

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS.

FIRST QUARTER.—STUDIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

B. C. 434. LESSON VI. THE KEEPING OF THE SABBATH; or, The Holy Day. Feb. 9.

EXPLANATORY.

Verse 15. In those days: During Nehemiah's second visit to Jerusalem, which has been variously dated B. C. 428, 425, and 425. As we cannot tell how long he was absent at Susa, whether several months or several years, the precise date cannot be fixed. Saw I. His knowledge and consequent action was based, not on report, but on his own actual observation.

Treading wine presses. Ancient wine presses were generally constructed in pairs, one higher, in which the grapes were trodden by feet, the other lower, into which the expressed juice ran. Sometimes they were hewn out of rock, in the side of a hill. These were probably near Jerusalem, perhaps on the sunny slopes of the Mount of Olivets, where Nehemiah could have observed them from the wall. On the Sabbath. This was in direct violation of the ancient law (Exod. 29, 8, 11), as well as of the recent covenant (chap. 10.) 1. "So soon do people forget God's command and their own promises when blinded by their own selfish interest."

There was a strong pressure upon the Jews in the direction of Sabbath desecration, from the fact that none of the surrounding nations observed the holy day. 2. "But God's people should be the leaders and not the followers of custom." They should impress their habits on others, and not follow the current of worldliness around them. Bringing in sheaves. Perhaps for use or for sale, but more likely for threshing, as it is common in the East for farmers to live within the walls of the city, and go forth to their fields by day, bringing home their harvests and threshing them inside the walls for protection against robbers. They might have plead the necessities of the harvest season as their excuse for this violation of the Sabbath, but it was expressly commanded (Exod. 34, 21) that even "in earing time and harvest shalt thou rest." 3. "God's people must not allow worldly interests to interfere with the sacredness of his day."

Testified against them. Nehemiah might have left unnoticed these desecrations of the Sabbath, or might have contented himself with a general statement of the law on the subject, but he felt it his duty to administer personal and direct rebuke and remonstrance. 4. "The servant of God must not only keep the law himself, but must urge its authority upon others, and bear his testimony against their sins."

16. Men of Tyre. A city on the sea-coast, north of Mount Carmel, whose people had always retained close relations, generally friendly, with the Israelites. They were idolaters, and their influence was ever toward laxity of worship and immorality of manners. They were the merchants and mariners of the ancient world, trading in all parts of the Mediterranean. A permanent colony of Tyrians had become established in Jerusalem for commercial purposes, which was affecting the whole city with its irreligious influence. 4. "Note the danger which always comes to God's church from intercourse with the world."

17, 18. Contended with the nobles. For not discouraging the sin. 6. "Every man is responsible for just as much evil in the community as he does not oppose." 7. "The rank, wealth, social position and office of a man, as they add greatly to his influence, increase, also, his responsibility." Nehemiah did not fear to deal with sin or with the sanctioning of sin in high places. 8. "In rebuking iniquity we should begin with the highest guilty ones rather than the lowest." Ye do. Though they had not done it in person, they are held guilty as consenting to it. Did not your fathers thus? One of the greatest crimes in Israel was the neglect of the Sabbath. There is scarcely an allusion to the day in the history or prophecy but refers to its violation by the people in general. This was a crime, 1. Against God, who commanded it. 2. Against society, which becomes demoralized and iniquitous without its elevating influence. 3. Against the body, which needs it for rest from toil. 4. Against the soul, which requires it for religious advancement. God bring all this evil. 8. "Sin is not unnoticed, nor unrewarded by the Most High." 10. "A land is sure to suffer whose inhabitants disregard God's law." 11. "May not our land have cause to dread God's wrath and punishment while the Sabbath is so generally profaned?"

19. Began to be dark. At sunset on Friday afternoon, when the Sabbath was

reckoned as beginning. Gates should be shut. Thus putting a stop to the traffic which wadric car on at the open places near the gates. 12. "While crime receives sharp rebuke, it should also meet with measures for prevention." Some of my servants. From among his own followers, men whom he knew, and on whom he could rely. 13. "God's work needs tried and trusty workers." Set I at the gates. Though the gates were kept shut against traffic, ingress and egress were not absolutely forbidden, as a certain amount of travel must have been necessary even on the Sabbath, especially since the people in the vicinity attended the worship in the temple. No burden be brought. When the gates were opened to allow the entrance of worshippers. 14. "Even the service of God's house may be made the opportunity for violating God's law."

20, 21. Lodged without. Not merely that they might be ready for trade on the following day, but also keeping a market through the Sabbath day outside the wall, and selling to dwellers in the vicinity, as well as those who passed through the gates within. 15. "The world is very eager and active for its own gains: would that the church displayed as much energy for the salvation of sinners!" I will lay hands on you. A warning of severe measures, the strong hand of the law, of which Nehemiah was the executive. 16. "When moral suasion fails, legal suasion must be tried." 17. "Those who persist in defying God's law and man's law, like Sabbath breakers and rum-sellers, must meet with stern and determined dealing." Come they no more. They found themselves confronted by a reformer who showed not only spirit but persistence, and they yielded. 18. "Vice is always cowardly when rulers are willing to do their duty."

