

SCHOLARS' NOTES.

(From the International Lessons for 1880, by Edwin W. Rice, as issued by American Sunday School Union.)

LESSON XI.

SEPT. 12.]

TRIAL OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH.

Gen. 22: 1-14.

COMMIT TO MEMORY VS. 11-14.

1. And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold here I am.

2. And he said, take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

3. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up and went unto the place of which God had told him.

4. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

5. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

6. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

7. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

8. And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

9. And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

10. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

11. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

12. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

13. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

14. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh; as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Now I know that thou fearest God.—
Gen. 22: 12.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

God honors the obedience which springs
from faith.

INTRODUCTORY.—As this is the last lesson in the history of Abram, it will aid the scholar, in fixing the facts in his mind, to give the chief events of the life of the patriarch in the order of their narration: 1. Abram's parentage. 2. Removal from Ur (Gen. 11: 27-32). 3. Call (12: 1-3). 4. Journey through Canaan into Egypt (12: 10-20). 5. Return from Egypt and separation from Lot (13: 1-13). 6. Promise again of Canaan (13: 14-18). 7. Rescues Lot. 8. Met by Melchizedek (14: 1-24). 9. God's covenant with Abram (15: 1-21). 10. Ishmael born. 11. Covenant renewed to Abram and his name changed to Abraham (Gen. 17: 1-27). 12. He intercedes for Sodom. 13. Cities of the plain destroyed—Lot saved. 14. Abram dwells at Gerar. 15. Isaac born. 16. Hagar and Ishmael cast out. 17. Covenant with Abimelech. 18. Offers Isaac. 19. Covenant again renewed. 20. Death of Sarai and purchase of Machpelah. 21. Isaac married. 22. Death of Abraham (Gen 25: 7-10).

NOTES.—MORIAH, 'chosen of Jehovah.' Whether this "land of Moriah" was near Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, or was in the region of Moreh (Gen. 12: 6), has been long in dispute. If the latter view is accepted, then Moriah must be found near Sechem, or modern Nablus.—JEHOVAH-JIREH, "The Lord will provide."

EXPLANATIONS.

LESSON TOPICS.—(1.) THE STRANGE COMMAND. (11.) THE WONDERFUL OBEDIENCE. (11.) THE BLESSED RESULT.

I. THE STRANGE COMMAND.—AFTER THESE THINGS, the birth of Isaac at Beersheba, and some years of subsequent residence there; tempt, try, prove; God does not tempt to sin (1 James 1: 13). (2.) THINE ONLY SON ISAAC, only son by Sarah, born in Abraham's one hundredth year; Isaac now, according to Josephus, was about twenty-five years old; MORIAH, either the place where Solomon's temple was afterward built (2 Chron. 3: 1), or a mount near Sechem (see Notes): OFFER HIM THERE, not immoral; for the basis of morality is God's moral character; did not sanction human sacrifices; the conclusion of the history implies condemnation of them. It was simply a trial of faith and obedience, and also possibly to show heathen that His servants could exercise as great self-denial for him as others for their gods.

II. THE WONDERFUL OBEDIENCE.—(3.) ROSE UP EARLY, what had to be done must be done at once; CLAVE THE WOOD, lest there should be none on the mountain. (5.) ABIDE HERE, lest they should hinder him; WORSHIP, it was a sublime act of worship; COME AGAIN, prophetic of the return of both. (6.) LAID IT UPON ISAAC, Christ bore His Cross. (7.) GOD WILL PROVIDE A LAMB, from the time of Abel lambs were offered as sacrifice. (8.) GOD WILL PROVIDE, etc., could not yet tell him that he was the lamb. (9.) BOUND ISAAC, no resistance offered; Isaac

seems now to know and to yield himself to the command of God. (10.) STRETCHED FORTH HIS HAND, the approaching completion of the act of obedience.

