

FOR THE SABBATH SCHOOL

International S. S. Lesson.

LESSON XI.—THE CITIES OF REFUGE.—SEPT. 15.

(Josh. xx. 1-9.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Who have fled for a refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us."—Heb. vi. 18.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—Refuge.

ANALYSIS:—The **P**urpose for the **R**efuges v. 1-3.
the **R**efuges v. 4-6.
places v. 7-9.

TIME AND PLACE.—Soon after last lesson, B.C. 1445, in Shiloh, a city of Ephraim.

INTRODUCTORY.—Seven years have passed away since the Israelites crossed the Jordan, and now all the land of Canaan, though not occupied, is conquered. At Beth-horon and Merom Joshua has overcome the enemies upon the battlefield; at Makeddab he has placed his feet upon the necks of their prostrate kings; over Hebron the aged Caleb has raised his flag of conquest. The mountain region has been possessed, save here and there a village where the Amorites are lurking. The land has been portioned out among the tribes, Judah on the south, Ephraim in the central highlands, Naphtali in the north, and the other tribes between. But before Israel enters upon the possession of cities which her enemies have builded and vineyards which they have sown, the command of the Lord concerning the cities of refuge is to be fulfilled.

THE PRECEPT FOR THE REFUGES, v. 1-3.—At the foot of Sinai forty seven years before God had promised that He would appoint a place of safety for the unintentional man-slayer, and now that Canaan had been entered and possessed He issued His command that the promise might be fulfilled, and the refuge places appointed. The necessity for these cities was occasioned by the custom of blood revenge that existed among the people, making it the duty of the next of kin to avenge the death of a slain relative. This avenger was called a *Goel*, a word translated usually, "redeemer." His duties were four-fold: (1) To redeem fortified property (Lev. xxv. 25); (2) to ransom a relative from slavery (25. 48, f.) (3) to revenge the blood of a slain relative, as here; and (4) to marry the widow, if childless, of a deceased brother. The first and fourth of these duties were performed by Boaz (Ruth iv. 4, 5).

THE PURPOSE FOR THE REFUGES, v. 4-6.—The purpose for the appointment of the cities, was to prevent the abuse of a custom which had become an ineradicable part of the national life. The distinction must be clearly drawn between the man entitled to the refuge, and the man not so. Only he who by accident, or carelessness and without malice or forethought had caused loss of life might find safety within the appointed walls; even then the terror stricken flight and the confinement in the city would form fitting punishment for the neglect or lack of care that had compassed the victim's death. On the other hand the wilful murderer met with no mercy from the Mosaic law. Even the horns of God's altar were to be no refuge for him. He was to be dragged from them to his doom, from which neither wealth nor rank could exempt him. Thus while innocence was protected, guilt was punished, and the inestimable value of a human life in God's sight, was evidenced and maintained.

Refuge for the accidental man-slayer was to be obtained by fleeing to one of the appointed cities; there was no other place of safety, and neglect to go meant that his blood was upon his own head. At the gate of the city, just within its precincts, the fugitive was obliged to stand and declare his cause to the civic elders, who might grant or refuse him admittance on the *prima facie* evidence offered. If the case was decided in his favor he was given a place to dwell among them until his accusers came and he could be formally tried before the congregation, a court of the rulers and elders who represented the whole population of the city. If as a result of this trial the fugitive were found guilty, he was handed over to the avenger to suffer the just penalty of his crime.

THE PLACES FOR THE REFUGES, v. 7-9.—The cities of Refuge were chosen from among the Levitical cities, as being the more likely to be righteously governed. Three were on the east side of Jordan, three on the west, and so scattered as to be easily accessible from all

parts of the country. These were the appointed cities, not only for the Israelite by birth, but also for the sojourning stranger; blessed type of the wider gospel that offers refuge for all in Jesus Christ.

CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR.

Helping the Sunday School.

First Day—Better attendance—John i. 40-49.

Second Day—Better studying—Ps. cxix. 97-104.

Third Day—Better singing—Ps. c. 1-6.

Fourth Day—Better attention—Pr v. viii. 1-11.

Fifth Day—Pray for it—1 John v. 9-15.

Sixth Day—Teach in it—Deut. iv. 6-10.

PRAYER MEETING TOPIC, SEPT. 15.—"HOW MAY WE HELP THE SUNDAY SCHOOL AND GET HELP FROM IT?" Neh. vi. 1-12.

Save the Boys and Girls.

PAPER THREE. How?

Respect Them.—Often people working with every good intention among the children, are discouraged and distressed by their bad conduct and evident wish to annoy. Almost as frequently the cause of such disheartening behaviour is no farther distant than the well-meaning worker, who has come among the children with the impression that they are all by nature mischief makers, and not to be trusted for a moment when the back is turned. The little ones are quick to perceive this conception of their characters in the mind of the worker, and they will probably resent it by doing all in their power to deserve it. But let that worker go to the children with the intention to trust them, and the expectation that they will respond by respecting his confidence, and though they may not quite reach his ideal of order and attention, he will find them making a brave effort to meet his expectations. If you call a boy "naughty child," every time he whispers to his neighbor, it is ten changes to one you will have him really naughty in a few minutes. If on the contrary you should say, "Bob, will you help me in my work by not talking just now?" the chances are greatly in favor of Bob being very attentive for the rest of the meeting. I, personally, make a point of dropping the term "children" altogether when addressing them, and using the words "boys and girls." It is a small matter, but there is an idea of childishness connected with the former term, while the latter phrase pleases them having a stronger, manlier, womanlier ring about it that appeals to their self-respect; and it is just such minor details as these that make toward success in work among the children.

Preach Christ to Them.—There is a great deal of goody-goody stuff talked to children, that either makes them little prigs or little sceptics. The sincere milk of the Word is watered down and mixed with the chalk of our worldly wisdom so as to be the more easily digested, and as a result the incompatible mixture turns the stomachs of the little ones and creates a disgust for all that resembles it in the least. "Be a good child; and some day you will be an angel and play a golden harp forever in heaven;" nice attractive teaching for a healthy boy of twelve, isn't it? Yet much religious work for children phrases itself in just such language. The boy doesn't want to be an angel and play a golden harp forever; he would much sooner remain just what he is the best pitcher in the school baseball nine; what inducement is there then to be good in that hope? But tell that boy it is hard work for a fellow to be good, to keep from swearing when he loses his tamper, or to play honest ball when he might win the game for his team by a little cheat, or just holding his tongue, and you will have him with you; his hearty though slangy "You bet," will prove you have touched a sympathetic chord. Then tell him God knows it is hard work, and so sent His Son to live and die and rise again that we might be forgiven all our failures to do right, and enabled to live honest, manly lives in the future. Tell him it was Christ's love for him a boy, that led Him to suffer on Calvary, and appeal then to the sense of gratitude always strong in a boy's heart. You will probably have to go no farther. The child heart was made to love Jesus, and needs but to be gently shown the way.

O, dear Christian worker, stop preaching "be good" to the children, and try preaching Christ. They know they ought to be good, but many of their little hearts are breaking for lack of knowing how.

The End.