

Notes on the Bible Lessons

FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS, ON
THE INSTITUTE LEAFLETS.

Published under authority of the Sunday School Committee of the Toronto Diocese.

Compiled from W. S. Smith's work on Genesis and other writers.

JUNE 7th, 1885.

VOL. IV.

1st Sunday after Trinity.

No. 28

BIBLE LESSON.

"Mysterious Visitors."—Genesis xviii. 1, 10.

Having had a special lesson last Sunday on the subject of the Holy Trinity, we resume our regular series to-day. This is one of the lessons appointed by our Church for Trinity Sunday. The appearance of the Lord was for the purpose of renewing the promise of Israel's birth, (ch. xxi. 19,) to stir up Sarah's sensibilities, and to make a special communication about the judgment which the Lord was about to bring on the guilty cities of the plain.

(1) *The unexpected Guests.* Our lesson opens with the Patriarch Abraham sitting in the shade of his tent, one very hot day. It was probably pitched under a close by one of the oak trees at Mamre. The heat of the day was the usual time for rest or sleep in this hot country. Hospitality or kindness to strangers was and still is a distinguishing characteristic in the East.

Suddenly Abraham becomes aware of the presence of three men or three Angels in the form of men. He does not seem to know at first that they were God's messengers to him, but this makes no difference; he hastens with great respect to invite them to rest and refresh themselves, verse 4. Where sandals were worn this was one of the kindest acts to a stranger, see ch. xix. 2; xliii. 24; Jude xix. 21; 1 Tim. v. 10; St. John xiii. 5. They agree to his proposal, and he hastens to provide the best he had to give, verse 8, ministering to them with his own hands. And he was richly rewarded for his hospitality; for who were his visitors? Although he knew it not at the time, one was the Lord Himself; the other two were angels. He who then appeared as a stranger was He who shall say at the last day, "I was a stranger and ye took me in," St. Matt. xxv. 35, see also what St. Paul says, 1 Tim. vi. 18; Heb. xiii. 2. So often blessings come to us unawares if we are fulfilling our duties "heartily as unto the Lord."

(2) *The Positive Promise.* After the meal under the tree was over, a question was asked which must have made Abraham wonder, verse 9. The speaker showed that He knew them, though He seemed to be a stranger. The mention of the changed name of Sarah must have reminded Abraham of the promise given in ch. xvii. 16, and now "the word of promise," (Rom. ix. 9,) is renewed that Sarah shall have a son in about a year's time. Sarah from her tent hears, and laughs in her heart, as if it could not possibly be true, but the Lord Jehovah who was conversing with Abraham, verse 13, showed His knowledge of the secrets of the heart, and repeats the promise, verse 14, and rebukes Sarah's doubt by the question "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" compare Job xlii. 2; Jer. xxxii. 17; St. Matt. xix. 26; St. Luke i. 37. That this rebuke stirred her into a more humble, and therefore more trustful condition of mind we may gather from Heb. xi. 2, where she is mentioned as an Old Testament example of "faith."

(3) *The secret revealed.* The two angels having gone on their way, the Lord Jehovah staid still with Abraham, verses 16 and 22. He had something to tell him, about the dreadful punishment He was about to send on Sodom and Gomorrah, verses 17 and 20, for their obstinate sin. This was to be a warning for Abraham, and all who belonged to him, so that they should continue to be faithful and obedient. But why was Abraham so highly privileged in thus being made a "depository" of God's truth? verse 19, compare Psalm xxv. 14. God knew Abraham and acknowledged him for His own, "I know him," see Nahum i. 7; 2 Tim. ii. 19; 1 Cor. viii. 3. He therefore treats him as a friend, St. James ii. 23; St. John xv. 14, 15;

Isaiah xli. 8. Let us observe too Abraham's character. In verse 19, is summed up (a) family religion, compare Joshua xxiv. 15; Deut. vi. 7. (b) Spiritual religion, "They shall keep the way of the Lord," compare Hosea xii. 6; St. John xiv. 15; 1 John v. 2. (c) Practical religion, "To do justice and judgment," compare Lev. xxiv. 22; Eccles. xii. 13; St. James i. 27; Rom. xii. 1. Let us then endeavour to "walk before the Lord," and to be "perfect." So shall we have the great honor of being counted as His friends, St. John xv. 14, 15.

THE RED INDIAN'S BAPTISM.

There is a school in America, called Hampton College, where young Red Indians are collected for the purpose of educating and christianizing them.

A party of Arizona Indians arrived at the college in February, 1880—a young scout, called Savarps, amongst them. He went through the usual course of instruction, but after a time his health began to fail, and his weakness increased so rapidly, that all hope was relinquished of his being able to return to his home.

Happily, the poor Indian had by this time learned that there was a better home in store for the followers of the Christian's God; and now the dying scout's one anxiety was to be allowed to enter the fold by the door of Holy Baptism.

Autumn leaves were falling, when one day the poor lad lay waiting for the clergyman—his eyes anxiously turned towards the window of his room. He had been wandering in his mind, at intervals, all through the day, but the friend attending on him—Antonito, the son of his chief—could always call back the sick lad's thoughts by speaking to him in his native tongue.

