



LESSON,—SUNDAY, JULY 5, 1908.

Israel Asks for a King.

I. Sam. viii. Memory verses 19, 20. Read I. Sam. iv.-viii.

Golden Text.

By me kings reign and princes decree justice. Prov. viii., 15.

Home Readings.

- Monday, June 29.—I. Sam. viii., 1-10.
- Tuesday, June 30.—I. Sam. viii., 11-22.
- Wednesday, July 1.—Deut. xvii., 14-20.
- Thursday, July 2.—Hos. xiii., 1-16.
- Friday, July 3.—I. Kings xxi., 1-16.
- Saturday, July 4.—Prov. i. 20-33.
- Sunday, July 5.—Micah iii., 1-12.

FOR THE JUNIOR CLASSES.

Who can tell me anything about Samuel? He lived about eleven hundred years before Christ, that will make it about three thousand years ago, and we know a lot about him, because the Bible tells us the story of his life. There are two of the books in the Bible named after him and he began to be important very early in his life. His mother Hannah called him a gift from God, and as soon as he was old enough to leave her she took him to the temple of God to live and serve the High Priest there. I see you all remember about him, and it is not very long since we were studying about him in Sunday School, so you tell me, Fred, how Samuel heard God speaking to him at night. (If one pupil cannot supply all the story, ask the others to fill in what is left out.) Samuel was only a little boy when God used him in his service like that, and God could use him, because Samuel was obedient. All his life long he was obedient to God and tried to teach the people of Israel to serve and love God too, so God honored him and the people trusted him and came to him for advice. He used to travel about from city to city, teaching, helping, and acting as a judge when he was needed, until he came to be an old man and tried to get his sons to help him.

FOR THE SENIORS.

It is well in studying this Bible history to gain as clear an idea as possible of the condition of the contemporary world outside of the Holy Land. At the time the Hebrews had been settled some four hundred years in Palestine, having come through the stormy period of the judges with their only real union that of blood. The several tribes, it is true, hung together, but there were occasional inter-tribal wars, and it was rarely considered the concern of the other tribes if one or another were suffering from an attack of an outside enemy. The judges ruled only over the immediate district where their services commanded recognition, and the only distinct regular authority was vested in the priesthood and the tribal elders. There is some suggestion of rule in the cities by a sort of council of the prominent men (Judges ix.), but nothing definite. The country, about the size of Wales, was hilly throughout. On north, east, south, and partially along the western borders there were enemies who descended at times without warning on the territory nearest at hand, and inside their own borders there were yet fenced and strong cities with unsubdued Canaanitish inhabitants, who were a menace to the immediate neighborhood. It was this problem which Samuel's life work reduced so far to order that there was at least concerted ac-

tion on the part of the tribes in desiring a king with the unity that a common ruler would demand. This early stage in the history of Israel was contemporary with the defeat of Turnus by Eneas and the founding of Lavinium in Italy as related in Virgil's writings, and with the rise of Assyria to great wealth and power. Israel, then, was well on its way as a kingdom before Rome was thought of, although the great empire of Assyria was Egypt's rival for place and power in the world of the time. Samuel had hoped to keep his nation free from the evils which the surrounding monarchies showed, and it was a bitter disappointment when they desired a visible king. God, he had taught them, was their ruler, but their faith proved too weak for them to accept and make practical a theocracy in the event of Samuel's death. They must be like the nations about them, but evidently their trust in Samuel is undiminished, for the selection of the king is left with him.

(SELECTIONS FROM TARBELL'S 'GUIDE'.)

The imposing greatness of Samuel's character is seen in the results of his work. He found his people in the deepest national degradation, politically and religiously, and left them on the eve of the most splendid era in their history,—the age of their widest dominion as a nation, and of their greatest glory as worshippers of Jehovah. In him began the long, illustrious roll of the prophets, with their earnest, practical enforcement of a religion of the heart and life, in distinction from mere outward rite. In the schools of the prophets which he established, we have the germs of a higher ministry than any ceremonial priesthood. From his day, in spite of the splendor of the tabernacle or temple worship under David or Solomon, the priest took the second place in the religious forces of the nation.—Cunningham Geikie, 'Old Testament Characters.'

Verse 18. Ye shall cry out in that day because of your king. 'This was exactly fulfilled in the revolt of the ten tribes from Rehoboam, which was caused by the grievous burdens to which they had been subjected.' I. Kings xii., 4.—'Speaker's Commentary.'