III. THE BLESSED RESULT.—(11.) ANGEL OF THE LORD, the angel of the covenant (Mal. 3: 1), the Lamb of God who was hereafter to be offered. (12.) LAY NOT THINE HAND UPON THE LAD, no such interference when Christ was about to be sacrificed; NOW I KNOW, he knew before, but this was a knowledge, through experiment; THOU HAST NOT WITHHELD THY SON, this surrender of what was dearest, the keystone of Abraham's spiritual experience. (13.) A RAM CAUGHT IN THE THICKET, Isaac, a sinner, could not be a type of Christ's sacrifice; the ram, sinless, was a fit type; IN THE STEAD OF HIS SON, in intention, he withholds not his son; in fact, he offers a substitute for his son. (14.) IN THE MOUNT OF THE LORD IT SHALL BE SEEN, in the height of trial to which God brings His servants, His deliverance shall be seen.

ABRAHAM OBEDIENT. SAVED.

ISAAC OBEDIENT. SAVED.

LESSON XII.

SEPT. 19.]

REVIEW.

GOLDEN TEXT.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.—2 Tim. 3: 16.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

God is the Maker and Ruler of the world.

NOTE.—The first three lessons of this quarter relate to the origin of the world, the beginning of sin, and the first work of death; then follows the destruction of the old world. The remaining lessons cluster around the life of Abraham, who is selected to be not only the father of the Jews, but also of God's faithful people to the end of time. The calling of Abraham begins a new period in the history of God's dealings with the human race. His history, and that of his descendants, form the principal theme of the remainder of the Old Testament. Abraham was chosen, and in him a family and a nation to be God's witness upon earth, and the repository of His truth until Christ should be born; hence the importance of the lessons which direct our attention to God's dealings with him.

Recall the Title, Golden Text, and Central Truth of each lesson.

GENERAL QUESTIONS.—What books compose the Pentateuch? Who wrote them? From which of the books are our lessons taken? Which of the lessons relate to Creation, Sin, and Death? What lesson tells of the overthrow of the world? To what do the remaining lessons refer? Why is Abraham considered so important a character in the Old Testament?

Beginning OF WORLD. OF MAN. OF SIN. OF DEATH. OF SALVATION.

QUESTIONS ON THE LESSON.

I.—Who is the author of all things? From what did He make the heaven and the earth? For what purpose did He make it? What was the first condition of Adam? Where did God place him? What was he to do there? What did God say of everything which he had made?

II.—How long did the happiness of Eden last? What brought it to an end? What was the motive for eating the forbidden fruit? What were the consequences of the sin of our first parents to them and to us? What mercy did God announce when he pronounced judgment?

III.—Give the names of the first two children. How did each of them worship God? How can we worship God acceptably? With what outward religious act was Cain's sin connected? What showed him to be untruthful? What other facts prove that his heart was not right? What was his fate? Who are said by John to be murderers?

IV.—What is a covenant? Who was the author of this covenant? Why was it made? What was its token? What is the covenant of the New Testament called? Describe this better covenant. What were the names of Noah's sons? From which of these are we supposed to have descended?

V.—Of what new period in the world's history is the call of Abram the beginning? How soon after the death of Noah was Abram born? Where was Ur? Who started for Canaan with him? To what place did the company come? How long did they stay there? What member of the company finally went to Canaan? Who was the father of Abram, and where did he die? What was Abram to gain by obedience? What to lose?

VI.—What relation was Lot to Abram? What was the difference in their characters? How was it manifested? After the separation, who appeared to Abram? For what purpose?

VII.—How did Lot's choice turn out as to earthly things? What did Abram do for Lot? What King and Priest is here introduced? Of whom was he a type? Which was the superior—Abram or Melchizedek? How do you know?

What trait in Abram is revealed by his answers to the king of Sodom?

VIII.—What promises had God before made to Abram? Why had they not yet been fulfilled? Describe the ceremony of an Eastern covenant. Describe the incidents of this covenant with Abram. How was the presence of God manifested? What is said of Abram's belief in God? What was Abram's faith counted to him for?

IX.—What does this lesson teach us in regard to Abram's character? What kind of a city was Sodom? Why did God reveal to Abram his purpose concerning it? Why did Abram pray for it? What are we taught in regard to intercessory prayer? What in regard to importunate prayer?

X.—How was Lot warned? Why were his family included in the warning? Who of them mocked? What haste did Lot show to depart? Who urged him? Where did he go? What became of Sodom? What became of Lot's wife? Where was the site of Sodom?

XI.—What strange command did God give to Abram? Where was the land of Moriah? How did Abram receive the command? Was the sacrifice completed? Who stayed it? Of what was the ram a type? Why could not Isaac be a type? What greater sacrifice was afterward offered near this place?

