

Sabbath School Lessons.

July 5th.

BALAAM'S BLESSINGS.

NUMB. xxiii. 7. 26.

I. THE FIRST BLESSING.

Come, curse me Jacob. This was the invitation which Balaam had received. Balak had seen that it was in vain to oppose Israel with carnal weapons. He was aware that, through some miraculous spiritual agency, they had triumphed over all their enemies, and he would therefore oppose spiritual power with spiritual. Israel and Jacob were covenant names of God's people. *How shall I curse?* There was no physical impediment to his doing so; and wicked though he was, he was probably restrained, partly by the fear of God, and partly by a certain degree of conscientiousness. He knew that the mere words of imprecation, uttered against those whom God had blessed, would be but empty breath, injurious only to himself and his abettors. *Shall dwell alone.* The Hebrew word, commonly translated, sanctified, means literally, set apart, or separated for the service of God. The Israel of God are separated from the world in their sanctification, and thus dwell alone. Compare this with our Saviour's prayer; Jno. xvii. 15. *Let me die the death of the Righteous.* Who would not wish to die the death of the Christian—strong in faith, in hope, and love? But Balaam's heart was given to covetousness, 2 Pet. ii. 15.—He endeavoured to serve God and mammon, which is declared to be an impossibility; Matt. vi. 24. This wish of Balaam is a strong proof that, in those ancient times, men also believed in the immortality of the soul.

2. THE SECOND BLESSING.

Though deeply mortified at his failure, Balak is still loth to give up his attempt. He had seen how Balaam's soul had kindled with enthusiasm, as he gazed on the happy multitudes encamped in the wilderness below, and how blessings had flowed from his lips at the sight, and trusted that, with a smaller number in view, the prophet would be able to exercise greater self-command. *Stand up Balak.*—He by whom kings govern, and whose creature thou art, is now addressing thee. *God is not a man.* Man often promises, not meaning to perform, often changes his mind, often has not the power to do what he has said.—But with God there is no dissimulation—he never changes his purpose—he is almighty, and can therefore effect whatever he wills. *He hath not seen iniquity in Jacob, neither*

perverseness; perverseness was their besetting sin, but all their sins were covered; Rom; iv. 7, 8. An Unicorn—supposed to be a Rhinoceros, an animal of great strength. *The shout of a king.* The presence of a Monarch used to be, and is still so announced. *What hath God wrought!* Through God's protecting care, neither sword nor enchantment could prevail against his people; the record of this should be handed down through all succeeding generations, for the glory of God, and the comfort of his church.

Learn.—1. *The blessedness of God's people.* They are a peculiar people. They are not conformed to the world. Sanctified by the Holy Spirit, they resemble their Saviour; they are godly, humble, and kind. Titus, ii. 11, 14. They are justified. All their sins are washed away with the blood of Christ. Christ is their righteousness, Jer. xxiii. 6; 1 Cor. i. 30.—God is ever with them—He is, "their strength, and their shield, and their exceeding great reward." In God they rejoice, "the shout of a king is among them." He is their king "to rule and defend them—to restrain and conquer all his and their enemies." Their last end is glorious. Death, "the king of terrors" to the wicked, is to them the messenger of peace. When the wordling, must leave his riches, the believer enters upon the enjoyment of his.

2. *The misery and folly of those who see and desire the Christian's joy, but love the world.* Balaam was a real prophet. He could not prophesy lies. He was not outwardly a wicked or profane man; but he loved the wages of sin. 2 Pet. ii. 15, and he sinned to get them. So "the rich man" and "Demas."

3. *God's love never changes.* Not even the sins of his people can affect it, and as it never had a beginning, so shall it never have an end. Jer. xxxi. 3; Jno. xiii. 1.

July 12th.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

Matth. xvii, 1-13.

1. JESUS TRANSFIGURED.

After six days. Six days after the solemn conference at Caesarea Philippi, in which Christ had foretold his sufferings, and those of his disciples. *Peter, James, and John.* It would seem that these three were the chief of the apostles. They were present when he raised the maid to life, Mar. v. 37; and were afterwards to be the witnesses of his agony in Gethsemane. *Mountain apart.* Probably Hermon; Tabor was far distant. Christ went thither to pray; he frequently sought privacy,