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BIBLE LESSONS.

STUDIES IN JEWISH HISTORY.

Third Quarter.

Lesson V. Aug. 4. I Samuel 9: 13-27.

SAUL CHOSEN OF THE LORD.

GOLDEN TEXT.

By me kings reign and princes decree justice.—Prov. 8: 15.

EXPLANATORY.

GOD'S GUIDING PROVIDENCE.—Vers. 15-21.

First. Saul guided to Samuel. Saul was living with his father on his farm, somewhere in Benjamin, probably at Gibeah, so often mentioned in connection with Saul. His father's asses had strayed away. Saul, with one servant, went forth in search of the asses, and after seeking two or three days in vain, they drew near to Ramah, where Samuel lived, and decided to inquire of the prophet about the asses. Some young woman drawing water from a well just outside of the city, directed them to Samuel, who was just then going out of the gate to a sacred festival.

Second. Samuel guided to Saul. Now the Lord had told Samuel in his dream, Literally, had uncovered Samuel's ear. The revelation was made privately to Samuel. 'I will send thee a man. God sent Saul, though apparently he went of himself. God controlled the influences which led Saul in that direction. That he may see my people out of the hands of the Philistines. These words clearly imply that at the time they were spoken, the Philistines were harassing and oppressing the Israelites. Because their cry is come unto me: as recorded in the last lesson.

17. And when Samuel saw Saul. This verse, it must be remembered, follows closely on ver. 14, the statements of verses 15 and 16 being parenthetical. The young Saul and his servant came up to accost the seer on his way to the sacred height; Samuel, at once impressed by the great stature and splendid beauty of the stranger coming towards him, asks this master silently, 'Is this then he of whom thou whisperest me yesterday, to whom the destinies of thy people were to be confined? The words, Behold the man, etc., were the silent answer of God to the silent prayer of his old servant.

18. Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate. The open space or market-place at the gate of the city.

19. Go up before me. Addressed to Saul only. The desiring the young stranger to precede him to the public place of sacrifice was a sign of distinguished honor from one of Samuel's rank to a young unknown wayfarer like Saul. Unto the high place: the hill-top, where people were assembled at a sacrificial festival, described more fully in ver. 22. For ye shall eat with me. Here the verb is plural, and the invitation includes the servant as well as Saul. Will tell thee all that is within this heart. These inmost thoughts and aspirations: Not merely about the asses, which Samuel tells him at once.

20. For thine asses, etc. set not thy mind on them. Be not anxious about them. For they are found; and even if they were not, the loss is of no account, for on whom is all the desire of Israel? Not 'all that Israel desire,' but, as in Rev. Ver., all that is desirable in Israel: all the honor, wealth and power which is held as precious, or may be the object of desire.

21. And Saul answered and said. He was filled not only with awe, but humility, as he contrasted his present condition with the prospects held out to him. A Benjaminite, of the smallest of the tribes. The warlike tribe of Benjamin, the smallest except Manasseh, at the time of the numbering in the wilderness (Num. 1: 37), was reduced to insignificance by the terrible slaughter recorded in Judg. 20: 46.

GOD'S GUIDING PROVIDENCE. In this story we have an illustration of how God guides men and controls affairs without interfering in any way with the free will and choice of men.

II. THE NOMINATION OF SAUL FOR KING. 22. And Samuel brought them into the parlor: or the chamber, a room at the high place specially used for sacrificial feasts. Made them sit in the chiefest place. Literally, gave them a place at the head of those who were invited. About thirty persons. Only the more distinguished citizens would be specially invited to the chamber. The rest would feast in the open air outside.

23. And Samuel said unto the cook. The meaning of this statement is simply this: all that took place in the meeting of the prophet and Saul at the sacrificial feast, and subsequently in Samuel's house, was arranged for beforehand; every event was foreseen and provided for, even the trivial details.

24. The Shewbread. Rev. Ver., thine. The right leg was the priest's portion (Lev. 7: 32), which Samuel had received. The reservation of the leg for Saul was a mark of honor. Josephus calls it a "royal portion."

Kept for thee since I said. Heb., saying, I have invited, etc. I have kept it in reference to the festival for which I have arranged.

25. And when they came down: after the sacrificial festival was over, Samuel commended with Saul upon the top of the house. On the housetop they would be open to the public view, so that all could see the honor Samuel showed his guest, while they would have opportunity for undisturbed conversation.

