

rescue them? If they had known, would it have required great courage and piety to do what they did?

III. WHAT MEN DID TO THEM (vs. 19-23).—How did the king feel about their refusal? Why? What did he do to the men? What kind of a furnace was this? Why was it heated so hot? What showed the greatness of the heat? Why are their garments mentioned?

IV. WHAT GOD DID FOR THEM (vs. 24-28).—What three wonders did the king see while looking at the fiery furnace? What was the fourth person like? Who was it? Why made thus visible? What did the king then do? What shows how unharmed they were? What was the effect of all this on the king? Did these three men know that God would release them? Would or should this have made any difference as to their conduct? (vs. 17, 18.)

LESSONS FROM THE MEN IN THE FIRE.

1. By faithfulness in early life these men were prepared for greater trials and greater victories.
2. The trial of our faith strengthens our character.
3. The trial of our faith manifests God's power and love to others.
4. The world expects us to bow before the golden images of wealth, success, pleasure, lax religion, and easy morals.
5. Its fiery furnace is persecution, unpopularity, ridicule, social ostracism.
6. True religious principle will do right regardless of consequences.
7. God saves his children either from trouble or in trouble. He delivers them out of it, or makes it minister to their good and the good of their cause.

REVIEW EXERCISE.

6. What did Nebuchadnezzar do near the middle of his reign? *ANS.* He set up a great golden image near Babylon. 7. Who refused to worship it? *ANS.* The three companions of Daniel. 8. What did they say to the king? *ANS.* (Repeat vs. 17, 18.) 9. What was done to them? *ANS.* They were cast into a burning fiery furnace. 10. What did the king soon see? *ANS.* (Repeat v. 25.)

B.C. 538] LESSON VII. [Feb. 14.

THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL.

Dan. 5. 1-12, 25-28. *Commit vs. 3-6.*

GOLDEN TEXT.

Thou art weighed in the balance and art found wanting.—Dan. 5. 27.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

Sin offends God and works the ruin of the sinner.

DAILY READINGS.

M. Dan. 4. 1-18. Tu. Dan. 4. 19-37. W. Dan. 5. 1-16 Th. Dan. 5. 17-31. F. Isa. 13. 1-22. Sa. Isa. 45. 1-13. Su. Jer. 51. 47-51.

TIME.—B.C. 538. Almost 50 years after the last lesson.

PLACE.—Babylon.

DANIEL.—Now about 80 years old. For more than 60 years he mentions but one incident of his life, that of interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream. He was now in some official position (Dan. 8. 27), but probably a subordinate or retired one.

BELSHAZZAR, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar through his mother. He was associated with his father as king. He was probably 16 or 17 years old. His father, having attacked Cyrus who was besieging Babylon, was defeated, and was kept from returning to the city by the besieging army. So that Belshazzar was the only king now in Babylon.

THE CIRCUMSTANCE.—Cyrus had been besieging the city for two years. But the walls were strong. There was food enough in the city to last 20 years. The citizens felt safe. An annual festival to some idol now occurred, and king and people engaged in a great revel.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.—*Drank wine*—It was the excitement of strong drink that led the king to the sin and to ruin. 2. *Golden vessels out of the temple*—Taken by Nebuchadnezzar, B.C. 604 and 586, 68 and 48 years before. *Drank in them*—Thus profaning them. He insulted God by using them in a revel, and in a feast to idols, see vs. 22, 23. *Fingers*—The fingers that

held the pen, with no arm or person to move them, showed that it was supernatural. *Over against the wall*—That stood on the king's table, so as to be seen in the brightest light. 7. *Chaldeans*—A priest class of wise men. *Third ruler*—i.e. Next to the king, who was second, his father being first. 8. *Could not read the writing*—So as to understand what was meant. The words were familiar enough. 10. *Queen*—The mother, not the wife of Belshazzar. She remembered Daniel in her father's days. 25. *Mene—Lusee* are Aramic (i.e., the Hebrew of the time of Christ) words. 28. *Mene—Lusee*, Numbered, the last number of its years counted. And Daniel applied it to the king. 27. *Bel—Lusee*, Weighed. 28. *Peres*—Divided, broken to pieces. This is the singular, of which *Chaphars* is the plural. *Peres* is the same word.

Even while this was going on, the army of Cyrus had entered the city, by drawing off the water of the river Euphrates, which ran through the city. His army marched up the river-bed, and entered by the brazen gates, which in their revels the guards had left open. See Jer. 51. 30-32, 53-58.

SUBJECTS FOR SPECIAL REPORTS.—Intervening history.—Daniel.—Belshazzar.—The circumstances.—The feast.—The handwriting on the wall.—Its interpretation.—The fall of Babylon.—The Bible confirmed by the monuments.

QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTORY.—How many years between the events of this lesson and the last? What event in Daniel's life during this time is recorded? How old was Daniel at this time? How long before Christ was the capture of Babylon?

SUBJECT: SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

I. THE SIN (vs. 1-4).—Who was now besieging Babylon? Who was king in Babylon. How old was he? What great feast did he hold? Who attended it? What did he do when under the influence of wine? What was the wickedness in this? When had these golden vessels been taken from the temple? (2 Kings 24. 10-13; 25. 8, 13-15.) With what sins does Daniel charge him? (Dan. 5. 18-23.) How many sins do you find in these accounts as committed by Belshazzar? In what ways do young people treat sacred things with irreverence?

II. THE WARNING (vs. 5-9).—What appeared during these revels? What made it seem supernatural? On what part of the wall were the words written? How did this affect the king? Why did it trouble him? What did the king offer to the person who should tell him what the writing meant? Why are sinners troubled by anything that manifests God's mysterious power.

III. THE PUNISHMENT (vs. 10-12, 25-28).—Who told the king where to learn what he wished? What description is here given of Daniel? Where had he shown his wisdom? What were the words? What did they mean? Did it require courage in Daniel to say these things? When and how were his words fulfilled? How did his drunken revelry help to bring the punishment? What warnings does God give us against our sins? In what balances are we weighed? When are we found wanting? How do our sins help to bring their own punishment?

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

1. Intemperance leads to many other sins.
2. The king was guilty of intemperance, idolatry, profanity, irreverence, pride, carelessness, godlessness.
3. Irreverence in the house of God is a great sin.
4. God warns us by conscience, by his Word, by his providence, by his Holy Spirit.
5. God weighs our characters, our actions, our motives, our intentions.
6. We are weighed when we are tested by temptation, by opportunities to do good, by the Bible.
7. Sin helps to bring its own punishment as we see in the case of intemperance.

REVIEW EXERCISE.

11. What did king Belshazzar do at a feast? *ANS.* He profaned the sacred utensils of the temple. 12. What led him to do this? *ANS.* He had been drinking wine. 13. What warning did God send? *ANS.* The fingers of a hand writing his doom upon the wall. 14. What did the words mean? *ANS.* (Repeat vs. 26-28.) 15. How was his doom fulfilled? *ANS.* That night the Medes and Persians captured the city, and the king was slain.

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