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INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Third Quarter Lesson 8, Aug. 25 1901

ABRAHAM AND ISAAC.— GENESIS 22: 1-14.

Print Verses 1-12.

GOLDEN TEXT.—By faith Abraham when he was tried, offered up Isaac.— Heb. 11: 17.

LEARN BY HEART

Vs. 6-8; Rom. 12: 1; Pet. 1: 1.

THE SECTION includes Gen. 21: and 22: 1-19.

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—Probably about B.C. 1871. Twenty-six years after our last lesson. The exact time is uncertain. It depends on the age of Isaac, who was born B.C. 1896. He was certainly a young man at this time. If he was twenty-five, as Josephus says then the date of the present lesson would be 1871.

Place.—Abraham's home was now Beersheba instead of Hebron, as in our last lesson. It was a town on the southern border of Palestine, forty-five miles south of Jerusalem, Connection. 1. Within a year after the destruction of Sodom a son was born to Abraham and Sarah.

2. Abraham removed from Hebron, and made his home at Beersheba, where was a fine well, named Beersheba, that is, well of the oath, on account of the covenant Abraham made with Abimelech a Philistine chief. It is twenty-five or thirty miles southwest of Hebron.

3. Hagar was sent away with her son Ishmael. We may only notice the instructive incident of Hagar and Ishmael almost dying of thirst, while a well of water was close at hand, unseen till the angel showed it to her. So often we mourn when consolation is close by us unseen.

4. Isaac grew up to be a young man, in the quiet country life of his father, till he had reached the age of 20 or 25 years.

THE SUPREME TEST OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH AND OBEDIENCE.—Vs. 1, 2. The sacrifice of Isaac was the supreme act of Abraham's life. The faith which had been schooled during a long and trying life was here required and used.

1. Abraham was to be the founder of a great nation, through which God and true religion were to be made known. The higher the example set, the brighter would the light shine down the ages.

2. It is possible that Abraham himself may have needed the assurance and comfort of faith in his own consciousness.

And it came to pass after these things. The things described in the previous chapter. It must have been a number of years after. God did tempt Abraham. Tempt i. e., try, or prove God often tries men, tests men. Test i. e., for the purpose of making them better. And said unto him. In some clear unmistakable manner, by vision, or by personal appearance. Takes now thy son, thine only son. He was the only son by his wife Sarah; he was the son of promise; he was the only son left to his father's house. Whom thou lovest. The joy and comfort of his old age. Get thee into the land of Moriah. The mountainous portion of Jerusalem, of which the hill Moriah, on which the temple was built, was a prominent part. And offer him there for a burnt offering. As the most precious thing he possessed. 1. He was to give up the heir of his property and his name. 2. This was the son of his love. (3) This was the son of the promise, and to offer him seemed to render it impossible that the promise be fulfilled, so that both Abraham's faith and love were tested in the severest degree.

This whole transaction has been so perverted both in teaching and in action that it is well to look at it carefully to see just what it means.

1. The spirit of the test was sacrifice, perfect consecration, perfect faith, perfect obedience. This is the essence of heroism, of patriotism, of love to God, and of love to man. It is not the pains, the losses, the sufferings, the death of the hero, or martyr, or patriot that we love to see, but the spirit that was willing to endure them for a noble purpose. The measure of love is the sacrifice one is willing to make for the loved.

2. Abraham lived among idolaters who sacrificed to their idols their choicest treasures, their most beloved, their first-born sons. Abraham may have feared lest the idolaters would not respect his God, for whom he made no sacrifice while he enjoyed his good gifts; that he did not love God as truly and deeply as they did their god.

3. Abraham had not yet learned to distinguish between the spirit and the form of sacrifice. The times were saturated with the ideas of human sacrifice. In Abraham's day the universal conscience had only approbation for such a deed as this.

4. What God did shows what he

intended to do when he gave the command. God meant Abraham to make the sacrifice in spirit, not in the outward act.

5. He went to show that the spirit of highest sacrifice can exist without human sacrifices. It was a protest against human sacrifices.

ABRAHAM ENDURES THE TEST.—Vs. 3-14. And Abraham rose up early. To avoid the heat of the day Saddled girdled to carry the wood. Claws the wood, to have that which was dry and would burn. On the third day. The usual time it would take them to go the forty-five miles to Jerusalem. Saw the place afar off. The hill Moriah can be seen about three miles by a traveler from Beersheba. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here. He would be alone in his agony, and in his communion with God.