At last, when daylight failed, the desired visitor entered—Mr. Gravatt, rector of St. John's Church, Hampton.

Antonito gently leaned over his friend, and told him who was there. Savarps at once opened his eyes, and tried to sit up, saying firmly, "I want to go to church."

It was no sudden flash of desire on the part of a dying man; only the time was short for the consummation of his long felt wish, and he knew it.

Mr. Gravatt knew it too, and would not delay.

The description of that baptism of the dying Indian comes to us, told by one who was present.

The once fleet and hardy scout—wasted to a shadow, with the death camp on his forehead—lay in his reclining chair, his dusky skin and jet black hair in strong relief against the pillow. Mr. Gravatt gently explained to him once again the meaning of the ordinance. Antonito crouched on the floor at his feet—intensely eager that no idea or word from either side should be lost.

And so water was brought, that the new disciple might be baptized; and the words were said, and the cross signed on his brow.

Then the poor Indian was at peace. "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved"—the risen Jesus had said in the Gospel to which he had so gladly listened; and in all simplicity he had believed, and now was baptized. What more did he need?

The hours went slowly by, that autumn night. Death stood within the threshold, but no one was afraid.

Now and again, the solemn silence was broken by the feeble voice of the newly baptized. He was glad at heart in the midst of his suffering and dying, and he must tell out his gladness to his friends. At midnight the voice ceased. The faithful soldier and servant of Christ had reached his life's end; had entered into the joy of his Lord.

Savarps was buried in the Hampton Cemetery—the students all attending, together with the school battalion. Just at sunset, the bugler stepped from the uncovered crowd, and on the mound formed by the earth of the newly-made grave, blew the farewell call—the long good night.

"For a space the tired body,
Lies with feet towards the dawn,
Till there breaks the last and brightest
Easter morn."

HINTS TO HOUSEKEEPERS.

A CORN CURE, recommended by Dr. Gezon, is as follows: R.—Salicylic acid, 80 parts; extracts of cannabis indica, 5 parts; collodion, 240 parts. The collodion fixes the acid to the part and protects it from friction; the cannabis indica acts as an anodyne, and the acid reduces and loosens the corn so that it comes off in four or five days. The remedy is applied with a camel's-hair pencil, and if the corn is not well cured, the application may be repeated. In four or five days the patient should use a warm foot-bath and rub off the collodion. If any portion of the corn remains, the acid should be applied again, and the treatment continue until the whole of the corn has disappeared.

An embroidered tea-cloth is a *sine qua non*, as many folks think. It may be either embroidered all over in a set pattern or merely bordered with crewel-work. Yellow jasmine or pink convolvulus is suitable for the latter purpose; they give sufficient color without contrasting too strongly with the white ground. Vivid colors are objectionable, as the china generally affords all that is necessary; and we must study to have our cloth decorations harmonize with our cups and saucers, so that we may secure a good tone of color throughout. On entering a room the tea-table, although it does not as formerly occupy the centre of the floor, is yet an object that invites attention, and we shall not be throwing away our time if we make it as attractive we possibly can.

TABLE-COVERS AND SCARVES.—It seems that the fashion for table-covers and scarves is not waning, for they are continually being made, and new devices are employed in their decoration. A pretty one was recently made of dark cardinal satteen, lined with yellow; on each end is a broad band of plush or velvet in the same color, but of a deeper shade; it is finished on each end with tassels, and above the band is a vine in delicate Kensington needle-work; and, by the way, to do one piece of this needle-work well is more satisfactory than to do half a dozen in Kensington painting. This is so easily done that a great many women take one lesson, and then go on "daubing," and fancy that they are really artistic in it. Another table scarf is of felt, and is cut into points all around. The ends have three deep points on each; between the points a tassel is hung. A few inches above the points on each end a scroll of velvet is applied, and the edge of the velvet is out-lined with gilt braid or fine cord. Another, of felt, has a bouquet of autumn leaves in velvet applied, and the ends of the felt are slashed to make the fringe. Yellow satteen makes elegant table scarves, and with broad bands of crimson plush and deep embroidery in various colors above the band, it is toned down so that there is nothing glaring or too pronounced about it.

BRIEF NOTES.

See that you do honor to the aged. Smooth the way for that mother's feet; they have not many more steps to take. Steady those tottering limbs; they will soon be at rest. Plough not up that face with any more wrinkles; troubles and care have already marked it enough. Thrust no thorn into that aged heart; it will soon cease to beat. "The eye that mocketh its father and refuses to obey its mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it."

Never think yourself safe because you do your duty in ninety-nine points; it is the hundredth which is to be the ground of your trial.

Death is very different to what many people think it is. I saw a beautiful angel wandering up and down the earth. He touched the aged, and they became young. He touched the poor, and they became rich. He touched the sorrowful, and their faces became radiant with joy. I said, "Who is this beautiful being wandering up and down the earth?" They told me his name was Death.