

SCHOLARS' NOTES.

(From the International Lessons for 1878, by Edwin W. Rice, as issued by American Sunday-School Union.)

LESSON XV.

APRIL 14.]

THE SCRIPTURES FOUND AND SEARCHED. [About 624 B. C.]

READ 2 Chron. 34: 14-22. RECITE vs. 20, 21.

DAILY READINGS.—M.—2 Chron. 34: 14-22. T.—2 Kings 22: 8-15. W.—Deut. 31: 24-29. Th.—Deut. 29: 21-29. F.—John 5: 39-47. Sa.—Ps. 119: 129-144. S.—Rev. 22: 14-21.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me.—John 5: 39.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—The Scriptures are to be searched and obeyed.

CONNECTED HISTORY.—The persons sent by Josiah to arrange for the repairs of the house of the Lord employed artificers, builders, and workmen who did their work faithfully. When they brought out the money from the temple, the book of the law was found.

TO THE SCHOLAR.—Observe God's special providence in preserving the book of the law through the times of apostasy, and bringing it out just when the people were ripe to receive its teachings. Before the time of the Reformation under Martin Luther, many, even of the priests, had never seen a Bible. All true reformation must be based upon the study of God's law.

NOTE.—Hul-hah, (portion of Jehovah), the high priest in Josiah's reign, 1 Chron 6: 13; 9: 11; Neh. 11: 11, probably the great-grandfather of Ezra, Ezra 7: 1. A-hi-kam, son of Shaphan, father of Gedaliah, 2 Kings 25: 22, and Gemariah, Jer. 36: 12. Ad-don... Ad-a-v-ah, 2 Kings 22: 12. Hul-dah, the prophetess, of whom nothing further is known than the statements in 2 Kings 22: 14, and 2 Chron. 34: 22. Her father, Shallum, was "keeper of the clothes," either those of the priests, which were kept in the temple, or the king's. She dwelt at Jerusalem, which may account for their visiting her instead of Jeremiah, whose home was at Anathoth, 4 miles north-east of Jerusalem. Huldah dwelt "in the college," or rather, as the margin reads, "in the second part," or district, of the city—that is, in "the lower city," the hill Aera, north-west of the old city, which had been enclosed by the wall of Manasseh. 2 Chron. 33: 14. Jewish tradition says that Huldah and Jehoiada the priest, 2 Chron. 24: 16, were the only persons not of the house of David that were ever buried in Jerusalem.

EXPLANATIONS AND QUESTIONS.

LESSON TOPICS.—(I.) THE LAW FOUND. (II.) THE LAW READ. (III.) THE LAW LEADS TO THE LORD.

I. THE LAW FOUND. (14.) HILKIAH, see Notes; A BOOK OF THE LAW, the book—i.e., the Mosaic law; GIVEN BY MOSES, some writers interpret this as meaning the original copy in the handwriting of Moses, or the copy deposited by Moses in the ark of the covenant, Deut. 31: 26. It may have been lost, or more likely secreted during the desecration of the temple by the earlier kings, 2 Chron. 27: 24, or by Manasseh, 2 Chron. 33: 4, 7. The ark had been removed from the temple, 2 Chron. 35: 3. (15.) SHAPHAN, the scribe—i.e., royal secretary, or "secretary of state." The office was important, and involved very confidential relations with the king. Scribes, as a regular class, came in about this time. 2 Chron. 34: 13. (16.) THE SERVANTS, the persons overseeing repairs on the temple. v. 8. (17.) MONEY, 2 Kings 12: 9.

I. QUESTIONS.—What book was found in the house of the Lord? By whom? His office? Where had the book first been deposited? Why so long out of sight? Form of ancient books? To whom did Hilkiah give the book? Where was it then taken? Report on the work of repairing the temple.

II. THE LAW READ. (18.) A BOOK, there is no definite article. He does not tell what book he has at first; READ IT, read in it, read a part of it. (19.) RENT HIS CLOTHES, an action used to express great grief, horror, and repentance, as Reuben, Gen. 37: 29; Job, Job 1: 20; Ahab, 1 Kings 21: 27; Jehoram, 2 Kings 6: 30.

