

LESSON NOTES.

FIRST QUARTER.

STUDIES IN JEWISH HISTORY.

B.C. 444.] LESSON X. [March 7.

READING THE LAW.

Neh. 8. 1-12.

Commit vs. 8-10.

GOLDEN TEXT.

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.—Neh. 8. 8.

CENTRAL TRUTH

Blessed are they who study, and understand and obey the Word of God.

DAILY READINGS.

M. Neh. 7. 1-6, 66-73. Tu. Neh. 8. 1-18. W. Neh. 9. 1-35. Th. Neh. 10. 1, 28-39. F. Neh. 12. 1-31. Sa. Deut. 11. 18-28. Su. Pa. 19. 1-14.

TIME.—About the middle of September, B.C. 444. It was the first day of the 7th month, their civil New Year's Day; two months after Nehemiah's arrival at Jerusalem (our last lesson).

PLACE.—Jerusalem, in the open square of Ophel, south-east of the temple area.

RULES, ETC.—See last lesson.

BUILDING THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM.—(1) Seen after his arrival, Nehemiah made a careful examination of the ruins. (2) The walls were three or four miles long, and were completed in 52 days. (3) Amid two kinds of hindrances (a) the poverty and sins of God's people, (b) opposition of enemies, by ridicule, false reports, attacks, and attempts to ensnare their leader. (4) The means of success were the mind to work, watchfulness, zeal, prayer, repentance, courage, self-denial, and large gifts.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.—1. *Street*—Rather, a court or wide open space. *Water gate*—A gate in the southern wall of the temple area, through which water was brought for use in the temple services. *Book of the law*—The Pentateuch, or first five books of Moses. 2. *Seventh month*—Of the second year, but the first of the civil year, Tisri, September-October. The first day was their New Year's Day. 4. *Beside him stood*—These were leaders of the people to sustain and honour Ezra in the sight of the people. Perhaps also to relieve Ezra in his long reading, from daylight to noon (v. 3). 5. *All the people stood up*—As a reverential form of worship. 6. *And Ezra blessed the Lord*—Uttered a prayer of praise and thanksgiving. 8. *Read distinctly*—So that all could hear every word, either by reading in concert, or by repeating the words in different parts of the great congregation. *Gave the sense*—By explaining or translating the obscure words. The law was read in Hebrew, while the common language was Chaldean. *Caused to understand*—Explained the meaning and applied the truths. 9. *Tirshatha*—Governor.

SUBJECTS FOR SPECIAL REPORTS.—Building the wall.—Hindrances and helps.—The great assembly.—Ezra's aids.—How we can help the minister.—Worship, its value and methods.—How to understand it.—The fruits of such study.

QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTORY.—Who was Nehemiah? Where did he live? Why did he come to Jerusalem? What did he do soon after his arrival? (Neh. 2. 18-18.) How long was the wall in building? (Neh. 6. 15.) What were some of the hindrances in the way? What qualities did the people show that enabled them to overcome these obstacles?

SUBJECT: STUDYING GOD'S WORD.

I. THE GREAT MEETING (vs. 1-4).—Where did the people gather together? At what time? What feast came on this day? (Lev. 23. 24, 25.) Of whom did the congregation consist? What book was to be read? Who was the reader? Who aided Ezra?

II. THE OPENING WORSHIP (vs. 5, 6).—What postures did the people take during the worship? Why? What posture should we take? What is it to bless the Lord? How did the people respond? Should we take part in the worship? What is the use of worship? How will it help us in Bible study?

III. STUDYING THE WORD (vs. 7, 8).—What three things did Ezra and his helpers do with the book of the law? How long did the first reading continue? (v. 2.) Why was there need of explaining the Word?

IV. FRUITS OF BIBLE STUDY (vs. 9-12).—What did the reading first lead the people to do? Why did they weep? How does the law of God convince us of sin? What did Nehemiah tell the people to do? Show how joy is a natural result of reading the Bible? What acts of benevolence were they to perform? (v. 10.) With what covenant did they consecrate themselves to God? (Neh. 9. 38; 10. 1-39.) What other fruits of reading God's word? (Neh. 8. 14-18; 10. 29-37; 13. 15-21.) What will be the effect of Bible study upon us?

SUGGESTIONS ON BIBLE STUDY.

