

February 25th.

TRIAL OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH.

Les. Gen. 21 : 1-13. Gol. Text, Heb. 11 : 17.
Mem. vs. 11-13. Catechism, Q. 90.

Twenty six years has passed since last lesson when Sodom was destroyed. It was now the year 1871, B.C.

Abraham had removed from Hebron and travelled Southward. Isaac the child of promise had been born and was now probably twenty-five years of age. Hagar and her child Ishmael, the ancestor of the Arabs, had been sent away.

Abraham is an old man of 125 years, and now comes the great trial of his life, greater than when he was called in early life to leave his home and native land and go far away among strangers, viz: He is commanded to offer Isaac his son in sacrifice. It was all the harder, from the fact that God had told him that Isaac should be the founder of a great people. How could that statement and this command both be true? Abraham did not question the matter with God as we sometimes do. He believed that God could raise his boy from the dead, and so he prepared to obey.

In verse first, we read, "God did tempt Abraham." The real meaning is that he tried him, to prove his faith, to test him, to see how far he would obey, to see whether he was worthy to be the founder of a great nation. We test a rope, a chain, a bridge, that is to be put to important use, and so God tested Abraham. He was not going to allow him to take life. He told him at last not to lay his hand upon the lad, but He wished to test how strong he was, how much he was willing to give up at God's command.

Abraham did not think of wrong doing in connection with it. He merely thought of it as God asking for his best and dearest and he would not withhold even that.

All the family knew that they were going on a journey to worship. None but Abraham knew the dread secret.

Abraham could not sleep that night. Early in the morning all were astir. Sarah kissed her son goodbye little dreaming what was before him. Abraham looked on with breaking heart.

They start. One day passes. They halt for the night. Isaac sleeps the sleep of youth and health. Poor old Abraham scarce closes an eye. Often he rises on his elbow and looks at Isaac. The second day passes, and the second night like unto the first. The third day they sight Moriah, supposed to be one of the hills by Jerusalem. Strangers cannot be taken nearer that awful sorrow, so the servants are left behind, and father and son journey on with wood, fire, etc.

What a terrible question it would be to Abraham when Isaac asked, "where is the lamb," and with what a breaking heart the poor old man would say, "God will provide Himself a lamb."

The place is reached, the altar built, the wood laid in order. And now the father has to tell his son the sad truth. It must have come very suddenly to Isaac. Life was sweet. He was strong and could easily escape. Abraham could not carry out the sacrifice without his consent. Isaac asks a moment to pray. Then he is ready and lies down upon the wood. Abraham with trembling hands ties him there. The knife is drawn.

And now a voice, "Abraham, Abraham." Enough. He has stood the test. A lamb is provided, and with joy unspeakable father and son embrace and with streaming eyes the old patriarch offers the lamb upon the altar.

How different would be the return journey. Picture the scene when they reach home and tell the story to the aged mother, and around the family altar that night they thank God.

Some precious lessons are here:

1. Always obey God's commands even though it may seem to call for sacrifice. It will be better in the end. He makes no mistakes.

2. God sends trials to test and strengthen us. The more one overcomes the stronger he is.

3. We cannot understand some things that come to us, but if we trust God and obey Him, all will be well.

March 4th.

SELLING HIS BIRTHRIGHT.

Les. Gen. 25 ; 27-34. Gol. Text, Luke 12 ; 23.
Mem. vs. Catechism, Q. 91.

Five chapters, 23-27, should be read with this story to get the full meaning of it.

This lesson begins about 33 years after last one and extends over about 28 years.

About 15 years after last lesson, at the age of 40 years, Isaac was married to Rebekah, and then Jacob and Esau were born.

Abraham lived on until he was about 175 years old, and his grandsons Jacob and Esau were boys of fifteen, and then he passed away and was buried in the cave of Machpelah near Hebron, where a big stone structure, built many centuries ago, still covers his dust.

Jacob grew up a quiet lad but with a great deal of perseverance and shrewdness, that in early life sometimes developed into cunning and wrong. He looked after the flocks, attended to business, and was a favorite with his mother. Esau was a bold burly reckless fellow, who cared little for work, and led a wild half savage life, spending most of his time hunting.