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Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS. STUDIES IN JEWISH HISTORY.

Third Quarter.

Lesson VI. Aug. 11. 1 Samuel 12: 1-15.

SAMUEL'S FAREWELL ADDRESS.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things he hath done for you." - 1 Sam. 12: 24.

EXPLANATORY.

I. THE EXAGGERATION FETTER. 11: 14, 15. When the 330,000 Israelites were returning from Saul's great battle and victory, which took place on the east of the Jordan, they naturally came to the fords of the Jordan opposite Jericho, where their fathers first crossed into the promised land. Here they forded the river and came to Gilgal, where their fathers had their first camp, and which was now a famous sanctuary and centre of religious life. It is inferred by some, from the expression (11: 15) "before the Lord," that the site of the covenant was at Gilgal at this time.

Here Samuel proposed that they hold a sacrificial feast, and renew the kingdom. Amid sacrifices and peace offerings, Saul was acknowledged to be king over all Israel, and his right was never again disputed. At the same time, Samuel, formally and publicly, laid down his office of judge, just as Washington laid down his rank of commander-in-chief of our armies. Thus the old era of the Judges, lasting about four centuries, had passed away, and the new era of the kingdom had dawned.

II. SAMUEL REVIEWS HIS PUBLIC LIFE. 1. And Samuel said unto all Israel. Assembled at Gilgal on the occasion just described. Of course he must have made this address to the leaders only, and they made it known to the others.

His NOBLE UNSELFISHNESS. Behold I have hearkened unto your voice, etc. He not only retired to private life, but he aided the new king with his counsel, and did all he could to make a success of the new kingdom which was established contrary to his own judgment.

His PATRIOTISM. A whole life devoted to the good of the people. 2. And now, behold, the king walketh before you. No doubt, here pointing to Saul by his side. And I am old: probably about 70 years old. Perhaps he was more worn and feeble than many of the same years, on account of the burdens of care and anxiety which had pressed upon him. And behold my sons are with you. These, too, had of course to give up their studies as judges in Beersheba (8: 2), and retire to private life.

His PURE AND UPRIGHT LIFE. And I have walked before you from my childhood. His whole life, from the time he entered the temple service as a little boy at Shiloh (3: 11), had been lived before the public observation. There was nothing concealed. There were no unknown deeds. The people could bear witness to the whole.

3. Behold, here I am. Samuel puts himself on his trial. The people are to be the accusers. Jehovah and his representative, Saul, are the judges. And before his anointed: King Saul, who had been designated as king by God. Whose ox, whose ass, whose I have taken away from the people for my own use. Whom have I defrauded? He had never used his position or power to gain anything for himself unjustly. Of whose hand have I received any bribe? The Septuagint adds, even a pair of shoes. "A proverbial expression for a mere trifle, a paltry bribe."

THREE WITNESSES FOR SAMUEL. 4. And they said. THE PEOPLE were unanimous in their testimony. Not one could be found who had been unjustly treated by Samuel.

5. The Lord is witness against you: that you have acknowledged the purity of my life. THE LORD Jehovah, knows that what I say is true. And his anointed, KING SAUL, witnessed to the people's public confession.

A NOBLE LIFE. (1) Samuel did not live his noble and upright life by being sheltered from temptation, and preserved from difficulty and danger; but he was assailed by the same temptations which overthrew his own sons and the sons of Eli. He stood firm, and grew stronger and better in the blasts before which so many mighty men have fallen. (2) The source of his strength and his goodness was in his religious life. He lived near to God in sweet communion. He worshipped in the temple. He went to God in prayer. He was obedient to His will. (3) His character was a source of comfort and blessing to himself. He could respect himself. He could rejoice in his past as well as hope for his future. (4) Samuel's life was an example and inspiration to the whole nation, tending to elevate the character of the people, to inspire the young to noble living, to be a power for good so long as the world endures.

III. A REVIEW OF THE PAST HISTORY OF ISRAEL, SHOWING THE ONLY SOURCE AND CONDITION OF PROSPERITY. We miss the whole meaning of divine providence if we look at events separately and incidentally, as we miss the whole meaning of the Bible if we read it in detached portions and texts.

6. And Samuel said unto the people, It is the Lord, etc. The Hebrew should be rendered, "even the Eternal that advanced Moses and Aaron." Advanced Moses and Aaron. Appointed them to office, lit. made them. All their power and glory came from God, through obedience to Him. That brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt. In their early history the hand of God was very apparent.

7. Now therefore stand still. Listen, be attentive, as in a court of justice, to hear the plea. That I may reason with you. That I may argue with you, show clearly to you what is your way of wisdom and safety by means of your own past history. The light on the future shines from the past. All the righteous acts of the Lord. Punishments for sin and deliverances from distress, alike prove the righteousness of Jehovah in His covenant with Israel.

9. They forgot. As he said them. These words show a direct citation of Judg 2: 17, 3: 4, 2. Forgetting God was shown by the worship of idols as Baal and Ashtoreth (ver. 10), the neglect of the worship of the true God, and disobedience to His commands. In the same way forgetting God is shown in our own day.

THESE GREAT OPPRESSORS. First, Into the hand of Sisera: the general of the Canaanites, under King Jabin, about 1300 B. C. (Judg. 4: 1-3), of Hazor, near Lake Merom. This oppression was very severe. It was enforced by 900 chariots of iron, and lasted 20 years. It was from this oppression that God, by Deborah and Barak, delivered Israel.

Second, And into the hand of the Philistines. A warlike and commercial race along the shores of the Mediterranean. They had their strongholds right among the Israelites, as the Jebusites held the fortress of Jerusalem even to David's reign.

