



LESSON XI.—SEPT. 10.

The Life-giving Stream.

Ezekiel xlvii., 1-12.

Golden Text.

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. Rev. xxiii., 17.

Commit verses 3-5.

Home Readings.

- Monday, Sept. 4.—Ezek. xlvii., 1-12.  
 Tuesday, Sept. 5.—Zech. xiv., 1-11.  
 Wednesday, Sept. 6.—Jer. xvii., 7-14.  
 Thursday, Sept. 7.—Amos iii., 13-21.  
 Friday, Sept. 8.—Ps. xlvii., 1-11.  
 Saturday, Sept. 9.—Ps. i., 1-16.  
 Sunday, Sept. 10.—Rev. vii., 9-17.

(By Davis W. Clark.)

The Bible is a book of visions. It abounds in pictorial and scenic representations of the truth. These are effective vehicles for the human mind in its early stages of development, and when unprepared to receive truth in abstract form. They also give that pleasing variety of style which makes the Bible the most fascinating book in the world. These visions appear in a series of dissolving views. Abraham, at time of evening sacrifice, sees the Divine presence under the appearance of a smoking furnace and a burning lamp. Jacob looks up from his stony pillow and sees a staircase to heaven, on which ministering spirits appear. Zechariah sees a golden lamp, into which living olive-trees pour their oil in ceaseless stream. Daniel sees the Ancient of Days, and Isaiah the Lord enthroned and the seraphim adoring. Peter has his vision on the housetop, and John's Revelation is one book of visions.

But all dreamers yield the palm to Ezekiel, who has been aptly called the Dante of the Bible. With unerring vision he sees the spiritual side of material things, and makes them as they really are, the vehicle of celestial truth, experience, relation, and destiny. Among the riches of his supernatural sight the 'River of Salvation' stands first for transparent simplicity.

It is not strange that Ezekiel, the priest, used as he was to the ritual and the sacred courts, magnifies the temple and looks upon it as the reservoir of grace, whence is to issue the means of the world's refreshment and cleansing. But the temple was only God's house, so what came from the temple came from God. This truth was never obscured in the Hebrew mind.

In a certain sense, and to a certain degree, the kingdom of heaven was with the Jews under the Old Dispensation. The apostle says the oracles of God were committed to them. As their religion found its chief expression in their temple, priesthood and ritual, the kingdom of heaven may be said to have been in their temple as in a sealed fountain. Here was no partiality, however. This was the Divine method. The Hebrew nation was appointed to be the almoner of grace to all. In them all nations were to be blessed. And so the prophet sees in the fullness of time a little ill of the pent-up salvation issuing out from under the threshold of the house of God in Zion. The length and breadth of the stream can be measured with historic accuracy. By successive stages the rill becomes the river. Not only are the waters abundant. They are curative as well. The desert shall blossom, and the salt sea shall be healed. Everything lives where the water comes. Trees shall

grow upon the banks whose fruit shall be for meat and whose leaf shall be for medicine.

ANALYSIS AND KEY.

I. Supernatural and prophetic vision of the Bible. Examples: Abraham, Jacob, Zechariah, Daniel, Isaiah, Peter, John.

II. Ezekiel the superlative dreamer. 'River of Salvation' his best and most significant vision.

III. Natural a priest should conceive of Temple as source of salvation. Temple God's house: originating with it meant originating with God.

IV. Kingdom of God under figure of a river. Source, Progress, Effect.

THE TEACHER'S LANTERN.

One must be on guard against a too minute application of this vision. It is a general, pictorial representation of the origin, progress and effect of the kingdom of God.

The growth of the Church has been like the growth of the river. The Church first had twelve apostles, then one hundred and twenty believers, then three thousand converts, now it encircles the globe.

The river of salvation transforms society. It brings life in place of death. On its banks flourish philanthropic institutions of which heathen civilization never dreams.

The kingdom of heaven is no cloudburst torrent, surprising in the suddenness of its appearance and the might of the force exhibited. It is a proportionate growth from an unfailing source. The other figures convey the same significance. The mustard-seed, the leaven, the stone out of the mountain, etc.

The figure of the river has peculiar charm and significance to the Oriental mind. It signifies abundance, comfort and felicity. It is a very synonym of life.

There is current illustration of the transforming power of water on the face of nature. Irrigation is converting our treeless alkali plains into gardens of fruit and foliage.

