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INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

[FROM PELOUBET'S NOTES.]

FIRST QUARTER.—Lesson 3.—Jan. 17.
THE FAITHFUL RECHABITES.—
Jer. 35:1-19.GOLDEN TEXT.—For unto this day they
drink none, but obey their father's com-
mandment.—Jer. 35:14.Only a few years pass away after
the warnings and prophecies of evil
in our last lesson, before they begin
to be fulfilled. The armies of
Nebuchadnezzar, now the general,
but soon to be the king, of the new
empire of Babylon, are devastating
the territory of Israel and Judah,
and approaching Jerusalem. The
people have grown worse in spite of
the warnings, but Jeremiah does not
cease his efforts to stay the on-coming
tide of corruption and calamity.
This lesson is an example of the
earnest, novel, striking methods the
prophet uses to enforce his teachings.

I. THE RECHABITES.—(1) THEIR

ORIGIN. The Rechabites were a

nomad tribe, not of Jewish, but of

Kenite, race, who were a branch of

the Midianites, i. e., the descen-

dants of Midian, the son of Abra-

ham, and his wife Keturah,—so that

they were related to the Jews. In

the days of Moses, the Kenites pas-

tured their flocks on the southern

slopes of the Sinai Mountains, in the

southern angle of Arabia between

the two branches of the Red Sea.

Moses, when he fled hither from

Pharaoh of Egypt, married a daugh-

ter of this race. They were very

kind to the Israelites as they passed

through this region on their way to

Palestine. Moses invited his father-

in-law, Jethro, to go with him to the

promised land, but he refused; but

afterwards some of the tribe went,

and settled in Southern Judah (Jud.

1:16; 1 Chron. 2:55). One fam-
ily of them went into Northern

Israel and settled in Kedesh Naph-

tali. (Judg. 4:11) on the Northern

Jordan, four miles north-west of the

"waters of Meron." One of these

was Jael, the wife of Heber the

Kenite, who slew the general Sisera

(Judg. 4:17, 21).

(II.) THEIR NAME is derived

from Rechab, the father or ancestor

of their great reformer, Jehonadab.

(III.) THEIR DEVELOPMENT.

During the great religious decline in

the days of Ahab and Jezabel, and

continuing after their death, Jeho-

adab—shortened to Jonadab,—the

son of Rechab, organized the Rech-

abites, consecrating them anew, by a

solemn command, to the simple and

religious life of their ancestors, as a

protest against the luxury, license,

and idolatry of the age. He joined

with Jehu, king of Israel (B. C. 884),

in his crusade against idolatry (2

Kings 10:15-27).

(IV.) THEIR CREED. (1) They

were believers in the true God, for

they were descended from Abraham;

all their leading names in this chap-

ter (Jer. 35) are compounded with

the name of Jehovah; they opposed

idolatry; and later on they joined

in the temple worship. (2) They

were pledged to total abstinence, re-

fusing to drink wine or strong drink.

(3) They were to own no fixed prop-

erty, as houses, vineyards, and

lands, but did possess cattle. (4)

They were not to settle in cities and

villages, nor build houses or culti-

vate the land, for this would soon

bring them to village life; but to

live in tents, moving from place to

place as they could find pasture.

(V.) THE OBJECT OF THEIR

MANNER OF LIFE. (1) It was a pro-

test against the luxury and vice of

the age. (2) It was to maintain

among them the purer morality and

higher feeling of the desert, con-

trasted with the laxity and effem-

inacy of the city life. (3) It was to

preserve to them their freedom.

Hence, although living among the

Israelites, they never became a part

of either kingdom.

II. JEREMIAH'S OBJECT LESSON

TO ISRAEL.

(I.) THE RECHABITES COMING TO

JERUSALEM. Nebuchadnezzar was

advancing with a great army of

Chaldeans and Syrians upon Judah

and of interest to all the people.
They must especially have excited
the sympathy of those, like them-
selves, still true to the old religion;
cheering them by a living proof that
amidst the wide decay of morals,
some remained faithful to the God
of their fathers. Fidelity so strik-
ing was fitted to read a lesson to the
community, and it was used for this
purpose by Jeremiah. Acting on a
prophetic impulse, he brought their
sheik and all the encampment to a
chamber within the temple pre-
cincts. Here he caused large bowls
of wine to be set before them, such
as were placed before guests at a
feast, and invited them to fill their
cups from them and drink. The
proposal, made in mock earnest,
must have been seen in that light,
for otherwise nothing could have
been in worse taste. Of course all,
at once, and without hesitation, de-
clined. They had vowed, they said,
to obey the commands of their fore-
father, Jonadab, and would be true
to their pledge. They could not
think of touching wine. Jeremiah,
turning to the multitude who had
witnessed the scene, announced that
he had been sent by Jehovah to
utter the words of the lesson for
to-day.

III. LESSONS TO ISRAEL FROM

THIS SCENE.—Vers. 12-16. 12.

The word of the Lord. Lord, when-

ever in small capitals as here, is al-

ways the translation of the Hebrew

word *Jehovah*. Unto Jeremiah.

Probably by some internal impulse

or revelation, which carried its own

witness to Jeremiah that the mes-

sage was from God.

13. The Lord of hosts. This

great God is the God of Israel, and

therefore able to save them from

their enemies, if they would trust

him. Will ye not receive instruction?

Will ye give less heed to me, the

Lord of hosts and your God, than

these Rechabites do to their reform-

er Jonadab.

14. Not to drink wine. This

was the most important of the com-

mands to the Rechabites, and the

one in which they had just been

tested by Jeremiah. They would not

even raise grapes or plant vine-

yards, lest they be tempted to dis-

obey this command. Are performed.

