

And they shall know that My name is the Lord.—Jer. xvi. 21.

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OUR COLUMN FOR PREACHERS AND TEACHERS.

NUGGETS OF GOLD FROM THE S. S. LESSONS.

By Rev. JOHN McEWEN, Secretary S.S. Association of Canada.

[August 2.] Elijah meeting Ahab (1 Kings xviii. 1-18)

"There shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word." These terrible words have had full sway for three years and a-half. The third year named in the lesson is the period of the prophet's sojourn with the widow of Zarephath. The six months were spent at the brook Cherith.

1. THE INTERDICT WAS PUT ON THE LAND by Elijah, in Ahab's presence, as the responsible representative of the prevailing idolatry, and it is seemly, and it should be removed in the same way. "Go shew thyself unto Ahab."

NOH WILL.

The selected incident of the three year's silence. The healing of the widow's son. 1 Ks. xvii. 17-25: thereby (a) the widow's faith in the prophet's mission is confirmed; (b) the prophet's faith in God and His calling is strengthened.

2. ELIJAH AND AHAB HAVE MET. Notice (a) The courage of faith by Elijah. He goes at once to present himself to the king. vs. 2, 17, 18 (b) Three years and a half of warning and reproof to be tested. Hence the commission, "Shew thyself." Be sure of your duty, and you have infinite store of force available in God. See Gen. xxii. 2, 3; Dan. iii. 17, 18.

PICTURE TRUTH AND TEACH CLEARLY the lessons of each utterance. vs. 17, 18. "Art thou here, O troubler of Israel?" A desolate land is behind the implied charge. No conviction or confession of personal sin, or guilt. There is a point where even mercury freezes, and ceases to register the cold. Here is the same fact in moral and personal life—little or no hope of repentance or return to Jehovah.

THE PROPHET'S DIRECT AND SEARCHING REPLY. 2 Chron. xv. 2, 4. "Thou and thy father's house" "God forsaken and Baal followed." Ahab knew the way of escape, but refused.

3 THE INSTRUCTIVE ILLUSTRATION ON THE PROPHET'S MISSION AND THE KING'S FIGHT. Obadiah—His fidelity to the king as a servant—His loyalty to God and His faithful ones in the dark day.

[August 9] The Prophets of Baal. (1 Kings xviii. 19-29)

We left Elijah and Ahab confronting each other on the slopes of Carmel. Each had charged the other as the immediate cause of Israel's troubles.

NOW FOR THE EVIDENCE.

Summon the nation as witnesses, and the prophets of the groves, the creatures of Jezebel,—the rousing summons of 1 Kings xvii. 1, comes back with a fierce intensity. The consciousness of the prophet, that he is armed with Divine authority, becomes manifest and sublime. The king accepts the challenge, possibly, in the hope that rain may be granted, or that this weird, wild man may, in the presence of the nation, be worsted. The proclamation is issued. The traditional spot at Carmel and all its surroundings are in sublime harmony. What is proposed to be done? Let the teacher fill his mind with all the details of the occasion, and this will raise his spirit to a powerful conception of the scene.

1. THE APPEAL FROM THE KING TO THE PEOPLE. vs. 21, 22. The single prophet against four hundred and fifty. Obadiah had saved a hundred. Later on we find Micaiah (chap xxii. 28) was faithful in Ahab's reign; but now so far as this occasion is concerned, they are all silenced, hiding in dens and caves—dare not come here—"I only remain exercising the office of the prophet."

2. THE TEST OF THE TRUE AND LIVING GOD. The details of the test are arranged. There is an instructive fitness in the selection. Baal claimed to be the sun god—the source of all life, energy and fruitfulness. Why, then, this drought and death? Let the test be at noon, the time of power. Jehovah had in the past selected fire as the symbol of His presence, and it continued to be so until the day of Pentecost. The people responded, "It is well spoken."

3. THE ATTEMPT MADE TO APPLY THE TEST TO BAAL. vs. 26-29. The frantic and fruitless appeals of Jezebel's priests. Self torture resorted to under Elijah's scornful words. The time must come when the faith of all will be tested. "There was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded." vs. 29. Read Prov. i. 24-33.

[August 16.] The Prophet of the Lord. (1 Kings xviii. 30-46.)

The prophets of Baal have not only had precedence in these arrangements, but it has been in fairness all that could be desired; and now it is far gone in the afternoon, and there is NO ANSWER.

1. IT IS NOW OUR TIME. COME NEAR UNTO ME. GIVE YOUR BEST ATTENTION. CHALLENGE ALL UNFAIRNESS.

The altar to Jehovah that had been thrown down by Jezebel, is repaired by Elijah. "his is an act of suggestive meaning. The kingdom, though rent in two, is still under covenant obligation to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. "Twelve stones,"—still twelve tribes, even though Ephraim and Judah vex each other. The new name given Jacob is emphasized (Gen. xxxii. 28). The wrestling of Jacob and the intense earnestness of the prophet, are instructive parallels. All the details for sacrifice are in accordance with the Law (Lev. i. 3-9). Abundance of water was poured on to preclude all possible deception, and render the evidence invulnerable at every point.

2. THE TIME OF PRAYER IS THE CRISIS OF THE DAY. Compare the argument of the prayer with God's reasons for appearing to Moses in another dark period of Hebrew history (Exodus iii. 6)—fire in the bush, and fire on the sacrifice. Note—The supreme desire of the prayer. vs. 37.

3. THE TWO-FOLD ANSWER. First,—the answer by fire (vs. 38; Lev. ix. 23, 24) is manifest, indisputable, miraculous, clear to all the people and the prophets. The terrible conclusion—Baal rule and Baal worship is