

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1880.

THIRD QUARTER.

Lesson VIII.—AUGUST 22.

THE COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM.

Gen. xv. 1-18.

Commit to Memory: Verses 5-7.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."—Romans iv. 3.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

- M. The Covenant with Abram, Gen. xv. 1-8.
 T. God a Shield, Psa. lxxxiv. 1-12.
 W. Righteousness not by Works, Rom. iii. 20-31.
 T. Righteousness by Faith, Rom. iv. 1-25.
 F. Signs for Israel, Ex. iv. 1-9.
 S. Signs for Gideon, Judges vi. 11-40.
 S. Joy in Believing, 1 Pet. i. 1-9.

PARALLEL TEXTS.

- With vs. 1: Dan. x. 1; Gen. xxvi. 24; Ps. xxxiv. 11; xvi. 5; Prov. xi. 13.
 With vs. 2: Acts vii. 5; Gen. xiv. 14.
 With vs. 4: 2 Sam. vii. 12; 2 Chron. xxxii. 21.
 With vs. 5: Ps. cxlvii. 4; Jer. xxxiii. 22; Gen. xxii. 17; Ex. xxxii. 13.
 With vs. 6: Rom. iv. 3, 9, 22; Gal. iii. 6; Psa. cvi. 31.
 With vs. 7: Gen. xii. 1; xi. 28, 31; Psa. cv. 42, 44; Rom. iv. 13.
 With vs. 8: Gen. xxiv. 13, 14; Judges vi. 17, 37.
 With vs. 10: Jer. xxxiv. 13, 19; Lev. i. 17.
 With vs. 12: Gen. ii. 21; Job iv. 13.
 With vs. 13: Ex. xii. 40; Acts vii. 6; Ex. i. 11; Psa. cv. 25.
 With vs. 14: Ex. vi. 6; xii. 36; Deut. vi. 22; Psa. cv. 37.
 With vs. 15: Job v. 26; Acts xiii. 36; Gen. xxv. 8.
 With vs. 16: Ex. xii. 40; 1 Kings xxi. 26.
 With vs. 18: Gen. xxiv. 7; Ex. xxiii. 31; Deut. iv. 20; Isa. xlviii. 10.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Its Basis, Vss. 1, 4, 5, 7. II. Its Difficulty, Vss. 2, 3. III. Its Acceptance, Vss. 6. IV. Its Confirmation, Vss. 8-18.

QUESTIONS.—I. Vss. 1, 4, 5, 7.—What promise in vs. 1 is a basis of belief? What refusal just made by Abram shaped this promise? What promise in vs. 4, 5? What in vs. 7? On what former occasion had these promises been made to Abram? Name some promise which is a basis of faith for us.

II. Vss. 2, 3.—Why did God repeat his promise to Abram so often? What difficulty in the way of believing one of these promises is stated in vs. 2, 3? What short rule for all difficulties of this kind does Paul give in the second clause of Rom. iii. 4?

III. Vss. 6.—In spite of all difficulty, what did Abram do? What was this counted for? What does this mean? Into what state before God did this bring Abram? (Rom. iv. 2.)

IV. Vss. 1-18.—Having believed God, why did Abram press the question of vs. 8? What uses were made of the animals which the Lord, in vs. 9, directed Abram to take? (Lev. chap. 1.) How did Abram show his obedience? What revelations were made? What happened when it was dark? What was meant by this furnace? What by the lamp? What covenant did the Lord then make with Abram?

TO TEACH THE LESSON—CONSIDER.—I. The Great Promise (vs. 1-5). Abram had been in Canaan ten years, and though he had increased in wealth, the promise of xii. 2, 3, and xiii. 16, seemed no nearer fulfillment. God came to him again with a revelation and promise. Adapted to his needs. "Fear not." He bestows on him the greatest of all gifts, himself. "I am thy shield," etc. A Son. A numerous posterity—as the stars in multitude.

II. The Great Faith. (vs. 6, 7.) Abram's faith was simple, positive, immediate, unflinching. See Rom. iv. 20-22. Because "he staggered not," "was strong in faith," "fully persuaded that God was able to perform," THEREFORE it was imputed to him for righteousness.

