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BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1874.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, May 17th, 1874.

The Lord's Ministers.—Num. iii. 5-13.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." 1 Peter ii. 9.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 5-8.

SUMMARY.—The tribe of Levi were ministers of the sanctuary, but the priesthood was confined to Aaron's family.

ANALYSIS.—1. The appointment of the Levites and the priests. vs. 5-10. 11. The reason for this appointment. vs. 11-13.

EXPOSITION.—Introduction.—The fourth book of Moses is called *Numbers* because it records the numbering of Israel by Moses. Chaps. i and xvi. It is a history of the Israelites from their reception of the law to their arrival on "the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho," thirty-eight years. It sets forth prominently the duties of the ministers of the sanctuary. This subject belongs here in our course of study, because it is inseparable from the subjects of the last two lessons. Indeed, it would more naturally have preceded the last. It is also peculiarly interesting because of the typical relation of the Jewish priesthood to Christ.

Separation.—The tribe of Levi, Jacob's third son by Leah, was set apart from all other tribes to do service in connection with the tabernacle, and subsequently with the temple—religious service. They were "ministers," that is *servants*, but as we shall see, their duties were quite unlike those of Christ's "ministers." Moses, Aaron and Miriam belonged to this tribe; this tribe was the first to separate themselves from the calf-worshippers at Moses' call, Ex. xxxii. 26; and now in *Numbers* iii, we see the whole tribe set apart, the curse turned into a blessing. Gen. xlix. 5, 7. They were specially the Lord's servants, and hence were taken instead of all the first-born sons of Hebrew women, who were regarded as specially the Lord's because he spared the first-born of the Israelites when he slew the first-born of the Egyptians. Vs. 12, 13. The tribes were small, and its males "from a month old and upward" (Vs. 15) numbered only 273 more than those first-born, and these 273 were redeemed by silver paid to Aaron and his sons. Vs. 46-48.

Division.—The word "Levites" is used with two meanings: 1. The descendants of Levi, that is, the members of the tribe of Levi, (xxv. 2), and in this use it includes the priests, "Aaron and his sons." Vs. 9. 2. The part of the tribe not belonging to the priestly family of Aaron, and which is thus distinguished as in our lesson. Vs. 9. In this narrower sense the word will be used throughout this exposition. We will consider 1. The Priests, because they were first set apart, and are first in rank. 2. The Levites, whose office was subordinate to the priests.

1. THE PRIESTS.—The Office.—Our word *priest* is a shorter form of the word *presbyter*, and this is from a Greek word meaning elder. The priest draws near to God in behalf of men. His office is that of a mediator transacting with God for men. xvi. 5; Heb. v. 1.

The origin of the priesthood.—If sacrifices were at first divinely instituted, doubtless the priestly office was also, for the two go together. In most ancient times sacrifice was a family affair, and the father, as head of the family, or in the father's absence the first-born son acted for the family. Gen. xii. 8; Job i. 5.

The Persons.—The priesthood, as instituted through Moses, consisted of one High Priest, and subordinate priests, and comprised only the family of Aaron. vs. 9; Ex. xxix. 1, 4, although it is thought that there was afterwards a system of adoption into the family. Bodily defects disqualified persons of this family to act as priests. Lev. xxi. 17-23. There were special rules as to the marriage of the priests. Lev. xxi. 7, 14; Ezek. xliv. 22; Ezra x. 18, but not even the high priest was forbidden to marry. Lev. xxi. 13.

The Dress.—This was determined minutely by law. See Ex. xxviii. That of the high priest differed from that of the others to correspond to his different position and duties. It was all symbolical and typical, as was the office itself, for the one only true High Priest is Jesus Christ. Heb. v. 10. The plate of gold on the front of the mitre or turban which bore the words "HOLINESS TO THE LORD," Ex. xxviii.

36, interpreted clearly this meaning. The names of the twelve tribes engraved on the stones of the shoulder. Ex. xxviii. 12, and on the precious stone of the breast plate, vs. 15-21, showed that he was acting for the whole nation and not for himself, as Christ died and makes intercession for others, not himself, and bears on and in his heart the names of all his redeemed ones. The dress of the ordinary priests is described in Ex. xxviii. 40-42.

