

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS.

FIFTH YEAR, 1877. APRIL. FIRST QUARTER: STUDIES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.

B. C. 894.] LESSON II. THE SHUNAMMITE'S SON; or, The Power of Persistent Faith. 2 Kings 4, 25-37. April 8.

EXPLANATORY.

CARMEL. From verse 23 it seems that Elisha had a place on Carmel where on the new moons, and on the Sabbaths, the people came for worship and instruction. A far off. She would come across the plain of Jezreel—overlooked by Carmel. Gehazi, first mentioned in this story. Of his origin nothing is known. Shunammite. Resident of Shunem, a city in the tribe of Issachar, situated on the northern slope of little Hermon. (Josh 19, 18.)

RUN... TO MEET HER. Evidence of Elisha's great esteem for her. Is it well? Hebrew, Shalom, peace. Her unexpected visit is evidence of some trouble or sorrow, which Elisha's sympathetic heart would anticipate. Her answer with the same word is an evasion, see verse 23. She would unburden her heart's sorrow only to one who can sympathize and help.

THE FEET. Great grief shrinks from speech. The action was one of supplication. Let her alone. So would the disciples drive loving mothers from Jesus. (Mark 10, 13, 14.) and the officious multitude would have repulsed the blind men. (Matt. 20, 30, 31.) Vexed. Heb. bitter. Hath hid it from me. Prophets were far from infallible either in knowledge or judgment. See 2 Sam. 7, 3.

DID I DESIRE. She would remind the prophet that her son was a free gift, and it were better never given if to be so soon taken. See verse 16.

TAKE MY STEP. The badge of his prophetic office. Elisha may have thought he could thus confer the prophetic power upon Gehazi. If so, the result showed his error. Not even the church can confer the gift of the Spirit. Salute him not. Oriental salutations take time. Haste was the object of the embassy, as in that climate decomposition must set in speedily.

I WILL NOT LEAVE THEE. Persistence is characteristic of strong faith and strong desire. The mother's heart will take no denial, and thus should we pray. (Luke 18, 1.)

TO MEET HIM. Gehazi had made haste, had failed, and returning met Elisha and the mother on their way. Child is not awake. No evidence that he supposed him not dead, as the term sleep was commonly used for death. (1 Kings 1, 21.) The symbol is of no use where the spirit and power are absent. Mistake not the sign for the thing signified, nor outward form for inward grace.

DEAD. Both here and in verse 20 it is expressly stated that the child was dead; there is, therefore, no room for supposing it a case of suspended animation, or a trance. His bed. Not the child's bed, but Elisha's. (See verse 21.)

PRAYED UNTO THE LORD. Thus had Elisha done; (1 Kings 17, 21.) and thus did Peter, (Acts 9, 40.) But Christ spake the word and it was done. (Mark 5, 41; Luke 7, 14; John 11, 43.) God alone giveth life, temporal or spiritual, but he is pleased to give it in answer to prayer.

LAY UPON THE CHILD. The prayer of faith will be supplemented by personal effort; and it is frequently through the personal contact of soul with soul that God works in bringing to life those who are "dead in trespasses and in sins."

WALKED TO AND FRO. Intense emotion is frequently thus exhibited. The recovery seems to have been gradual—first the warmth, then the sneezing, showing restored respiration—then opening the eyes. But life was there to produce the warmth.

TAKE UP THY SON. Elijah delivered the risen son to his mother, (1 Kings 17, 23.) as did Jesus, (Luke 7, 17,) who also charged the parents of the damsel (Mark 5, 43,) to give her something to eat. And thus he commits to our care those whom he has quickened to life, that we may nourish and feed them. (John 21, 15.)

FELL AT HIS FEET. A grateful acknowledgement of the priceless favor. The thankful heart bows itself in praise before it takes to itself the blessing it has sought.

We once saw a young man bravely turning up the glass. He was a free-hearted, glorious fellow; he was, as he said, "sowing his wild oats." We afterward saw the constable hauling a miserable drunkard from the gutter to the jail. It occurred to us that the wild oats were being dragged in. A glorious crop! The bar-room and gutter are exhaustless in their fertility.

A PARENT'S EXAMPLE.

L— was a bright-eyed little boy about four years old. His parents were devotedly attached to him. They were both members of the Church, and his father was an officer in it, but because of his timidity had never erected a family altar in his home, and in consequence of this, little L— had never heard his fathers voice in prayer. L—'s mother had taught her little boy to pray every evening before retiring, and was earnestly trying to bring him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. One evening after the little fellow rose from his knees, as he was climbing into bed, he said:

"Ma, when I get to be a man, I won't have to pray, will I?" "Yes, dear," said the mother; "you will always have to pray to God, for he loves you."

"Well, father does n't pray, and he is a man."

The above is a true incident. I give it just as it was related to me by the child's mother. I need not add that the father has a family altar in that home now. I hope that the eye of some other Christian parent who never prays with his family, may fall on it. Fathers, see to it. Little eyes are watching you, and if your father don't do it, "little," ask them to do it.

The N. Y. Witness says:—"The President and his excellent wife (truly she has earned that excellent title) have again given an unmistakable token of good common sense, excellent taste and adhesion to correct principles in quietly ignoring all attempts to make a show of them in the house of God. To go unexpectedly to an unpretentious near-by Methodist-Episcopal church on foot, because Mrs. Hayes was averse on principle to unnecessary carriage-riding on the Sabbath, instead of accepting invitations to occupy grand pews in grand churches, was setting an example to spectacle-loving Washington which will not soon be forgotten.

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