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SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Lesson XI.—Fourth Quarter, For Dec. 14, 1913.

THE INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

Text of the Lesson, Josh. vii, 6-15. Memory Verse, 13—Golden Text, Numbers xxxii, 23—Commentary by Rev. D. M. Stearns.

Although our lesson is in chapter vii, we are asked to read to chapter xi, ending with the words, "So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord said unto Moses * * * and the land vested from war (x. 23). The section tells of the conquering and destruction of many cities after the taking of Jericho, but begins with the defeat at Ai and the reason of it.

Defeat seems strange after the word of the Lord to Joshua, "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life" (1-5), but the fulfillment of the Lord's promises sometimes depends upon conditions to be fulfilled on our part, as when He said, "If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you" (John xv, 7).

We have seen that Israel had been forbidden to appropriate anything of the goods of Jericho, and unknown to Joshua there had been transgression. We do not wonder that he in his ignorance of this rent his clothes and fell upon his face before the ark and that he and the elders of Israel put dust upon their heads and that he said: "O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies? What wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?" (Verses 6, 8.)

We do well to consider whether our name or His name is most in our estimation. Joshua was jealous for the honor of Jehovah. The Lord explained the cause of the defeat by the said announcement that Israel had sinned and sinned and sinned, and He said that He would not be with them any more until the sin was confessed and put away (verses 10-12). Although only one man had sinned, note that the Lord said that the nation was guilty. "Israel hath sinned; they have transgressed; they have taken" (verse 11). Consider how the welfare of a family or a church may be affected by the wrongdoing of one person.

On the morrow Joshua began to search for the guilty one, and, probably by lot, the guilt was found to be in the tribe of Judah. Then the family was found and then the household and finally the individual, and Achan began to realize that his sin had found him out (xiii, 18, and Golden Text). Joshua then urged Achan to make confession, which he did, and the stolen things being found in his tent, he and all his were stoned and burned and the sin put away (xix, 26).

The valley of Achor is therefore spoken of as a door of hope (Hos. ii, 15), for where there are confession and putting away of sin there will always be blessing. Achan's confession, "I saw, I coveted, I took" (verse 21), takes us back to Eden, where Eve saw and desired and took the forbidden fruit.

Our eyes affect our hearts for good or evil (Sam. iii, 5), and we are prone to follow our inclinations; therefore we need to pray, "Turn away mine eyes from debauching vanity" (Ps. xli, 37). When we behold the beauty of the Lord and follow Him fully, as Caleb and Joshua did and as Simon Peter was exhorted to do, all will be well (Ps. xxvii, 4; Num. xxxii, 12; John xxi, 22).

There was a secondary cause of Israel's defeat at Ai, and that was underestimating the enemy and thinking that 2,000 or 3,000 men were sufficient to conquer such a city (verses 2-5). When the sin of Achan was put away and the Lord encouraged Joshua to go up and take Ai, saying, "Fear not; neither be thou dismayed," He also said, "Take all the people of war with thee" (chapter viii, 1, 2).

This time the city was taken and destroyed, as fully recorded in viii, 3-29. Then Joshua offered burnt offerings and peace offerings unto the Lord, wrote a copy of the Law of Moses and read every word before all the congregation (viii, 30-35).

Chapter 9 tells of Joshua forgetting his instructions from the other captain to lose his shoe from off his foot (v, 13-15), for he made a league with the lying Gibeonites without consulting his captain; he asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord (ix, 14). We cannot expect that He will direct us if we fail to acknowledge Him (Prov. iii, 6).

In chapter x, 7-43, we learn that Gilead continued to be Joshua's headquarters, from which he set forth and to which he returned. Gibeon was a great city, and because of her submission to Israel five kings made war with her (x, 1-5).

The Gibeonites appealed to Joshua, and he took all the people of war and all the mighty men of valor and went to their relief, for the Lord had said to him: "Fear them not * * * Not a man of them shall stand before thee" (x, 8-9). After an all-night march the men of Israel came suddenly upon the armies of the five kings and slew them with a great slaughter, and the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them and slew more with hailstones than Israel slew with the sword (x, 9-11).

In some miraculous way the daylight was prolonged till the battle was fully won, for the Lord fought for Israel (x, 14-15). As the Lord commanded Moses and Moses Joshua, so did Joshua and left nothing undone (xi, 13, 14).

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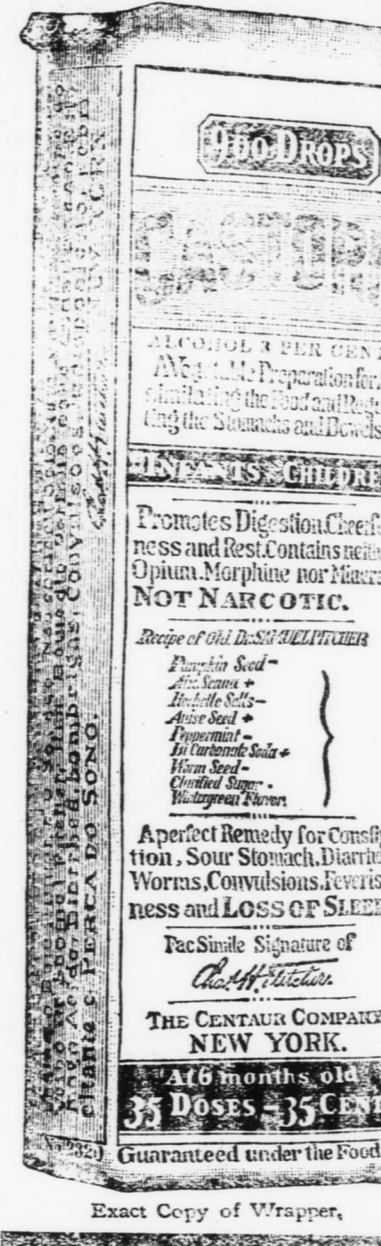
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