

The Christian Messenger.

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BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1875.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.
Heroes and Judges.

SUNDAY, March 14th, 1875.—The Altar of Witness.—Joshua xxii. 1-27.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Ye are all one in Christ."—Galatians iii. 28.

ANALYSIS.—1. A bad motive discovered. Vs. 21-23. 11. A good motive avowed. Vs. 24-27.

HISTORICAL NOTE—As a first exercise in preparation for this lesson all should read Num. xxii. 1-33. Having kept their promise and been away at war seven years, the trans-Jordanic tribes ask permission to return home. As good soldiers, their captain gives them an honorable discharge. While on their way home, and just after crossing the Jordan, they build an altar, upon the report of which the ten tribes infer that their eastern-bound brethren had erred at Peor. Vs. 17; Num. xxi. 3. A first impulse for war was overruled by discretion, and an investigating committee was ordered, the result of whose mission proved the wisdom of their appointment, reflecting great honor upon all parties. It is a green spot in a quiet corner of Jewish history, to linger upon which even in a Sunday-school lesson, is delightful.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 21.—Children. More literally, in each case, "sons." These three tribes, as we have already learned, had, at their own request, received of Moses before his death their assignment of land on the east of Jordan. Their men of war had left their families on the east of Jordan, and had given seven years of service with and for the other tribes on the west of Jordan, until now that land was in the main conquered. Thus had they well redeemed the pledge made to Moses, when he made to them the assignment of this territory, Num. xxii. 25-32. Their dismissal with Joshua's paternal charge and benediction, was only fair and fit. Vs. 1-5. At the time mentioned in this verse they were back on their own soil, in their own homes. What a re-union of friends long sundered! What hearty and general joy all through the region occupied by the three tribes! But in the midst of the joy they are suddenly charged by their brethren on the other side with a grievous sin, and are roundly upbraided. Vs. 16-20. And said unto the heads of the thousands of Israel. Compare vs. 14, from which it appears that these princes or heads were the chiefs, not each of his tribe, but rather each the chief of one of the sub-divisions of a tribe, called a family, or "house." The word thousands emphasizes the number of Israel.

Verse 22.—The Lord God of gods, the Lord God of gods, he knoweth. They were about to assert their perfect innocence of the awful charge brought against them. This appeal is here put most strongly. The word translated "God" means "the mighty," that is, the Almighty; "of gods" is God as the supreme, or sovereign, and "the Lord" is Jehovah—the I Am, the Covenant God of Israel. Preserving the Hebrew order, we have as the appeal the following: "The Almighty One, God, Jehovah, The Almighty One, God, Jehovah, knoweth." Happy the man who, when accused of crime, can thus call God to witness in his favor! "God does know our integrity," say they. And Israel, he shall know. Shall know, shall be made speedily to know the same. They recognize in this that their accusers had not knowingly and willfully charged them unjustly. They knew that there was some reason for the inference drawn by their accusers. Their act, in the circumstances, was liable to that construction. A lesson of caution from the conduct of the accusers is, to beware how we make haste to put bad constructions on the conduct of others—especially of those who have proved themselves worthy of trust by past integrity. If it be in rebellion. The word properly translated "if," is often "a particle of swearing," as has the meaning, "assuredly not," or, "as the Lord liveth, not." "Save us not this day." "Blot us out at once." The Scriptures and common sense both warn us against the use of such solemn affirmations on ordinary occasions, and concerning ordinary matters.

Verse 23.—That we have built us an altar, to turn from following the Lord. This continues the sentence beginning

"If it be in rebellion," etc. The erection of the altar of course they could not, and did not care to, deny; but only the motive or design charged against them in its erection. Jehovah had commanded, that the nation should sacrifice at the place by him designated, and nowhere else; that there should be one and only one centre—tabernacle or temple—one national sanctuary. No man can truly worship God, if he willfully disobeys God. "Obedience is better than sacrifice." Or if to offer thereon burnt-offering or meat-offering, or if to offer peace-offerings thereon. If even these they would not there offer, much less would they offer the solemn sacrifices of atonement—the sin-offering and the trespass offering—which lay at the foundation of the ritual service. They emphatically denied the purpose to offer any sacrifices. Let the Lord [Jehovah] himself require it. Equivalent to the words, "Save us not." A clean conscience gives great boldness; and the conscience made clean through Christ's blood—accepting Christ as Atoner and Advocate—can go with boldness even to the final judgment. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? &c.