How much Samuel told Saul we do not know; but doubtless they talked over the political and religious situation, the danger from the Philistines, and the greater danger from the departure of Israel from the true God, and the various ways of dealing with these vital issues. He may have instructed him also in the duties of a king, and the best way of assuming his new duties.

27. Bid the servant pass on: so that Samuel might be alone with Saul. Thereupon, producing a vial of oil, he poured it on his head, adding the kiss of homage; and telling him that Jehovah had anointed him to be captain over his inheritance. The prophet named three incidents which would happen to Saul on his return, as signs that Jehovah was with him; the first an assurance of the safety of his father's cattle, as the prophet has said; the second, a present which was to be an earnest of the future offerings of the people; the third, the descent of the spirit of Jehovah upon him, causing him to prophesy and turning him into another man.

WHY SAUL WAS CHOSEN. (1) He was a Benjaminite. By selecting a king from this least and nearly extinct tribe (Judges 20), divine wisdom designed: to remove all grounds of jealousy among the other tribes. (2) Saul was tall and commanding, and that his extraordinary weight in the estimates of rural admirers. (3) Saul had in him the possibilities of a great, noble, useful king. He had the military instinct, a capacity for generalship.

Possibilities. There lie in every one of us almost infinite possibilities. God has made us to be kings and priests. He has brought every one of us to a king-dom. Power, usefulness, goodness, influence, helpfulness, victory over sin, are all before us. Out of the little acre grows the oak. The helpless babe in the nurseries becomes Moses the statesman and general. Weak and sinful human souls become saints in white and angels excelling in strength.

III. PREPARATION OF SAUL FOR HIS KINGDOM.—I Sam. 10: 6-10. In addition to his natural qualifications, Saul was especially prepared to assume his kingdom by the Holy Spirit of God, who "turned him into another man," and "gave him another heart."

IV. THE ELECTION OF SAUL TO BE KING.—I Sam. 10: 17-25. It was very important for the fair fame of Samuel that the nomination of a king should not seem to be determined by any partial favoritism on his part. It was necessary that respect should be secured for the new king, by his appointment being manifestly under the divine direction and control. In due time, therefore, the tribes were convened at Mizpeh for the choice of a king by lot.

V. THE INAUGURATION OF SAUL.—I Sam. 11: 1-15. Some of the people, the roughs, the evil-minded, refused to acknowledge Saul as king, and he himself went to his home in Gibeah, holding his peace till his hour should come. It was not long. Israel was attacked by an invading army of Ammonites from the East under Mahash. Saul summoned the warriors of the nation; and 330,000 men assembled around his standard. A great victory was gained, which established the confidence of the people in the new leader, and his authority was confirmed. He still had the aid and counsel of Samuel.

His entry upon a career that might have ended in untold uselessness and blessedness.

A Bunch of Chrysanthemums.

He was an old man. Of this fact I became conscious as I seated myself beside him in the well-lit street car. Yes, unmistakably his brow was marred with years. Opposite sat a maiden, with clint of gold in her sunny hair, and eyes that reminded one of wet violets. The sweet, childish smile curved into a smile as if some bright memory of happy association were in her thought. What a contrast between this bright, fresh bit of God's creation and the withered form at my side! I found myself studying the aged face, while the hand that I picked up was a bunch of chrysanthemums which were held in the trembling fingers. How I wish it were in my power to describe those blossoms; such clusters: white as a snow-drift! Immaculate purity of color relieved against bunches of golden glory, yellow like the dandelions we pick in the fields of our childhood, and deep maroon tints that set you thinking of damask roses.

But the face that bent over the chrysanthemums, that was more wonderful still. Silver the hair, furrowed the brow, weaker bent the form, but radiant over all a look that made you feel that this voyager had weathered the storms of life, and was coming gently and triumphantly into port. Passages from an old time book came to me: "There remained, therefore, a rest for the people of God." "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness." After all, what did I know of the man before me? Truly, nothing! But around the snowy locks was there not a halo, such as the old painters used to give to their subjects? The kind, appreciative eyes betokened that the God of beauty was his God. Others might worship him as the God of conscience—as for this man, he had reached a higher plane, hence he saw all things clearly.

Holding the flowers in a tender clasp, he left the car as I sat pondering. Somewhere in the ripe, rich years, the golden, mellow years that sun the great future when all earthly harvests are garnered, shall it not be granted me to see this face again?

My aged neighbor goes before. "Do you serene and silent she says: Shall we not meet as heretofore? Some summer morning?"—Church at Work.

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