The wood . . . and laid it upon Isaac. As his part of the load, while Abraham carried the brazier of fire. And he took the fire in his hand. That is, the vessel contained the coals of fire. My father: . . . where is the lamb for the burnt offering? Only the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary surpass this.—God will provide himself a lamb. In v. 14 the expression is "Jehovah will provide," and the place is named "Jehovah-jireh," But Jehovah, the covenant God, provides the way of escape. And bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar. This must have required great faith and obedience in Isaac.

And Abraham . . . took the knife. Abraham, so far as his heart and his intent are concerned, has shown the deed virtually done. It was so regarded by God (Heb. 11: 17). By faith Abraham, when he was tried offered up Isaac." It is not the act, so much as the will and the purpose of heart, which God regards.

The angel of the Lord (Jehovah) called unto him out of heaven. A voice familiar to Abraham and at once recognized as that of God himself. Lay not thine hand upon the lad. Abraham had now gone as far as God intended. The event show that he intended Abraham to have the mind and will that would give his best to God and would obey God to the utmost. Now I know that thou fearest God. Abraham had perfectly borne the test. The moral purpose of the trial was accomplished. The shortest and surest way out of trials is perfect submission to God's will. This was faith in action.

And behold behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns. Here occurs the substitution in which God set forth as in a figure the plan of the Mosaic economy for the offering of animal victims instead of human sacrifices. The spirit of sacrifice was to be retained with forms and methods that should be harmless but effective.

THE SUPREME BLESSING. The promises to Abraham were renewed and emphasized.

It was his blessing to be such that his race and his character could be safely multiplied.

PRACTICAL LESSONS.—1 Everything must be tested before it is safe to put it to use,—the ship, the cannon, the engine, the bridge. The whole of life is a testing and an education by testing.

2 Most of the time the trial is through little things, every-day experiences. These are often a severer trial than most great things.

3. Then a few times in life come great and severe trials.

4. The trials of life are often a great mystery to the one who suffers the trials.

5. There is a double purpose in all these trials. Life is both a probation and an education:

(1) The trials of life are to prove what we are, to see if we are fitted for larger things. The rope is tested by a weight, not to break it, but to see if it is fitted to hold up more precious things. Thus in this lesson Abraham was tested to see whether he was worthy to be the ancestor of a mighty nation, and to fulfil the hopes that rested upon him (2) The meaning of trial is not only to test worthiness, but to increase it, as the oak tree is not only tested by the storms, but toughened by them.

(6) It is a sign of God's favor to have trials. "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons."

(7) Great blessings, great influence, accompany great trials successfully endured. Highest trials bring highest blessings.

(8) The surest and quickest way to be relieved of great trials is through perfect submission to God's will. When the purpose of the trial is accomplished, the trial may be removed. When the gold is perfectly refined, the fire can be put out.

(9) The wonderful way in which God provided the sacrifice, in the hour of greatest extremity, was the source of a proverb, which would comfort God's people in all ages. The nearest equivalent in English is "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." When the difficulties and dangers seem insurmountable, God will provide a way out of them

for his children. There are many places in every Christian life where we might well name "Jehovah-jireh,"—"The Lord will provide."

The Real Captain Kidd

Despatches told, the other day, how working man, engaged in tearing down an old house at Damariscotta Mills, Maine, found in the walls a pot of Spanish gold, which might have been placed there by Captain Kidd. The silly phrase indicates the popular idea of Kidd's actions—that he buried treasures anywhere and everywhere along the Atlantic coast. Yet the truth seems to be that all the valuables he really did conceal were discovered during his lifetime.

Two hundred years ago William Kidd was hanged at Execution Dock, London, and time has sifted out from many fables some of the facts about his career. It seems that he was born at Greenock, Scotland, and was the son of a non-conformist minister who had suffered imprisonment and torture for conscience' sake. Some of the father's sterling stuff must have been in the son. He went to sea, rose to be captain, and made a fortune.

He had specially distinguished himself as a privateer against the French in the West Indies, and when the Earl of Bellmont, Governor of Massachusetts Bay, undertook in 1695 to stamp out piracy, no less important a New Yorker than Robert Livingstone recommended Kidd for the command of the expedition. There would probably be gold gained, by such a movement, and Bellmont and others of the nobility and gentry raised six thousand pounds to fit out the pirate catchers. A new ship was provided, the Adventure Galley, of two hundred and eighty-even tons, and mounting thirty-four guns. And Kidd, who had retired and was living at his ease, gladly made ready to go to sea again.

There was difficulty in raising a crew at Plymouth, England, where the vessel was built, and Kidd sailed her to his home port, New York, where, five years earlier, he had been presented with a hundred and fifty pounds for protecting the colony from pirates. At New York he shipped men enough to make in all one hundred and fifty-four. Then in September, 1696, the Adventure bore away in search of the pirates who prowled between the Cape of Good Hope and the Straits of Malacca.

