

BEREAN NOTES.

Feb. 27.] LESSON IX. THE ARK BROUGHT TO ZION. [B.C. 1042.] [2 Sam. 6. 1-15.]

HOME READINGS.

MONDAY—2 Sam. 6. 1-15. TUESDAY—Exod. 25. 10-22. WEDNESDAY—1 Sam. 4. 1-11. THURSDAY—1 Sam. 5. 1-12. FRIDAY—1 Heb. 9. 1-12. SATURDAY—Psa. 24. 1-10. SUNDAY—Psa. 132. 1-18.

TOPIC: Earnest service pleasing to God.

GOLDEN TEXT: The Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. Psa. 132. 13.

TOPICAL OUTLINE.

An earnest service.— 1. Begun, verse 1-5. 2. Impeded, verse 6-11. 3. Completed, verse 12-15.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES.

Num. 10. 33-35; 1 Sam. 6. 19-21; Psa. 132. 1-9; Exod. 25. 18-22; Psa. 80. 1; 150. 3-5; Lev. 10. 1-3; 1 Chron. 15. 2, 11-15; Gen. 22. 1-13; 39. 23; Prov. 3. 9-10; Matt. 10. 42; Psa. 30. 11, 12; Luke 15. 25; Dent. 6. 5; Eccles. 9. 10; Col. 3. 23.

DOCTRINE: God works inseparably from pity. James 1. 27; 2. 26.

GENERAL STATEMENT.

What wilt Jerusalem, and the king, and the court, and the army of Israel do without the ark of the Lord? So the long-cherished purpose and desire of David are about being fulfilled. In our lesson, according to the TITLE, we see "The ark brought to Zion," and this movement is according to the Lord's will as recorded in the GOLDEN TEXT, "The Lord hath chosen," etc.

David having fortified Mount Zion, routed the Philistine invaders, and formed an Alliance with Hiram, king of Tyre, next erected a palace as his official residence, thus making Zion the capital of the nation.

But the government was a theocracy; and Jehovah, its head, chose Zion to be also the capital of his kingdom. (See Psa. 68. 16, and Golden Text.)

As such, it must be the dwelling-place of the ark of his covenant, the symbol of his presence. Thus the "City of David," chap. 5. 9, became "the City of God."

Pa. 46. 4; 48. 1, 2. Acting doubtlessly by divine direction, David erected for its reception a tabernacle on Mount Zion. As its service was to be different from that of the Mosaic tabernacles then located at Gibeon, some four or five miles distant, it was probably somewhat different in its style.

Our lesson describes the removal of the ark to its new place. The account should be read of its taking from Shiloh, its capture by the Philistines ninety-eight years previous, and its fortunes until it reached Kirjath-jearim, where it still remained. See 1 Sam. chap. 4-7.

1-5. The first attempt. Compare 1 Chron. 13. 1-14. "We inquired not at it in the days of Saul," is a sad confession of the general neglect of the ark by both priests and Levites as well as the king.

Religion was at a low ebb, and David sought its genuine revival after the true spirit of the Mosaic institutions. As a first step he prudently consulted his chief men, that the movement might be a national one and in earnest.

The popular assent was given to it as "right." THIRTY THOUSAND MEN accompanied David to Kirjath-jearim, here called BAALBETH-JUDAH. (The word FROM should read TO.)

For a description of the ark see Exod. 25. 10-22, and Freeman, 143. A great mistake was made at the outset. The law was very explicit in its directions concerning this sacred chest. Only the priests might touch it; in removing it the priests must carry it by the staves of acacia wood, inserted in its rings; and it was said, "they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die." Num. 4. 5, 15.

Only on the theory of ignorance of these precepts can we explain the employment of a cart drawn by oxen, while the use of a NEW CART shows a wish to avoid everything profane. But such ignorance shows the great need of a reformation.

6-11. The disaster. The procession moved, and the king and people broke forth in songs of joy, accompanied with instruments of various kinds. It had reached NACHAR, a spot now unknown, when suddenly the OXEN SO SHOOK OR STUMBLING that the ark seemed in danger of falling, and Uzzah took hold of it to secure its safety. This was the second mistake. Had not the first been committed, this would not have occurred. So does one sin prepare the way for another.

For his ERROR (rashness) Uzzah died by God's act on the spot. Did he not know better? He must have received instructions from his father, in whose house the ark had been so long. Perhaps familiarity had made him irreverent and careless. He did not stop to think or remember—the frequent plea of sinners. But it was his business to think.

