



LESSON IX.—AUGUST 27.

JEREMIAH IN THE DUNGEON.

Jeremiah xxxviii., 1-13.

Golden Text.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Matt. v., 10.

Commit verses 1-10.

Home Readings.

Monday, Aug. 21.—Jer. xxxviii., 1-13.

Tuesday, Aug. 22.—Jer. xxxvii., 1-10.

Wednesday, Aug. 23.—Jer. xxxvii., 11-21.

Thursday, Aug. 24.—Jer. xxxviii., 14-23.

Friday, Aug. 25.—Jer. xxxix., 1-10.

Saturday, Aug. 26.—Jer. xxxix., 11-18.

Sunday, Aug. 27.—Jer. xxi., 1-13.

(By Davis W. Clark.)

The keenest torture Jeremiah suffered was the imputation cast upon his loyalty. Stocks, nor bastinado, nor dungeon, nor hunger were to be compared to this. To have to appear equivocal would be bad enough; but to seem actually favorable to the enemy of his nation, and that, too, after the foe had raised the siege, was almost unendurable. How could he make it appear that he had not been subsidized by the Chaldean? Yet the prophet stood the fiery ordeal with sublime fortitude and patience.

His enemies soon found an opportunity to bring the case to an issue. Jeremiah was of Anathoth, of the tribe of Benjamin. The time of distributing the tithes among the priests of that locality was at hand. He could go and bring his share. The distance was only four miles. He would then have some store against the renewal of the siege. He was following the dictate of practical wisdom. But he was arrested in the gate. Hananiah's grandson had a sweet revenge as he laid his violent hands upon the prophet (Jer. xxviii., 16), with the charge of desertion to the enemy.

A king of Israel, when advised to consult a certain prophet, exclaimed: 'I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.' (I. Kings xxii., 8.) It is easy to transfer our resentment against the message to the messenger. Jeremiah was odious because he carried an offensive communication. Nor were his terms always general. He had once likened the very princes into whose hands he fell to a basket of rotten figs. They were in a rage against him. They did him personal violence. In a star-chamber session they condemned him to a dungeon as a traitor.

Once the darkness of his dungeon was broken, as he was carried secretly to the palace and asked by the king for a word from the Lord. He was in a weakened physical state through his long confinement with scant allowance of food. He was taken at the same disadvantage that many a so-called heretic has suffered since before heartless inquisitors. Think you not the tempter was at hand to suggest, 'Speak a smooth word, or at least equivocate. Answer with a "double entente." You won't have to go back to the dungeon. On the contrary, your popularity will be restored. You may even be promoted to office.' But none of these things moved him; neither counted he his life dear unto himself, so only he could be true to his message and to him that sent him.

Even after he speaks the doom of Judah, he ventures to appeal to the king, who will exercise his powers so brief a time. 'Where is the king's sense of justice?' Jeremiah vindicates his own character. The imperious prophet condescends to supplicate. He does not propose to suffer more than he has to. He does not appeal entirely in vain.

How soon turned the wheel of fortune. Zedekiah finds himself in a dungeon. Jeremiah is free. He who saves his life shall lose it. He who loses, shall save.

ANALYSIS AND KEY.

1. The prophet's trying plight. His loyalty impeached. Steadfastness in the mental ordeal.
2. His physical sufferings. Stocks, whipping-post, dungeon, short allowance of food. Steadfastness in bodily ordeal.
3. Unnecessary suffering not courted. Mitigation sought and secured. Manly and honest means only used.
4. Providential reversal. King in dungeon. Prophet free.

THE TEACHER'S LANTERN.

The penal inflictions of that early age were cruel in the extreme. They were hateful and vindictive. For example, the prophet was not given solitary confinement in a dungeon; that would have been comparatively merciful. Instead he was lowered into a partly empty cistern. In the murky sediment he could find no footing. The foul miasma choked him. It was slow death. Capital punishment would have been merciful in comparison.

The treatment of prisoners is one test of the advance of civilization. Penology is a recognized science—an important branch of sociology. The underlying principle of reformation, not vengeance.

The last king on Judah's throne was a phantom king. He cravenly admitted himself to be a cipher. He ruled in a shadowy way over the ghostly remnants of a great nation.

The glorious figure of one great patriot rises in the universal gloom. He has been called the weeping prophet. His tears were vicarious. Not for self, but for his nation. Though he wept, he did not sit disconsolate amid the ruins. He valiantly stood for the best which the situation afforded. His constancy is admirable.

Dante liked Jeremiah and was like him. Their situations were much alike. Florence was in some respects the mate to Jerusalem.

Jeremiah, more than any other, taught by object lessons. Like liding the girdle in Babylon, breaking the potter's vessel, his baskets of good and rotten figs, his offering of wine to the Rechabites, and his purchase of the land on which the Chaldean army was encamped.

