

The Sunday-School.

FOURTH QUARTER.
LESSON III.—Oct. 16.

ELISHA AND THE SHUNAMMITE.

2 KINGS 4: 25-37.

The lesson includes the whole story of the Shunammite. 2 Kings 4: 8-37.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*—Rom. 6: 23.

Learn by heart V. 30; Matt. 7: 11; 1 Thes. 5: 17; Psa. 40: 1.

HISTORICAL SETTING.—*Time*—No exact date can be given. The collection of stories about Elisha is very likely not arranged in chronological order.

Elisha was prophet at least 50 years, B. C. 850-798, revised chronology (or 892-842, Ussher's chronology, as in the margin of our Bibles).

During the reigns of Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, the Jehoash, kings of Israel.

Place—(1) Shunem was situated in the valley of Esdraelon, the richest and most fertile of Palestine (a part of Galilee in the time of Christ), seven miles south of Nazareth, three north of Jezreel, and ten or twelve from Carmel. (2) Elisha's home seems to have been at Samaria. (3) Mt. Carmel, where Elisha sometimes retired.

Place in the History—A picture of the life of the people during unsettled political times.

1. THE HOME AT SHUNEM.—Vs. 8, 9. Elisha had to travel in his work of visiting the schools of the prophets and furthering the cause of true religion. He went frequently to Mt. Carmel, perhaps to religious gatherings or a school of the prophets. He went on foot, accompanied by his one servant, Gehazi.

There were almost no Khans (a kind of inn) in Palestine. Elisha frequently turned aside to the village of Shunem, where, at the house of the chief personage, he was entertained. Shunem was not far from midway of his journey.

The family consisted only of the man, his wife, and their servants. The family name is unknown.

THE HOME AND THE PROPHET'S CHAMBER.—Vs. 10, 11. Elisha was so frequent a visitor that the good woman proposed to her husband to build a little room on the flat roof of the house to which he might have easy and private access.

Blessings came to the Shunammite as a result of her hospitality. She was promised a son; a miracle of mercy brought her near to God; and years afterwards it was the means of restoring to her her home and property, which had been unjustly taken from her during her absence (2 Kings 8: 1-6).

THE CHILD IN THE HOME.—Vs. 12-17. Elisha was anxious to express his gratitude to the family. Being acquainted at court, he offered to say a good word for her to the king or general of the army. She declined with thanks. Finding that her life was wanting in one great blessing, in that she was childless, Elisha promised from the Lord that within a year she should embrace a son.

SICKNESS AND SORROW IN THE HOME. Vs. 18-21. Several years later, the boy was taken suddenly ill, probably with sunstroke, and died.

THE MOTHER'S PRAYER.—Vs. 22-31.—Elisha at this time was at Mt. Carmel,

sixteen miles away. She went with the utmost speed to the prophet. *The man of God saw her afar off.* From his hilltop. *Run now.* Elisha knew that only some matter of great importance could bring the woman there. *Is it well with thee? And she answered, It is well.* She said but one word, *Peace.* *She caught him by the feet, etc.* The falling down, clasping the feet, etc., are actions witnessed every day in the East. *Gehazi came near to thrust her away.* Deeming her importunity excessive. *The Lord hath hid it from me.* Often the Lord had told him what was coming; but in this case he let him learn from the woman herself. *Did I desire a son?* She did not say, but implied that her son was dead. *Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins.* In preparation for a journey. *Take my staff.* The symbol of his authority. *If thou meet any man, salute him not.* The Jewish salutations occupied so much time as to be a hindrance where there was reason for haste. *Lay my staff upon the face of the child.* In expectation that through this prophetic power would restore the child. But the mother of the child was not willing to trust her hopes to Gehazi and the staff. *Gehazi . . . laid the staff upon the face of the child,* but without effect, and he went back to meet the prophet and report his failure.

THE CHILD RESTORED. THE MOTHER'S PRAYER ANSWERED.—Vs. 32-37. Elisha went with the Shunammite to her house, and found the child dead. *He . . . shut the door upon them twain.* Wrestling alone for the blessing.

And he went up, and lay upon the child, etc. He used whatever means were in his power, though the means alone could never have brought the child to life. *He returned, and walked in the house to and fro.* There had been signs of life. But there was a great struggle of faith in the prophet. This was a new experience of what the Lord might do through him. *The child sneezed seven times, and . . . opened his eyes.* These were the first acts of restored respiration. *Take up thy son.* Compare Elisha's action (1 Kings 17: 23) and our blessed Lord's (Luke 7: 15).

THE HEART OF THE LESSON.