Are maintained in full force. Unto

this day. For more than 275 years,

and even before Jonadab's time

the rule has been partially kept.

Notwithstanding. The object is to

draw a sharp contrast between the

obedience of the Rechabites to their

father, and the disobedience of the

Jews to the commandments of God.

Rising early and speaking. As a

man in earnest and full of his mis-

sion is up betimes in the morning to

begin, so God represents himself as

wakeful and active, giving up the

live-long day to his work, laboring

with unwearied patience to reclaim

and to save his people, but all in

vain.

15. I have sent also: i. e., even

after you have disobeyed I have con-

tinued to speak to you, offering for-

giveness of the past. And ye shall

dwell in the land. The promise an-

nexed to the fifth commandment, for

children who obey their parents, is

here given to the children of God

who obey their Father in heaven.

Both are equally true. The chil-

dren of Israel were never driven

from their land except through their

own disobedience. And where in

all history is there a nation which

has perished unless it first disobeyed

God's commandments? Righteous-

ness is the only safety of any nation.

(I.) WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR

THE NATION. He made them a

nation. He gave them a perfect

law from heaven. He did marvel-

ous wonders for them to awaken

their gratitude. He gave them many

prophecies to teach and to warn them.

He led them by His providence. He

sent messages of forgiveness. He

encouraged them by great and pre-

cious promises of rewards for obedi-

ence. He punished disobedience.

Well could he say by the mouth of

his prophet Isaiah, "What could

have been done more to my vine-

yard that I have not done in it?"

IV. REWARDS AND PUNISH-

MENTS.—Vers. 16-19. (I.) PUN-

ISHMENT OF DISOBEDIENCE. 16.

that houses and cultivated lands are
wrong. It was the spirit of obedi-
ence which God commanded, and
which he wishes us to imitate. We
do not refrain even from strong
drink because of the command to
the Rechabites, but in obedience to
God. And the reward promised to
the tribe was the same which is pro-
mised to an individual for filial
obedience, namely, long life. *Shall*
not want a man. See chap. 33:17,
18. The meaning of the language
is, that the time shall never come
when there shall not be a man of the
tribe left; the perpetual existence of
the tribe is promised; and not only
this, but also its perpetual continu-
ance in the service of Jehovah, this
being implied in the next clause,
stand before me, which is a figure
taken from a servant's standing be-
fore his master, waiting for his com-
mands, and ready to serve him.

THIS PROMISE HAS BEEN FUL-

FILLED IN TWO WAYS. (1) By the

existence of Rechabites to the present

day. Dr. Wolff says the Jews of

Jerusalem and Yemen told him he

would find the Rechabites of Jer.

35 living near Mecca. He found

them near Senaa. One of them,

Mousa by name, in answer to the

question, Whose descendants are

you? read from an Arabic Bible

Jer. 35:5-11, and said, "You will

find us sixty thousand in number."

Even as late as October, 1862, an

Eastern traveller, Signor Pierotti,

read a paper at the meeting of the

British Association, stating that he

met a tribe calling themselves by

this name near the Dead Sea. They

had a Hebrew Bible, and told him

the same story that had been told

Dr. Wolff thirty years before. (2)

By incorporation into the tribe of

Levi, and so ministering in the tem-
ple service. The tribe of Levi was
chosen "to stand before God" (Deut.
10:8, and 18:5-7). There is evi-dence that the Rechabites were
adopted into the families of Israel,
and recognized as belonging to the
tribe of Levi; that they ministered
thus before the Lord. (3) This pro-mise is fulfilled spiritually in those
who adopt the temperance prin-ciples of these people. (4) Of course
the promise may have been condi-tional on their continued obedience.
But it is implied that they would
continue to obey.

LESSONS FROM THE RECHABITES.

I. OBEDIENCE.

God has done all that is possible

to help us to obey,—by his Word;

by his Spirit; by the teachings and

examples of parents and teachers;

by his rewards; by his warnings;

by his punishments; by the love and

atonement and example of Jesus
Christ. Apply the subject in these
directions:—

1. To obedience to parents. Note

the promise in the fifth command-

ment.

2. To obedience to the Govern-

ment; making us good citizens.

Young and old are often careless as

to the laws of their country. See

how easily some are broken; as, for

instance, those against gambling and

lotteries, broken by good people in

fairs as well as by bad in gambling

houses; or the efforts to escape taxa-

tion and custom-house duties by

lying and deceit. So Sunday laws.

But what this nation greatly needs

is instruction, example, and the

principle of obedience. For life or death

this nation depends on obedience.

3. Obedience of individuals to

God. The only way to the best life

here, and eternal life, is by obedi-

ence,—faith that leads to doing

God's will. God's laws are the true

principles of living.

4. Obedience of nations to God.

Prosperity, enduring existence, per-

manent government, a happy people,
can be obtained only through obedi-ence. Immorality and irreligion
ruin a nation.

II. TEMPERANCE. The Rech-

abites were: (1) an example of tem-

perance.

(2) An example of a temperate

life in spite of temptations such as

all are exposed to.

(3) They were a protest against

the luxury and intemperance of their

age. They went too far, but that is

far better than not to go far enough.

The best of all is to go just far

enough.

(4) They are an example of the

rewards of temperance,—long life,

and a religious divine life.

As their temperance came through

obedience, so ours comes through

obedience.

(1) Obedience to God's Word.

(2) Obedience to the law of Love.

(3) Obedience to Science.

(4) Obedience to Reason.

(5) Obedience to Experience.

No grace is more necessary to the

Christian worker than fidelity; the

humble grace that marches on in

sunshine and storm, when no ban-