II. QUESTIONS.—How did Shaphan make know the discovery and contents of the book to the king? Effect on the king? How did he show his feelings? What was the result of reading his clothes? Other Bible examples of the same action? Why was the king so greatly affected?

III. THE LAW LEADS TO THE LORD. (20.) HILKIAH, see Notes. (21.) ENQUIRER OF THE LORD, through some prophet: this was a very common phraseology, 1 Kings 22: 5-7; 2 Kings 3: 11; THE WRATH OF THE LORD, probably the curses were read contained in Deut. 27, 28, or Lev. 26. (22.) HULDAH, see Notes; THE PROPHETESS, women occasionally exercised the prophetic office, as Miriam, Ex. 15: 20; Deborah, Judg. 4: 4; Isaiah's wife, Is. 8: 3; Anna, Luke 2: 36.

III. QUESTIONS.—How many were commanded by the king to enquire of the Lord? State their names. What do you know about each? Why was the king's fear excited? What curses had he probably heard read? State some of them. What was Huldah's Meaning of prophecies? Other women having the like gift? Dwelling of Huldah? Question proposed to her?

What facts in this lesson teach us—

- (1.) That the law of the Lord is often lost sight of?
(2.) That the reading of it should make sinners afraid?
(3.) That we should at once enquire of the Lord as to the meaning of his Word? [The Holy Ghost now reveals to enquirers.]

(4.) That they who now neglect the Bible are "without excuse?"

ILLUSTRATIONS.—Reading the Bible. A priest in Ireland found a peasant reading the Bible, and reproved him. "But I have a warrant for reading it, your reverence." "What do you mean?" asked the priest. "Why," answered the peasant, "Jesus Christ says, 'Search the Scriptures, for you think in them to have life everlasting.'"—[Douay Bible]

Searching the Bible. An aged man who had read the Bible from his youth was persuaded to join the Sabbath-school. He said that though he had read the Bible through many times, and thought he understood it tolerably well, he found it necessary in Sabbath-school to do more than read—he had to search—the Scriptures.—Gray.

LESSON XVI.

APRIL 21.]

JEREMIAH IN PRISON. [About 590 B. C.]

READ Jer. 33: 1-9. RECITE vs. 8, 9.

DAILY READINGS.—M.—Jer. 33: 1-9. T.—Jer. 32: 26-36. W.—Rom. 7: 11-25. Th.—Zeph. 3: 8-20. F.—Isa. 26: 1-11. Sa.—Zech. 14. S.—Isa. 62.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not.—Jer. 33: 3.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—The Lord hears and pardons.

CONNECTED HISTORY.—Jeremiah was called to the prophetic office in the thirteenth year of King Josiah; announced the coming destruction of Judah; was denounced as a traitor; and when the Babylonian army besieged Jerusalem, Jeremiah was imprisoned by King Zedekiah. While thus shut up he prophesied as recorded in this lesson.

TO THE SCHOLAR.—As we are to have only three lessons in the book of Jeremiah, you will need to read as much as possible outside of the lesson. Especially try to learn the condition of Judah at this time, and its relation to the neighboring nations. See what prophets and kings were contemporary with Jeremiah.

NOTES.—Jer-e-mi-ah, son of Hilkiah; born in Anathoth, 4 miles north-east of Jerusalem; began prophesying 627 B. C.; proclaimed that Judah would be in captivity to Babylon for 70 years, after which time it would be delivered; imprisoned and threatened with death by the men of Judah; went into Egypt with the remnant left after Jerusalem was taken; was alive 570 B. C. Tradition says he was stoned to death in Egypt. Jeremiah was contemporary with five kings of Judah—viz., Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah; and with five prophets—viz., Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Daniel, Ezekiel, and probably Obadiah. Chal-de-ans, the inhabitants of Chaldea, on the Euphrates and the Tigris Rivers. They were descendants of Cush. After 625 B. C. all Babylonia was included in "the land of the Chaldeans."

EXPLANATIONS AND QUESTIONS.

LESSON TOPICS.—(I.) GOD REVEALS "HIDDEN THINGS." (II.) PROMISES A RETURN FROM CAPTIVITY. (III.) PROMISES PARDON AND PROSPERITY.