Into every home come hours of bitter sorrow. The door through which help comes is the door of prayer, and the use of means. The mother prayed and put her prayer in action. The prophet prayed and put his prayer in action. The best things of life must come through prayer.

Our hearts are God's highways through which he sends his blessings to other men. God reaches men through men. This is one of the greatest blessings God bestows upon his children that their hearts may be his highways.



One of the Vildest Diseases

Is catarrh, which first attacks the nose and throat, and finally spreads all through the system. The only sure cure is fragrant healing Catarrhzone, which is sent by the air you breathe direct to the root of the trouble. Mr. T. Y. MacVicar, of Yarmouth, suffered for years from catarrh, and says: "In my long experience with this loathsome disease, I never used any remedy that relieved and cured so promptly as Catarrhzone. When my nostrils were so stuffed up that I couldn't breathe, I found a few inhalations of Catarrhzone was sufficient to clear away the mucus. I am perfectly cured by Catarrhzone and free from the disease entirely." Use only Catarrhzone. Complete outfit only \$1.00; trial size 25c.

THE MYSTERY OF SUFFERING.

The mystery of human sorrow baffles our understanding, though it does not shake our faith. Here is a Christian, a loving, earnest, devoted disciple, living in self-denial and continuing in prayer, giving means, strength and effort to the service of the Master. To that disciple are appointed successive trials, the loss of children, the loss of friends, the loss of fortune, the loss of health. And while his neighbor who spends his years in worldly pleasures or strife for material ends increases in prosperity, has apparently no vexing annoyances, nor crushing griefs, the good man battles with accumulating adversities.

"Why does God permit it all?" inquires an onlooker. The question cannot be answered, because we are not in the counsels of God. But one thing we know, and it is, that out of the mystery of human pain there will emerge for the Christian a dower of compensation: serenity that no storm will ruffle, communion with the Lord in the midnight and the tempest, acuter feelings for others' woes, a readier and surer touch of consolation.

For he doeth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. He knoweth our frame. He remembereth that we are dust. In our sorest trials, underneath are the everlasting arms. God is with his own in the furnace fire that burns away their dross and refines their gold. And God, being with them, their souls shall be delivered, though the battle seem to be against them.

We cannot explain why a dear daughter of the King must spend some months and years in a darkened chamber chained to a bed on which she cannot turn herself nor move hand nor foot. We cannot explain why a man in his prime is suddenly stricken, falling like an ox shivered by the woodman's axe. We cannot explain why dear little children are one by one called from mothers who love them to the last long sleep. But we can and do accept whatever God appoints, as a part of his gracious will, and believing that every life is planned by the Lord, our souls have no resistance to will or plan. Whatever our Lord sends is the best and the only right thing for his children.

Character, ripened in God's school and disciplined by suffering, often grows very beautiful and strong as the years go on. The tree that strikes deep roots has sturdier fibre and more abundant foliage that the little bush that has no depth of soil. The tool that is fit for the master's hand must have an edge of proof. The work that cost the artist pains will most express the artist's meaning.

The saint who has been often under God's loving hand may most reflect the glory and the shining of God's face.—*Chris. Intelligencer.*



When our Lord assured his disciples that he would be present with two or three he made every assembly of sincere worshippers sacred. It may be a very humble place—a cottage or a cabin—but he is there. It may be on the frontier, where only two can meet together, but he is there. This is better than the presence of a vast multitude. He is more than a mighty army. Let no one bemoan the fact that the church is small and the congregation feeble. The presence of the Master makes up for every lack. Let us be sure that we are present in his name, and all is well.

Ayer's

To be sure, you are growing old. But why let everybody see it, in your gray hair? Keep your hair dark and rich and postpone age. If you will

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White Hair

The missionary year closes on the last day of September. Every offering intended for the work this year should be in the mission rooms by that time.

No Alcohol In It.—Alcohol or any other volatile matter which would impair strength by evaporation, does not in any shape enter into the manufacture of Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil. Nor do climatic changes affect it. It is as serviceable in the Arctic Circle as in the Torrid Zone, perhaps more useful in the higher latitudes, where man is more subject to colds from exposure to the elements.

Twelve new missionaries will sail for their fields in September. This will be glad tidings of great joy to the men and women at work, and to many myriads at home.

Who discovered the famous Nestorian monument in Ning'an Fu? A missionary.

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One has not to travel to find his duty. The way to serve is to begin where you are now, not where you expect to be in the dim and uncertain future.

I tell you, fellow Christians, your love has a broken wing, if it cannot fly across the ocean.—*Maltbie Babcock.*

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