1. There is great value in large assemblies for Bible study.
2. Therefore, attend teachers meetings, Sunday-school assemblies, normal classes, etc.
3. From the Bible we learn (1) God's will, (2) how to live best in this world, (3) the way to heaven.
4. Worship from the heart, and in becoming attitudes, is a great help to Bible study.
5. We should learn many of the words of the Bible by heart.
6. We should use every means for understanding God's word.
7. The fruits of Bible study are repentance, consecration, obedience, joy, brotherly kindness, happy lives, noble character, national prosperity.

REVIEW EXERCISE.

6. How long were they in building the walls? *Ans.* 52 days. 7. What did they do when the walls were finished? *Ans.* They held a great assembly for the study of God's word. 8. What did they do at this assembly? *Ans.* Ezra and his aids read and explained the law to the people. 9. What was the effect on the people? *Ans.* They wept because they had so failed to keep this law. 10. What did Nehemiah tell them to do? *Ans.* To rejoice in God, and henceforth to obey his law with perfect hearts.

B.C. 474.] LESSON XI. [March 14.

ESTHER'S PETITION.

Esther 4. 10-17; 5. 1-3. Commit vs. 1-3.

GOLDEN TEXT.

So will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.—Esther 4. 16.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

God causes all things to work together for good to his people.

DAILY READINGS.

M. Esther, ch. 1. Tu. Esther, ch. 2. W. Esther, chs. 3, 4. Th. Esther, chs. 5, 6. F. Esther, ch. 7. Sa. Esther, ch. 8. Su. Esther, chs. 9, 10.

TIME.—B.C. 474, between Lessons 8 and 9. 30 years before Nehemiah came to Jerusalem, our last lesson.

PLACE.—Shushan, or Susa, one capital of the Persian empire, 250 miles south-east of Babylon, 125 miles north of the Persian Gulf.

PLACE IN THE BIBLE.—The story of Esther belongs in the interval of 58 years between the sixth and seventh chapters of Ezra.

BOOK OF ESTHER.—Author unknown, but believed to be a Persian Jew who lived about the time of the events described. It is a story of Divine providence, without the name of God once in it, but God manifest everywhere in it.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.—The story must be read, but a few explanations are here given. *Why should God so care for the preservation of the Jews?* Because they were his missionaries to the heathen nations where they were scattered, and were preparing the way by the Word of the one God for the coming of his son Jesus Christ. *Xerxes*—The Greek and common form of the name Ahasuerus is well known in ancient history. The feast mentioned in chap. 1 was the one in which he proposed his great expedition into Greece, where he took 5,000,000 persons and returned with 5,000. The expedition took place between the feast and the marriage of Esther. 10. *Esther*—"A star." Her Hebrew name was Hadassah, "Myrtle." She could have been only 15 or 20 years old at her marriage. *Mordecai*—Esther's cousin and adopted father, a descendant of Kiah, a Benjamite carried captive by Nebuchadnezzar B.C. 589. 11. *There is one law of Mo*—Rather for him, for

all. *Put to death*—This was to preserve the life of the king from those who might wish to kill him, and to save him much annoyance. *Golden sceptre*—A rod tipped and ornamented with gold. *ESTHER'S DANGER*—(1) of death. The chances were against her. (2) The king seemed to have lost some of his attraction to her. (3) The king's decree, which could not be changed, was to be averted,—a seeming impossibility. (4) His leading favourite was opposed to her. (5) She belonged to a despised race, and the king would now have to know it. 13. *Mordecai commanded*—He urges four arguments. (1) She will perish if she does not go. (2) She will lose not only life, but the opportunity of doing a good service. (3) God will certainly deliver his people. (4) God had given her all the blessings she enjoyed for this very purpose. She would be carrying out God's plan. 1. *Put on royal apparel*—To appear as attractive as possible.

SUBJECTS FOR SPECIAL REPORTS.—The Book of Esther.—Xerxes.—Esther.—Haman.—Mordecai.—The danger of God's people.—The heroism of Esther.—Haman's ambition and its fruits.—Mordecai's success compared with Haman's.—The deliverance of God's people.—Divine providence as seen in this lesson.

QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTORY.—Did the story of Esther occur before or after the events of our last lesson? Where in the Bible history does this story belong? In what city did Esther live? What can you tell about Ahasuerus?

SUBJECT: A STORY OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

I. THE DANGER TO GOD'S PEOPLE.—Who was Mordecai? His character? Who was Haman? His character? Why was Haman angry with Mordecai? Why would not Mordecai bow down before him? Was he right in this? What did Haman do in revenge for this? What did he give the king for the privilege? How did he expect to get back this money?