Obedience was in God's sight of more consequence than the ark itself. By this startling judgment, directly connected with Uzzah's act, he declared his sense of the ark's sacredness and his own holiness.

and set men to inquiring after his law, as well as stopped all further innovation.

DAVID WAS DISPLEASED. Grieved, astonished, and alarmed. Consternation fell upon the throng. AFRAID OF THE LORD. As he might well be. He trembled in view of his new ideas of the holiness and terribleness of God, and knew not what next to expect. For the first time he saw that he had gone blindly at this business, and he dared go no further with it.

12-15. The second attempt. Compare 1 Chron. 15. and 16. In the THREE MONTHS that followed this calamity David learned that it befell them because they disobeyed God, and "sought him not after the due order."

Pity he had not inquired earlier. He also heard of God's blessing upon OBED-EDOM, in whose house the ark was, upon his person, his family, and his possessions, and was thus encouraged to believe that it might be safely removed if it should be done rightly.

He resolved to try and to do all things as commanded. The priests and Levites, nine hundred and sixty-two in number, "sanctified themselves," and went down to learn the ark and perform the musical service. "All Israel"—vast numbers of the people—attended.

It is supposed that on leaving Jerusalem they broke out in singing Psa. 15; as the priests entered Obed-edom's house, Psalm 132. 1-7; as they came out with the ark 9-18. After marching SIX PAGES, and seeing that "God helped the Levites" and did them no harm, double sacrifices were offered, David laying aside his royal robes, and, clad like a priest in an ephod, dancing in holy joy with all his strength.

On starting again they sang Psalm 78, and on approaching the city and tabernacle, Psalm 24 responsively. Having placed the ark in the tent, additional sacrifices were offered, and free provisions distributed to the people.

The ark was never restored to the tabernacle of Moses. The offering of sacrifice and the whole service of the ritual continued there until the temple was built, thirty-eight years later. For the tabernacle on Zion a distinct service was provided, under the care of the Levites, with Asaph at their head, of which sacrifice formed no part, and with no priests except to blow the trumpets as the call to worship.

It consisted of song, prayer, and a recital of God's dealings with suitable applications, a primitive style of preaching. 1 Chron. 15. 4, 37-40. It was more spiritual than that at Gibeon, and was a great transition step in the line of preparation for the brighter and still more spiritual worship of the Gospel. Acts 15. 16.

Lessons. 1. Truly, an earnest service entered upon and continued with energy of soul and persevered in with a desire of honoring him is pleasing to God. A half-hearted service neither pleases nor honors him. Rom. 12. 1; Eccl. 9. 10; John 9. 4; Rev. 3. 15, 16; Gal. 1. 16.

2. Blessed is the home where God dwells and is revered. The family of Obed-edom found it so. Every family should have its daily reading of the Bible and prayer, seeking his will and asking his grace. Josh. 24. 15; Gen. 18. 19, 3. Let us learn from the case of Uzzah God's hatred of sin, even of what men call the smallest sins. He notes all sin. He has mercy for all penitent souls, but the disobedient and impenitent ought to be AFRAID OF HIM. Rom. 2. 4-8. Psa. 119. 120; Eccl. 12. 14; 1 Cor. 15. 22.

4. How thankful we should be that we have God's word, so that we need not be in ignorance of his will. Let us study it. Psa. 119. 105; John 5. 29; 2 Tim. 3. 15.

LONG AND SHORT SERMONS.—In the current number of the *Sword and Trowel* Mr. Spurgeon writes under the head of "Personal Recollections": "We had heard of Dr. Brock a story of his youth, and we at dinner-time inquired as to its truthfulness, and he replied, 'Oh, yes, that's right enough.' It seems that John Angell James, of Birmingham, remarked in company that the longest sermon he had ever preached was in a town in Devonshire, where had held forth for more than two hours, but he added, 'I never could make out how it was; for I had no intention of being so long; it seemed as if the time would not go, and yet, when I came to look at my watch, it had gone, and I had actually preached two hours.' Dr. Brock remarked that he could explain the riddle, for, being a lad at the time mentioned, and wishing to hear as much as possible of the good divine, he had taken a key with him, and sitting on the back of the o'clock had managed to stop it every now and then, and so decrease the speed of time, and lengthen the sermon.

'At William Brock,' said Mr James, 'you were full of fun then, and I fear it is not all gone out of you now. I dare say you would do the same again if you had the opportunity.' The company were not a little amused when William Brock replied most decidedly that he would do nothing of the kind; that the production of a long sermon was the act of his youth and inexperience, and that now with the key in his hand he would be far more likely to put on the hand and cut the sermon short than in any way to prolong it."

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