

What had been shut up? **The Lord's house.**

What had this brought upon them? **The anger of the Lord.**

What did Hezekiah want to make with the Lord? **A covenant.**

What did he call upon the priests to do? **To be earnest in seeking God.**

Words With Little People.

THE LORD'S HOUSE.

Why ought we to worship there?

Because { God has told us to do so.
The Lord dwells in his own house.
He meets all who seek him there.

Whisper Motto.

"Early will I seek Thee."

General Statement.

Ahaz was the worst of Judah's monarchs. His son and successor, Hezekiah, was the best. The idolatrous religions which competed with the religion of Jehovah for the favor of the young prince were seductive and captivating in the magnificence and picturesque license of their ceremonies. He began to reign at the age of twenty-five, and immediately the nation felt the strength of his character. He opened the long-closed gates of the temple, caused the priests to fulfill the offices of a restored ritual, and led his subjects to make a solemn covenant which pledged the services of the sons to the God of the fathers. The Judean power had begun to wane years before Hezekiah was born, but new springs of national life were opened by his vigorous rectitude. He defended his nation bravely against invasions; he managed his finances with singular aptitude; he improved the water supply of Jerusalem, and attained eminence by his literary skill. All of these advances in secular prosperity had their origin in the act of consecration described in our lesson. The date is perhaps 726 B. C.

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

Verse 1. Began to reign. No king ever appeared in more evil times, none served God more thoroughly, and none accomplished more for his land. The "kingdom" he inherited was but a tributary province; the kingdom he left to his heir was independent and respected by all surrounding states. **Five and twenty.** In the prime of his young manhood. (1) *Moral choice is almost always made early in life.* **Mother's name.** Where a father so evil as Ahaz is followed by a son so good as Hezekiah, we may conjecture that a pious mother prayed over his cradle. The influence of even the worst of fathers may be overcome by the earnest efforts of a good mother. Said Napoleon, "What France needs most of all is a generation of good mothers."

2. That which was right in the sight of the Lord. Not that Hezekiah's character or David's was perfect, but that they were in deep-seated purpose, committed to Jehovah's cause; Hezekiah's early surroundings were corrupt; but (2) *Whatever may be the circumstances, a man or boy may do right.* **According to all that David . . . had done.** (3) *The young should choose the best for their exemplars.*

3. First year. At once he struck the keynote of reform. Without waiting to consolidate his power, or to assure himself of co-operation from princes or people, he opened his reign by opening God's house. (4) *Right beginnings are of the utmost importance.* (5) *Decision and promptitude are the strongest buttresses of character.* **First month.** Not necessarily the first month of Hezekiah's reign, but Nisan, the first month of the ecclesiastical year. **Opened the doors.** Caused the ritual services to be resumed. **Repaired.** The doors had been despoiled of their golden cov-

erings and left to decay on their hinges. Hezekiah richly restored them. See 2 Kings 18, 16. (6) *Emphasize the value of religion in high places.*

4, 5. Priests . . . Levites. (7) *Those who conduct religious service and instruction should be the first in a revival of religion.* **Gathered them together.** Great revivals are always accompanied by great assemblages. The people must be brought together to awaken enthusiasm and enkindle inspiration. (8) *Church attendance is the first step toward conversion.* **East street.** The open area, or court, at the eastern gate of the temple, corresponding to what was afterward the court of the Gentiles; the Hebrew phrase would correspond to our East Broadway. **Sanctify now yourselves.** (9) *Only purified hands can purify the house; first cleanse the heart, and then the temple.* **Filthiness.** "The idols and all their trinkets and trash."—Trapp. Justly so named, for in form they were repulsive and indecent, and in rites of worship, sensual and abominable. **Holy place.** The temple proper, in distinction from the courts which surrounded it.

6, 7. Our fathers. Ahaz and his contemporaries. **Have trespassed.** (10) *The sins of the fathers will not excuse their children, who may possess clearer light.* Beside Hezekiah, as his guide and counselor, stood Isaiah, now at the culmination of his prophetic powers. (11) *Happy he who enjoys, happier he who employs, religious privileges.* **Turned away their faces.** The Israelite in worship turned his face toward God's house, but the idolaters, in their devotions, looked eastward toward the rising sun. **Shut up the doors.** Both to the court and to the house; thus indicating the entire cessation of the stated worship. **Put out the lamps.** The golden