Consecration.—This is described in Ex. xxix. The priests were all sinners, and before they could be received to the priestly office atonement was to be made for their sins, and they be made ceremonially clean. So every year on the day of atonement remembrance was made of the high priest's sin. Heb. ix. 7. Herein there was a signal contrast between the high priest and Christ. Heb. iv. 15. The washing in clean water betokened purity. The anointing with oil symbolized the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Duties.—The chief and distinguishing duties of the priests were those performed in the sanctuary in connection with the sacrifices. Heb. x. 11. They alone could accept the offerings as God's representatives, and present them as man's representatives. "The priests assisting the high priest were to watch over the fire on the altar of burnt-offerings and keep it burning evermore by day and night. Lev. vi. 12, to feed the golden lamp outside the veil with oil. Lev. xxiv. 2, to offer the morning and evening sacrifices, each accompanied with a meat-offering and a drink-offering at the door of the Tabernacle [at the brazen altar in the court]. Ex. xxix. 38-44. The high priest alone could with the blood of the sin-offering enter the most holy place, to the very mercy-seat, to make atonement and intercession for the whole nation once a year. Lev. xvi. Herein he typifies Christ's entrance into heaven, his departure to the Father with his own blood, that is with his own sacrificed life and being, which the blood symbolized. Heb. ix, x. On certain other duties of the Jewish priests see vi. 22-27; iv. 5-15; x. 1-8; Josh. vi. 4; Joel ii. 1, 15.

Maintenance.—On this see chaps. xviii; xxxi. 25-47; Deut. xiv. 28; Lev. xxvii; Ex. xxiii. 19; Deut. xxvi. 1-10. Some offerings were for the priest only. Lev. vi. 30; others for their families also. Lev. x. 14. In Canaan the priestly families had thirteen cities with adjacent pasturage for their flocks. Joshua xxi. 9-19. It of course depended upon the piety of the people whether the supplies furnished the priests would be adequate. It seems that priests and people alike together were often and for long periods sunk low in wickedness, giving cause for such stern and terrible rebukes as those in Mal. i, ii; Micah iii. 11.

2. THE LEVITES.—Division.—There were three divisions according to the three sons of Levi, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari, iii. 16-22.

Duties and privileges.—The duties in times of the wanderings are described minutely enough in vs. 23-37. They were to be assistants to the priests, and hence said in vs. 9, to be "given" to Aaron and his sons. They thus held a position of sanctity intermediate between that of the priests and the people. They had their own chief or president, who in turn was under the authority of one of the priests. Vs. 32. Thus was secured prompt and orderly execution of their prescribed duties. In Canaan they, like the priests, had assigned to them cities in different parts of the land, in all thirty-five. Josh. xxi. 20-41. These with the thirteen of the priests make the forty-eight of vs. 41. They were to be supported by tithes, that is *tenths* of all the products of the land, of all the income of the people. Lev. xxvii. 30-34, though a tenth of their tenth was to be given by the Levites to the priests. xviii. 21-28; Deut. xiv. 22-29. It naturally fell to the Levites in Canaan to give themselves to the study of the law, and to the instruction of the people.

Conclusion.—Admirable was the religious provision made for Israel, but only as introductory to what is infinitely more admirable With Christ as our High Priest it is for us to draw nigh to God and to dwell in his presence.

QUESTIONS.—Why is this book called *Numbers*? i. 3, 4. To what time does it carry forward the history of Israel? xxix. 47. How many years.

Subject of this lesson? Who were these "ministers"? Vs. 6. Deut. xvii. 9. Of which tribe were the priests? Vs. 10; Ex. iv. 14. Which had the higher office? Vs. 10. Instead of whom were the members of the tribe of Levi chosen as ministers? Vs. 12, 13. Why did God regard the first-born as specially his? How did the num-

bers of the tribe and of the first-born correspond? Vs. 39, 43, 46.

Which was the priestly family in the tribe of Levi? Vs. 19. Of whom was the high-priest a type? Heb. iii. 1; x. 21. Describe his dress? Ex. xxviii. 4-39. How different from the dress of the other priests? Ex. xxviii. 40-42. Why the names of the tribes on the stones of the shoulders, and of the breast plate of the high priest's ephod? Ex. xxviii. 9-12, 17-21. For whom does Christ act as High-priest? Heb. ix. 23. Why do we need a priest? Why the inscribed plate on the priest's mitre? Ex. xxviii. 36. What were the Urim and the Thummim? Ex. xxviii. 30.

How were the priests consecrated? Ex. xxix. Why this ceremony? With what rite did Christ begin his ministry? Matt. iii. 16. The duties of the priests? Heb. x. 11. Might any one else offer sacrifices? Vs. 10. The special duties of the high-priest? Lev. xvi. Why are Christians called priests? 1 Peter ii. 5.

Describe the work of the Levites? Vs. 7, 8; iv. 1-33. Their consecration? Chap. xviii. Their support? xviii. 21-32; Deut. xiv. 27-29.

Abridged from the *Epistole Teacher's Scripture Catechism*, 1888.

SUNDAY, May 24th, 1874.—Israel's unbelief.—Num. xiv. 1-10.