The 'counting of Israel' has its dangers. It admits of question whether it is not always an evil and hazardous thing. Mere numerical gains count for nothing. Religion in its best sense is not a formula of confession. It is a kingdom of conscience. It is an evolution of goodness in character and deed. No census can be taken of it.

Ezekiel, the man and his style, has peculiar charm. He gives evidence of having been a closer student of the sacred books than any of the prophets, as well as an intelligent observer of other races, their architecture, implements, etc. His book may be called a cabinet of ethnology.

C. E. Topic.

Sunday, Sept. 10.—Topic—What is practical Christianity? Jas. ii., 14-26.

The world is weary of hearing men 'say' their faith. The formula may be very venerable and the ecclesiastical environment perfectly appropriate, but the mere repetition is as meaningless as the clashing of brazen cymbals. Faith must concrete itself in deed as well as express itself in word. The creed which does not build itself up in a spinal column of character is a caricature and travesty of religion. No sacred writer enforces this principle more effectively than St. James, who pictures the Christian in his ethical relations, and commands him to be a 'doer' as well as a 'hearer' and 'sayer.'

Junior C. E. Topic.

THE RAGGED MESSENGERS.

- Monday, Sept. 4.—A league against Joshua. Josh. ix., 1, 2.  
 Tuesday, Sept. 5.—The Gibeonites' plan. Josh. ix., 3-5.  
 Wednesday, Sept. 6.—The lie they told. Josh. ix., 6-11.  
 Thursday, Sept. 7.—Another lie. Josh. ix., 12, 13.  
 Friday, Sept. 8.—A mistake Joshua made. Josh. ix., 14, 15.  
 Saturday, Sept. 9.—Their punishment. Josh. ix., 16-27.  
 Sunday, Sept. 10.—Topic—The ragged messengers and their story. Josh. ix., 3-16.

Doing Hard Things.

I am strongly tempted to organize an order of Calebites. The one requisite for membership shall be the man's willingness to do a hard service for Christ or the church in the course of a month. When he has to choose between the easier and the hard, he shall be expected to choose the latter. If it is harder for him to recite a verse of Scripture from memory in prayer meeting than to read an extract from Miss Havergal, he shall choose the former. If it is harder for him to offer prayer than to recite Scripture, he shall do the former. If it is harder for him to speak a word of testimony or exhortation than to offer prayer, he shall do the former. If it is harder for him to be sweet and helpful in home relations than to participate in any way in prayer meeting, he shall do the former. The order of the Calebites, who will be the first to join? There will be no officers, no committees, no conventions, but all are welcome.—H. A. Bridgman, in 'Congregationalist.'

Some Don't's for Teachers.

(The Rev. A. Y. Haist, in the 'Evangelical S.S. Teacher'.)

'Don't forget much prayer.'—Let your prayer closet door swing shut after you, and there plead with God for your work. Pray much for yourself and your equipment, pray much over your lesson, pray much for your scholars. 'Don't forget!'

Sunday-School Methods.

At the recent session of the Free Church Council at Cardiff, Wales, an entire morning was occupied with discussions on the status of Sunday-school work in England. Some of the suggestions made might be profitably studied on this side of the sea. Distinguish carefully between the letter and the spirit of the Bible; the essential work of the teacher is to edify; teachers should not raise difficulties and doubts, but yet they should avoid the contrary policy, which is hurtful and perilous; namely, the attempt to settle dogmatically in the mind of childhood and youth questions which are in the world of scholarship, and in the honest judgment of the church universal still unsettled; let periodical examinations be held to show whether any progress is made; get rid in some way of incompetent teachers; organize training-classes for supplying better teachers—these were some of the points made by different speakers.—'S.S. Teacher.'

It is the work of the Sunday-school teacher to make the child see itself as it really is, and at the same time to see what it may become by the grace of God. Self-knowledge becomes fundamental. Show the child that it is ruined by the fall, but at the same time that it is ransomed by Immanuel's blood.

Missionary Fire and Fuel.

Missionary literature is fuel, but fuel does not make fire. It feeds fire, and there would be no use in the accumulation of the most abundant missionary literature if you have no fire. But when fire is there, with this fuel you can make the fire burn with far more intensity. There ought to be education in missions from the cradle, and as the child's mind and heart are inspired with a desire for the uplifting of mankind, feed the fire with fuel appropriate to the child's measure of intelligence.—A. T. Pierson, D.D.

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