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Sunday School Lesson.

LESSON VIII.—AUGUST 22, 1880.

THE COVENANT WITH ABRAM.—Gen. 15: 1-18.

TIME.—B. C. 1912. A few months after our last lesson.

PLACE.—Hebron—about 20 miles south of Jerusalem—the home of Abram.

INTRODUCTION.

Abraham's faith had begun again to waver. With unbounded promises of the number and blessedness of his offspring, he was yet childless; with vast wealth, he had no heir but his steward and slave Eliezer of Damascus. And now God vouchsafed to him a plainer and more solemn revelation, which was made the more emphatic by the threefold form of a promise, a sign, and a covenant. The promise was that his own son should be his heir. The sign was given by a view of the clear sky of an Eastern night, studded with stars. This promise was ratified by a new COVENANT, in which Abram stood to God in the relation of the Father of the faithful.

EXPLANATORY.

In a vision. The way in which Abram was led out, and saw the stars, and the subsequent reality of the sacrifice, look like a waking vision; and it is not till verse 14 that he falls into a deep sleep. Fear not Abram. The most eminent saints are prone at times to give way to discouragements; but God, who watches over the secret fears as well as the outward affections of his people, interposes at the needful moment, and ministers the support, confidence and courage which they require. I am thy shield. The pronoun is emphatic. You can rest on my divine power to carry you through all difficulties. And thy exceeding great reward. It is not the great things which Jehovah would give, but Jehovah himself, to which the mind of Abram is turned as his reward. He was as safe as God himself could keep him.

Lord Jehovah. The name Adonai (Lord) is here for the first time used in the divine records. It denotes one who has authority, and therefore, when applied to God, the supreme Lord: Jehovah, the self-existent, the living God. The Jews, from a feeling of reverence, avoided the utterance of this sacred name, except on the most solemn occasions. What wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless? If you are my reward, what will you give me? Of what avail are all my possessions, wealth and power, since I have no child? The steward of my house. As Abram was alone in this strange land, and separated from his kindred, it would seem that he could only look to his steward—his confidential servant and manager of his house—as his successor and heir. Eliezer of Damascus. Probably a servant acquired at that city during Abram's journey.

One born in my house. It is not synonymous with house-born. It has a deeper meaning: it designates the most esteemed servant of his house.

Tell the stars. In the promise to Noah the rainbow had been the given sign from on high—a sacramental promise of mercy to mankind. Now, to Abraham the still brighter and more enduring token is the stary firmament.

He believed in the Lord. The Hebrew term "believe" means to rely upon. The word is Amen, from which we have Amen, meaning to be sure, and then to be assured, or to confide in. And Abram took the animals as prescribed, and did as God commanded him. By this prompt fulfillment of that which God ordained him to do, Abram showed, as matter of fact, that he believed Jehovah; and that which God did with the animals which Abram sacrificed was the practical declaration of Jehovah's side that he reckoned Abram's faith as righteousness. He (God) counted, esteemed, reckoned, imputed, set to his account. His faith in Jehovah. To him for righteousness. Righteousness is in the sense of justification. The sense then is, Faith was imputed to him for justification; i. e., in order to his becoming and being treated as righteous. This faith is viewed here, not merely as the root of all true obedience to the will of God, and thus the sum of righteousness or personal holiness, but as embracing and steadfastly resting upon (as the word rendered "believed" here means) God, as the God of grace and salvation. It is the act by which he goes out from himself, and relies upon God for righteousness and grace. The promise which Abram's faith embraced was the promise of salvation through the covenant seed, and he so regarded it. His faith, therefore, was essentially the same with that specific faith in Christ which is said to justify.

That brought thee out of Ur. Let Abram confirm his faith in God by looking at the steps already taken for giving him the land of promise. This is enough. Will God now falter or fail in the midst? So the Christian may encourage himself in God by looking back at all that God has already done for him, at the ways in which he has already led him.

Whereby shall I know? Not an expression of doubt, but of desire for the confirmation or sealing of a promise which transcended human thought and conception.

Take me a heifer, &c. The way in which the Lord chose to meet his wish is, in all respects, remarkable. He entered into a formal ritual covenant with him, after the manner of men. It was the most solemn of all forms of ratifying a treaty or covenant among the diverse ancient nations and among the rest of the Chaldeans. The animals are (strikingly enough) all those which were afterwards used in the Levitical sacrifices. It has been said that the transaction was not a real sacrifice, as there was no sprinkling of blood nor offering on an altar; but the essence of the true Hebrew sacrifice was in the slaying of the victim, for the very word (Eboch, sacrifice) signifies slaying, and it was rather with the shedding of blood than with its sprinkling that atonement was made, Heb 11: 22.