Verse 24.—If we have not done it. For fear of this thing. The same motive, and the same zeal which animated the other tribes in calling them to account, had animated them in building the altar. Accusers and accused had one spirit. "The thing" feared is that which follows. In time to come your children, etc. "Children" are here descendants of future generations. These eastern tribes so prized the unity of national life, worship and inheritance, that they wished to guard against its rupture in future. Here was laudable care for the future, and a wise foresight. The tables are thus turned, for there is a sort of accusation against the other tribes implied in the supposition that even their descendants might thus proudly act.

Verse 25.—For the Lord hath made Jordan a border between us and you. This was the ground of the fear, and they here suppose the Israelites of future generations, west of Jordan, to urge it in justification of their rejection of the eastern tribes. This reason naturally caused the fear. Ye children of Reuben and children of Gad. Manasseh is not mentioned here, either because of its comparative smallness, or because a part of the tribe had a place in Palestine near Ephraim, and hence the tribe would in them continue to be represented. No part in the Lord [Jehovah]. Jehovah was regarded as himself the inheritance of the Israelite. He belonged to Israel, and by inheriting him they inherited all the blessings that come from having him as a possession. So shall your children, etc. A sufficient cause of dread to the hearts of pious Israelites. Here speaks the religious care of loving parents.

Verse 26.—Therefore we said. "This is the reason, not that which you suspected and charged." Their story was true and self-consistent, and proved them to be Israelites indeed, and was so accepted by the deputies and the tribes whom they represented. Vs. 28-34. Blessed is the man who rejoices to find and own himself to have been wrong in an unfavorable judgment of a brother.

Verse 27.—But that it may be a witness. From verses 10 and 14 it seems that it was built by the Jordan. Verse 11 readily admits that it was on the west side. Do the service of the Lord before him. Share in the established national service at the sanctuary of his own appointment where he for them dwelt, and to them manifested himself. Dear to the heart of the true Israelite were the city, the sanctuary, and the service of God.

QUESTIONS.—With whom does our lesson deal to-day? What do you know of the previous history of these tribes? Should you say they were men of their word? How long had they been absent from home? From what had they been absent? Num. xxii. 26. In the way home, what did they build? Vs. 10. On what bank? Hearing of which, what did the ten tribes infer? Vs. 15-20. What was their first impulse? Vs. 12. What did they finally do? Vs. 13, 14.

Vs. 21. What is meant by "heads of the thousands?"

Vs. 22. What is the significance of the phrase, "The Lord God of gods"? Of the words in parenthesis, "Save us not this day?"

Vs. 23. If their motive had been bad, what are they willing God should do? Meaning of *requite*?

Vs. 24-27. What does their motive prove to be? Is it culpable or worthy? Is the statement satisfactory to the ten tribes? Vs. 33.

What practical lessons does that narra-

tive teach? Ans. 1. That however natural an inference may be, it may prove to be utterly false. 2. That a mutual conference is the surest way of ending difficulties. Matt. xviii. 15. 3. That zeal for God's honor is commendable, if it be without sacrifice of brotherly love. Gal. vi. 1.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, March 21st, 1875.—Joshua's Warning.—Joshua xxiii. 11-16.

Youths' Department.

LOOK AHEAD.

A pelican, flying home one day
With a fine fat fish from Oyster Bay,
Was met by a crow, who had sought in vain
For something to still his hunger's pain—
And who knew that fish was good for the
brain,
So he slyly said, "Why, friend, what's in you,
To carry a fish at a full neck's length?
Is that any way to economize strength?
I call it a waste of muscle and sinew.
Just throw your head over your shoulder,
so—
You distribute the weight over all your
frame,
You can carry a double load of game,
And thus, without tiring, home you go!"
The pelican did as his false friend bade,
But striking a bough he came to wreck,
And down he fell with a broken neck,
And the crow had a royal dinner of shad.

I wrote this fable for three little men,
Whose names are Willie and Arthur and Jack;
And this is the moral, clear and plain:
"When you run forward, don't look back."
—John Hay, in St. Nicholas.

TOMMY'S KITTEN.

"Kitty, kitty, kitty!—come puss, come puss!" called little Tommy's mamma, and placed a saucer of warm milk in kitty's cosy corner. "Where's kitty?" she added.

And little Tommy answered—"Trowed 'er in 'e well."

