

The Sunday-School. THIRD QUARTER, LESSON VII.—Aug. 14.

OBADIAH AND ELIJAH.

1 Kings 18: 1-16.

THE LESSON.—Study the entire interview between Elijah and Ahab, 1 Kings 18: 1-19. There is no parallel in Chronicles.

GOLDEN TEXT.—I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth.—1 Kings 18: 12.

HISTORICAL SETTING.—Time. Three and a half years after Elijah's first appearance to Ahab. About B. C. 907 (common chronology), B. C. 870 (revised chronology).

Place.—The country northwest from Jezreel (1. 46), perhaps on the slopes of Mt. Carmel.

Rulers.—Ahab, king of Israel, perhaps in his twelfth year, which would be the eighth year of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. Ahab's queen, Jezebel.

Place in the History.—While, under Jehoshaphat, Judah was enjoying a religious reformation, Israel was in the deepest darkness of idolatry, in punishment for which was sent a famine of three and one-half years. Conclusion of the great drought, and reappearance of Elijah.

LEARN BY HEART.—Vs. 13-16; Prov. 3: 5; Matt. 10: 18; 2 Tim. 1: 7.

ELIJAH'S COURAGEOUS MISSION.—Vs. 1, 2. Elijah remained two years at Zarephath, nourished by God's wonderful providence. The word of the Lord came to Elijah. By an inward impulse, a vision, or an audible communication. In the third year of his sojourn at Zarephath. The drought had begun three and a half years before, but about a year of this Elijah had passed at the brook Cherith. Go shew thyself unto Ahab. As the interdict had been placed on the land by announcement to Ahab, it was fitting that it should be removed in the same way.

A Test of Courage.—Elijah's obedience could hardly be put to a more severe test.

- 1. Ahab was a king of well-known wickedness and unscrupulous cruelty.
2. Jezebel was one of the most dangerous women that ever lived.
3. Against Elijah personally the wrath of king and queen burned fiercely. He had rebuked Ahab to his face. For three and a half years Ahab had been searching to wreak vengeance upon him.
4. Elijah knew that the people were gone after idolatries.
5. With these terrors in the way, Elijah was not left without some cheer. God promised, I will send rain upon the earth. Ahab would hardly venture to destroy the prophet till his influence with Jehovah had restored the rain.

There was a sore famine in Samaria. The capital, and the whole country around. Some grain might have been obtained from Egypt at a cost prohibitive for the poor.

Why did God Send the Famine?—(1) Because the wickedness of the people required severe measures. (2) It was appropriate punishment. Baal was the god of rain and sunshine, of fertility, and harvest. His failure in the famine would turn the people to the true God. (3) The miraculous return of rain would set before the people the superiority of Jehovah. (4) The national dis-

stress would humble the people and lead them to seek God.

AHAB'S ANXIOUS SEARCH.—Vs. 3-6. Samaria, the capital, would be the last to suffer. The famine had now come close to the king. Ahab called Obadiah, the governor of the house. His lord high chamberlain. Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly, with reverence, and trusting, obedient service. His fear of God made him faithful to man.

Religion Under Difficulties.—Note that (1) Obadiah was true to God when the majority were false, when true religion was unfashionable. (2) He maintained his faith at the very center of idolatry. (3) It was not a half-way religion. For it was so. For example. When Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord. The cruel queen slew them, probably in revenge for the drought. God had not left himself without witnesses. Hid them by fifty in a cave, two companies for convenience and safety. Go . . . unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks. Ahab hoped that there might be occasional moist places where fodder might be found. To save the horses and mules alive. So they divided the land between them. That the search might be quickly conducted. Ahab went one way. Probably southward from Jezreel. By himself. This personal search was not considered beneath the dignity of a king in the east. And Obadiah went another way. Toward the north, probably meeting Elijah.

OBADIAH'S FEAR AND HESITATION.—Vs. 7-16. As Obadiah was in the way Elijah met him. A meeting divinely ordered. And he knew him. Obadiah recognized Elijah by his peculiar clothing. And fell on his face. This seemed no mere man who stood before him, but the representative of the Eternal. Art thou my lord Elijah? R.V., "Is it thou, my lord Elijah?" I am. R. V., "It is I. Go tell thy lord, who has been seeking me so long. What have I sinned? He assures Elijah that he is an upright man and does not deserve to have trouble brought upon him. No nation or kingdom. Those countries immediately around Israel Whither my lord hath not sent . . . he took an oath that the search had been thorough. The Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee Doubtless Elijah had often seemed spirited from place to place during the king's search for him. He shall slay me. As the Romans slew a guard when he allowed a prisoner to escape. Was it not told, my lord? Elijah would naturally believe that Ahab's steward was an idolater, but Obadiah thought Elijah might have heard what he had done to save fifty of the prophets. Before whom I stand. He was the ready and patient slave of Jehovah. I will surely shew myself unto him today. Obadiah knew Elijah would keep his word, and went to find Ahab. And Ahab went to meet Elijah. Anything was better than suspense and famine. And Elijah's return contained in it a promise of rain.

