



LESSON VII.—AUGUST 14.

Obadiah and Elijah.

I. Kings xviii., 1-16.

Golden Text.

I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth.
I. Kings xviii., 12.

Home Readings.

Monday, Aug. 8.—I. Kings xviii., 1-16.
Tuesday, Aug. 9.—I. Kings xviii., 7-19.
Wednesday, Aug. 10.—Deut. xxviii., 38-48.
Thursday, Aug. 11.—II. Chron. vi., 24-31.
Friday, Aug. 12.—I. Kings xxi., 1-16.
Saturday, Aug. 13.—Is. v., 1-10.
Sunday, Aug. 14.—Micah iii., 1-13.

1. And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.
2. And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab. And there was a sore famine in Samaria.

3. And Ahab called Obadiah, which was the governor of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly:

4. For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.

5. And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks; peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts.

6. So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.

7. And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, Art thou that my lord Elijah?

8. And he answered him, I am: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here.

9. And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hands of Ahab, to slay me?

10. As the Lord thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not.

11. And now thou sayest, Go, tell, thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here.

12. And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not. and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth.

13. Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord, how I hid an hundred men of the Lord's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water?

14. And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here: and he shall slay me.

15. And Elijah said, As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to-day.

16. So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

(By R. M. Kurtz.)

INTRODUCTION.

We left Elijah in the lesson of last week, still the guest of the widow of Zarephath, who, with her household, was greatly blessed by his presence. It proved a case of entertaining angels unawares, as you may discover by reading the remaining verses of I. Kings xviii.

The time of this lesson was 'in the third

year' of his sojourn at Zarephath. The lack of rain was having its terrible effect on the country of Israel. Streams were dry, fields were withered, the cattle were in danger of perishing, and the distress was becoming severe. The drought lasted three and a half years. See James v., 17.

As might be expected from what we have learned of Ahab, King of Israel, and Jezebel his queen, the prophet Elijah, who had foretold the drought, was not loved by them. Indeed, he has been in hiding from the king all this time, though Ahab has diligently sought for him.

Meantime the kingdom of Judah, under Jehoshaphat, was returning to the knowledge of God, and was enjoying prosperity. Keep in mind that God sent this drought and suffering upon Israel because of their idolatry.

In this lesson we take up the events attending the close of the famine. It is now time for Elijah to come forth from his concealment.

THE LESSON STUDY.

The Promise of Rain: 'Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.' Verse 1.

For three years and a half there has been no rain in Israel, and things are in a desperate state. Relief of some kind must come soon or the very lives of the people will be endangered. It was not God's intention to destroy but to punish his disloyal people.

Elijah, so long in hiding from Ahab, is sent to the king. When he had last seen Ahab he predicted the drought, now the time has come to end it and God is sending his prophet to the wicked king again. He assures Elijah, however, before sending him upon his errand, that he will send the rain.

'And there was a sore famine in Samaria.' 2. This refers to Samaria the capital of Israel and the country round about. The long term of dry weather is having its effect, famine has set in, with all its horrors. But God is merciful and long suffering. Though Israel's sins called forth his wrath he still yearns to bring them back to himself.

A Servant of God in Ahab's House. 'Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly.' 3.

Writing from Rome to the church in Philippi, Paul says (Philippians iv., 22), 'All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.' Even in the house of a Roman tyrant God had his saints, and so also, in our lesson to-day, we find a man who feared God greatly serving the wicked Ahab, as governor of his house.

Men sometimes think that their associations in this or that business, the language they hear, and the temptations that come prevent them from being Christians. If his business itself is honest and right a man can, by the grace of God, be a Christian and still keep his position. Indeed, the Lord needs servants in just such places.

The Scripture turns aside in verses 3 and 4 to show how faithful Obadiah could be. When the wicked queen, Jezebel, was persecuting and slaying the prophets of God, Obadiah secretly aided a hundred of them whom he hid and supplied with bread and water.

