

## \* The Sunday School \*

### BIBLE LESSON.

Abridged from Peloubet's Notes.

Second Quarter.

#### CAPTIVITY OF THE TEN TRIBES.

Lesson XII. Sept. 18.—2 Kings 17: 9-18.  
Read 2 Kings 17: 1-23; Amos 6; Hosea 5.

Commit Verses 13, 14.

#### GOLDEN TEXT.

If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever, 1 Chron. 28: 9.

#### EXPLANATORY.

THE MORAL CAUSES OF THE FALL OF ISRAEL.—Vs. 9-18. These verses are the summary of the causes that led to ruin. It is the divine epitaph on the nation. The sum of it is that the people had come into that condition in which "it was impossible to destroy the sin without at the same time destroying the sinner." This is the state wherein is no hope. God had done all that wisdom and love could do to save them, without success. There was only one thing left to do,—to root out the sin by destroying the sinner.

First, Forgetting God. They forgot God and all he had done for them (v. 7). Hence came sin and weakness. They lost their confidence in God's wisdom and power to defend them as he had done in days of old. His authority waned. His commandments were forgotten or set at naught.

Second, Hypocrisy. 9. DID SECRETLY. Literally, "they covered." They cloaked or covered their idolatry with pretenses that it was a worship of Jehovah. Hypocrisy is always weakness and death.

Third, Idolatry. BUILT . . . HIGH PLACES. Altars in groves on a hill, for worship, sometimes for worship of Jehovah, but often for the licentiousness and revelry of the worship of idols. FROM THE TOWER OF THE WATCHMAN. In lonely spots, to guard vineyards and flocks.

10. IMAGES (R. V. "pillars"), perhaps carved in some figure, but often only obelisks, representing some idol. GROVES. Asherim, wooden images, carved on pillars, of the goddess Asherah, corresponding to the Grecian Venus.

11. WHOM THE LORD CARRIED AWAY, into captivity by the Assyrians. These nations were nearer Assyria, and first attacked, and yet Israel did not take warning, but did the very things which brought evil upon others.

Fourth, Resistance to Good Influences. 13. YET THE LORD TESTIFIED AGAINST (R. V. "unto"). BY ALL THE PROPHETS. Those who speak forth what God would say to men. AND BY ALL THE SEERS. Those who see visions which God reveals. Prophets of every kind were sent.

14. BUT HARDENED THEIR NECKS. A metaphor derived from those oxen who, in spite of all efforts to guide them, hold their necks set and firm in the way they determine to go. It expresses unbending obstinacy and self-will.

Fifth, Unbelief. THAT DID NOT BELIEVE IN THE LORD. They of course knew his existence, but they did not trust in his guidance, in his wisdom and goodness, so as to do what he commanded. They did not commit their ways, their interests, and their future into his hands, but thought their own way was better.

Sixth, Disobedience. 15. THEY REJECTED HIS STATUTES. The natural result of unbelief. AND HIS COVENANT. So the law was called, because it was an agreement between God and his people, he to preserve and defend them, they to obey. (See Deut. 29: 1, 9, 13). HIS TESTIMONIES. His law, which is the testimony he bears for truth and against iniquity. AND . . . FOLLOWED VANITY. Nothingness. Idols who were absolutely powerless to help them. BECAME VAIN. Weak, helpless, with no power to resist attacks.

16. A GROVE. An Asherah. (See on v. 10). Seventh, Cruelty and Crime. 17. CAUSED THEIR SONS . . . TO PASS THROUGH THE FIRE. Not merely "made them pass through the fire for purification," but burnt them with fire, as is said of Ahaz (2 Chron. 28: 3; see 2 Kings 17: 31; Ezek. 16: 21). This was done in the worship of Molech. "The Rabbin tell us that this idol was made of brass, and that the head was that of a calf with a crown upon it. I was made hollow, and a furious fire was kindled within it. . . . When the arms were red hot, the victim was thrown into them, and was almost immediately burned to death, while its cries were drowned by drums." This horrible custom was grounded in part on the notion that children were the dearest possessions of their parents (who should offer their best to God), and in part that as pure and innocent beings, they were the offerings of atonement most certain to pacify the anger of Deity. DIVINATION AND ENCHANTMENTS. These were different ways of seeking to know future events, and of

imposing upon the people. AND SOLD THEMSELVES TO DO EVIL. The metaphor is taken from the practise of men selling themselves into slavery, and so giving themselves wholly up to work the will of their master. This was a widespread custom in the ancient world.

The Result was captivity (v. 18). How could it be said that God removed them out of his sight, and that the ruin of Israel came from moral causes? (1) God permitted it to be done. He would have warded off the enemy if the people had obeyed him. Unseen moral forces are under God's control, as the world and the stars are held in their places by invisible forces.

(2) Irreligion brought weakness. There was no longer any high moral devotion to a great cause, which gives strength almost unconquerable. A guilty conscience is always weakness. (3) Immorality led to degeneracy. It made them physically weak, and it divided the counsels of the nation.

#### ADDITIONAL PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

1. No nation, and no individual, can attain the highest good from life without supreme consecration to God, a lofty ideal, and a holy enthusiasm in the service of God and man.

2. Sin is ungrateful and mean as well as wicked. God's goodness, which has ever blessed our lives, which has done more for us than we can ask or even think, should lead us to love and serve him with our whole heart.

Illustration. A gentleman once said to a wicked man, "You do not look as if you had prospered by your wickedness." "I have not," cried the man. "With half the energy I have spent I might have been a man of property and character. I am a homeless wretch, have been twice in State's prison, and made acquaintance with all sorts of miseries; but 'my worst punishment is in being what I am.'"

3. God does all that is possible to save men from sin and ruin. He puts every kind of obstacle in their path,—warnings, mercies, punishments, entreaties, love,—to make the way of transgressors so hard that they will forsake it and live.

4. There is a limit to probation. There comes a time when it is too late to change; when, as in the case of Esau, repentance, though it be with bitter tears, cannot restore the lost birthright. The flames have gone so far that the building cannot be saved.

Illustration. Men can ill-treat their bodies, and disregard the laws of health, up to a certain point, and yet recovery be possible. But there is a point, to go beyond which is incurable disease and death. No medicine, no nursing can save them. So with strong drink, there is a time while the habit is forming when it is possible, however difficult, to leave off. But if the drinking goes on, the habit is so confirmed, the disease of the body is so inwrought, the will so weak, that the drunkard may pray and strive with bitter tears for release, and yet go straight to his cups again. The same is true of all bad habits.

Mr. Birch, an English evangelist, tells of a dying infidel whom he visited by request. The man had long been ill and in great need. Mr. Birch, with Christian liberality, had supplied his wants, and now the dying man told him he had sent for him, not to speak about religion, for he didn't believe in it, but to thank Mr. Birch for his great kindness to him and his. Mr. Birch then said: "Will you answer me one question?" "Yes," said the dying man, "provided it is not about religion." Lifting his heart in prayer to God, Mr. Birch said: "You know I have to preach to-night; many will be gathered to hear—mostly poor people, who will soon have, like you, to face death; I ask you, What shall I preach about?" Silence for awhile; then, with tear-dimmed eye and trembling voice, the unexpected answer was given: "Mr. Birch, preach Christ to them; preach Christ." And then, utterly broken down, the dying sinner sought mercy from God for his own soul.—Young People's Paper.

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As the result of a runaway at Fortune Bridge, P. E. Island, Frank McDonald and John Reilly were seriously injured. McDonald's arm was crushed to jelly and necessitating amputation. Both of Reilly's feet were badly injured.

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