



LESSON I.—JULY 3.

The Kingdom Divided.

I. Kings xii., 12-20.

Golden Text.

Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Proverbs xvi., 18.

Home Readings.

Monday, June 27.—I. Kings xii., 1-11.
 Tuesday, June 28.—I. Kings xii., 12-25.
 Wednesday, June 29.—I. Sam. viii., 10-22.
 Thursday, June 30.—I. Kings xi., 26-40.
 Friday, July 1.—II. Chron. xi., 5-17.
 Saturday, July 2.—II. Chron. xii., 1-14.
 Sunday, July 3.—II. Chron. xiii., 3-21.

12. So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day.

13. And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him;

14. And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

15. Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the Lord, that he might perform his saying, which the Lord spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

16. So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents.

17. But as for the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.

18. Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the tribute; and all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. Therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem.

19. So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.

20. And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.

(By R. M. Kurtz.)

INTRODUCTION.

During the first six months of 1904 we studied the life of Christ, but now we turn again to take up the history of Israel. You will recall that our opening lesson a year ago, on this subject, was, 'Israel Asking for a King.' The young nation was about to adopt the custom of the heathen nations round about by becoming a kingdom and possessing the pomp and glory of a royal house.

Then we followed the fortunes of the nation under its first three kings, Saul, David, and Solomon. It was displeasing to God that the request for a king was made, and we have found the nation paying the penalty of its disobedience by sharing the troubles of royalty.

Now, when King Solomon died, he left the kingdom in a splendid condition, outwardly, for its bounds had been enlarged, and during his reign of peace its wealth had been greatly increased. The people now numbered some six millions. But the very prosperity of Solomon's reign prepared the way for trouble. Heathen immoralities crept in, and the people were made restless by heavy taxes.

Solomon, so far as the Bible gives us his history, had only one son, Rehoboam, and the mother of this prince was a heathen princess

for whom Solomon built a place for idol worship, for he had taken wives from among the idolatrous nations about Israel. This son had thus received very poor religious and moral preparation for the duties that devolved upon him when his father died. He was probably twenty-one when he came to the throne.

Jeroboam was a man who had been brought to Jerusalem during Solomon's reign to assist in the building of the fortifications. He had proved very capable, and had been advanced to govern the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

Through the prophet Ahijah Jeroboam was informed that God would rend the kingdom from Solomon's hand, and give Jeroboam ten tribes. I. Kings xi., 29-39. After this Solomon sought Jeroboam's life so that he fled to Egypt. After the death of Solomon, Rehoboam, his son, ascended the throne, but the people summoned Jeroboam from Egypt to Shechem where the question of their allegiance to the new king was to be considered.

Jeroboam came, and there at Shechem the people showed King Rehoboam how Solomon his father had oppressed them and asked that he relieve them of this heavy yoke, promising to serve him if he would do so. The king asked three days in which to consider, and at first sought the advice of the old men, who had counselled his father. They counselled him to make fair promises to the people so that he might win their allegiance. Rejecting this advice, Rehoboam turned to the young men who had been his own companions. They, in their haughtiness, told him to tell the people that he would make their burdens heavier than ever. It is at this critical point that we resume our study of the history of Israel. Read all of chapter xii.

The exact date of this lesson is not known, but it was the tenth century, before Christ.

THE LESSON STUDY.

Verses 12-14. 'And the king answered the people roughly.' We are told that 'Jeroboam and all the people' came to the king on the third day. Already Jeroboam was recognized as a leader to look up to in this time of uncertainty. On the third day the king gives his answer as he has agreed to do, but he follows the foolish advice of his young men, setting aside the wisdom of his father's counsellors.

Notice how foolish and utterly reckless the boast of the young king in verse 14. He would not only continue the oppression begun by his father, but he would be utterly tyrannical. He failed to see that the people were already deeply stirred, that they had a strong leader, that the most experienced of his advisors realized that concessions should be made.

Every community has its Rehoboams, young fellows of promise and good prospect, who have lost all through neglecting wise counsel and following wild comrades.

