

The Sabbath School.

LESSONS FOR MAY,

FIRST SABBATH.

SUBJECT.—*Joseph's Exaltation*.—Gen. 41: 37-49.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Ps. 94: 11. Par. Passages, Ps. 91: 14; Math. 6: 33; 1st Tim. 4: 8.

Vr. 37-39.—Show us in a very striking manner the wisdom of this great King. If all monarchs had been governed by such principles in the choice of their ministers, how much misery would the human race have escaped. The Scriptures declare that wisdom in planning, and skill and energy in executing, like every other mental endowment, come from the spirit of God. Pharaoh saw that Joseph's plan was good in itself; but he also saw that God had sent the dreams in mercy to him and his kingdom, that the most appropriate mark of gratitude that he could offer, would be to honour and exalt God's chosen interpreter; and that thus he would be most likely to obtain the divine blessing on the measures adopted to meet the impending calamity.

In Vr. 40-30.—We have *Joseph's Exaltation*, including a number of particulars. First, the extent of the authority with which he was invested. He was placed over all the land and people of Egypt. Secondly, his official rank. He was to be next to Pharaoh and over all others. "Only on the throne will I be greater than thou." Thirdly, his investiture with the insignia of office;—a—the official seal or signet ring, not probably worn on the finger, as it is said to have been taken off the hand of Pharaoh and put on the hand of Joseph. The seal was possibly attached to a bracelet, and worn on the wrist, which ancient engravings show to have been a very prevalent custom. Among modern nations the seal is an important instrument. But in ancient times seals were of still more consequence, because documents required no signature, but were authenticated by the seal alone. Hence very great care was taken to hinder seals from being imitated or forged; and those who committed such an offence were severely punished.—b—vestures of fine linen. Probably a suit of official robes, made of the fine muslins of India, sold in Egypt at enormous prices, and worn by the Priests, who were the nobles of that country.—c—a chain of gold about his neck. This was in those early times almost uniformly a mark of official distinction.—d—The second of the King's state Chariots is assigned to him, and he ride

are commanded to cry before him, "Bow the knee." In V. 44: Pharaoh pledges to Joseph his own royal dignity as a guarantee that his power should be as unlimited as his own. Fourthly, his social elevation—he was united, by marriage to one of the most illustrious families of Egypt. The city of On, called Avon, in Ezek. 30: 17 and Bethshemesh in Jer. 43: 13, but known in profane history by the name of Heliopolis, or "city of the Sun" was at this time the Egyptian Capital. The Priest or Prince, of the capital city, must have been a man of very high rank.

The exaltation of Joseph, who like Christ, our gospel Joseph was first humbled and then exalted, that he might save his brethren and his father's house—was a surprising contrast to his previous condition. For the persecution of his brethren he had the favour of the King. For the condition of a slave, the rank of Prince. For a prison, a palace. For the toils of servitude Royal power. For fetters of iron, a chain of gold. It was also long delayed. Thirteen years of servitude elapsed from the time of his expulsion from his father's house and protection, before God interfered for his deliverance. Often during that time he may have been ready to faint under the idea that God had forgotten him; and yet he was not left without tokens of the divine care and favour. And still it came unexpectedly. Two long years had shown that the butler had forgotten him; and never perhaps had he less expectation of it than at that time. But the arrangements of God were completed, and the selfishness of the butler accomplished that which would never have been brought about by his gratitude.

Vr. 47-49.—Show us Joseph making provision for the coming famine. Twenty per cent of the produce of the year of plenty were collected and stored up, being probably a tax exacted from the people. In modern times the same taxes have been as much as 70 per cent. Joseph have bought corn at a price of 1/6 to that yielded by the soil of the crop during the year of plenty perhaps never equalled. The Egyptian wheat yielded ten ears or heads on the stalk as many as eight on the root. A handful of straw has never been known before or since.

Explain to the children the leading facts in the history of Joseph; and practically improve the lesson by advertent to Jesus, Joseph's great antitype, to whom alone they as sinners must go to receive the bread of life, even as the Egyptian Joseph, because of his father went to Joseph.