I. GOD REVEALS "HIDDEN THINGS." (1.) JEREMIAH, see Notes; THE SECOND TIME, for the first time, see 32: 6, 8; YET SHUT UP, by King Zedekiah, 32: 3; compare Paul's experience, 2 Tim. 2: 9. (2.) THE MAKER THEREOF—i.e., the doer of that which he is now to reveal; i.e., "whatsoever Jehovah wills" [Speaker's Com.], the city of Jerusalem (Fausset and Calvin); HIS NAME, Jehovah, "I am that I am." Ex. 3: 14. (3.) CALL UNTO ME, in prayer; he had already prayed and received answer, 32: 16-25, 36-44; compare Ps. 91: 15; MIGHTY THINGS, "hidden things," as in the margin, Is. 48: 6; comp. Dan. 2: 28, 47; 1 Pet. 1: 10-12. (4.) THE MOUNDS, the mounds or earthworks of the besieging enemy. (5.) THEY, the Jews, defenders of the houses; THEM, the houses; DEAD BODIES, their own, slain by famine, pestilence and sword.

I. QUESTIONS.—The prophet Jeremiah? His birthplace? Date? Mission? Life? Where shut up? By whom? Why? Meaning of the name Lord? [Jehovah.] Jeremiah's former prayers? Their answer? What would God reveal? Word concerning the houses? How destroyed? Fate of those opposing the Chaldeans? By whose will slain? Why?

II. PROMISE: A RETURN FROM CAPTIVITY. (6.) IT, the city. (7.) CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH, in Babylon, for 70 years, as predicted; CAPTIVITY OF ISRAEL, in Assyria, beginning in 721 B.C., when Samaria was taken. Judah and Israel are used together to denote the whole covenant people.

II. QUESTIONS.—What would Jehovah bring to the city? What royal to its inhabitants? The promise as to the captivity? How long did the captivity of Judah continue? Among what people? Name the two Bible books in which you can find a history showing, in part, the fulfillment of this prophecy. [Ezra and Nehemiah.] When did the captivity of Israel begin? Where was it? Promise to the covenant Israel?

III. PROMISE: PARDON AND PROSPERITY. (8.) WILL CLEANSE THEM, comp. Zech. 13: 1; Ezek. 36: 25; 1 John 1: 7; Heb. 9: 13, 14. (9.) IT, the city, as in v. 6; THEY, the nations, as opposed to Israel; as opposed to the people of God. For the rejoicing of Israel see Ezra 3: 11.

III. QUESTIONS.—From what would God cleanse them? What pardon? Repeat verses from Zechariah, Ezekiel, 1 John, and Hebrews showing how God pardons sin. What is the hope and ground of our pardon? How shall the nations regard Jerusalem? What are we thus taught as to the final triumph of God's people?

What facts in this lesson teach us—

- (1.) That God's promises ought not to slacken, but to quicken, our prayers?

- (2.) That God judges nations in this world?
(3.) That even in wrath God has purposes of mercy?
(4.) That the Church will surely triumph over the world?

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE.

THE WORLD GIVES WEAKNESS, DISTRESS, DESTRUCTION, DEATH, CAPTIVITY. THE LORD GIVES HEALTH, PEACE, PARDON, PROSPERITY, FREEDOM. WHICH WILL YOU CHOOSE?

LESSON XVII.

APRIL 28.]

THE RECHABITES. [About 605 B.C.]

READ Jer. 35: 12-19. RECITE vs. 18, 19.

DAILY READINGS.—M.—Jer. 35: 12-19. T.—Jer. 35: 1-11. W.—Heb. 12: 23-29. Th.—Neh. 9: 35-35. F.—Isa. 51: 12-23. Sa.—Prov. 1: 24-33. S.—Mal. 1: 6-14.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the Lord.—Jeremiah 35: 13.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—God will reward obedience.

CONNECTED HISTORY.—The events of this lesson took place several years before those in the last lesson. The Rechabites fled to Jerusalem for safety from the advancing armies and plundering bands, when Nebuchadnezzar, after having defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish, on the Euphrates, B.C. 605, advanced against Jerusalem in the reign of Jehoiakim.

TO THE SCHOLAR.—Mark the blessing which God gave to the Rechabites for their obedience to a father's command. Strive for yourselves to gain the blessing which comes to those who obey the earthly, and still more to those who obey the heavenly, Father.

