

The Sabbath School.

LESSONS FOR APRIL.

FIRST SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*Israel's Promise*, Josh 24: 14-18. Golden Text, Josh. 24: 24. Read in class, Josh. 24: 1-25. Read at home and refer to in class, 1 Kings 18: 17-21. Matt. 6: 19-24. Luke 16: 19-31.

Joshua feeling his end at hand summons the people over whom God had placed him, and in whom he was so deeply interested, and gives them his parting warning and advice. The difficulty he had found with them was not unwillingness to serve Jehovah, but a tendency to serve Him only outwardly, and to serve other gods at the same time.

First, from the mouth of the Lord, he reminds them of all the good the Lord had done them; then on that he grounds his charge, "now therefore fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth, and put away the gods, &c." "And if it seem evil to you to serve the Lord" wholly, realize that you cannot be His people at all, and choose some other whom you will serve. To help them to decide aright he declares his own determination that he and his house should serve the Lord. The people immediately responded, expressing their abhorrence of the idea that they should forsake the Lord, and declaring their determination to serve Him, who had done so great things for them. Joshua answers in strange words, ver. 19. The meaning seems to be, you cannot serve the Lord if you continue as you have been, half hearted in the matter; God will not allow his people to serve or worship any other; do not think He will wink at this or allow it to go unpunished; if you therefore do it He will burn and destroy you. (Explain to the children the difference between the evil temper which we now commonly mean by the word "jealousy," and the holy mind of God which will not allow the horrible sin, which is also the ruinous injury to ourselves, of having any other god beside him). See illustration in "The King's Highway," chap. 3. The people on this declared anew their determination to serve the Lord, whereupon Joshua made a covenant with them; see ver. 22-25.

Human nature is the same at all times. It is the same tendency which is now one of the great dangers to which men and children in our Churches are liable. Not unwilling to serve the Lord—like it, beauty of it, music of worship, to hear preachers (comp. Ezek. 33: 30-32) attend Sabbath School, &c., affords pleasing excitement, gratifies natural religious cravings, silences conscience, affords a degree of comfort and support, and hope of help from God. Yet tends to rest in merely superficial and external, to fear the Lord, and yet serve other god (see 2 Kings 17: 33). They like God's favour and His service, till it interferes with other desires.

(Explain what is spiritual idolatry, compare Col. 3: 5. Luke 8: 13. 2 Cor. 4: 4. "God of this world." Thus the sad spectacle of children and older persons nominally Christian, yet not sincerely and entirely serving Christ, through love of pleasure, or of praise or of money, and this double service impossible. The Lord or other god, not both, Matt. 6: 24. Compare Joshua "followed the Lord wholly." We only deceive ourselves we think to serve Him with half our heart. We shall only reap disappointment.

Various god were temptations to the Israelites. So now, choose one, or choose God alone. A CHOICE MUST BE MADE. God has a right to our service, but that service must be the result of our own free, intelligent choice. Many if brought to this point will shrink with horror from forsaking God who if not pressed to choose will long continue trying to serve both.

Which is the best choice? Joshua's answer to the peoples, "We will serve the Lord." Compare the services required, the profit or loss to ourselves, putting even at the best the advantages of serving other gods and disadvantages of serving the Lord. Then the facts of the case as seen in ordinary experience. Here considering duration, compare Matt. 16: 24-27, Luke 16: 19-31. Which is the right choice? Consider God's character, His relation to us, His love and goodness to us. See Joshua, compare Rom. 12: 1.

NECESSITY OF DECISION. Must not be vacillating; calmly consider, select, and decide; compare Kings 18: 21, and illustrate by evil of vacillating in choice of a course for life, to courses of action, &c. It is well often to renew consideration and decision, necessity for immediate decision, soon after made happier. Ps. 90: 15. Time in which a decision may be short; awful danger in delay. "now is the accepted time," 2 Cor. 6: 2. Illustrate by examples from life.

NECESSITY FOR PUBLICLY DECLARING CHOICE, compare Matt. 10: 32, 33; Luke 10: 9.

SECOND SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*The promise broken*, Jer. 11-16. Golden Text, Ps. 106: 13.

The title, the promise broken, is strictly accurate. The promise made to the preceding generation was not broken to them. The promise was, "We will be the Lord," and so they did. "Israel served the Lord on the days of Joshua, and on the days of the elders that outlived Joshua. This was a new generation. Exodus 32: 1. "There arose up a new king which broke the promise of the Lord to Israel, and said, 'I will not be the Lord.' Judges begins, 'There arose up a new generation which knew not the Lord.' Still more sad, 'Which knew not the Lord.' The generation which broke the promise so far from breaking it, was particularly faithful. "They soon forgot the works," does not apply to them. The contrary, "We search the sacred records vain, from the exodus to the captivity. No other generation that was so faithful to Jehovah."