22. Levites. As the tribe to which religious matters specially belonged, and which carried with it an especial influence from its sanctity. Cleanse themselves. Thus making the guarding of the gates and the enforcement of the Sabbath laws not a secular but a sacred matter, requiring special consecration, as for a holy service. Remember me. "Not a prayer of self-glorification, but of faith in God's truth."—Crosby. Thy mercy. We find him asking not to be honored, but to be spared, and appealing not to his own good deeds, but to the divine mercy. 19. "The best of men can look to the infinite mercy of God for hope."

GOLDEN TEXT: Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Exod. 20, 8. DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION: The sanctity of the Sabbath. The next lesson is Psa. 1, 1-6.

JOYFUL NEWS FOR THE AFFLICTED.

PORT GEORGE, Annapolis Co., N.S., June 12th, 1878. Messrs. C. Gates, Son & Co.—Gentlemen In the Autumn of 1877, my little boy, about two years old, was in very ill health on account of worms, which destroyed his appetite, and made him peevish and poor. The strongest symptoms of the disease being starting out of a sound sleep and crying loudly. I had never previously used your medicines for any complaint to which children are subject, but concluded to try them in this case. I administered your No. 1 Syrup according to directions with amazing results. One symptom after another speedily disappeared before it, (it carried off worms four or five inches long,) and when only two bottles had been taken a perfect cure was effected.

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Yours with gratitude, ISAAC B. SPINNEY. Sworn to at Wilmot, before me, the undersigned, June 13th, 1878.

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nds of years? Gen. 12: 8, and chapter 17. When God made the covenant with Abraham by circumcision, at the same time made the covenant with him regarding all nations to the end of time, which looked beyond the first part of the covenant to the second, and the covenant had respect to the children under both parts; hence to have the children baptized under the second part, would become the duty of the parents, as it was the duty of the parents to attend to circumcision under the first part. The possibility of placing children in covenant relation to God is here put beyond doubt, first by the terms of the old covenant, and, second, by the ordinance under the new; that the children were by no means to be left out under either part.

A QUAKER'S LETTER TO HIS WATCHMAKER.

"I herewith send thee my pocket-watch, which standeth in need of thy friendly correction. The last time it was at thy friendly school it was in no way reformed, nor in the least benefited thereby, for I perceive by the index of his mind that he is a liar, and the truth is not in him, that his pulse sometimes slow, which betokeneth an even temper. At other times waxeth sluggish, notwithstanding I frequently urge him when he should be on his duty, as thou knowest his and denoteth. I find him slumbering, or, as the variety of human reason phrases it, I caught him napping. Examine him, therefore, and prove him beseech thee, thoroughly, that thou mayest, being well acquainted with his inward frame and disposition, draw him from the errors of his way, and show him the path wherein he should go. It grieves me to think and when I ponder there in I am verily of the opinion that his body his foul, and that the whole mass is corrupted. Cleanse him, therefore, with thy charming physic, from all pollution, that he may vibrate and circulate according to the truth. I will place him for a few days under thy care and pay for his board as though he were a stranger. I entreat thee, friend John, to demean thyself on this occasion with judgment, according to the gift which is in thee, and prove thyself a workman, and when thou layest thy correcting hand upon him, let it be without passion, lest thou shouldst drive him to destruction. Do thou regulate his motion of the light that ruleth the day, and when thou findest him converted from the error of his ways, and move conformable to the above mentioned rules, then thou send him home with a just bill of the charges drawn out it the spirit of moderation and it shall be sent thee in the root of all evil."

THE WIFE'S SECRET.

"I will tell you the secret of our happy married life," said a gentleman of three score and ten. "We have been married forty years; my bride was the belle of New York when I married her, and though I loved her for herself, still, a beautiful flower is all the lovelier poised in an exquisite vase. My wife knew this, and true to her genuine refinement has never, in all these forty years, appeared at the table or allowed her to see me less carefully dressed than during the days of our honeymoon. Some might call this foolish vanity; I call it real womanliness. I presume I should not have ceased to love her had she followed the example of many others, and, considering the every-day life of home necessarily devoid of beauty allowed herself to be careless of such small matters as dressing for her husband's eye; but love is increased when we are proud of the object loved, and to-day I am more proud of my beautiful wife, with her silver hair and beautiful face, than of the bride whose loveliness was the theme of every tongue. Any young lady can win a lover; how few can keep them such after years of married life."

In all the little courtesies of life; in all that makes one attractive and charming, in thoughtfulness of others and forgetfulness of self, every home should be begun and continued. Men should be more careful to sympathize and protect the wife than the bride—more willing to pick up her scissors, hand her the paper, or carry her packages than if she were a young lady; and as no lady would for a moment think of controlling the movements and engagements of a young gentleman, neither should she do so when he is her husband. If by making herself bright and attractive she fails to hold him, compulsion will only drive him farther from her. I do not believe it possible to retain the friendship of any one by demanding it. I do not believe it possible to lose it by being lovable.—Alliance.