



LESSON X.—DEC. 6.

Solomon's Wise Choice

I. Kings iii., 4-15.

Golden Text.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Proverbs ix., 10.

Home Readings.

Monday, Nov. 30.—I. Kings iii., 1-15.
 Tuesday, Dec. 1.—I. Kings iv., 29-34.
 Wednesday, Dec. 2.—Jas. i., 1-17.
 Thursday, Dec. 3.—Prov. iii., 1-18.
 Friday, Dec. 4.—II. Chron. i., 1-13.
 Saturday, Dec. 5.—I. Kings ix., 1-9.
 Sunday, Dec. 6.—Matt. vi., 19-34.

4. And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar.

5. In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.

6. And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.

7. And now, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in.

8. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude.

9. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?

10. And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.

11. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment:

12. Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.

13. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honor: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.

14. And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days.

15. And Solomon awoke; and, behold, it was a dream. And he came to Jerusalem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and offered up burnt offerings, and offered peace offerings, and made a feast to all his servants.

INTRODUCTION.

For the third time in this series of lessons we find a king taking up the reins of government in Israel. We must remember that Israel had been for several generations a people of fixed national life. All the grand men who took part in bringing the people to the land of promise had long since died. The reigns of Saul and of David had come and gone, and to-day we enter the study of the reign of Solomon.

We find in I. Chronicles xxix., that Sol-

omon received the ready and hearty allegiance of his people. He had to punish by the death penalty, several disloyal and rebellious men, as we find recorded in I. Kings ii., but the great multitudes, high and low, were loyal to the young king. The date of Solomon's accession to the throne is uncertain, but it was about a thousand years before Christ.

As yet there was no fixed place of religious worship and ceremony. We learn from the opening verses of this chapter that 'the people sacrificed in high places, because there was no house built unto the name of the Lord, until those days.' In to-day's lesson we have an account of a great gathering at Gibeon, one of those 'high places' near Jerusalem. It was a hill five or six miles north of Jerusalem. This gathering is more fully described in II. Chronicles i.

THE LESSON STUDY.

Verse 4. 'And the king went to Gibeon,' etc. Solomon, as we learn in II. Chronicles i., assembled the chief men of the nation at Gibeon. It was a gathering very much like that before which David presented Solomon, as we saw in the last lesson. The tabernacle was at Gibeon, though the ark was at Jerusalem. The fact that the outward symbols and instruments used in their worship were thus separated shows the need for a great fixed centre for the national religion. A thousand burnt offerings were offered here.

5. 'In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night,' God comes the nearest to all of us when we are making true sacrifices for him, when self is put aside and his interests put first.

'Ask what I shall give thee,' God knew what Solomon most needed, as he knows what each of us most needs, but he wants to lead us to come to him. God wants fellowship with us, and is constantly seeking to encourage us to do our part. (See John xiv., 23; xv., 15; Revelation iii., 20.) To use a common phrase, God wanted to encourage Solomon to talk over his needs with him.

6. 'Thou hast showed unto thy servant David my father great mercy,' etc. Solomon's very first sentence in answer to God's question was an acknowledgment of God's goodness to his father, and of the fact that it was God that placed Solomon upon the throne. The spirit of thanksgiving is one of the essentials of true prayer. We are always getting more than we ask for.

7. 'And I am but a little child,' etc. Notice the progress of the king's prayer. First we had the recognition of God's goodness and providence, second, we have a humble admission of the weakness and inability in himself of the one who offers the prayer. A presumptuous petition is offensive to Heaven. You recall at once the case of the Pharisee and the Publican. The power of God is available to the one who is emptied of self-sufficiency, self-complacency, selfish desire, and self-will.

8. 'And thy servant is in the midst of thy people.' Here is another step—the sense of personal responsibility. One must feel his responsibility before he can meet it.

Here was a people that, in the expression of the king, could not 'be numbered nor counted for multitude,' and yet they were looking to him for direction and for judgment.

9. 'Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart,' etc. Up to this point the king's prayer revealed only a serious condition of affairs—his own inability in the face of great responsibility. But Solomon had the secret of success in doing the Lord's work. Knowing his own shortcomings, he turned to the resources of God. Here he showed a courageous faith.

10. 'And the speech pleased the Lord.' Such a humble, unselfish, and courageous prayer could not do otherwise. Solomon confessed weakness, owned his responsible position, but instead of asking to be relieved of it or that it might be made less, he boldly took God into partnership and met the situation.

11, 12. 'Because thou hast asked this thing. . . Behold, I have done according to thy words.' The answer came quickly, for Solomon had met the conditions.

13, 14. 'And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked.' Solomon had looked after God's work first, and now God promises to look after Solomon's interests. 'But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.' (See also Mark x., 28-30 and I. Timothy iv., 8.)

15. 'And Solomon awoke.' God spoke to him in the mystery of a dream, but the dream was a reality in Solomon's life. He awoke to return to Jerusalem and again offer sacrifice, this time before the ark of God, which symbolized his presence. When a great vision comes to a godly soul, that soul turns instinctively toward the God who sent it.

Next week we have 'The Dedication of the Temple.' I. Kings viii., 1-11, 62, 63.

C. E. Topic

Sunday, Dec. 6.—Topic—What the heroes of faith teach us. Heb. xi., 1-40.

Junior C. E. Topic.

GETTING SWEET TEMPERS.

Monday, Nov. 30.—Bad temper. Prov. xv., 18.

Tuesday, Dec. 1.—Envy. Luke xv., 29, 30.

Wednesday, Dec. 2.—Pride. II. Kings v., 11.

Thursday, Dec. 3.—Slowness to anger. Prov. xiv., 17.

Friday, Dec. 4.—Not resisting. Matt. v., 39.

Saturday, Dec. 5.—Patience. Rom. xv., 5.

Sunday, Dec. 6.—Topic—How to get sweet tempers. Col. iii., 8-15.

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