III. The Great Covenant (vs. 8-18.) Abram's inquiry—"Whereby shall I know?" The answer by sacrifice. Sacrifice is the key to the secrets of the Lord's heart. Jer. xxxiv. 18-20. The full revelation. The promise slow in fulfillment, but certain. Patient waiting

demand (Heb. vi. 15.) See Ex. xii. 35; xiv. 28; Gen. xxv. 8. God gives the reason why Abram's seed do not at once occupy Canaan: "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." The Covenant ratified. The symbol is "a glowing furnace, enveloped in smoke and out-bursting flame," very like the burning bush (Ex. iii. 2), and pillar of cloud and fire (Ex. xiii. 21). Doubtless, it consumed the sacrifice, in token of its acceptance.

EXPLANATORY NOTES.—Verse 1.—After these things. Probably soon after. Jehovah calls Abraham by name. In a vision. Uncertain whether dream or trance. See Job iv. 13; Acts xxii. 17, 18. Thy shield. "A shield to thee."

Verses 2, 3.—I go childless. "I still continue childless." Steward. "Heir." One born in my house. Dependants "Will be." So it looked to Abraham. Eliezer was, very likely, Abraham's steward (chap. xxiv. 2, is supposed to refer to Eliezer), though not so named in vs. 2.

Verses 4, 5.—Tell the stars. Count. Verse 6.—Abraham's confidence was, by God, reckoned to his credit as righteousness. Abraham's faith was an act of his heart, and in this sense, a true sense; a work of righteousness.

Verses 7, 8.—What is here related occurs after the night had passed. Compare vs. 5 and 12.

Verses 9, 10.—Three years specified the perfect maturity of the animals to be selected. Divided them in the midst. "Cut them in halves" [lengthwise naturally], and laid the one half of each animal opposite the other half, with a space between.

Verse 11.—The fowls. "Birds of prey." Some have imagined that the birds of prey represented the heathen nations, especially Egypt, which would oppose the chosen people.

Verse 12.—Deep sleep. The "horror of great darkness" may have been a prophetic symbol of the four hundred years' bondage awaiting Abraham's posterity.

Verses 14, 15, 16.—Abraham himself shall enjoy prosperity, and reach a good old age. Fourth generation. The average space of a generation was then about a century. Amorites. Supposed by some to be the highlanders, or mountaineers, of Canaan, but standing here for the inhabitants in general.

Verse 17.—This verse completes the story of the rite begun in vs. 9. The parties to a solemn covenant were accustomed, in ancient times, to pass between the several halves of a slaughtered victim, thus symbolically invoking upon themselves a like fate of being rent asunder, should they violate the compact into which they were entering. God here condescends to cause the emblems of his presence to enact this part of the rite. The covenant is one of pure grace, there being no consideration offered on the side of Abraham. A smoking furnace and a burning lamp. "A furnace of smoke and fiery flame." The former meaning has afforded to expositors reason for discerning here a prophecy of the Egyptian bondage and the subsequent deliverance, as also of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. A striking symbol of God's presence and power.

Verse 18.—This verse states the substance of the covenant thus made. River of Egypt. The Nile, in the most eastern of its branches. The utmost extent of Israelitish dominion is here given. See 1 Kings viii. 65.

To believe God, is, rationally regarded, an act or work of righteousness performed within the soul—a point of conduct in which morality and religion meet and become one.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

Tell of God's words to Abram soon after he got home from the war. Explain how a shield protects from danger, by keeping off blows, etc. Think how God had been a shield to Abram; he had kept him from worshipping idols; he had not let him suffer from Lot's selfish choice; he had kept him safe from his heathen neighbors; he had brought him home safely from the war, etc.

God said to Abram, "I am thy exceeding great reward." The Apostle James tells us Abram was called "The friend of God." The greatest reward

we can have, is to have God for our friend.

God said, "I will give you a child, and grandchildren, and great grandchildren," till, like the stars, they could not be counted. He did not see how it was to be done, but he believed it all. Name some of God's promises. What better promise have we than that of Abram's earthly Canaan? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." If we believe on him this way, then Jesus' righteousness will be counted as ours.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Bible Enigma.

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No. 85.