Divided them in the midst. This very solemn form of ratifying a covenant is again particularly mentioned in Jer 24: 18. It consisted in cutting the throat of the victim, and pouring out its blood. The carcass was then divided lengthwise, as nearly as possible into two equal parts, which being placed opposite to each other at a short distance, the covenanting parties approached at the opposite ends of the passage thus formed, and meeting in the middle, took the customary oath. Each piece one against the other. Head against head, shoulder against shoulder, leg against leg, and so of the other parts; with a considerable space between, through which the covenanting parties were to pass, verse 17. But the birds divided he not. The same things was afterwards prescribed in the law, Lev 1: 17.

When the fowls came down. The birds of prey, especially vultures and other birds of prey, Abram drove them away. As the animals slain and divided represent the only means and way through which the two parties can meet in a covenant of peace, they must be preserved pure and unutilized for the end they have to serve.

Know of a surety, &c. Abram is now most positively forewarned of the delays he should experience, and how his faith must look for its realization beyond his natural lifetime. Hence this example is cited by the apostle as an eminent instance of patient waiting for the promise, Heb 6. Shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs. It was 400 years in round numbers (490 years) from the departure of Abram from Haran, B. C. 1921, to the exodus, B. C. 1491.

Will I judge? Overrule and punish. Exod 6: 6, Deut 6: 22.

See the fulfilment of this chap 25: 8. The death of Abraham is predicted in one of those remarkable phrases which seem to prove that the Hebrews were not unacquainted with the doctrine of immortality.

In the fourth generation. Caleb was the fourth from Judah, Moses from Levi, Or, Isaac, Levi, Amram, Eleazar, may represent the four generations. Generation here means "all the souls then living," so that the sense of the passage was, "In the course of the fourth entire renewal of the living representatives of Abram upon the earth, they shall return," i. e., within four times 120 years.

A smearing furnace. . . a burning lamp. A symbol of the presence of Jehovah. See Exod 3: 2; 13: 21. Kurtz regards this as the first appearance of the shekinah, and says, "It is the symbol of the gracious presence of God; the splendor of his glory, the consuming fire of his holiness, which no mere human eye can bear, before which no sinful child of man can stand, is veiled beneath his grace."

In that same day. There follows immediately now the solemn declaration, to which all these ceremonies were meant to give effect. Made a covenant. "Cut a covenant;" from the ceremony of dividing the animal in solemn memorial and ratification of it. (See Illustrative.) Unto they seed have I given. "I will give;" on which the Jewish doctors very pertinently remark, "He saith not, 'I will give,' but, 'I have given;' and yet Abraham had now begotten no children. But, because the word of the holy blessed God is a deed, therefore he thus speaketh." From the river of Egypt (the Nile) . . . the river Euphrates. In its best days, the Israelitish dominion reached, to all intents, to Egypt, since all or nearly all the intervening powers were subject to David and Solomon.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

The oath.—The judicial legislation of the East does at this day recognize a false oath as a moral impossibility; and hence among some of the most mendacious people in the world, an accusation on oath is held to be true, in the absence of other testimony, and unless the accused will consent to purge himself by a counter oath. Even in ancient Greece, where a lie was a small matter, to distrust an oath seems to have been regarded as a high crime. The same sentiment is indicated in the special judgments from heaven, which were expected to await the breaker of treaties, or the man who had sworn falsely.

CATCH THEM YOUNG.

Some funny Englishman once said: "You can make something of a Scotchman, if you catch him young." There are vast multitudes of souls around us whom we must catch for the Lord when they are young, or we shall lose them forever. The fact is, that there are now, in our country, great blocks or masses of society that never "go to church" at all. When their children grow up, of course they will not go to church, either. As far as we can see, the best hope, and almost the only hope, is in catching them off the streets when they are young. Then may we, by grace divine, make something of them. Remember the fable. A man caught a little fish. "Let me go," said the little fish, "and when I have grown a little bigger, you can catch me again." "Oh, no," said the man, "I might not catch you then." Haec Fabula docet: Catch the little fish with the gospel net. When they grow bigger they will be far away from you. They that are fishers of men should go for the little fish. If they are small, they are sweet. Jesus could make "a few small fishes" serve for a great host. If you catch a soul young, you get a whole life given to Christ instead of a few weak years.