But after a while strange tales began to come back. It was said that Kidd had turned pirate himself, that he had seized the Quidah Merchant, East Indian, and other ships of his own nation. Finally the governors of all English colonies were ordered to seize him at sight. So when Kidd turned towards America, in 1699, he left his ship near Haiti, and with a few men in a small sloop sailed up to Gardiner's Island, which lies off the east end of Long Island, New York. Thence he sent an emissary to Boston, to Bellmont, protesting innocence, and asking if it were safe to come ashore.

Apparently Bellmont encouraged him. Kidd ventured to Boston. A week later he was arrested, to be sent to England. Political complications caused a year's delay, but in May, 1701, he was put on trial at the Old Bailey, charged not only with piracy, but with burning houses, massacring peasantry, brutally treating prisoners, and murdering William Moore, a gunner on his ship.

Kidd answered that his own crew forced him into piracy; that after they had cruised a year and found no pirate, and therefore no booty, they mutinied and made him do their will. He admitted killing Moore, "as he sailed," but asserted that he had to do so to maintain discipline. There seems no doubt that his trial was grossly unfair. He was refused counsel and all facilities for making a defense. Still the charge of piracy failed, but he was convicted of the murder of Moore, and Kidd and nine of his crew were hanged.

As for the "treasure" of this man, who may have been better than his reputation, some was buried at Gardiner's Island, some was carried on his person, and some was stored on his little sloop. It consisted of about eleven hundred ounces of gold twenty-three hundred ounces of silver, seventeen ounces of jewels (sixty-nine stones), fifty-seven bags of sugar, forty-one bags of merchandise and sixty-seven pieces of canvas, the total value being about fourteen thousand pounds.

Protecting His Rights.

What was I laughing at? said Uncle Silas, repeating the boy's questions, as they gathered around the chair where he was resting under the shadow of the maples.

Well, I was just watching what went on in the next yard there, and laughing at a picture of human nature.

You see, the women folks are cleaning house, and they've moved a lot of things out on the porch—chairs, pictures, and such like—and they put one big looking-glass where it leaned against the porch railing, glass side this way.

I don't know how their chickens came to be out, for they don't generally have the freedom of the yard; but anyway, they were out, and that old red rooster was marching along as lofty as you please, when, just as he got opposite the porch, he stretched up his neck to crow, and saw another red rooster crowing back at him from the looking-glass. That was too much to bear! He would not allow any trespassing on his grounds, and he flew up and struck his head such a blow against the glass that it knocked him flat.

He seemed to think, at first, that the other fellow had had the best of it, and he picked himself up and looked around rather caustically. But there was no other rooster in sight, none on the ground nor under the porch, and, after jerking his head this way and that, he seemed to think he had really driven off the enemy. So he ruffled his feathers, stretched his neck again, and began to crow over his victory, till all at once he spied the other rooster, and it was crowing, too.

'Twas funny to watch him, and I believe he'd been at it yet if some of the folks in the house hadn't seen him, and moved the glass for fear he'd break it.

'Twas only a rooster's foolishness, of course, said the old man, but it made me think of human beings that are always watching out for what they call their rights.

Discovered by Accident

The retirement of Professor Thomas C. Mendenhall from the presidency of the Worcester Polytechnic Institute has been a matter of extreme regret to educators, for he has long been regarded as one of the best mathematicians in the country. He was himself long ignorant of the possession of this talent, and only discovered it by the merest accident.

Professor Mendenhall was the son of a poor farmer in Ohio, and was at work on the farm one day when a resident of a distant village drove up and struck a bargain with the elder Mendenhall for the purchase of a cow.

Now, said the visitor, I must get this cow home, but I can't take time to drive her twenty miles ahead of my team, and she can't go fast enough to be led behind. My lad, I will give you a dollar to drive her over to my place.

Thomas jumped at the chance, and the next morning started on his walk, barefoot, before daylight. Arrived at his destination, he received his dollar—the first money he had ever owned—and was invited to stay overnight before returning. On his way to his room he passed a bookshelf on which lay a Euclid. He had never seen a geometry before, and something prompted him to take this one down and look inside. He carried the book to his room and pored over it as long as the candle held out. Then he dreamed of it for the rest of the night.

In the morning he timidly asked his host if his dollar would buy that volume. His joy was so great at learning that it would that he could scarcely eat his breakfast, and he trudged home perfectly happy, with his precious volume under his arm.

That was his first step in science, and his accidental introduction to Euclid inspired him to work his way through school and college and enter upon the life of research which has placed him in the front rank of American scholars. He now has the right to place a long string of honors and titles after his name, and is a member of half a dozen scientific associations. — Saturday Evening Post.

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