

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS.

FOURTH QUARTER: THREE MONTHS' STUDIES IN THE KINGS AND PROPHETS.

B. C. 740.]

LESSON X. THE SINFUL NATION.

[Dec. 6.

Isa. i. 1-18.

[Commit to memory verses 16-18.]



1 The vision of I-sa'iah the son of A'moz, which he saw concerning Ju'dah and Je-ru-sa-lem, in the days of Uz-z'i'ah, Jo'r-tham, A'haz, and Hez-ek'iah, kings of Ju'dah.

2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken: he have nourished and brought up children, and they rebelled against him.

3 The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

4 Ah sinfulness, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Is-ra-el unto anger, they are gone away backward.

5 Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

6 From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.

7 Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire; your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrow; it is a cottage in a

vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.

8 Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

10 Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah:

11 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of goats.

12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?

13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.

15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes: cease to do evil;

17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

General Statement

The prophet Isaiah lived during a period of many changes in the kingdom of Judah. In the year that King Uzziah died he was called to his prophetic mission through a wondrous vision of the Most High in the temple, when his lips were touched with a live coal from the altar; and he stood as the recognized interpreter of God's will through the quiet reign of Jotham, the dark days of Ahaz, the bright but brief night of Hezekiah, and for a little while in the black period of Manasseh's rule. Those were times in which the lines of party were sharply drawn, between those who favored the protection of Assyria on the one side, who favored the protection of Assyria on the other, and the faithful few who trusted in the Lord God of Israel alone, and held aloof from worldly entanglements on all sides. Of this element in the national life, Isaiah was the natural head; for he lived in closer fellowship with God than any other of the ancient seers. He penetrated more deeply into the maze of politics, could see more clearly

than any other eye the approaching downfall of Assyria, the rising cloud of Chaldea, and the utter impotence of Egypt. He saw with as deep an insight the true condition of Judah, the formalism of its worship, the worldliness of its leaders, the rottenness of its morals. This insight gave a tone of severity to his utterances concerning the time and the people; for he felt it to be their duty to rebuke the iniquity of his nation, to shake out of them the sword of the law, in order that he might over them the sword of the mercy of the Lord. But his highest point of view was directed toward the future. He saw out of the fall of Samaria and Jerusalem a true and rising, like shoots from the root of a tree heaven down, destined to spread its green shade over all the earth. He saw far down the future the Messiah approaching, with kingship on his brow, and the cross looming up above him. He saw, what other eyes even of prophets failed to see, the Redeemer, dying for the sins of the whole world.

Explanatory and

Practical Notes.

Verse 1. The vision of Isaiah. The prophet was a seer, whose eyes were enlightened to see spiritual realities invisible to other men; hence his writings are spoken of as a vision. **Isaiah.** His name means "Salvation is from Jehovah," and it expresses the keynote of his ministry, which was to proclaim not Assyria, nor Egypt, nor Babylon, the defender of Judah, but their God himself as their strength. **Son of Amos.** Nothing is known concerning Amos. That he was the prophet Amos, or that he was a brother of King Amaziah, are both mere traditions without authority. **Concerning Judah and Jerusalem.** The earlier portion of Isaiah's ministry was during the years of Israel's overthrow; but it is scarcely mentioned in his prophecy. As Israel declined he saw Judah more and more called to take its place as the Lord's people; and throughout this book the name Israel mainly refers to Judah. **In the days.** He began his public labors in the last year of Uzziah (Isa. 6, 1), and was probably put to death early in the reign of Manasseh; so that his labors lasted through sixty years. **Jotham** was almost colorless as respects character, not pronounced on either side; **Ahaz** was one of the worst and basest, as **Hezekiah**, his son, was the best, of the kings, and **Manasseh** followed his grandfather rather than his father: so that Isaiah stood at his post through varied times. (1) *He who lives in communion with God is not moved by the conduct of men.*

2. Hear, O heavens. As if turning from men who will not hear, he calls upon the heavens and the earth to bear witness to his message. **I have nourished.**

The relation between God and Israel (including in Israel Judah) is sometimes referred to by the prophets as that between a father and a child, at other times that between a husband and a wife. **They have rebelled.** Their rebellion was not merely in general, but in a special sense a violation of the covenant with God.

3. The ox knoweth. The conduct of the Jews is held in contrast with that of dumb beasts without intelligence, who nevertheless show a regard for those who care for them. **Israel doth not know.** Those who by their origin were the people of God utterly disregard him who had chosen and cared for them.

Doth not consider. They show the utmost folly in not thinking of their relation and their duty. (2) *What drunkard or evil-doer fully considers his crime and its consequences?*

4. Ah sinful nation. In this verse the conduct of Israel is presented under seven aspects, the first of which is its moral state, as *sin*; next in the verse is *laden with iniquity*, as burdened with evil; then *Seed of evil doers*. A generation descended not from holy ancestors, but apparently from wicked progenitors. **Children that are corrupters.** Rev. Ver. "that corrupt themselves," by birth the children of God, but in conduct self-destroying. The other clauses represent sinners as renouncing their high privileges in God's service; as in consequence arousing the divine wrath; and as turning their backs upon God and their faces and feet downward toward evil. (3) *Every picture of the sinner only draws his iniquities in darker lines.*