

The Sabbath School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

June 9.] B. C. 537. [Daniel vi., 14-23.
DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me.”—Verse 22.

HOME READINGS.—M. Heb. 11. 32-40; T. Acts 4, 13-31; W. Acts 12, 1-11; Th. Ac’s 16, 25-40; E. Dan. 6, 1-14; S. Dan. 6, 15-28; S. Ps. 57, 1-11.

Verse 14—*The King*—DARIUS.—Opinion differs as to whether this Darius was actually King in his own right, or a vice-roy acting under CYRUS. It accords with Dan. 5:31 and 6:1, to regard him as King of Media, contemporary with Cyrus, King of Persia, and in such close alliance with him that he and Cyrus divided their vast empires into 120 provinces, with separate governors, over whom were appointed three Presidents—of whom Daniel was first. In verse 28 it is said that Daniel prospered in the reign of both.

The change in the dynasty of Chaldea did not exempt Daniel from molestation. He was now an old man—had been nearly 70 years in Babylon—full of honours, too; but his high rank at Court increased the jealousy of the native princes who concerted a plan for his overthrow. At their instigation a decree was issued—signed by Darius—that whosoever should ask a petition of any god or man, for 30 days, save of Darius, should be cast into the den of lions. They represented that “all the presidents,” &c., had agreed to this, which was obviously untrue, for Daniel, the chief president, had never consented to that. It was an impious decree, because its object was to prevent the worship of the true God. It was cruel and absurd—but it flattered Darius’ vanity, and in a weak moment he yielded. Daniel, nothing daunted, prays as usual to “his God,” morning, noon and night, and at the open window looking towards Jerusalem. He remembered the prophetic prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple, I. K. 8, 47-49. He followed the example of David, Ps. 55, 16-17. Verse 15, “these men assembled,”—literally, came together simultaneously, see Ps 2, 1-5. Darius repented of his rashness when it was too late. He would give anything now if he could deliver Daniel. Pilate acted in the same way when he delivered the just One to be crucified. Matt. 27:24. Yielding to the fear of man (Prov. 29:25) he sanctions the horrid deed. A stone is placed on the mouth of the den to prevent escape—sealed with the king’s signet. When Christ was buried his enemies also “sealed the stone” at the door of the sepulchre. Matt. 27:66. Verse 22, “My God hath sent his angel—the instrument, but not the author of his deliverance. Ps. 91:11 and 34:7. “Shut the lions’ mouths” Heb. 11:33—so in another sense will God silence the adversary. I. Pet. 5:8. Daniel was unhurt, “because he believed in his God.” v. 23. He was not certain of being delivered from the lions, but he was quite ready to die if his God so willed. He could say with Job, “though he slay me yet will I trust in him.” Job 13:15.

THE DEN OF LIONS.—In those days lions were plentiful, even in Palestine—though now extinct. They were taken alive in nets and kept in den—strong enclosures—at first as natural curiosities, but afterwards as instruments of royal cruelty. In Nero’s time it was a common mode of execution to condemn criminals “to the lions,” and horrid sport for the populace to witness the dreadful scene in the Coliseum.

LEARN to have a habitual place for prayer, as well as stated times. It is a foolish and wicked thing “to do evil that good may come.” “Trust in God and do the right” at all hazards.

June 16.] B. C. 555. [Daniel vii., 9-14.
MESSIAH’S KINGDOM.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; the sceptre of Thy Kingdom is a right sceptre.”—Psalm 45:6.

HOME READINGS.—M. Dan. 7, 1-14; T. Dan. 7, 15-23; W. Isa. 60, 1-22; Th. Ps. 45, 1-17; E. Ps. 72, 1-20; S. Micah 4, 1-7; S. Rev. 21, 1-27.

It accorded with the Divine method to make known future events through prophets, Heb. 1:1—ordinarily by dreams and visions, Num. 12:6—exceptions however to this rule, as in the case of Moses, to whom God spoke face to face, Num. 12:8. A dark and figurative method; but Daniel from his saintly character and discernment was peculiarly fitted to receive and discover the import of disclosures hard to be understood. He had been in a measure prepared for it by his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, Ch. 2. This vision refers to the same subject under different imagery,—namely, the *Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian and Roman empires*, represented by (1) the Lion, (2) the Bear, (3) the Leopard, (4) an unnamed beast, “dreadful and terrible.” In the former case the outward aspect of these kingdoms was symbolized by inanimate substances, gold, silver, brass, iron; in this the reference is to their moral features. Daniel’s familiarity with the colossal winged sculptures in Nineveh and Babylon would aid his interpretation of his vision. The scope and tenor of it was to announce the overthrow of the great powers then existing, as well as those which should succeed them, and to assure God’s covenant people that, however severe the conflict, the rise and fall of these nations would certainly be succeeded by the permanent establishment of the KINGDOM OF THE MESSIAH, Verse 3. “The four beasts came up from the sea,” i. e. they all, at some time, extended their borders to the Mediterranean. The emphasis falls on the fourth beast—Rome—the most terrible and longest-lived of all—ever seeking universal empire. V. 8. *The little horn*—Pope—seems to fulfil this part of the prophecy in many respects, the Pope claiming infallibility and to be above all earthly dominions. V. 9. *I beheld till*—continued looking till—thrones were cast down; rather placed, for the saints and angels to whom judgment is given, v. 22, 1 Cor. 6:2. *The ancient of days*—the Everlasting Father. V. 10. *The judgment was set*—not the last great judgment, but that on Antichrist—the last development of the fourth Kingdom, which is not yet, but which must precede the millennium. There must be a “regeneration” of the world before Christ’s Kingdom is fully developed. Matt. 19:28. V. 10. *Because of the voice of the great words*—bidding defiance to Heaven. Enoch prophesied that for this the Lord would come to judge the world, Jude 15. V. 13. *One like to the Son of Man*; Christ himself refers to this passage, John 5:27. V. 14. *He shall have UNIVERSAL dominion*, Phil 2, 9-11; also EVERLASTING. Those earthly kingdoms shall successively decay and fall, but MESSIAH’S KINGDOM shall not pass away, Ps. 145:13; 2 Peter 1:11.

LEARN that the promises of God are our encouragement to work and pray for, and to expect the coming of Christ’s Kingdom—the kingdom of grace—and our chief concern should be that ourselves and others may be brought into it and kept in it. See *Catechism*, ques. 102.