"What?" inquired sister Florence, snatching him up in her arms, while everybody stood breathless—"what do you say, Tommy?"

"Trowed pussy down in 'e water—souse!" repeated the three-year-old, enjoying the consternation. "Mew! mew!" he went on, imitating the cry of a distressed pussy.

"Oh, you cruel, you dreadful boy!" cried Aunt Huldah, dropping her flatiron. "You'll get into State's Prison some day, sure as you live."

Tommy knew nothing of State Prison, and therefore had no dread; but the severe tones of his aunt disturbed him, and he put his thumb in his mouth and was silent.

"O Tommy, Tommy!" moaned Florence, letting fall some tears on his fair hair, at which he seemed still more perplexed. "What have you done?"

"Don't blame the child till you know," was his loving grandmother's suggestion. "He don't know what he's saying."

"Come and show mamma where kitty is." His mother gave Tommy her hand and he led her to the well direct.

"Down there," said he, doubtfully now. "Deep, deep. Kitty can come up in a bucket. Mew!"

"Do you know you'll have to choke to death for want of water—you dreadful, dreadful boy!" from Aunt Huldah. "The well is spiled."

Tommy on tiptoe tried to peep over the curb, to see how a spoiled well looked.

"Poor, poor kitty!" murmured his sister with more tears. "I'm afraid God can't love Tommy now."

"He's dot tats enough," replied the child innocently.

"You'll all catch cold," says grandma, who, with all the family, had come out to the well. "That ain't worth the while, when if the cat's in the well, she's dead of course."

Mrs. Macy sent Florence into the house with Tommy, and Aunt Huldah and grandma followed.

Two neighbors were at the moment passing in a sleigh; Tommy's mother called to them and told what had happened. They sprang out, and while one was hitching the horse at the gate, the other hastened to look into the well.

"I can see nothing," he said, "except some little floating thing, like a chip."

The sun was shining brightly, and he directed Mrs. Macy to bring a looking-glass, in order that by reflecting its rays into the well they might make certain of the presence of the drowned animal. He also inquired the depth of the well, and spoke encouragingly about going down to bring up the body.

"Mow-purrow!" and just then Tommy's black kitten came trotting along the

snow-path with a mouse in her mouth that she had caught at the barn. Her tail was erect and her eyes shone; she evidently expected praise for her brave deed, after her long watching, while little she knew the anxiety of the household on her account.

"Why, of all things!" exclaimed grandmother, who had returned as far as the back door.

"You dear creature!" said Florence running out to meet the kitten. Then to Aunt Huldah at the window, "Tommy isn't so dreadful a boy, after all, is he?"

"I should say yes—to tell such a story—at his age!" returned her aunt, nothing softened. "You know what becomes of all liars?"

But at this moment, up, up, was drawn the brimming bucket out of the well, and on the surface of the water was the baby's toy kitten, looking not much damaged—but it never mewed after that.

So the excitement about a cruel little boy and a drowned kitten was over.—L. S. G. in Christian Era.

A TRUE STORY OF LITTLE MARY.

FROM A LETTER WRITTEN BY HER SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER.

"During the last few weeks I have endeavored to ascertain the true state of little Mary's mind, and am convinced that she really loves the Saviour. I have many times asked her what reason she could give why she loved Jesus. She says, 'Because I love to read the Bible, and to pray, alone by myself and with the little Catholic girls, and to talk with them about the Saviour.' Said she to me, (in one of our interviews, which are very frequent,) 'I was having a little prayer meeting last Sabbath noon, before coming to Sabbath school, and just as I was going to read my chapter, I thought of one of the little girls who was not there. So I ran over to her house for her, and do you think, Teacher, I found her sewing! and said to her, 'What, sewing on the Lord's Day! What can you be doing!' She said, 'Making my doll's dresses.' I asked her to lay them all away, and to-morrow I would make them for her.' Mary said she did so and went with her to the prayer meeting, and added, 'I prayed particularly for this Catholic girl, that God would make her so good that she never would wish to work again upon the Sabbath.' The next day Mary went to the Sunday School Department, and bought a little book entitled, 'The Little Girl who was afraid to work upon the Sabbath,' for which she said she paid two cents, and gave it to her little friend, begging her to always 'Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.' Little Mary has been in the habit of meeting these Catholic children for the last three months, reading the Bible, singing and praying with them, and also teaching them hymns and verses of Scripture. She has brought many children into our school. Mary is a sweet singer, and loves most of all the beautiful hymn, 'We love to sing of Jesus,' and her little face brightens as I talk to her of the Saviour, always more interested in the story of the cross than any other. She is an English girl, and only eight years of age."