NOTES.—Jon-a-dab (whom Jehovah impels), called Jehonadab in 2 Kings 10: 15, son of Rechab and the founder and lawgiver of the Rechabites. Re-chabites, a branch of the tribe of Kenites which sprung from Hobab, the brother-in-law of Moses, Num. 10: 29; migrated with the Israelites from the desert to Canaan, and there continued their nomad life. Judg. 1: 16; 4: 11; 1 Sam. 15: 6. In order to keep them from the vices of settled life, Jonadab laid down rules for descendants. They were not to build houses, to sow seed, to plant vineyards, or to drink wine. They had observed these rules for 300 years when Jeremiah used them as an example against Israel. A tribe has been found in the desert of Arabia, near Mecca, which claims its descent from Hobab, and has been supposed to represent the Rechabites.

EXPLANATIONS AND QUESTIONS.

LESSON TOPICS.—(I.) THE RECHABITES AN EXAMPLE OF OBEDIENCE. (II.) PUNISHMENT OF JUDAH'S DISOBEDIENCE. (III.) PROMISED REWARD OF OBEDIENCE.

I. THE RECHABITES AN EXAMPLE OF OBEDIENCE.—[Their principles and conduct should be studied in the first part of the chapter.] (13.) TELL, say so. (14.) JONADAB, see Notes; UNTO THIS DAY, a period of 300 years, over since the time of Jehu, 2 Kings 10: 15; THEIR FATHERS, forefathers, the founders of their institutions. The force of the argument is, They obey their earthly ancestor, long ago dead; you do not obey your Heavenly Father, the living God. Compare Mal. 1: 6.

I. QUESTIONS.—Describe the circumstances under which the Rechabites were invited to drink wine. Their refusal. Reason of their total abstinence principles and practice. How long had they persevered in their ways? The founder of the order? His association with Jehu? Jeremiah's word to Judah? Use of the Rechabites as an example?

II. PUNISHMENT OF JUDAH'S DISOBEDIENCE. (15.) THE PROPHETS, before this time there had been prophecies from Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Joel, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, as well as from Jeremiah; RISING UP EARLY, a proverbial expression, equivalent to speaking "zealously and earnestly," used frequently by Jeremiah (see Jer. 7: 13; 25: 3, 4; 26: 5; 29: 19; 35: 14, 15; 44: 4), and implying the unwearied endeavor of Jehovah to reach his people. (17.) I HAVE PUNISHED AGAINST THEM, by the prophets above mentioned; THEY HAVE NOT ANSWERED, Prov. 1: 24-33; Is. 65: 12.

II. QUESTIONS.—How had God warned them? Give the names of the prophets who had lived before this time? Force of "rising up early"? Other places in which Jeremiah uses similar words? The promise held out if they would return? v. 15. Contrast of the people of Judah with the Rechabites? Judgments threatened? On what ground? Danger of those who will not hearken unto God's call?

III. PROMISED REWARD OF OBEDIENCE. (18.) HOUSE OF THE RECHABITES, family of the Rechabites; they did not dwell in houses. (19.) TO STAND BEFORE ME FOR EVER, may mean, (1) to minister before Jehovah—i.e., to worship him, never serving any other God; (2) never to cease to exist as a tribe, but to continue in God's sight for ever; (3) "to stand before the Lord" in the official sense, as did members of the tribe of Levi. Deut. 10: 8; 18: 5, 7. Some have inferred that the Rechabites were incorporated into the tribe of Levi, but this is doubtful.

III. QUESTIONS.—The ground of God's blessing upon the Rechabites? The promise made to them? Meaning of it? Its fulfillment? Repeat the fifth commandment. The promise in it? How may we obtain the blessing of obedience? Are you striving for it?

What may we learn from this lesson as to—

- (1.) The influence of fathers in securing temperance among their descendants?

- (2.) The honor due to God, since we acknowledge so much as due to fathers?
(3.) The certain punishment of wilful disobedience?

(4.) The enduring nature of God's blessings?

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE.

GOD WILL PUNISH DISOBEDIENCE. AND REWARD OBEDIENCE.

COMPLIMENTARY.

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