Verse 20. Singularity is not to be affected for singularity's sake; but neither are we to conform to fashion simply because it is fashion. . . . Can any one justify himself before God, if the honest utterance of his heart must be, 'I take this course, not because I deem it well-pleasing in Thy sight, but because if I did otherwise, men would laugh at me and despise me?' The very statement of the case condemns it. Not less is it condemned by the noble conduct of those who have withstood the voice of the multitude and stood up faithfully for truth and duty. Was there ever a nobler attitude than that of Caleb, when he withstood the clamor of the other spies, and followed the Lord fully? or that of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, when alone among myriads they refused to bow down to the image of gold? or that of Luther when, alone against the world, he held unflinchingly by his convictions of truth?—W. Robertson Nicoll, in 'Expositor's Bible.'

This truth is for the school boy in his school, tempted to swear and cheat because the other boys do. It is for the young man or woman in the boarding-house, crowded upon by the low atmosphere of gossip and frivolity which is hot and heavy there. It is for the shop-keeper shut in by the bad tricks and habits of his trade. It is for the men and women of society, for the students and the lawyers and the ministers; for the mechanics and the laborers; for every human creature who is tempted to slight his work and not do and be his best. To all such comes the call, 'Be better than the world! Break through the slavery of your class and time and set. Enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God.'—Phillips Brooks.

(FROM PELOUBET'S 'NOTES'.)

'One great work that Samuel did was the establishment of the schools of the prophets;

schools for the training and education of young men, at Ramah, Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpeh. The head of each school was called the Father, and the studies included the Law of Moses, sacred poetry, music, and history. The students were thus trained for the prophetic work.'—O. R. Barnicott, LL.D.

Verse 19. Like the Israelites, we are tempted to insist on our own wills and choices, when wisdom would make us say 'thy will be done.' 'All insisting on our own will is really tantamount to rejecting God. We can neither have two masters nor two confidences. We cannot stand, like the apocalyptic angel, with one foot on the steadfast land and one on the tossing sea. We must serve God or, not and, mammon; we must trust God or, not and, "the things that are seen." The divine dealing with the faithless recreants is a specimen of what he often does with us. He lets us have our foolish desires, and so find out our mistakes.'—MacLaren in 'Sunday School Times.'

The Life of Faith, which relies on an unseen arm, and hearkens to the law of an unseen King, is difficult, and sense cries out for something that it can realize and cling to. Luther, in one of his letters, has a parable that tells how he looked at the vault of the sky, and sought in vain for the pillars that held it up, and how he feared that, having no visible support, it must fail.'—MacLaren in the 'Sunday School Times.'

Junior C. E. Topic.

Sunday, July 5.—Topic—Songs of the Heart. VII. Longings and satisfactions. Ps. lxxiii. (Consecration meeting.)

C. E. Topic.

- Monday, June 29.—Loving Christ best. Matt. x., 37, 38.
- Tuesday, June 30.—Putting Christ first. Mark x. 21.
- Wednesday, July 1.—Daily self-denial. Luke ix., 23.
- Thursday, July 2.—Following Christ. Luke xiv., 27.
- Friday, July 3.—Not pleasing ourselves. Rom. xv., 1-3.
- Saturday July 4.—Enduring hardness. II. Tim. ii., 3-4.
- Sunday, July 5.—Topic—What cross-bearing means. Mark viii., 34. (Consecration meeting.)

The First Thing.

The primary object of the Sunday School is to teach the Word of God, and nothing should be allowed to fill the minds of the young people during the brief hour allotted to this task but thoughts calculated to lead them to better and holier lives. They bring enough of the worldly atmosphere with them, and anything that tends from reverent attention to Bible truths should be promptly discouraged.

There is a dear old lady in a certain town who has taught in the Sunday School many years, and whose hobby is temperance. Sunday after Sunday she tells of the horrors of the liquor traffic till her scholars never trouble themselves to look up the lesson at all. They know the teacher pays no attention to it, so why should they? It is true that touching little illustrations and practical points pertinent to temperance may often be used to good effect in other than the regular lesson on that subject, but they should not be used to the exclusion of the work for the day.—'S. S. Times.'

Some forms of Bible study are attempts to satisfy soul hunger by eating the dishes instead of the dinner.—'Ram's Horn.'

Sunday School Offer.

Any school in Canada that does not take the 'Messenger' may have it supplied free on trial for three weeks on request of Superintendent, Secretary or Pastor, stating the number of copies required.

N.B.—Ask For Our Special Year End Offer.