THE BEST.—Of all the family medicines in use there is none so equal GRAMM'S PAIN EXPELLER. It is the most gentle in its action, and the most effectual in use. It does not contain Opium, Ether, or Chloroform to destroy the sensibility and injure the nervous, nor any Cayenne Pepper, Peppermint, or Assafoetida to burn or blister, as found in so many others that depend on causing so much smart that the sufferer does not feel the original pain. The Pain Expeller is a purely vegetable medicine. Healing, Balsamic, Magnesia, Oil that effectually reduces inflammation and allows circulation of the system. It is especially efficient from the fact it has effectually cured hundreds of cases of Rheumatism, many of which had suffered for more than twenty years previous to using it; a thing not accomplished by any other medicine. It is equally good for other forms of aches and pains.

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Our Spices are ground by Steam Power, on our own premises, packed in tinfoil packets of 2 ounce and quarter pound, FULL WEIGHT, and labelled with OUR NAME. They may be had of all the leading retail grocers throughout the Maritime Provinces. We request the favor of a TRIAL of them by any who have not already used them, convinced that their own merits will secure their continuous use.

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A careful observance of the laws of health, and the systematic and persistent use of SCOTT'S EMULSION OF COD LIVER OIL with HYPOPHOSPHITES and LIME AND SODA will accomplish this result. This preparation has all the virtues of these two most valuable specifics, in a form perfectly palatable, and acceptable to the most delicate stomach, and we make the unqualified statement that SCOTT'S EMULSION is being used with better results, and endorsed and prescribed by more physicians for Consumption—and the diseases leading to it, Chronic Coughs, Bronchitis, Scrofula, Anæmia, General Debility and the Wasting Disorders of children, than any other remedy known to medical science. The rapidity with which patients improve on this food medicine diet, is truly marvellous.

SEE WHAT PHYSICIANS AND THE PEOPLE SAY ABOUT IT.

Messrs. Scott & Downe: 66 West Thirty-sixth street, New York, Sept. 2, 1876.

GENTS—I have frequently prescribed SCOTT'S EMULSION OF COD LIVER OIL with HYPOPHOSPHITES during the past year, and regard it as a valuable preparation in scrofulous and consumptive cases, palatable and efficacious. G. C. LOCKWOOD, M.D.

Messrs. SCOTT & BOWNE—Gentlemen—Within the last year I have used in my own family, and in my private practice prescribed very extensively SCOTT'S EMULSION OF COD LIVER OIL with HYPOPHOSPHITES and found it a most valuable preparation, especially in diseases of children. It is agreeable to the most delicate stomach; which renders it a very reliable agent as a nutritive remedy in consumptive and scrofulous cases. October 12, 1879. Yours respectfully, A. H. SEXTON, M.D. Baltimore.

Messrs. SCOTT & BOWNE—Gentlemen—Within the last two months I have fairly tried SCOTT'S EMULSION OF COD LIVER OIL with HYPOPHOSPHITES, and I candidly declare that it is the finest preparation of the kind that has ever been brought to my notice; in affections of the lungs and other wasting diseases, we consider it our most reliable agent, in a perfectly elegant and agreeable form. December 10th, 1878. Very truly J. SIMONAUD, M.D. New Orleans, La.

Messrs. SCOTT & BOWNE—Gentlemen—In September 1877, my health began to fail and my physician pronounced spinal trouble; under his care I got some relief from pain, but my general health did not improve, and early in the winter I began to raise blood and rapidly grow worse. In May last I was taken with a violent bleeding which brought me to my bed and my life was despaired of for many weeks; violent symptoms appeared, night and morning coughs, night sweats, short breath, and a return of the spinal trouble. My physician stopped the bleeding and then ordered Cod Liver Oil and Lime: and I used various preparations, but they did me no good. I lost all hope of life, and was an object of pity to all my friends. Last September I purchased a bottle of your Emulsion, and was an object of pity to all my friends. I then bought a dozen bottles and have taken all with the exception of one. Cough subsiding, night sweats stopped, appetite returned, pains in spine disappeared, strength returning, and my weight increased from 118 to 140 pounds in sixteen weeks. I have taken no other medicine since commencing with your EMULSION and shall continue its use until following results: I frequently meet some friend on the street who asks, what cured you and I answer SCOTT'S EMULSION OF COD LIVER OIL, &c. I have a friend who has not spoken aloud for a year, before it was all taken I was better. I then bought a dozen bottles and have taken all with the exception of one. Cough subsiding, night sweats stopped, appetite returned, pains in spine disappeared, strength returning, and my weight increased from 118 to 140 pounds in sixteen weeks. I have taken no other medicine since commencing with your EMULSION and shall continue its use until following results: I frequently meet some friend on the street who asks, what cured you and I answer SCOTT'S EMULSION OF COD LIVER OIL, &c. 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