

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS.

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

B. C. 896. LESSON X. ELIJAH TRANSLATED; or, Walking with God. 2 Kings 2: 1-12. March 11.

EXPLANATORY. WHEN. Soon after Jehoram's succession. The "writing" which came to the king of Judah afterward (2 Chron. 21: 12), was doubtless written before this, and committed to the care of some disciple.

TARRY HERE. Elijah knew not yet that it was to be given any one to see his end. (Ver. 10.) He may not have designed it thus, but God made it a test of Elisha's persistence.

SONS OF THE PROPHETS. The pupils or disciples of the prophets; not necessarily their sons in a literal sense, though probably such in many cases.

JERICHO. In the Jordan valley, twelve miles north-east from Jerusalem. Destroyed by Joshua, rebuilt in the reign of Ahab, by Hiel, it was the seat of another large school of the prophets, to which Elijah was making his last visit.

ELIJAH SAID. This is the third time that he has urged Elisha to stay, and he has insisted on going with his master. It reminds us of Christ's thrice repeated question to Peter. John 21: 15-17. As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth. This double oath is very remarkable.

FIFTY MEN. A portion of the school, which must have been large, as fifty men were afterward sent in search of Elijah's body, ver. 16, 17. To view. Possibly on the high mountain behind Jericho, whence they could see the Jordan valley and the mountains beyond.

HIS MANTLE. The same in which he wrapped his face on Horeb, with which he called Elisha, (1 Kings 19: 13, 19,) and which he left him as the sign of his prophetic calling, a loose robe of sheep-skin. Whipped. Rather "rolled it up," for convenient use as a weapon to smite the waters.

ASK WHAT I SHALL DO FOR THEE. As a father wishes to leave a beloved son some special token of love, so Elijah requests him who had proved his claim to sonship to name the token. He does not say, "What shall I do when I get to heaven?" but "before I am taken." No ground for mediation of saints here. A double portion. That is, the portion of the first-born son. Not double what Elijah had, but a richer measure than that of any other son.

A HARD THING. Something not in his power to give, but which may be granted by God, with whom all things are possible. If thou see me taken. (It is better to leave out the supplied words.) This shall be a sign that your request will be granted.

WENT ON, AND TALKED. Sweet soul-communion. How like the talk with Jesus

just before his ascension. Chariot of fire, and horses of fire. It will be noticed that the words "there appeared" are not in the original. There is nothing in this text to support the common notion that Elijah rode to heaven in a chariot of fire. It is expressly said that he was taken up by a whirlwind. Went up... into heaven. The expression is the same as is used for the burning city of Gilboah. (Judges 20: 40.) The word translated "heaven" is properly the visible firmament or sky. Elijah disappeared; but, like Enoch of old, "the Lord took him," and we find him in after years coming with Moses to commune with the transfigured Christ upon the mount.

ELISHA SAW. (Omit it.) The condition was fulfilled, and he was to receive the boon he craved. My father. Not only his beloved teacher and master, but now, by this sign, he had been adopted spiritually as the first-born son, and so he cries out in the ecstasy of his assurance, "My father! my father!" The chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof; or, better, Thou chariot of Israel and horsemen thereof! The words are applied to Elijah, and are an expression of the spiritual strength and defense he had been to Israel.

THE NEW STAR.

The object of this description is to show the value of the phenomenon which has been absorbing the attention of astronomers lately. For a new star has once more blazed out in our heavens. It was discovered by Professor Schmidt, the director of the Athens Observatory, on the 24th of November last. On the 20th, the last clear evening preceding, it was certainly not in the spot in the heavens where it so soon appeared; that is, the constellation Swan. A series of cloudy nights prevented its observation, even in Paris, until December the 2nd, when the spectroscope was used to investigate the rapidly-diminishing light of this new visitor. The results are as before. Brilliant gases, intensely hot, and enveloping the whole star, are palpable, showing that, in some way, some excessively minute star has encountered in space some enormous mass of gaseous matter—an attenuated nebula, or matter in some other unknown condition, roaming through the depths of space. We may be inclined to ask, Is such a danger possible to our sun? In his wanderings through the universe, may he encounter such a cosmical cloud? If the facts are as they seem, it is evidently simply possible; but the infrequency of the occurrence of these phenomena, when taken in relation with the enormous number of bodies of the universe, as seen by us, and watched with undeviating continuity, is proof of the rarity of the catastrophe. But it is clear that we know but a small proportion of the facts, and if we knew them all, we might learn that some act of profound benevolence is proceeding among the unwonted fires of the new star. But whether with all the facts before us we could see this or not, we know enough to conclude that infinite Wisdom is working out its glorious purposes, as much among the unusual fires of a flame-enveloped star, as in the clothing of the earthly lily.—Lon. Meth. Magazine.

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