



LESSON,—SUNDAY, AUGUST 11, 1907.

The Sin of Nadab and Abihu.

Leviticus x., 1-11. Memory verse, 9. Read Lev. viii.—x.

Golden Text.

Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.—Prov. xx., 1.

Home Readings.

- Monday, August 5.—Ex. xxiv., 1-15.
- Tuesday, August 6.—Ex. xxx., 1-10.
- Wednesday, August 7.—Lev. viii., 13-30.
- Thursday, August 8.—Lev. ix., 8-24.
- Friday, August 9.—Lev. x., 1-20.
- Saturday, August 10.—Num. xvi., 1-22.
- Sunday, August 11.—Num. xvi., 23-46.

FOR THE JUNIOR CLASSES.

Who can remember anything about the beautiful tent temple that God told the Israelites to build? We were studying about it last Sunday, with its beautiful curtains and lovely golden furniture. All the people had been busy over building it for several months, and God appointed special men called priests and Levites to look after it. But do you suppose God just wanted it built like this because it was beautiful? No, indeed. Everything about and in it was intended to teach the people some lesson, and God was very particular that everything should be done his way, because he knew best. One day Rob's teacher told him to draw a picture on his slate, and to start at the top of the slate, not at the bottom. Rob thought it really couldn't matter how he started so long as the picture was drawn, so he started at the bottom, and drew up to the top. When he had finished, however, he found that while he was drawing the top, his hand had been rubbing out all that he had drawn before. So he learned that the way you do things really does matter after all. Just after this beautiful tabernacle was finished there were two of the priests who were something like Rob, that is, they thought that the way they served in the temple really did not matter so long as they did what they had to do. God had particularly told them what to do, and how to do it, but they thought their own way was just as good, and they disobeyed God. This sad lesson tells us that God punished them by death. There was another thing that God was very particular about, and that was that none of his priests serving in his temple should drink strong drink.

The verses dealing with this can easily be explained. The prohibition was made not only for the sake of the priests themselves (verse 10), but that they might be fit guides for the people (verse 11). These two reasons are equally forceful to God's children to-day.

FOR THE SENIORS.

There is some little doubts as to what is referred to by the expression 'strange fire' in verse 1, but taking together Lev. ix., 24; vi., 12, 13; xvi., 12, and other such passages, it is reasonable to suppose that the fire on the altar of burnt offering, kindled by direct divine act, maintained continually by the priests, and in fact specifically mentioned in some cases, was the fire designated by God for use with the incense in all cases. But whatever it may be, it was an act committed

knowingly in disobedience of God's command. If thoughtlessly done, it was none the less deserving of its punishment. God had been for months impressing on the people his own holiness, and the fact that punishment followed the breaking of his law. In the very first day of regular service, and in the eyes of all the people, these men, his representatives, dare to neglect his express command. It was almost a direct challenge of the truth of his word, and was followed by the decreed punishment (Ex. xix., 22). That it was the spirit of the act, which displeased God is evident as this same chapter records a second infringement of rule (verses 16-20), that at first roused Moses to anger but on Aaron's presentation of the case 'he was content.' The touch is very beautiful; Aaron and his remaining sons uttered no cry of grief at God's judgment, but they had not the heart to eat the customary meal. They had in a very terrible manner offered their sin offering, and their burnt offering before the Lord, and Aaron truly realized that God did not require of them an appearance of callous indifference they did not feel.

The close conjunction of verses 8-11 with the foregoing tragedy hint the possibility that it was under the influence of drink that Nadab and Abihu sinned. But whether or no this may be, the lesson makes a strong temperance study. We as Christians are the temples of God, and have no more right to defile his temple in a small way than had Nadab and Abihu. Anything that is indulged in detrimental to our bodily good, even apart from moral danger, is a sin against God, and if the moderate drinker considers his a small and negligible sin, let him consider God's judgment on Nadab and Abihu.

SELECTIONS FROM PELOUBET'S 'NOTES.'

The Necessity of the Punishment. It was the same as the necessity for all punishment,—in its justice, in its measurement of the evil of the sin, and its prevention of crime. No government of imperfect people can exist or does exist without it. As has just been pointed out, the ritual system had been inaugurated on that very day. All was new and strange, easily dislodged, depreciated, or corrupted, and therefore needing special guarding. The bud needs, and has protection from rough husks, which the flower can do without. This swift death of offenders against the new order has its parallel in the swift death of Ananias and Sapphira, which is to be vindicated on similar grounds. There, too, the necessity was stringent for instant removal of a springing root of bitterness, by which many might be defiled, and for saving the young life of the community from disease, which, unchecked, might infect its whole future. . . . To insist on strict obedience was not the pedantry of ritual martinetism, but the carefulness which stops the smallest crack in the "levee" that alone keeps millions of acres from being drowned by the Mississippi. If we think of all that hung on the question whether Israel was to keep itself unspotted from the heathen world-around it, and its various cults, perhaps this tremendous judgment will assume a different aspect. . . . The command applied to the priestly order; but all Christians are priests, and their office binds them to loftier lives of more speckless purity, and involves them in sorer chastisements if they stain their garments. Amos had brooded over Moses' words, and reproduced them for the nation: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities;" and Peter echoes them when he speaks of "judgment to begin at the house of God." —Alexander Maclaren, in 'Sunday School Times.'

'A number of gentlemen in the State of New York, came together to value certain parcels of land which were to be offered at public sale. They agreed unanimously upon the sum they were worth; but upon the day of the sale the owner cunningly treated them to alcoholic drinks, and one of them bid and actually paid four times as much for the property as he or any other man in his right senses thought it worth. A temperance man,

having some standing timber to be disposed of at public sale, decided that he would not furnish any alcoholic liquors to the bidders, as was the custom in that day. The auctioneer replied: "I am sorry, for you will lose a great deal of money. I know how it works, for after men have been drinking the trees look much larger to them than they did before." A vendue master in Connecticut said: "I have often in this way got more than ten times the value of the drinks that I have furnished." Horse jockeys, gamblers, thieves, wholesale merchants, and commercial travellers often furnish alcoholic drinks for similar purposes.—Julia Coleman, in 'Independent.'

1. Disobedience to God's laws is the road to death, whether it be disobedience to his moral laws or to the laws of health and right use of our bodies.
2. Even the moderate use of strong drink shortens the life in years, and shortens it still more in its effective power.

BIBLE REFERENCES.

I. Cor. iii., 16, 17; Psa. lxxxix., 7; I. Cor. x., 11; Luke xii., 48; I. Sam. xv., 22.

C. E. Topic.

Sunday, August 11.—Topic—The teachings of the trees. Ps. civ., 16-18; i., 1-6.

Junior C. E. Topic.

COMMON BLESSINGS.

- Monday, August 5.—God's manifold mercies. Neb. ix., 27, 28.
- Tuesday, August 6.—His tender mercies. Ps. li., 1.
- Wednesday, August 7.—His loving-kindness. Ps. cxiii., 2-5.
- Thursday, August 8.—The multitude of his mercies. Isa. lxiii., 7.
- Friday, August 9.—Always merciful. Ps. xxv., 6, 7.
- Saturday, August 10.—His kindness shall not depart. Isa. liv., 10.
- Sunday, August 11.—Topic—Every-day mercies. Lam. iii., 22-25.

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