



LESSON.—FEBRUARY 24, 1907

## God's Covenant With Abraham.

Gen. xv., 1, 4-16. Memory verses, 5, 6. Read Gen. 15-17.

### Golden Text.

He believed in the Lord; and he counted it to Him for righteousness. Gen. xv., 6.

### Home Readings.

Monday, Feb. 18.—Gen. xv., 1-16.  
 Tuesday, Feb. 19.—Gen. xvii., 1-22.  
 Wednesday, Feb. 20.—Ex. vi, 1-13.  
 Thursday, Feb. 21.—Num. xxiv., 3-19.  
 Friday, Feb. 22.—Ps. cv., 1-15.  
 Saturday, Feb. 23.—Rom. iv., (1-18).  
 Sunday, Feb. 24.—Heb. viii., 1-13.

(For the Junior Classes.)

Who knows what a promise is? Of course you all do, but can anyone describe it? Suppose I handed this book to you, Fred, and said, 'Here, Fred, is a hymn book for you.' Would that be a promise? Well, if I said instead, 'I will give it to you next Sunday,' that would be a promise, and Fred would expect to get it. We have to trust a great many promises in this world. This, for instance (showing a dollar bill). How much is this worth? You all say 'a dollar,' but it really is not. It is only a piece of paper worth almost nothing in itself, then why do you say it is worth a dollar? It's the promise on it. 'The Dominion of Canada will pay to bearer the sum of One Dollar,' it says, and there isn't one of you here but will believe it and be quite as well satisfied if I give you this promise as you would if it were real gold. Here's a twig I broke off a tree outside. What are all these little lumps on it? Leaves, you say, or buds that would have leaves if they had remained on the tree. Are you perfectly sure? Yes, there isn't a doubt in anyone's mind about that. All these little brown lumps on the trees are going to grow out into beautiful broad green leaves, but they are only promises now. These are some of God's promises, and there are very many such promises about us on all sides if we only had time to speak about them. We want to-day to speak about a special kind of promise that is mentioned in the name of our lesson to-day, a covenant. You all know well what 'a promise' is, now let us think awhile about 'a covenant.' Robbie, your elder brother Jack knows a good deal more about arithmetic than you do. Suppose he should say, 'Well, Rob, I'm gong to help you with your arithmetic every night,' that would be 'a promise' worth having, but instead of this he might say, 'Look here, Rob, I'll help you with your arithmetic every night if you'll carry in the wood for the kitchen stove'—Rob would think awhile and then if he agreed that would be 'a covenant.' You see it takes one person to make a promise, but when two people promise each other something, that we call a covenant. We have been studying about Abraham, a man of whom, as our Golden Text reads, it is said that 'he believed God.' Connect this lesson with the others by telling of God's promises to Abraham and how he trusted God's words. Go through the lesson briefly, but for the younger children it will be more interesting to talk of some of God's promises and covenants in which we all have a share. The Golden Text is a good starting point for this.

(For the Seniors.)

Keep in mind always the continuity of the lessons and cover, even though very briefly, the ground between the last lesson and this. After Abram's separation from the last tie with his old home associations in the depar-

ture of Lot, God again assured him of his help and presence. (Gen. xiii., 14-18.)

The whole of the fourteenth chapter is of large interest historically and otherwise, and is a great temptation to digress. It must be referred to, however, to explain the opening phrase of the lesson, 'After these things.' Recent archaeological research has added greatly to the interest of some of the old names mentioned in this chapter, but too much time must not be given to these subjects. There is a suggestion in the first verse that Abram may have been depressed. He had rescued his nephew Lot from danger, only to have him return to his former life. He might well have feared the return with yet larger forces of the powerful kings he had defeated. Years had passed, he had suffered famine and the loss of friends, and was yet a wanderer in the land which God had promised him. Moreover, he was becoming an old man, and had no children in whom these promises might be fulfilled. There is little wonder that he should ask some tangible, definite, sign of his hopes being really sent from God (verse 8). This is not a lack of faith, and God does not rebuke it as such. Rather he readily grants him the sign in a visible symbol of their mutual agreement. Verse 6 states without a reservation the reality of Abram's faith. God's promise was of a future blessing won through trouble and suffering, with the certainty of his present care and guidance.

### SELECTIONS FROM TARBELL'S GUIDE.

Abram saw in God the Friend of men, whereas the law set Him forth, or was understood to set Him forth, as their Ruler to whom they must pay tribute, or as an austere Judge whose anger must be appeased by offering and sacrifice. So profoundly did this conception of the Divine Nature enter into and mould his creed and conduct, and so deep was the impression it left on his followers, that to this day Abraham is known as 'the friend of God.' So familiar is this title in myriads on myriads of minds that almost every Arab, almost every Mohammedan, indeed, abbreviates it, and will think you strangely ignorant and unlettered if, when he speaks simply of 'the Friend,' you do not at once take him to mean Abraham, the friend of God.—Samuel Cox, in 'Expositor.'