1. The mother of King Manasseh.
2. The agency to which we are indebted for the Holy Scriptures.
3. The original name of the most northern city of the land of Israel.
4. The name used in Scripture for Arabia-Deserta.
5. The glorious hope which Christ brought to light through the gospel.
6. The "faithful martyr" of Pergamos.
7. The Syrian captain who murdered his sovereign and reigned in his stead.

The initials give the discoverer of a Divine gift which had been hidden for eight hundred years.

CURIOUS QUESTIONS.



No. 80. Find in the above beautiful picture,

1. the opening of rivers,
2. military accoutrements,
3. two large boxes,
4. a yard measure,
5. a body of vapour,
6. parts of three needles,
7. two young animals,
8. two book cases,
9. a portion of window upholstery,
10. parts of watches,
11. an organ,
12. an instrument used for shooting,
13. the border of a lake,
14. the important parts of a sermon,
15. useful portions of harness,
16. three-fourths of a head-land,
17. what is done by a running dog,
18. a military command,
19. what is often seen in ships,
20. a full dress for a dog.

No. 81. Make a square of five words, the same from top to bottom as from left to right.

1. The musical scale.
2. To get up.
3. One who hoards.
4. Those who use.
5. Short and pointed.

Answer to Bible Enigma.

No. 84.

S ale M
A dam I
M ero Z
U sur P
E agl E
L ais H

SAMUEL—MIZPEH.

ANSWERS TO CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

76. B I B L E
S I L L Y
D R E S S
M O S E S
H U S K S

P E T E R
A S H E R
C H E S S

D O L L Y
B O O K S
H O R S E
C I D E R

C R O W S

C O M E T
H A Y E S

H O S E A
G R O U P
S O U T H
S I L K S

77. Afterwards.
78. Wreath.
79. Wealth.

The English Language.

A pretty deer is dear to me,
A hare with downy hair;
I love a hart with all my heart,
But barely bear a bear.
'Tis plain that no one takes a plane
To have a pair of pairs;
A rake, though, often takes a rake
To tear away the tares.
All rays raise thyme, time raises all;
And, through the whole, hole wears.
A wit, in writing "right," may write
It "wright," and still be wrong—
For "write" and "rite" are neither
"right."

And don't to write belong.
Beer often brings a bier to man,
Coughing a coffin brings,
And too much ale will make us ail,
As well as other things.
The person lies who says he lies
When he is but reclining;
And, when consumptive folks decline,
They all decline declining.
A quail don't quail before a storm—
A bough will bow before it;
We cannot rein the rain at all—
No earthly powers reign o'er it.
The dyer dyes awhile, then dies;
To dye he's always trying,
Until upon his dying-bed
He thinks no more of dyeing.
A son of Mars mars many a sun;
All deys must have their days,
And every knight should pray each
night

To Him who weighs his ways.
'Tis meet that man should mete out
meat
To feed misfortune's son;
The fair should fare on love alone,
Else one can not be won.
A lass, alas, is something false:
Of faults a maid is made;
Her waist is but a barren waste—
Though stayed she is not staid.
The springs spring forth in spring, and
shoots
Shoot forward one and all;
Though summer kills the flower, it leaves
The leaves to fall in fall.
I would a story here commence,
But you might find it stale;
So let's suppose that we have reached
The tail end of our tale.

The Woman that disliked Ministers.

BY REV. J. B. THOMPSON, D. D.

"And you're a minister?" said a pleasant young lady with whom we had been having a pleasant chat in the cars. "And you're a minister!" with a sort of sadness and semi-reproach in her tone.

"Certainly," was the reply. "I hope you don't think any the less of me for that?"

"N-o," half hesitatingly. "No; but I shouldn't have talked with you if I had known it."

"Why not?"

"Oh, I dislike Christians, and ministers especially!"

"Thank you for your frankness; but will you tell me why?"

"Oh because! because they're so dull and stupid and make you feel so bad."

"Do they?"

"Oh, not you! I excepted you in the beginning."

"You do not mean that all Christians are so?"

"No. I know some that call themselves Christians who are as gay and worldly as I am. They never speak of their religion; and you would never guess they had any, if you did not see them at the communion table," (speaking bitterly.)

"Do you like them better than other Christians?"

"No;" (almost angrily.)