A Search for Water. 'Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks.' 5.

There is danger that the lack of pasture, due to the drouth, may result in the loss of the animals belonging to the people, thus adding another calamity. So Ahab calls Obadiah and, after conferring together, they set out in different directions to examine all the springs and water courses, in order if possible to find some place where there was sufficient moisture to keep grass growing.

Obadiah's Fear. 'And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here: and he shall slay me.' 14.

God is ordering events, and Obadiah, travelling in search of pasture, meets Elijah, whom God had commanded to go to Ahab, as we have seen. When God ordered Elijah to go to the king from whom he had been fleeing for so long, there was no promise that God would provide a special messenger for the prophet, but so it is. Obadiah is being used to announce to Ahab that Elijah is found and that he is to see him. Had Ahab met Elijah unexpectedly, he might have thought him still in fear for his life and fleeing, but when Obadiah is sent to boldly announce Elijah's whereabouts and that Ahab is to see him face to

face, this puts matters in a different light to Ahab. He sees that Elijah acts with boldness and confidence, and the guilty king dare not injure the man of God.

But Obadiah hesitates about delivering this message. In verses 9-14 we have his reason set forth. He states that Ahab has most diligently sought Elijah, and has required solemn oaths from surrounding nations that the prophet was not found there. The expression, 'There is no nation or kingdom,' refers, of course, to all those countries about Israel, to any of which Elijah might have fled.

Now, reasons Obadiah, if I go to tell Ahab that you are here, the Lord may take you away to some other place; and when King Ahab comes and does not find you, so great will be his rage that he will kill me.

Obadiah further urges the fact that he does not deserve such a fate, as he has feared the Lord always, and he refers to his saving the hundred prophets as an example of his faithfulness.

To us Obadiah's conduct may appear somewhat singular. He seems indeed to have been a faithful man, but one who lacked a bold, outspoken nature. He would not hesitate to save a hundred prophets by secret means, but he is afraid to carry a message from one great prophet to the king, for fear he may get into trouble. God does not basely desert nor carelessly forget his faithful messengers.

Obadiah Assured. 'I will surely shew myself unto him to-day.' 15.

But God is merciful to the timid and weak in faith, so Elijah utters the most solemn assurance that he will meet Ahab, and Obadiah is satisfied and delivers his message.

Elijah gives his promise in words similar to these in which he solemnly assured the king that the rain should cease, 'As the Lord of hosts liveth.' This was not a profane oath, but a solemn assurance in the name of the God whom Elijah served. As a public official is permitted to use the seal of the state in official business, so the prophet about God's business is allowed to use the name of God as an evidence of the certainty of what he says.

'And Ahab went to meet Elijah.' 1. At last the suspense was to be broken. Ahab could talk to the prophet face to face over this calamity that has befallen Israel, as he had prophesied. Ahab speedily abandons the search for pasture, and starts to meet Elijah.

The lesson for August 21, 'Elijah on Carmel,' I. Kings xviii., 30-46, deals with what followed this meeting between a faithful prophet and a wicked king.

C. E. Topic.

Sunday, Aug. 14.—Topic—Obeying when obedience is hard. Gen. xxii., 1-8.

Junior C. E. Topic.

FORGIVENESS.

Monday, Aug. 8.—Forgiving one another. Eph. iv., 32.

Tuesday, Aug. 9.—'As Christ forgave you.' Col. iii., 13.

Wednesday, Aug. 10.—How Stephen forgave. Acts vii., 59, 60.

Thursday, Aug. 11.—How Joseph forgave. Gen. i., 15-21.

Friday, Aug. 12.—How David forgave. I. Sam. xxiv., 9-12.

Saturday, Aug. 13.—How Solomon forgave. I. Kings i., 50-53.

Sunday, Aug. 14.—Topic—How Esau forgave his brother. Gen. xxxiii., 1-16; Luke xvii., 3, 4.

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