Youths' Department.

THE BITTER AND THE SWEET.

Come, darling Effie,
Come, take the cup;
Effie must drink it all,—
Drink it all up.

Darling, I know it is
Bitter and bad;
But 'twill make Effie dear
Rosy and glad.

Mother would take it all
For her wee elf;
But who would suffer then?
Effie herself.

If Effie drinks it,
Then, I can tell,
She will go out to play
Merry and well.

Drink; and then, darling,
You shall have this:
Sweet after bitter,
Now, first, a kiss.

Ah, darling Effie!
God also knows,
When cups of bitterness
His hand bestows.

How His poor children need
Urging to take
Merciful draughts of pain,
Mixed for their sake.

He, too, gives tenderly
Joy after pain;
Sweet after bitterness;
After loss, gain.

THE LIGHT IN THE WINDOW.

He plodded on, through sleet and snow, with step awkward and shuffling, yet with a certain resolution in it. Other men might have turned aside, unwilling to breast the full force of such a storm. Not so Daniel Newton—"Shuffling Dan," his fellow-workmen called him. He was no favorite among them—silent, brooding, sullen fellow, they thought him—but he lived a life of which they understood very little. It had been consecrated for fourteen years to one object; and there was in it an element of chivalrous self-sacrifice of which he was utterly unconscious himself. He passed a store, where some of his comrades were lounging; then the large, with its door invitingly open, and the bright-red light streaming out of it cheerily, into the murky, gathering night. For a moment he was tempted just to go in and warm himself a little in that glow; but he shook his shaggy head and turned away. "She'll be waitin'," he said, as he drew up the collar of his coarse coat; "little lamb, she'll be waitin'." And then, as if the thought had given him new life, he plodded on again valiantly.

On, through sleet and snow, till he came at last in front of a low-cottage, standing in the midst of a square lot. A light streamed forth from its front window over the white pathway. It had shone there for him every Winter night-fall for many a year; and he never saw that beacon-ray without blessing his "little lamb" over and over again. How warm she had kept his heart! And yet among the hard things in his life, people who took the trouble to speak of him at all always reckoned "that crippled child." When his wife died, and left him her hour-old baby to bring up as best he could, they commiserated him, and wondered what he was to do. And when it was found that the child would never be able to walk,

they thought his burden was heavier than he could well bear. But he knew—only he could not have told them or reasoned about it—what had been his sweet compensation. At first, to be sure, it was a hard blow when he found that the little one he loved was never to be quite like other children—that she never would come toddling down the path to meet him, clinging to his hard hands with rosy little fingers—but this very grief about her made his love all the more tender.

She was the one idea of his life. The only absorbing feeling he had ever known was for her. He had liked her mother well enough; but it had been an ordinary, commonplace regard, until she died and left this tender, blue-eyed blossom, which he was half afraid to touch. The child consecrated the mother's memory, and he cared for her dead more than he had ever cared for her living. But it was little Eunice who filled his heart full, and sat on his throne queen-regent forevermore. He had her nursed carefully, and he cheerfully gave up every hour of his life to the task of being father and mother to her, both in one. When she was old and strong enough to sit in a little wheeled chair in which she could trundle herself about the room, his delight knew no bounds. In Summer she was always at the open door to meet him; and in Winter her cheery lamp burned always at the cottage window. When she was twelve years old she herself proposed to keep house for him. There were three rooms in their little cottage, all on one floor, besides the unfinished garret overhead. From room to room of these three she could trundle herself around. She contrived to do a good many household tasks; and, with a neighbor hired to come and help each day, she managed nicely and was the proudest of little housewives. Of late, however, she had been growing weaker, and her father had insisted that she should not be left alone at all. So the neighbor who helped her staid all day now, but went home at night when Dan came; for he was not ready to give up the pleasure of having his darling quite to himself in the long evenings.

Now, as he entered the yard, his step grew quicker. All that was shuffling and uncertain passed out of his manner, and he walked with the strong, firm tread of one sure of his welcome. Drawing near, he saw her face at the window, which the light illumined—a face of almost ideal beauty. Not the features so much—when you analyzed them they were far from regular, and bore a curious likeness to his own. But the great blue eyes were full of light, the color came and went on the cheeks in faint pink flushes, and the skin was transparent as the most delicate crystal. Around this wistful, loving, waiting face floated a mass of soft golden hair, like the halos you see sometimes in old pictures around the brows of saints. When she saw him the blue eye kindled, then the face disappeared from the window, and when he opened the door there she was in front of it, with her lips uplifted for his kisses. The neighbor stood by, her things on ready to go, and it struck Dan that there was a look of pity on her face.

