

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS.

FIFTH YEAR, 1877. MAY.

FIRST QUARTER: STUDIES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.

B.C. 962. LESSON VIII. JONAH AT NINEVEH; or, True Repentance. Jonah 3. 1-10. May 20.

EXPLANATORY.

THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME. He had heard that voice before; but how different it sounds now! Humbled, repentant, willing, he listens to the call of duty. Jonah. Son of Amitai; born at Gath-hepher, in Zebulun; prophesied from the reign of Jehu, to that of Serobosh II. His mission to Nineveh, and wonderful experiences in the sea, are all that we know of him previous to the events of this lesson. The second time. The new call comes as a test of his sincerity and a token of his acceptance. "God's making use of us is the best evidence of his being at peace with us."

NINEVEH. One of the oldest cities on the earth; founded by Nimrod, B. C. 2200; located on the east bank of the river Tigris, capital of the great Assyrian empire; destroyed 600 years B. C., and so completely ruined and entombed that its very place has remained unknown until the present century. That great city. Great in extent in height and thickness of its walls, on which three chariots could drive abreast; in the number of its inhabitants—not less than six hundred thousand—and in the enormity of its wickedness. The preaching that I bid thee. God's word is not to be suited to man's tastes. He who chooses his messengers will appoint their utterances.

AN EXCEEDING GREAT CITY. Nineveh itself, the city proper, was very large; and under the name were included also the three great cities of its suburbs, all united by canals, streets, ramparts, and a great wall surrounding the entire group. Three days' journey. The four cities within one wall were twenty-five miles long by fifteen wide, covering together an area of nearly four hundred square miles.

JONAH BEGAN TO ENTER THE CITY. Not to wonder at its palaces, nor to wander through its parks; not to enjoy its pleasures, nor partake in its sins, as would many travellers, but to rebuke its wickedness and to warn it of its doom. A day's journey. We know not how far, since his progress must have been delayed by frequent pauses for the delivery of his message. Yet forty days. God gives men time, because he desires, not their destruction, but their repentance. Men who would be alarmed if they knew death would come in forty days, are careless when they know it may come in one moment.

BELIEVED GOD. The faith of Nineveh, after one message from but one prophet, shines out in strong contrast with the unbelief of those to whom "a greater than Jonah" speaks in his word and through his Spirit. Proclaimed a fast. The Assyrian revelers, greatly addicted to animal pleasures, abstain from feasting, and even from food, thus showing the humiliation of their souls before God. Sackcloth. A rough garment of dark color, made from goat's hair, and irritating to the skin, which was worn during seasons of mourning.

THE KING OF NINEVEH. Expositors have variously supposed his name to be Pul, Adrammelech, or Sardanapalus; but G. Smith, the latest authority, concludes that it was Rummon Nirari. He arose from his throne. Fortunate it is that nation whose rulers set an example of faith, fear and repentance. The greatest of monarchs may well sit in the dust before the great God. "Sackcloth was the ground, and ashes the garnish, of all his garments."

MAN NOR BEAST. It was customary, in times of public affliction, to withhold food from cattle, as well as human kind, that their cries of hunger and thirst might add to the general tokens of grief. Once, when a Persian general was slain, all his soldiers, with their horses and mules, were shorn.

CRY MIGHTILY UNTO GOD. TURN EVERY ONE FROM HIS EVIL WAY. Here was a true repentance; confession, sorrow and renunciation of sin; turning to God and earnest prayer. Fasting and prayer, the tokens, reformation and sorrow the inward witness that God are the tears received no more from his throne. Their might might us re-ter

GOD SAW. He who had seen their sins, now sees their sorrow. God repented. "Repent" means "to change." God changed his purpose from wrath to mercy, because that purpose was conditioned upon man's conduct. When man changed, God changed also. He did it not. The repentance averted the penalty for two hundred years. Then the cup of Nineveh's crimes was full, her latter state was worse than her former; God's justice was executed by the combined armies of the Chaldeans and Medes, and Nineveh became a perpetual desolation.

IMMERSION OR SPRINKLING?

A recent conversation presents an original and rather striking aspect of the immersion question, and one which at least has the merit of being an actual occurrence. The Rev. Dr. B— was introduced by a friend to a highly intelligent lady, who was a decided and earnest Baptist, the friend remarking pleasantly to the Doctor as he introduced him—"But you must be careful, Doctor, or she will make a Baptist of you." Encouraged perhaps by the remark, the good lady at once plunged deep into the views of the Immersionists, when the Doctor interrupted her by saying—"I have no time just now, my dear madam, to go into this subject at length with you; but" (very significantly and seriously) "there is a matter on which I confess I have been troubled and in doubt, and perhaps you can enlighten me respecting it. It is as to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; and the question that troubles me is—How much of the bread ought I to give to each communicant? Shall it be but a crumb, or a large piece, or an entire loaf?" "Why," said the good lady, "I don't see that it makes any difference, so that each take some, whether it be much or little. It is the eating, not the amount of eating, which is the important thing."

"Well, so I have thought myself," said the Doctor. "But there is another thing. In receiving the cup, how much should each one be allowed to take—the whole cup, or a large part of it, or is a mere taste sufficient? What do you think about it?" "Why," said the good lady, "I should say just the same about this that I did about the bread—that it is the drinking from the cup, not the amount of drinking, that meets the spirit of the sacrament and of the command of the Saviour. I don't see how anyone could see otherwise." "Well," said the Doctor again, "just so have I thought myself. And now, my dear madam, why don't the same principle apply to the other sacrament—the sacrament of baptism? Why isn't it just as true here that it is the application of water, not the amount of water, that meets the full spirit of baptism, as that is not the amount of the bread or wine, but the taking of the bread and wine, that meets the true spirit of the Lord's Supper?" And the good lady, who now saw the clear drift of his questions, gave no reply, but at once changed the subject. And we do not see what reply could be well given by any one, except a reply that would be fatal to the views of Immersionists.

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