Can you venture to say that you are a friend of God? If you can not, what are you? Our relations to men admit of our dividing them into three parts—friends, enemies, nothings. We may love, we may hate, we may be absolutely indifferent and ignorant. I am afraid the three states can not be transferred exactly to our relations to God. If not His friend, what are you? All friendship here has its limits, its changes, its ends. God's is boundless, immutable, eternal.—Alexander Maclaren, 'Triumphant Certainties.'

It was a custom with those who entered into covenant with each other to take a heifer and cut it in two, and then the contracting parties passed between the pieces. For whatever purpose a covenant was made, it was ratified by a sacrifice offered to God; and the passing between the divided parts of the victim appears to have signified that each agreed, if he broke his engagement, to submit to the punishment of being cut asunder; which we find from Matt. xxiv., 51; Luke xi., 46, was an ancient mode of punishment.—Clarke.

To be sure of God, most wise, most mighty, most holy, most loving, our Father in Heaven and on earth, to be sure of Christ, divine and human, our Brother and our Master, the Pattern of excellence and the Redeemer from sin, the Saviour of all who trust in Him; to be sure of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Guide, the Purifier, given to all who ask for Him; to be sure of immortality, an endless life in which nothing can separate us from the love of God,—let us concentrate our faith on these things.—Henry van Dyke.

To believe, not because we are learned and can prove, but because there is something in us, even God's own Spirit, which makes us feel light as light and truth as truth,—this is the Blessed Faith.—F. W. Robertson.

### FROM PELOUBET'S 'NOTES.'

Hammurabi, king of Persia, whose monument was found at Susa a few years ago, was a contemporary of Abraham. He was the Amraphel of chapter 14. The name of Ohedor-

laomar, who led the expedition against Sodom, has been found on a tablet of Hammurabi.—Hastings' 'Bible Dictionary.' Bricks with his name are now in the British Museum, and 'Salem' is found on the Tel-el-Amarna tablets.

Abraham was a hero long before this, a moral hero, the highest kind of hero, on several other occasions, but this act brought his heroism into clearer knowledge. Great men are developed by great occasions. We do not know what is in ourselves or in others till the occasions for manifesting it arise. The only way is to be faithful and true all the time.

F. B. Meyer calls attention to the fact that in this chapter occur for the first time in Scripture four striking passages.

1. The word of the Lord came. 'Repeated thereafter with many charming variations.'
2. Fear not. 'For the first time rings out this silver chime of divine assurance.'
3. I am thy shield.
4. (V. 6) Believed. 'Now we first meet in human history that great, that mighty word "BELIEVED."'

The cutting up of the carcasses and passing between the pieces was one of the customary forms of contract. It was one of the many devices men have fallen upon to make sure of one another's word. That God should condescend to adopt these modes of pledging himself to men is significant testimony to his love; a love so resolved on accomplishing the good of men that it resents no slowness of faith and accommodates itself to unworthy suspicions.—Dods.

'As the missionary learns the barbaric dialect, and lays aside his own better and purer language to talk to the Bushmen in their own gutturals, so God for the time being adopts the language which Abram can best understand.'—Abbott.

God did not cease with Abraham to give signs and symbols in aid of faith. Jesus taught truths continually by means of nature, so that everywhere in nature we have signs of God's truth and promises. The prophets of old did the same. Then we have signs far beyond what Abraham had. We have the experiences of God's people for 4,000 years. We have miracles of conversion. We have the facts of God's guidance. We have instances of God's deliverance. We have all that Christianity has done for individuals and for the world to assure us that he is living and able to help in every time of need. We have baptism and the Lord's Supper for perpetual memorials.

And he believed in the Lord. 'Neither Greek nor German, much less Latin or English, can furnish any full equivalent to the meaning of these words. He was supported, he was built up, he reposed as a child in its mother's arms (such seems the force of the Hebrew word), in the strength of God, whom he did not see, more than in the giant empires of earth, and the bright lights of heaven, or the claims of tribe and kindred, which were always before him.'—Stanley.

### BIBLE REFERENCES.

Gal. iii., 29; Rom. ii., 28, 29; Psa. ciii., 17, 18; II. Pet. i., 4; Heb. xi., 6; Psa. iii., 3; lxxxiv., 11, 12; Isa. xli., 10; Rom. iv., 20-24.

### C. E. Topic.

Sunday, Feb. 24.—Foreign missions: The Kingdom in the Islands. Isa. xlii., 10-13, 16-17.

### Junior C. E. Topic.

#### MISSIONS.

Monday, Feb. 18.—The earth is the Lord's.—Ps. xxiv., 1, 2.  
 Tuesday, Feb. 19.—He is king over all.—Ps. xlvii., 2, 3.  
 Wednesday, Feb. 20.—The mighty God.—Ps. l., 1.  
 Thursday, Feb. 21.—All nations shall serve Him. Ps. lxxii., 11-15.  
 Friday, Feb. 22.—Many nations. Zeech. ii., 11.  
 Saturday, Feb. 23.—The promise. Ps. xxii., 27.  
 Sunday, Feb. 24.—Topic—The world for Christ. Ps. ii., 8.