

For the Sabbath School.

International S. S. Lesson.

LESSON IV.—APRIL 22.—GEN. xli., 38-48.

(Joseph Ruler in Egypt.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Them that honor me I will honor.”—1 Sam. ii., 30.

Joseph, when he reached Egypt, was sold to Potiphar, “the captain of the guard.” The military caste in Egypt ranked next to the priesthood; and the entire force consisted of 410,000 men, who were divided into two corps, a thousand serving each for a year as the king’s body-guard (Herod 2. 164-168). Potiphar was probably the captain of one of these thousands, and consequently a man of great honor and influence.

At the end of ten years another bitter trial came to Joseph. After long resisting temptation, his very goodness and truth are made the occasion of an unjust accusation, and without trial he is cast into prison. In the present case, the term very probably implies an edifice, or portion of the official mansion, mostly subterranean, of which the roof or vault, rising immediately from the surface of the ground, was round, or shaped like an inverted bowl. It is called, in chap. 41: 14, “the dungeon.” Such dungeons are still, under similar circumstances, used in the East. In Ps. clv. 17, 18, we are told that his feet were hurt with fetters; he was laid in iron. The imprisonment was at first severe. But God favored him, and he afterwards had a freer and better life in waiting upon the other prisoners.

STEPS IN JOSEPH’S TRAINING AND PREPARATION.—(1) His discipline was severe. His prison life was hard to endure. He was practically a martyr. (2) He learned to trust in God. We see no signs of distrust or of complaining. He simply clung closer to God, and became acquainted with God. (3) He had long opportunity to study himself and his needs. There are times when character grows best by rest from work, by slow, unconscious growth. (4) Wherever Joseph was, and in whatever circumstances, he did what was right. He made the best of everything. He not only *looked* on the bright side, but he did what was better; he *worked* on the bright side. The way to be ready for larger fields is to be faithful in the smaller. The way to reach a wider sphere is to fill full the narrower. It is well to remember that the particular sphere we are in is of very small importance compared with what we do in the sphere. Piety is just as beautiful in a hovel as in a palace: faithfulness, truth, courage, honor, are no more noble on a throne than in a factory or on a farm; love, gentleness, self-denial, are as blessed in the kitchen as in the parlor, in the prison as in the court. (5) He grew in helpfulness and kindness.

LINKS IN THE CHAIN OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE, by which Joseph was delivered from his misfortunes. The story of the dreams of the butler and baker and Joseph’s aid to them is given in chap. 40. Joseph continued in prison for two years after showing kindness to the released cup-bearer, who ungratefully forgot all about his young prison friend. Then God sends two strange dreams to Pharaoh. None of the wise men of Egypt could interpret the dreams. Joseph is remembered, he is exalted.

DREAMS.—That ordinary dreams have in our day, and had in those days no special significance, is undoubted. But “the time in which Joseph lived was the childhood of the world, when God had neither spoken much to men, nor could speak much, because as yet they had not learned his language, but were only being slowly taught it by signs suited to their capacity. Hence God spoke to them in various ways, which are not necessary to us, because we have the training of ages, the word spoken by prophets, and chiefly by Jesus Christ.

AND PHARAOH CALLED JOSEPH’S NAME ZAPHNATH-PANEAH. Briggs translates this as meaning, “Governor of the district of the place of life,” or, as Geikie suggests, “Governor of the Living One,” with a reference to Joseph’s true God.

Joseph’s success consisted (1) in his worthy character and fitness to serve God and man. (2) In his great work

for helping a great number of people, and (3) his thus proclaiming the true God to an idolatrous people. (4) The blessings he brought upon his father’s family. (5) The wealth, honor, and position which came to him.

There is a divine and human element in every life. They are the warp and woof of which the web of life is woven. Both are necessary to a successful life.

The trials and experiences of youth are meant to be the preparation for larger and fuller lives. We do not know what is before us, but we do know that a right use of the present is the only true preparation for the future.

So our whole life is a school for the future life. Life is the time of preparation. “We know not what we shall be.” We do not know what glorious work or place is before us.

Christian Endeavor.

PRAYER MEETING TOPIC, APRIL 22.—“What and How to Provide for the Future,” Matt. xxv. 31-46. There are some things as young Christians we should learn to lay by in store for the future. Among these I place first a knowledge of God’s Word. No time is put to better advantage than that spent in memorizing scripture, for you are laying by a source of help and power absolutely immeasurable. Second to a knowledge of the Bible I place knowledge of all that will make you purer, stronger, wiser in righteousness and truth. On a par with this I put health. What right have young Christians to be sapping their vitality by spending night after night in overcrowded, overheated rooms, wearing themselves out in the careless dance or other doubtful amusements? What right have others by carelessness in such matters as proper wraps and dry feet to lay the seeds of disease that may render them useless for the Masters service? “Know you not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost?” 1 Cor. vi. 19. I have not touched on the thoughts of our subject passage, the lessons taught there are self-evident. Scripture passages:—Psa. cxix., 11; Prov. xxviii., 20, 22; Mal. iii., 1-3; Matt. xi., 42; xxiv., 44; xxvi., 1-30; Mark xiii., 32-37; Luke xii., 16-21, 42, 43; 1 Thes. iii., 12-13; 1 Tim. vi.; Tit. ii., 11-14; Heb. vi., 10; Jas. iv., 13-15; 1 Pet. i., 24, 25; 2 Pet. iii., 10-14; 1 John ii., 17.

BRIEFLY PUT:—The more one *gives up* on earth, the more one *lays up* in heaven. To-morrow depends upon to day: the fruit of the harvest grows from the seed of spring, Gal. vi., 7-8.

A Noble Cause.

No branch of church work can lay stronger claim to the sympathy and help of our young people than that to which your attention has already been called by two editorials in our issues of March 22nd and 29th, viz., The Aged and Infirm Ministers’ Fund. That the veterans of our Church, who have spent their lives in making it the power for God’s glory that it is, should be allowed to want for lack of interest or effort on the part of the rising generation who are living in full enjoyment of the fruits of their labors, is a crying shame which it behooves us as Christian Endeavorers to help silence. What Society will be first to take this matter up? Let us hear from you.

Wanted.

Bicycle sinews that can be harnessed to God’s errands. Tennis shoes with gospel spikes for slippery places. Football kickers who will rush Right to its goal. Crack oarsmen who will pull against the tides that overwhelm humanity.

Bronzed faces on which grace has pictured the manly young man, Christ Jesus.

Hands that have learned the sleight of giving vice a black eye, and that are not afraid to try to knock out the saloon.

Upper lips that can keep still at the proper time as well as grow glossy moustaches.

REV. J. F. COWAN in the *Golden Rule*