

JAN. 6.—Rehoboam, First King of Judah.

2 Chron. xii, 1-12.—B.C. 975-958.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"And when he humbled himself [the wrath of the Lord turned from him, that he would not destroy him altogether; and also in Judah things went well."—2 Chron. xi, 12.

INTRODUCTORY.

The Two Books of Chronicles were originally one Book. The Hebrew word for Chronicles means *Daily acts or occurrences*; the word used in the Greek translation (Septuagint), means *things omitted*. The authorship of Chronicles is by general consent ascribed to Ezra, and the date the time of the return of the Jews from their Babylonian captivity. The history is a duplicate account with that given in the Books of Samuel and Kings, to a great extent, but written more for the times in which Ezra lived.

"As compared with the parallel histories of Samuel and Kings, the history of Chronicles is characterized by three principal features: (1) A greater tendency to dwell on the externals of religion, on the details of the temple worship, the various functions of the priests and Levites, the arrangement of the courses, and the like; (2) A marked genealogical bias, and desire to put on record the names of persons engaged in any of the events narrated; and (3) A more constant, open and direct ascription of all the events of the history to Divine agency, and especially a more plain reference of every great calamity or deliverance to the good or evil deeds of the monarch or the nation which Divine Providence so punished or rewarded."—*Speaker's Commentary*.

Before leading the class to a consideration of the lesson proper, the teacher will do well to review briefly the events which led to the disruption of Solomon's kingdom, as recorded in the first section of last year's "The Kingdom of Israel," 1 Kings, xii, 12-20. Impress upon the scholars again the duty and the wisdom of paying respectful heed to the advice of those older than themselves, especially when their own inclination and the advice of their associates of the same age would prompt to a different course. See Job, xxxiii, 7; Prov. xiii, 20; 1 Peter, v, 5, &c., &c.

The Kingdom of Judah was not wholly confined to the tribe of that name. "Benjamin from the outset cast in its lot with Judah; the Levites, we are expressly told, left their allotted cities in the northern kingdom and came to Judah and Jerusalem," (2 Chron., xi, 13, 14); while the position of *Simon* to the south of Judah, and the half tribe *Dan* on the hills to the north-east would effectually prevent those communities from joining themselves to the Kingdom of Israel."—*The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah*.

Rehoboam's possession of Jerusalem with the Temple brought to him also the truly pious remnant of all the tribes, (2 Chron. xi, 16); so that, on the whole, his separate reign was commenced with very hopeful prospects. The lesson of the revolt of the ten tribes under Jeroboam was not altogether lost upon Rehoboam, and for three years his reign was "marked by a wisdom and prudence which bade fair to obliterate the recollection of his early folly. He 'established the kingdom, and strengthened himself' (verse 1; Comp., chap. xi, 23). Ease and security, however, are not without their dangers, any more than periods of common and tumult, and in this case they prepared the way for a religious decline, which, toward the fifth year, terminated in open apostasy from God."—S. S. Teacher.

Our lesson tells us of Rehoboam's sin, his punishment, and his repentance.

REHOBAM'S SIN.—V. 1, 2.

V. 1. Rehoboam. Although Solomon had one thousand wives and concubines, the only son of whom there is any historical notice was Reho-

boam. His mother was Naamah, the daughter of Haman, king of Ammon. She was no doubt one of those heathen wives who seduced Solomon into idolatry; and her conduct would have much influence, no doubt, in moulding the character of her son. Established the kingdom and strengthened himself.—See chap. xi, 5-17. Forsook the law of the Lord.—"We have here another proof of man's readiness to forsake and forget God in the day of prosperity. There are multitudes who can endure adversity far better than prosperity. A fuller account of the extent to which this apostasy took place will be found in the parallel passage, 1 Kings, xiv, 22-26. And all Israel with him." Rehoboam however led the way. The courts of kings generally exercise a great influence over the morals of their subjects."—*Barth*.

II. REHOBAM'S PUNISHMENT.—V. 2-4, 9.

V. 2. In the fifth year, God did not, in His mercy, allow this... course to continue long without doing His displeasure. Shishak, king of Egypt. This is the *Sheshonk I.* of the monuments, first sovereign of the Tanite-Babastic dynasty. He reigned 21 years. He had befriended Jeroboam (1 Kings, xi, 40). The exploits of this monarch against Judah are sculptured on the wall of the great temple of El Karnak, and furnish a valuable confirmation of the Scripture narrative. Because they had transgressed against the Lord. "Shishak's motive in coming up was no doubt to help Jeroboam, and to extend his own influence."—*Speaker's Com.* But Jehovah was using him all the while, as the rod by which Judah was to be chastised.—He makes the wrath of man to praise Him.