"You'd better not get too near the child with those wet things on," she said kindly. "She's but a weak little thing, and mustn't take cold."

He started back remorseful, and did not go up to the girl again until he had taken all his wet things off in his own room and made himself quite dry and tidy. By this time the neighbor was gone, and he and Eunice sat down together to the supper which waited. He had the keen, hungry appetite of a workman, but it did not keep him from noticing, presently, that the food on his child's plate remained untouched. He laid down his knife and fork, and looked at her anxiously.

"Ain't you going to keep father company a little, deary? You ain't never hearty, I know, but I want to see you eat something."

She smiled faintly. "You know you don't let me work any more, father; and I can't get hungry like you, that are busy all day, working for me."

"Yes, lamb, for you," he repeated, as if the words gave him pleasure. "God knows it's all for you, and he knows how thankful I am to have you to work for. Folks talk about my lot bein' hard, but that's all they know. I wouldn't change places with no man. So long as he leaves me you, I'll never doubt that God loves me."

The girl sighed, and a look of white pain quivered a moment about her lips.

"Take me up, father," she said, half an

hour after, as they sat before the bright fire together. No mother's touch could have been more tender than that rough man's as he lifted the little twisted form into his arms, and laid the sunny head carefully against his bosom. She rested there for a while silently, looking fondly up into his face, and now and then touching his cheeks gently with her thin fingers. At last she said, with an air earnest, yet slightly hesitating: "You do believe God loves you, don't you, father?"

"Yes, lamb, yes; so long as he leaves me you."

"But if he didn't leave me," she persisted, "wouldn't you believe that, too, was because he loved you?"

The man's face darkened with a sudden, sick terror.

"Look here," said he, in a voice of passionate entreaty, "don't talk about that, don't! It couldn't be love, no way, that wouldn't leave you. You're all I've got, child—all. God don't want to take all away, does he? That ain't love."

The girl stretched her arm up and drew it around his neck, and laid her face on his shoulder to hide the tears she could not keep back. But she made no answer. After a while he asked a sudden question, breathlessly, as if a suspicion had pierced him with a pang too sharp to be borne: "Has Dr. Peters been here to-day, Eunice?"

She trembled a little, but she answered quietly, "Yes, father."

"And he says you're goin', does he, the way your mother went? Child, don't you believe him! You shan't go. My love will keep you alive. Hasn't it kept you, now, fourteen year? Why, the doctor said you wouldn't live, the first time he laid you in my arms! But you have lived, and here you are, and here I'll hold you. Hasn't my love kept you so long?"

"Your love, and God's love, father. But what if he thinks, now, that it's time for me to go home?"

And then they sat on silently, for a long, still hour; and the wood fire burned brightly, and now and then a brand dropped on the hearth, and that and the storm outside were the only sounds which broke the stillness, save when, once or twice, a great gasping sob tore up from Shuffling Dan's deep chest. At last he bent over, and turned his girl's face toward him, and looked into it with eager, hungry eyes.

"It'll be a sorry world, lamb," he said, "when you're not in it—when there's nobody waitin' at the door, and no light burnin' in the window."

She looked up, her blue eyes full of tears.

"Father," she said gently, "don't you know you've told me, sometimes, how the thought that I was waitin' made it easy for you to get home, when the storms drove ever so hard, and kept you from waitin' to turn into store or tavern?"

"Yes, lamb, yes; but what'll keep me on my way when you're gone?" he answered bitterly.

"I thought of the times you'd said that, father, after Dr. Peters went away, to-day; and I wondered if it wasn't God's love that was going to take me to the heavenly home, so as to make it easier for you to come. I'll wait for you there, father; and I won't be lame any more, and I'll come to meet you, when you get on that threshold—as I never could here—strong and free, father, strong and free. Won't it make it easy for you to come on, in spite of storms, and not turn aside by the way, when you know I'm waitin' there, just as sure as ever I waited here?"

But the father said nothing. He only held her against his aching heart, with a grasp that almost hurt her, as it did to ease his pain—held her till bedtime came, and then carried her to her room, and left her there with a long, sad, silent kiss. Once alone, the passion of his agony clutched him in its grasp; but he suffered no sound to escape him which should reach her ears. Rigid as stone he sat before the fire, and never heeded when the room grew cold, and the last brand burned out and fell into gray ashes.

After that night he never returned again to the subject. He saw that she failed every day, but he could not talk about it, and she understood him too well to urge him. Every day he went to his work; now was not the time to fail, when she needed unwonted luxuries, and might need them no one knew how long. Every night he came home to her, his face pallid with apprehension. At last she grew too weak to sit up any more, and lay patiently all day on her little bed, bearing without a moan her torturing pain, and never for-

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