THIRD, Into the hand of the king of Moab. The oppressor of the Moabites under Eglon, from which they were delivered by Ehud (Judg. 3: 12-30). This oppression lasted 18 years, B. C. 1387-1369. The Moabites dwelt East of the Dead Sea.

DELIVERANCE. 10. And they cried unto the Lord. The returned to the only true source of help, repented, turned from their sins, promised to live better lives. Baalim and Ashtaroth.

11. And the Lord sent, etc. Four typical deliverances of the nation are mentioned. (1) Jerubbaal, who brought the Midianite oppression to an end (Judg. 6-8). His original name Gideon was changed to Jerubbaal (let Baal please) for his bold act of piety in destroying the altar of Baal (Judg. 6: 31, 32). (2) Bedan, Probably Bedan is a copyist's error for Horak, which is the reading of the Sept. and Syriac. The letters of the two words are such alike. In this case the reference will be to the deliverance from the Canaanite oppression already mentioned (ver. 9; Judg. 4: 6 ff.). (3) Jephthah, the Gileadite, who routed the Ammonites (Judg. 11). (4) Samuel. That Samuel should thus mention himself need not surprise us if we remember (2) that the apparent abruptness of the mention is due to the condensation of the narrative, which gives only a summary of the original speech; (b) that he has resigned his office, and standing as it were outside the era of the Judges; (c) that he reviews it as a whole; (c) that in order to point his rebuke of the Israelites for ingratitude to Jehovah in asking a king, it was necessary to prove that he had not forsaken them, but had continued His deliverances down to the present; (d) Samuel's rebuke is intended to arouse a remembrance of God's deliverances (7: 12-15), the last as well as one of the greatest.

IV. THE CONDITIONS OF PROSPERITY THE SAME UNDER THE NEW ORDER. 12. And when ye saw that Nahash (11: 1-11). See last lesson. The threatening attitude of Nahash and the Ammonites was one of the reasons why the Israelites were so anxious for a king.

13. Now therefore, etc. You have attained your wish, the king is inaugurated, the kingdom established. But do not imagine that any different principles will prevail in the future from those in your past history.

Two courses were open before the nation. FIRST COURSE. 14. If ye will fear the Lord, etc. Samuel here mentions five conditions of well-being for the people and the king in their new relation: (1) Fear the Lord; (2) serve Him; (3) obey His voice; (4) not rebel against the commandment of the Lord; (5) continue pure. These may be regarded as the essential ones. Indeed, the whole may be summed up in this one word, obedience. Then shall the hand of the Lord be against you. If God be for us, who can be against us? So, if God be against us, who can be for us? The question is, whence thus punished? (1) Because from the nature of the case, obedience was necessary to the true success of the people. Every law, every requirement, was made for the purpose of elevating, purifying, enlarging, ennobling the people. (2) If they were disobedient, the Lord would therefore be to aid and strengthen the things which would work their ruin. (3) To punish them who would tend to bring them back to disobedience. (4) This course would also be an object lesson to all the nations around them.

"Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep." By virtue of its age and value and previous associations, this little prayer has become a classic. It must be very ancient, for who can tell when or by whom it was written? Thousands, from the silver-haired pilgrim to the lisping infant, sink to nightly slumber murmuring the simple petition. It has trembled on the lips of the dying. One instance was that of an old saint of eighty-six years, whose mind had so failed that he could not recognize his own daughter. "Very touching," says the relator, "was the scene one night after retiring, as he called his daughter as if she was his mother, saying like a little child, 'Mother, come here by my bed and hear me say my prayers before I go to sleep.' She came near. He clasped his white, withered hands, and reverently said:

Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray thee, Lord, my soul to keep; If I should die before I wake, I pray thee, Lord, my soul to take; then quietly fell asleep and woke in heaven."

A distinguished judge, who many years ago died in New York in extreme old age, said that his mother had taught the stanza to him in infancy, and that he never omitted it at night. John Quincy Adams made a similar assertion, and an old sea captain declared that even before he became a decided Christian, he never forgot it on turning in at night. Selected.

A Remarkable Conversion.

A dying publican's wife, in England, recently gave the following encouraging testimony, as narrated by the evangelist who visited her. He says: "I was asked to go to a public house in Nottingham and see the landlord's wife, who was dying. I found her rejoicing in Christ as her Saviour. I asked her how she had found the Lord. 'Reading that,' she replied, 'hending me a torn piece of a newspaper. I looked at it and found it was part of an American newspaper, containing an extract from one of Spurgeon's sermons, which extract had been the means of her conversion. 'Where did you get this newspaper from?' I asked. She answered: 'It was wrapped round a parcel which was sent me from Australia.' Talk about the hidden life of a good seed! Think of that, a sermon—preached in London, conveyed to America, an extract reprinted in a newspaper there, that paper sent to Australia, part torn off (as we should say accidentally) for the parcel dispatched to England, and after all its wanderings, conveying the message of salvation to that woman's soul. God's Word shall not return to Him void.—Ez.

Do Not Think for a Moment that catarrh will in time wear out. The theory is false. Men try to believe it because it would be pleasant if true, but it is not, as all know. Do not let an acute attack of cold in the head remain unattended. It is liable to develop into catarrh. You can rid yourself of the cold and avoid all chance of catarrh by using Dr. Sage's Catarrh Remedy. If already afflicted rid yourself of this troublesome disease speedily by the same means. At all druggists.

"A lie stains the soul, but a doubt eats into it."—George Ethel.

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