II. QUEEN ESTHER'S HEROISM (vs. 10-17).—How did Queen Esther learn about this danger to her people? What did Mordecai wish her to do? What made this difficult and dangerous? How old was Esther? What reasons did Mordecai give why she should do it? How did she prepare for her dangerous duty? How did she accomplish it? What lessons do we learn from Queen Esther's conduct?

III. RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE.—What was the first step in Haman's fall? How was it accomplished at last? Was this justice? Do such things happen in our days? What lessons do you learn from Haman's career?

IV. DELIVERANCE.—What stood in the way of saving the Jews? (8. 8.) How was their deliverance accomplished? Trace the workings of Providence in accomplishing this result? What promise was fulfilled? (Rom. 8. 28.) Why should God interfere to protect the Jews? What comfort and help can you gain from this story?

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

1. God puts us in our place for a special purpose.
2. Ambition leads to pride, selfishness, and cruelty.
3. Pride goes before a fall.
4. Difficulties in our way make heroism possible.
5. Wisdom, piety, prudence, and courage are needed in God's work.
6. Goodness, faithfulness, piety, are the foundation of true success.
7. God will save his people because he has work for them to do in the world.

REVIEW EXERCISE.

11. Who was Esther? *Ans.* A Jewish maiden who became the queen of Xerxes the Great. 12. What danger overtook God's people? *Ans.* Haman obtained permission to destroy them all. 13. How was that danger averted? *Ans.* By the heroism of Queen Esther, who braved death in their behalf. 14. What became of Haman? *Ans.* His pride and ambition led to his fall and death.

In Madagascar, where as late as 1857 nearly 2,000 people were put to death for adhering to the Christian faith, there are now 1,200 churches and 71,585 communicants. The native churches during the past ten years have given nearly \$1,000,000 for the spread of the gospel.

SUNDAY SCHOOL REWARD BOOKS.

Neatly Bound in Cloth and Illustrated.

At \$1.40.

Classic Stories Simply Told and Finely Illustrated.

- Chaucer's Stories Simply Told. Gilt edges.
- Siege of Troy (The), and the Wanderings of Ulysses. Gilt edges.
- Stories of the Days of King Arthur. Gilt edges.
- Stories of Old Rome: The Wanderings of Aeneas. Gilt edges.

UNIFORM WITH CLASSIC STORIES.

—Coleridge's Ancient Mariner. Illustrated by David Scott, R.S.A. Gilt edges.

Works of Travel and Research.

- In the Holy Land. By Dr. Andrew Thomson.
- Kane's Arctic Explorations.
- Kingston's Western World.
- Maury's Physical Geography of the Sea.
- Mountains and Mountain-Climbing.
- On the Desert. By Henry M. Field, D.D.

Select Library of Historical Tales.

- City and the Castle (The). By Annie Lucas.
- Leonie. A Tale of the Franco-German War and of the Siege of Paris. By Annie Lucas.
- Wenzel's Inheritance; or, Faithful unto Death. By Annie Lucas.
- Arthur Erskine's Story. By the Author of "The Spanish Brothers."
- Helena's Household.
- Joan the Maid. By the Author of "Chronicles of the Schonberg-Cotta Family."
- Pendower. A Story of Cornwall.
- Spanish Brothers (The).
- The Czar. A Tale of the First Napoleon.
- Under the Southern Cross. By the Author of "The Spanish Brothers."
- Family Fortunes. By Edward Garrett.

At \$1.60.

Arnot's Works.

- Arnot's Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth.
- Arnot's Lesser Parables of Our Lord.
- Arnot's Parables of Our Lord.
- Whiston's Josephus. Illustrated. 8vo.

At \$1.75.

A. L. O. E. Series. Gilt edges.

- Exiles in Babylon.
- Hebrew Heroes.
- Rescued from Egypt.
- Shepherd of Bethlehem.
- Triumph over Midian.

Kingston (W. H. G.) Series.

- In the Wilds of Florida.
- My First Voyage to Southern Seas.
- Old Jack.
- Saved from the Sea.
- South Sea Whaler (The).
- Twice Lost.
- Voyage Round the World (A).
- Wanderers (The).
- Young Llanero (The).
- Young Rajah (The).

Travel and Adventure.

- Eastern Archipelago (The). Gilt edges.
- Hudson Bay. By R. M. Ballantyne. Gilt edges.

WILLIAM BRIGGS,
78 & 80 KING STREET EAST, TORONTO.
C. W. COATES, Montreal, Que.
S. F. HUESTIS, Halifax, N.S.