15. 'For the cause was from the Lord.' This verse presents a difficulty in the way of the old question concerning the relation between the divine and the human will. We may ask how Rehoboam could be blamed if his action 'was a thing brought about of the Lord,' as the Revised has it. We may say, however, that God was going to make the wrath of man to praise him. Rehoboam preferred to be self-willed, proud, and cruel, as God foresaw, and God brought it about that he should show his rash character in this way, at this time, so that he might now bring about the division of the kingdom, as prophesied to Jeroboam.

16-18. 'To your tents, O Israel.' The temper of the people may be judged from their answer to the king. The northern tribes felt they no longer had any part with the tribe of Judah to which Rehoboam belonged. The cry, 'To your tents, O Israel,' was a call to prepare for a war of secession. The tribe of David was told to look out for itself.

A tax collector is not a very popular man, especially in the Orient, and the king showed his lack of tact in sending 'Adoram, who was over the tribute,' to the seceding tribes at this time. The people speedily killed him, and King Rehoboam found it wise to hurry back to Jerusalem. Blood had been shed, and the king realized at last that he had gone too far.

19-20. 'So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.' 'Israel' here refers to the ten tribes, as distinct from 'Judah,' to which was also joined the tribe of Benjamin, as seen by verse 21 of this chapter. The twelve tribes have never been reunited.

The ten existed as a separate kingdom un-

til they disappeared from history, in the eighth century before Christ, following the fall of Samaria, their capital.

The prophets tell us that God will yet bring them back to his people, but in the meantime 'the lost tribes' form one of the puzzles of human history. In this connection hear the beautiful words of Jeremiah, concerning the restoration of the ten tribes of Israel:

'Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.'

The lesson for July 10 is, 'Jeroboam's Idolatry,' I. Kings xii., 25-33.

C. E. Topic.

Sunday, July 3.—Ways of consecrating ourselves to our country. Romans xiii., 1-7; I. Peter ii., 13-17.

Junior C. E. Topic.

NATIONAL GREATNESS.

Monday, June 27.—Governed by God. Ps. lxviii., 4-6.

Tuesday, June 28.—A prosperous nation. Isa. liv., 17.

Wednesday, June 29.—Seeking the Lord. Zech. viii., 22.

Thursday, June 30.—Walking in his paths. Mic. iv., 2-5.

Friday, July 1.—God's people. Ezek. xxxvii., 21-23.

Saturday, July 2.—'Whose God is the Lord.' Ps. xxxiii., 12.

Sunday, July 3.—Topic—What makes a nation great? Prov. xiv., 34. (Home Missionary Meeting.)

Clippings for Illustrations.

Teachers may draw inspiration for their work from the methods of Dr. Banks:

The church study of Dr. Louis Albert Banks, the Methodist preacher, who has recently brought his powers to bear on the Sunday-school lessons each week in 'The Sunday-School Times,' is a busy man's workshop. Four revolving bookcases show the habit of 'no time lost.' Two capacious flat-topped desks, two sides of the room lined with more bookcases, a telephone, a typewriter, and a great mass of magazines and newspapers, show how very closely he keeps in touch with the moving world about him. Asked whether he found filing-cabinets useful in his gathering of illustrations, he replied, 'I've owned probably every kind of filing system I ever heard of, and,' with a chuckle, 'I've bestowed them all on my friends. I now use up my illustrations with a prodigal hand as I go along, and depend on the Lord's being as good to me to-morrow as he has been to-day. Tried pigeon-holing illustrations? Goodness alive! I've had my walls lined with pigeon-holes full of stuff I never "could" use. Now I have nothing over ten days old on my desk.'

That is the secret of Dr. Banks's success as an illustrator of Bible truth. He gets his illustrations from the 'present' day life of the world. He turned to his desk and picked up a big handful of newspaper clippings,—fifty of them,—and read some of the headings as they appeared in type: 'Clung to ledge over abyss through long night.'

'The osprey's solid home.'

'Unhealthy telephone booths.'

'Portugal's king who pawned his crown.'

'Crippled child heiress to over twenty millions.'

That handful of fifty clippings was cut from one day's papers. 'And they've been in nobody's cyclopedia of illustrations, in nobody's sermons; they're "fresh,"' said Dr. Banks with a smile. 'It's like the manna that God sent. It comes every day, but it won't keep.'

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