ELIJAH'S BOLD CHALLENGE.—1 Kings 18: 17-19. The recreant king put a bold face upon the matter. "Is it thou," he exclaimed, "thou troubler of Israel?" He had no word to say about Jehovah, or his sin and the nation's; no expression of repentance.

Elijah met the issue promptly and

sternly. "It is not I that have troubled Israel," he replied, "but thou, and thy sin of idolatry." Ahab had not another word. Immediately assuming his place of rightful authority, the prophet began to issue his commands to the conscience-smitten king. "Send," he ordered, "and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal." There, Elijah implied, the issue would be fought out between the two religions; and though he was one, and the idolatrous prophets nearly a thousand, he was not afraid to meet the test. Ahab obeyed, and made ready for the mighty combat.

THE HEART OF THE LESSON.

A most instructive contrast is presented by the three characters of this lesson. Ahab had wholly surrendered to the evil of idolatry; Obadiah was outwardly complaisant but inwardly protested and was secretly its opponent; Elijah alone had courageously withstood it and separated himself from it. Ahab was for Jezebel; Elijah was for Jehovah; Obadiah tried to stand safely in between. They are examples of whole-hearted piety, half-hearted piety, and whole-hearted impiety. Many useful lessons may be drawn from this event:

- 1. God does not needlessly prolong punishment. The famine had done its work, exhibiting the powerlessness of Baal and preparing the people for a return to Jehovah and it was now to end.
2. A servant of God serves him as truly in times of waiting as in times of action.
3. It is best always to bide God's time. Elijah must often have chafed during those three and a half years, and longed to upbraid the people for their sins, and proclaim Jehovah as their only help. But God said, "Wait."
4. God gives men every chance to be brave and true. Elijah, Obadiah, and Ahab each had his chance in this one event. Elijah accepted it eagerly. Obadiah accepted it tremblingly. Ahab met it with impudent bravado, that disclosed his weakness and contemptibleness.
5. Elijah's power over men sprung from his obedience to God.
6. Whenever God's servants really join issue with evil men, they conquer.
7. Plain speech is best in the presence of evil.
8. It is always safe to be on God's side. It is never safe to be anywhere else.

A SCREEN OF STAMPS.

A most interesting screen composed of about 40,000 postage stamps is on the point of completion by a Philadelphian. It is of four panels. The handsome frame, with ledge or shelf top, is of quartered oak the dark, English weathered variety. This is in rich contrast with the panels, which are composed entirely of cancelled postage stamps of every denomination, from \$50 to something like a tenth of a cent. Not only is every nation represented, but there is a good variety for each nation, and old as well as new issues are arranged in wonderful variety. The peculiar color used in postage stamps blend themselves admirably and grow still more mellow in a few years. C. E. Schermerhorn, who is having it made, says the stamps are stuck on composition board, which is both light and strong. It is alike on both sides, seven feet in height, each of the inserted panels measuring six feet by two feet and a half. In spite of the fact that very many of the stamps were collected by

Ayer's Cherry Pectoral. Don't try cheap cough medicines. Get the best, Ayer's Cherry Pectoral. What a record it has, sixty years of Cherry Pectoral cures! Ask your doctor if he doesn't use it for coughs, colds, bronchitis, and all throat and lung troubles. Correct any tendency to constipation with small doses of Ayer's Pills.

friends, the screen has cost about \$100. And \$500 wouldn't buy it.—Philadelphia Record.

Heart Palpitation at Night. Rattles even the strongest man, but to the average woman it is a taste of general purgatory. Take a little Nerviline in sweetened water and away goes the palpitation. You'll be saved lots of worry by keeping Nerviline on hand, which is a treasure for all sorts of pains and aches. Nerviline cures headache, stomach and bowel troubles quickly. Costs 25c for a large bottle.

The environment may be unfavorable, the atmosphere may be worldly, but one who has the grace of God in his heart creates his own atmosphere, and faith discovers an environment unseen by mortal eye.

Something that Should be Rubbed in.—Whenever pain is felt in the limbs or back, take Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil; pour a little in the hand and applying it to the surface beneath which the pain lies, rub briskly. If the first application does not afford relief, which is not usually the case, keep rubbing. The Oil will gradually penetrate to the affected part and relief will come.

"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written."

There is no such thing as a harmless cough. The trouble goes from bad to worse unless checked. Allen's Lung Balsam cures the worst of colds. It allays inflammation and clears the air passages.

Surely, if God is ruling our lives, and educating us for a purpose, He is shaping our present surroundings and environment.—Robert E. Speer.

FIRST AID TO THE INJURED POND'S EXTRACT. FOR BURNS, SPRAINS, WOUNDS, BRUISES OR ANY SORT OF PAIN. Used Internally and Externally. CAUTION! Avoid the weak watery Witch Hazel preparation, represented to be "the same as" Pond's Extract, which easily sour and often contain "wood alcohol" an irritant externally and, taken internally, a poison.