

Sabbath School Lessons.*March 13th, 1864.***GIDEON'S SIGN.—JUDGES VI. 28-40.**

We are in this lesson incidentally informed of the lamentable fact, that the worship of the gods of the heathen was freely practised in Israel, and that among the very family from which Gideon, the appointed deliverer, was chosen. The very night after the divine appearance, a message came to Gideon, well calculated to test his faith, and the extent of his obedience. He was to throw down the altar of Baal that his father had. Though this altar seemed to belong to Gideon's father, whose name was Joash, it was destined for the common service of the town. It is probable that Joash was the actual leader of this rebellion. After having thrown down the altar and cut down the grove, Gideon was to build an altar to Jehovah, and offer sacrifice thereon.

This work Gideon did in the night.

When the citizens arose betimes, perhaps to pay their morning devotions to Baal, and saw what had taken place, they were speedily informed that Gideon had done it, and nothing but his blood could satisfy the persecuting rage of these infatuated idolaters.

Joash, though himself guilty of idolatry, was unwilling to have his son punished; and probably by what he had done he was convinced of the sin and folly of worshipping an idol, particularly a god which could not defend himself.

It is generally agreed, that under Baal the power of the sun was personified. Baal had temples and images, as well as altars and groves;—but in this case we read only of the elementary apparatus of his worship—the altar and the grove.

At the proper moment the Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon with authority and power. He blew the trumpet for volunteers, and the Abi-ezrites, the men of his own clan, were the first to join him.

Having gathered what seemed to him an adequate number of troops, Gideon wished for a sign. He now required it; not, perhaps,

so much for the confirmation of his own faith, as to authenticate his commission in the eyes of the strangers who had responded to his call.

The sign he made choice of was remarkable: "If thou wilt," &c., ver. 37. This is an experiment natural enough to occur to a man of few and simple ideas, and these connected chiefly with agriculture. The thing came to Gideon as he had desired. It is not stated that the ground about the fleece was quite dry, but that is implied.

Gideon, for further assurance, and with a becoming apology for his presumption, ventured to ask that the miracle might now be reversed—the fleece to be dry and the ground to be wet.

This of the two was the stronger proof of supernatural interposition, seeing that it is the property of wool to absorb whatever dew may fall, and its dryness when the ground about was wet with dew, was altogether a miraculous thing.

God granted him this request also.

Observe—I. The condescension of the Most High God. Though God ordered Gideon to go forth to the deliverance of Israel, yet He had compassion on His weakness, and granted him various tokens for the purpose of establishing his confidence.

II. The efficacy of prayer. The signs Gideon asked were not promised, neither were they forbidden. God heard and answered his prayer.

III. If God help us we need fear no evil.

*March 20th, 1864.***THE GREAT SUPPER.**

Read *Luke* xiv. 15-35.

I. *The invitation rejected*, ver. 15-20.

Blessed is he that shall eat, &c. This guest heard Christ mention "the resurrection of the just," and having the Jewish idea of the Messiah's temporal kingdom, thus expressed himself. Christ replied with this parable, to show that instead of joyfully accepting the invitation to God's kingdom of grace, the Jews with one consent rejected it.

A great supper. Supper was the chief meal among Eastern nations, Mark vi. 21. The heat prevented such entertainments dur-