V. 3. Twelve hundred chariots. See Exod. xiv, 7; 1 Kings, v, 26, &c. Libnites—the Libyans of north-eastern Africa. Sukkims—according to the Septuagint, the *Troglodytes*—Cave-dwellers, living on the shores of the Red Sea. Ethiopians—people from the south of Egypt.

V. 4. Took the fenced cities. "Among the fortified cities taken by Shishak, we find in the Karnak inscription three only—viz., Shoco, Adoraim, and Abijah. Fourteen names, however, are lost at the commencement of the inscription, which is the place where the frontier towns towards the south would naturally have been mentioned."—*Sp. Com.*

III. REHOBAM'S REPENTANCE.—V. 5-12.

V. 5. Shemaiah—the Lord's prophet during the reign of Rehoboam. See 1 Kings xli, 22-24; 2 Chron., xi, 2; xli, 5, 7, 15. The Princes of Judah. The king's chief men. None of them were princes in our acceptance of the word. See 1 Kings, xiv, 2-6. Ye have forsaken Me. "It was the business of the prophets to point out the connection between national suffering and national sin." Therefore have I also left you, &c. "God does not do such things merely as marks of reproof; for He afflicts men not to punish but that they may be benefited thereby."—*Barth*.

V. 6. The princes and the kings humbled themselves. It looks as if the princes anticipated the king in this. The Lord is righteous. They acknowledged that they deserved the calamity that seemed about to swallow them up. See Jer., xiii, 15-18; Jonah, xi, 5-9; James, iv, 10; 1 Peter, v, 10, &c.

V. 7. I will not destroy them. Compare with this the repentance of Ahab, 1 Kings, xli, 27-29; and also that of the Ninevites, Jonah, iii, 5-9; where Jehovah revokes similar sentences passed by the mouth of His prophets. Some deliverance, that is, deliverance for a short space.—*Sp. Com.* The future was to be such as they merited by their faithfulness or unfaithfulness to their God. By the hand of Shishak. This great conqueror, who had swept everything before him in his onward march

to Jerusalem, could only go just so far as God, as His all-wise purposes determined.—Psaln, lxxvi, 10.

V. 8. Shall be his servants—in order that they might learn the difference between "My service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries."

V. 9. Took away the treasures. These must have been enormous, when we remember the lavish expenditure of precious metal which Solomon put upon the temple and the palace. No wonder Shishak had this expedition signalled by the new caldrons and censers at El Karnak! V. 10. Shields of Brass. How humbling! The "shields of gold" mentioned in the previous verse have been estimated to have cost about \$1,199,000.

V. 12. In Judah things went well. This may mean either (1), that things became prosperous, or (2)—in accordance with the marginal rendering (*there were good things*)—that all was not bad, (see Gen., xviii).

PRACTICAL LESSONS.

1. The danger of prosperity in leading men to forget and forsake God.
2. The goodness of God in arresting and saving sinners from the fearful consequences of their sins.
3. The readiness with which God saves those who are truly penitent.
4. The peril and certain ruin of those who continue to presume on the Divine goodness.

JAN. 13.—Asa Faithful to his God.—

2 Chron., xiv, 1-11.—B.C. 955-914.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"And Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said: 'Lord, it is nothing with Thee to help whether with many or with them that have no power; help us O Lord our God; for we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, Thou art our God, let not man prevail against Thee.'—2 Chron., xiv, 11.

INTRODUCTORY.

The repentance of Rehoboam recorded in our last lesson was not genuine—"He prepared not his heart to seek the Lord." He died, he was buried with his fathers, and Abijah his son reigned in his stead. 2 Chron., xiv, 14, 16.

Abijah (or Abijam, as he is called in the Book of Kings), reigned only three years. "During this short reign he effectually broke the power of Jeroboam in the war which he carried on for the recovery of his father's lost dominions. The army which he gathered together amounted to 400,000, and although this was opposed by an Israelite army of 800,000, Abijah gained so complete a victory that 500,000 of the Israelites were slain and several cities recovered (2 Chron., xiii, 13-19). But it is mentioned as a distinguishing characteristic of this battle that 'the children of Judah prevailed because they relied on the Lord God of their fathers.' With the large forces at his command, Jeroboam was able to surround the army of Judah, so that 'the battle was before and behind.' But the old days were revived when the Lord fought for Israel. The people cried unto the Lord, and the priests sounded with their trumpets; and as the men of Judah rushed forward with a great shout, according to their custom, 'God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah; and the children of Israel fled before Judah; and God delivered of them into their hand' (2 Chron., xiii, 12, 20). The superior position thus gained by the kingdom of Judah was retained for a little over a century, until the defeat of Amaziah by Joash, in B.C. 825.—*Commentary on the Old Testament*. But Abijah's religion was political and personal; for 'he walked in all the sins of his father which he had done before him'; yet the Lord was merciful; and 'for David's sake did the Lord his God