

Do. An agricultural implement, and leave an article for shooting.

Do. One who rules, and leave a flower.

Do. A portion, and leave a quadruped.

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

No. 141.

- 1. B alak.....Numb. xxii. 4-6.
2. A morites.....Numb. xxi. 23, 24.
3. L eave.....Numb. xxii. 13.
4. A s.....Numb. xxii. 20-33.
5. A ngel.....Numb. xxii. 27, 34.
6. M oab.....Numb. xxiv. 15-17.

BALAAM.

ANSWERS TO CURIOSUS QUESTIONS.

252. Diet, edit, tide, tied.

253. 1. Sympathically; 2. Incomprehensibility; 3. Pyramidically.

254. Transliterations.

1. Work, pork, port, pert, peat, plat, play.

2. Beef, beet, beat, peat, pert, port, pork.

3. Hand, hard, hare, fare, fore, fort, foot.

4. Rich, rice, rile, pile, pole, poll, pool, poor.

5. Warm, warn, worn, corn, coon, cool.

Baby's Sermon.

The children had been up in their mama's room, after breakfast one morning, learning their text, and when they had it perfect and were coming down stairs again for a run in the garden, while nurse was busy, Nannie and Frank fell to disputing, and what do you think it was about? Why who should carry the great rubber ball down stairs.

Nannie wanted it because she thought of it at first, and Frank wanted it because he was the oldest.

“You are a mean, selfish boy,” said Nannie.

“You're a pig,” said Frank.

“I'll just tell papa what a horrid boy you are,” said Nannie.

“And I'll tell mamma I wish she'd sell you to somebody. I don't want such a sister,” answered Frank.

So the naughty children went on from bad to worse, saying all sorts of unpleasant things to one another—so very unkind that they were ashamed enough whenever they remembered them afterward.

All this time baby Ben was coming down stairs behind them. Slowly, one foot at a time, holding fast to the baluster with both fat, small hands, the little man made his way; and wider and wider opened his big blue eyes, more and more surprised he looked, as he heard the angry words.

The children stopped to finish their quarrel at the foot of the stairs. Frank was trying very hard to get the ball away from Nannie, and she had got so far as pulling his hair, the naughty girl, when the baby stopped on the lowest stair and preached his sermon to them:

“Ickle children,” he said, “love one another.”

That was every word he said. It was the text the children had been learning in their mother's room such a short time before. Nannie dropped her hands, her face flushed, she turned half away from baby Ben, and nobody said anything for a moment.

“Here, Frank,” said Nannie at last, holding out the ball, “you can have it; I'm going to be good.”

“So am I,” said Frank. “You shall have the first toss, Nannie. I'm—I'm very sorry I was so cross.”

So the two went off to the garden, hand in hand, ashamed of having been so naughty, while the baby curled himself up in papa's big chair in the study, and there nurse found him, after a long hunt, fast asleep, with his thumb in his mouth.—Living Church.

Judas's Convert.

BY AUGUSTA MOORE.

I once knew an infidel. He was one of the charming and lovely ones of this world; was a great favorite with his friends, among whom were some true Christians, and many church members, who were not worthy of the Christian's name. These latter so misrepresented, to the upright, generous hearted infidel, the religion they professed, that he was more and more confirmed in his unbelief. To be sure, he was obliged to confess to himself that certain other friends of his were sincere in their efforts to live a good life, and to please a Being they imagined was interested in them. “But,” said he, “they are naturally honest and good, and their little notions about their Christ, as they call him, cannot do them any great harm.” He was so keen and so presumptuous in his wit, whenever any of these good people, yearning over him and longing for his salvation, attempted to reason with him and to show him his danger, that they really dreaded to introduce the subject of religion in his presence.

Thus he went gaily along in his unconscious spiritual danger and death. But he had a faithful, praying wife. Oh how she loved him! As she looked upon his frank, handsome face, and listened to his musical voice, singing often the psalms and hymns she loved, tears of tenderness and sorrow for his blindness, would start to her eyes. But she had learned that words were of little profit in his case. He never resented anything she said to him; but he did what even more troubled her,—turned all into sport.

But the wife believed that God's promises were firm—meant what they said and not some other good thing—she prayed on; and waited as patiently as she could, for the answer.

One day, her husband surprised her by saying; “I'm going to read the Bible all through, just as if I had never seen nor heard of it; and when I've finished I'll tell you how it strikes me.” You may be sure her prayers were not forgotten while her husband read.

Long afterwards he told the story of that reading. He got along, somehow, through all the Old Testament, and until he came to the betrayal in the New, explaining things away, as best as he could. When he found that Judas had betrayed Jesus, he felt pleased. “He knew that the claims of Jesus were unjust, and that he was an impostor. He did right to deliver him up to be punished—I would have done just so,” he said. But he read on. When he found that Judas repented, and said he had betrayed an innocent man, and threw away his money, and went and hanged himself, our reader was confounded. “Judas knew,” was his honest thought. “If, under such circumstances, Judas acted thus, his testimony is true. And if an innocent man, Christ was what he claimed to be, and all he says is true—and I am a sinner and lost—unless I go to him.”

Thus the testimony of him who betrayed his Master, was used by the Holy Spirit to convince this infidel, and to save a soul from death. Truly,

“God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform.”

Nothing is too hard for him. In ways we little dream of, he is working to answer prayer and to save souls. Let us be faithful, and wise in our faithfulness, and let us pray on, nothing doubting, for God's promises are sure.

Infidels and the Bible.

Hume used to go to church sometimes in Scotland. Collins insisted on his servants going to church, “that they might not rob or murder him.” Voltaire “built a church to God” at Ferney. Mr. Huxley wants the Bible introduced into schools. Prof. Tyndall is indignant at being charged with hostility to religion; and Mr. Herbert Spencer leaves ample space for the “unknown and unknowable.” The heart, like nature, “abhors a vacuum;” it craves for something beyond a negation, and as long as the unknown is treated as “unknowable” the craving is hard to satisfy.—Saturday Review.

Have the courage to be ignorant of a great number of things, in order to avoid the calamity of being ignorant of every thing.