The prophecy of Jeremiah as a book of devotion stands next to the Psalms. It is an invaluable aid to spirituality.

The tradition that the Cyrenian who helped Jesus bear his cross was a Negro is now generally discarded, but that it was a Negro who rescued Jeremiah admits of no question. He did it tenderly as well as efficiently. He thoughtfully provided that the prophet should not be cut by the ropes in being drawn out.

C. E. Topic.

Sunday, Aug. 27.—Topic—Mission work among women. Acts xvi., 13-18; Titus ii., 3-5. (Home and foreign fields.)

One of the greatest epochs of human history opened with a woman's prayer-meeting. It was the passage of Christianity from Asia to Europe. The first convert was a woman. The most successful approach to unchristianized countries is still through women. The Church is therefore to be congratulated upon the phenomenal growth and efficiency of the Women's Missionary Societies.

Junior C. E. Topic.

A CITY CONQUERED.

Monday, Aug. 21.—Keeping the passover. Josh. v., 10-12.

Tuesday, Aug. 22.—Joshua's vision. Josh. v., 13-15.

Wednesday, Aug. 23.—Joshua's orders. Josh. vi., 1-15.

Thursday, Aug. 24.—The procession. Josh. vi., 16-18.

Friday, Aug. 25.—The city destroyed. Josh. Josh. vi., 17-21.

Saturday, Aug. 26.—Rahab saved. Josh. vi., 22-25.

Sunday, Aug. 27.—Topic—A city conquered. Josh. vi., 12-20.

Sample Copies.

Any subscriber who would like to have specimen copies of the 'Northern Messenger' sent to friends can send the names with addresses and we will be pleased to supply them, free of cost.

'On to the Ministry.'

It is worth a great deal for a lad to have his life-plant cut out early. It gives direction and value to all he undertakes. It deepens his sense of his own value.

Many people are doubtless looking forward to specific and strenuous service for Jesus Christ. A lad known to the writer, not twelve years of age, has become so interested in this matter that he has laid out his life-plan. He has a little desk at home, peculiarly his own, in which he lays away his Sunday-school papers, his Bible, and everything that pertains to his Sunday-school life. His present intention is to be a minister. He has written out, and pasted on the front of his desk, the words at the top of this article, 'On to the Ministry.'

What have you written out and placed in front of your life? What is its great plan and future? To what great cause will you give your energy and strength? What hinders your consecration to the specific work of missions or the ministry? Are you seeking a place where your life will do the most good, irrespective of what it costs you?—'Christian Age.'

Need of a Programme.

Have a good programme of work. Then when you stand before your class, you will not feel perplexed as to 'what comes next,' but will know just what to do. Neither will you be in danger of spending too much time over one thing to the neglect of something else. Your work will be well balanced, and each part of it will receive attention.

As to the plan of your lesson, let it be arranged with reference to one definite thought. Then let your hymns, illustrations, lesson story, prayer, all serve to emphasize and impress this thought. In this way the truth will be driven home.

Arrange, too, for your opening and closing exercises, for the offering, and for such supplementary work as you may have, and see that due prominence is given to each part.

If you follow your programme, there will be no halt in your work. You will be able to pass from one exercise to another with ease, and without loss of time. You will also find that a programme will tend to preserve order. Children like to see things running smoothly, and the fact that you are mistress of the situation will greatly increase their respect for you.

It may be that your memory is good, and that you think it can be depended upon. It is not well, however, to trust entirely to it, lest it should play you false.—'Evangelical S. S. Visitor.'

Illustrations of Giving.

Andrew Fuller once asked an old friend for money for missions. The friend said: 'I will give you five pounds, Andrew, seeing it is you.' Fuller handed it back. 'I will take nothing,' he said, 'seeing it is I.' The man saw the point, and replied: 'Andrew, you are right. Here are ten pounds, seeing it is for the Lord Jesus!'

Two working girls, of Providence, R.I., decided one day to walk between their homes and the factory, thus saving ten cents a day, and supporting their own native preacher at \$30 a year. When they told of their plan, their faces shone as if they had just found a gold-mine.—'Christian Endeavor World.'

Pictorial Testament Premium

A very handsome Pictorial New Testament, just published, with chromographs and engravings from special drawings made in Bible lands by special artists, J. C. Clark and the late H. A. Harper. The book is neatly bound in leather, round corners, gilt edge, well printed on fine thin paper, making a handsome book. The colored plates contained in this edition are particularly fine.

Any subscriber to the 'Messenger' can secure this book by sending four new subscriptions to the 'Northern Messenger' at 40 cents each, or six renewal subscriptions at forty cents each.