"Why not? They are not so dull and stupid, and do not try to make you feel so bad."

"That's so. But I can't abide a hypocrite."

"Then we may leave them out of the question. But tell me candidly, are all real Christians you know so dull and morose?"

"Why, no," (reflectively). "I have met one or two who seemed so cheery and lively that it was a pleasure to be with them. They seemed to enjoy everything, and talked and laughed just as you do."

"Thank you for a compliment. But what seemed to be the difference between these two or three and the great bulk of your Christian acquaintance whom you set down as stupid?"

"Well, I hardly know. I was visiting one of them not long since, when her husband was away. And at breakfast she just asked God to bless our food, as simply as I would ask a favor of my father. And then, after breakfast, she took the Bible and read a psalm, and we all kneeled down and she put up a simple little prayer to Jesus, thanking him for taking care of us during the night, asking him to keep us through the day,

and with us the dear ones who were absent. It was all done so naturally, in such a childlike way, without any fuss or hesitancy, or assumption of dignity, or formality, that I was charmed. And after prayer and a moment's silence, she said, 'Now, girls, let us take our luncheon with us and go out into the fields and have a good time to-day.' And we did. Now that's what I like. That's what I call Christianity."

"Good. There you're right. That is it exactly. That is Christianity. But now what is it that makes others of your friends so 'dull'? Is that Christianity, or is it something else?"

"Why" (hesitatingly), "I suppose it must be something else; but I always thought it must be Christianity. At least" (confidently), "nobody but Christians are so."

"That may be, but it can hardly be Christianity which makes them so; for you say you have other Christian friends who are quite different. Let me see if I cannot help you to discover what it really is. Do these people pray as your friend you have described does?"

"N-o, not that way. Oh, I suppose they pray every day in secret."

"But have you not heard them pray?"

"No, not many of them. Generally, if no man is present at meals, the women look in one another's face, and then look down in their plates, and out of the window, and into their plates again, and are silent for a moment or two, and then begin to eat. Perhaps one out of a hundred will read a chapter and a prayer after breakfast. But they are alike afterward. They never speak of Jesus nor allude to their religion, unless it be to reprove one for a little innocent fun, or to sigh dolefully if one likes to go out and hear the birds sing better than to go to church."

"And how is it with your other friend? Does she act the same way?"

"No. I told you she was different."

"You told me she was different as regards prayer; but how is she different otherwise?"

"Every way. She enjoys herself, and is willing that other people should enjoy themselves. She can talk and laugh as long and run as fast as I can. If she finds a beautiful October leaf, or looks up into the sky, she is as happy over it as a child. Indeed, I think she seems to enjoy these things even more than I do."

"How so?"

"Well, I can hardly tell. She seems to see more in them than I do. One day when I said so to her, she looked at me, and said cheerily, 'Why, Adelaide, my Father made them!' Anybody might have said it. But most people would have said it with a solemn look and doleful voice, enough to make any one hate the very name of religion."

"Now, tell me truly, which do you think had the most religion; your cheery friend whom you love, or those you dislike so much?"

"Why, my 'cheery friend,' as you call her, of course."

"Why do you think so?"

"I can't tell. But I have what we women call a feeling sense by which I know it."

"Very well. Your 'feeling sense' is undoubtedly right in this case. What can make one so happy and joyous as to know that God is my Father? That Jesus, my Saviour, is my Elder brother?"

That the Divine Spirit dwells in me, working in me continually, regulating my will, inciting my feeling, prompting my actions, enabling me to know and to do the will of my loving Father? What can give me so much happiness as to be sure that all things shall work together for good to me, because he who loves me rules all things for my advantage? And even when things seem to go against me, I know they are for me, only I cannot see how, for my Father is wiser than I. I missed the cars a little while ago. But it was better so. My Father knew best. If I had caught that train, perhaps the cars would have been thrown off the track. At all events I should have missed this conversation with you."

"I am glad you missed them."

"Thank you; so am I. But I will be more glad a thousand fold if you will abandon your silly prejudices against Christianity, and learn to know the blessedness there is in being a child of God!"

"I suppose it must be so."

"I know it is so." I do not know, I cannot understand, how one who is at enmity with God dares to go to sleep,