The Covenant IN EDEN. WITH NOAH. WITH ABRAHAM. WITH THE FAITHFUL.

THE PENNY POST.

We daresay there are some of our desperately busy men who look on the penny post as an unmitigated bore, and not without some reason. We think it was two hundred and sixty letters that the late Dr. Livingstone received in one day by the penny post, during one of his brief visits to this country. Mr. Gladstone, we suppose, could tell a similar tale. Livingstone was a most courteous and conscientious man, and at first he struggled to overtake the terrible deluge. But after a trial he had to give it up in despair. Fancy a man, after twenty years' absence, returning to his country for a few months, anxious to see something of his family and friends, overwhelmed with public engagements, struggling to write a big book, and under the necessity of being back in Africa by a particular time, lest, losing the river in flood, he should be thrown back a year—fancy him in the fresh vigor of the morning receiving scores of letters and trying to answer them! The bloom of his strength would be gone before he got to the hard work of the day. Letters are all very well to a lawyer, who, with his fee for every page, can make a very good thing out of them. To a merchant his letters are important, as they constitute a great part of the machinery of his business. But to a man with a laborious occupation otherwise, his letters are a great burden. They don't seem to count for anything. They leave the great work of the day untouched. They don't afford copy for the printer; they are not materials for sermons. Undoubtedly there is a class of men to whom the penny post makes a serious addition to the burdens of life. We believe that it shortened the days of the late Dr. James Hamilton, the delightful but very laborious author of "Life in Earnest." At the new year he used to lay in so many reams of note-paper, and it was incredible how soon the vast stock became exhausted. The halfpenny cards are a relief and a help, as Mr. Gladstone has found. It used to be always a sign of good breeding to answer letters promptly. The neglect of this habit cannot always be reasonably taken in that sense now.

Whatever may have been in the purpose of its first promoters, it is certain that the penny post has had a wonderful effect in realizing one of the articles of the Creed—the communion of saints. It has brought like-minded people into contact from all parts of the country, and we may say from many parts of the world, interested and united them in various departments of Christian life and work, and created a sense of brotherhood previously unknown. To take a single instance or two:—There is a Union of Christians for reading and studying the same chapters of the Bible every day of the year. A scheme is drawn out yearly, sent by post to nearly a hundred thousand members who, as they read, feel that the thoughts and feelings of a vast Christian brotherhood are running in the same channel as their own. It would be interesting to enquire whether this circumstance does not give a new interest and a new power to their reading of the Word of God. Or let us think of the International Sunday-school Lessons. But for the cheapening of postage at home and abroad, that interesting and important form

of Christian co-operation would have been impossible. Yet who can calculate the good that may result from a scheme which is fitted to make more valuable and efficient the weekly labors of many hundred thousand Sunday-school teachers, who influence millions of the young in our several churches? If cheap postage had no other effect on Christian life and work, this alone would have made it an incalculable boon.—*Prof. Blairie, in Sunday Magazine.*

"THE HORRIBLE PIT."

Walking along leisurely to church one evening, my attention was arrested by the pitiful cries of a child not very far off. On looking about I discovered that there was, in an adjacent lot, the ruins of a cellar wall. There seemed to be special attractions about these ruins for the children of the neighborhood, and they used to amuse themselves by running over and around the walls, jumping across the corners, and down into the bottom.

And so, when I heard the cries of a child, I immediately hastened to the spot from whence the sound proceeded, and discovered, as I expected, that a little girl had fallen to the bottom of the excavation. She was crying piteously for help. "Oh, I fell and I've hurt myself! Please help me." Bending over the top of the wall I reached down and took her by the hand and helped her to the top, from whence she started homeward a happier and wiser girl.

As I proceeded on my way the words of David occurred to my mind with greater force than ever before: "He inclined unto me and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings."

And so He comes to the fallen one, full of pity and love, and when there is no other eye to pity and no other arm to save, His almighty arm, which is strong to deliver, and mighty to save, is stretched forth, and taking hold we are lifted up out of danger, out of the filth of sin, out of the horrible pit, and placed where we can enjoy the full light and liberty of the children of God.—*People's Journal.*

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