The beloved friend from whom I had this account was soon after called to her rest. Whether little Mary still loves and serves the Saviour on earth, or praises Him with her faithful teacher in heaven, I do not know.—W. & R.

We find the following in one of our exchanges:—

HOW THE PIG GOT HOME.

Just out of New York city dwells a thrifty couple whose great love is pork. A pig is raised yearly. Many children would be glad of the attention paid to the inmate of the pen. The man and his wife took a journey, and were gone three days. On the way home—fifteen miles away—the couple saw at the forks of the roads a small pig that had a wonderfully familiar look. The animal stood waiting for the waggon, facing the comers. The pig made a grunt of recognition and made a dash for the horse. He soon got entangled in the running gear and brought the thing to a standstill. Satisfied that the young porker was his own, the man lifted him into the waggon. The pig cuddled down and went to sleep, and lay stiller than a child. He woke up as the waggon neared the house, leaped out, and ran for his pen. It turned out that he had been stolen and carried twenty miles into the country. He made

his escape and was homeward bound when he spied his old friends and got a lift in the waggon.

[Some of our readers will doubtless wonder whether the New York man made any enquiries in the neighbourhood if they had lost a pig.]

FIT FOR—WHAT PLACE?

It is related of the distinguished Rev. Dr. Bellamy, that he had seasons of deep despondency, when he was confident he was going to hell. His brethren often labored with him in vain.

One day, after all reasoning had failed, one of the ministers said to him, "Well, brother, you know more about yourself than we do. To us you appear very well; but after all, you may be a whitened sepulcher—beautiful outside, but inwardly full of corruption. If so, you will go to hell. I should like, however, to know what you will do when you get there?"

"Do?" cried the doctor, with great animation and emphasis; "what will I do? I will vindicate the law of God, and set up prayer meetings."

"All right," said the brother; "but in that case the devil will not keep you there; he will soon turn you out as unfitted for his place and company."

The doctor came out of his gloom and was happy.

THE FIRST FALSEHOOD.

An aged man, who hoped that his sins had been forgiven, said that through his whole life his first falsehood deliberately uttered was present to his remembrance. His mother had forbidden him to go to bathe at a certain place. He had been led to transgress her command by the ridicule of his companions, who taunted him with being afraid of being whipped by a woman. When he came home, she saw from the derangement of his dress what he had been doing. She asked him if he had been bathing, and with a flushed countenance he answered, "No, ma'am." She gave him a look of pain, and retired to her chamber. That first falsehood led to others; yet it was never forgotten by him, and never remembered by him without pain.

There should be no first falsehood, and then there will be no succeeding ones.

TEN SERVANTS.

One of the Paris almanacs has this story, signed Laboulaye: A lazy girl, who liked to live in comfort and do nothing, asked her fairy godmother to give her a good genius to do everything for her. On the instant the fairy called ten dwarfs who dressed and washed the little girl and combed her hair, and fed her, and so on. All was done so nicely that she was happy except for the thought that they would go away. "To prevent that," said the god-mother, "I will place them permanently in your ten pretty little fingers." And they are there yet.

BAPTIST WANTS.—"We want," says a correspondent of the *Watchman and Reflector* who writes from a Massachusetts village, called Turner's Falls, "Baptist young men in our mills, also a Baptist dentist, a Baptist 'meatman,' a Baptist milkman, a Baptist barber, a Baptist dry-goods merchant, and Baptists to start business of all kinds. We want Baptist ladies too. Baptist girls who will carry their religion into the mills will be a Godsend. A first-class Baptist milliner is needed. The Baptist society is the most intelligent here and the pastor will gladly answer any letters of inquiry from smart Baptist people."

The really great are aware that on a multitude of subjects they can be but learners and inquirers, till they see things by-and-by in the light of the perfect day; and so they are modest and silent, where others are fluent and confident.

Diamonds are found in great abundance among the tropics, where the sun shines the most. There seems to be the best place for the carbon to crystallize into the gem. So Christians grow into precious worth into Christ's kingdom, when longest in the enjoyment of Him as the Sun of Righteousness.

Difficulty excites the mind to the dignity which sustains and finally conquers misfortune, and the ordeal refines while it chastens.