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INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS.

FIRST QUARTER: STUDIES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH.

B. C. 941. LESSON III. THE COVENANT RENEWED; OR, COURAGE REWARDED. 2 Chron. 15. 8-15. Commit to memory verses 10-12. January 20th.

EXPLANATORY.

THESE WORDS. Words are often mightily spoken words, infused with the magnetism of the speaker, are mightier; but prophetic words, freighted with a message from the Most High, and bearing divine authority, are mightiest of all. The prophecy. Outlined in verses 1-7; reminding the king and people of privileges lost by the nation's backsliding, which might now be regained by renewed earnestness. Oded. The context (ver. 1) shows that this should read "Azariah the son of Oded." Probably the words were dropped by a copyist. He took courage. To reform vices which had fastened upon the mass of the people, and which infested even the royal palace, (see verse 16,) required courage of the highest order. Every true reformer must needs be a brave man. Abominable idols. Every sinful habit is an idol; for it takes God's place in our affections, and shuts him out of our heart. To cast it down from its throne there must be principle, will and firmness. [Teacher, apply to habits of evil temper, profanity, tobacco, strong drink, etc.] Mount Ephraim. The territory of the Ten Tribes wherein Aaa had made conquests. Renewed the altar. True reform consists in building up as well as in casting down. Those who have lost their idols will soon replace them unless something better be supplied. Before the porch. In front of the Holy Place, where Solomon had consecrated it sixty years before.

GATHERED ALL JUDAH. There is power to stir the feelings in a mass of people assembled for the worship of God. From the day of Pentecost down to the present work of Mr. Moody, great assemblages have been important factors in great revivals. Strangers. People of the northern kingdom, now widely separated in character from Judah. Simeon. A tribe located south-west of Judah, but attached to the other kingdom, into which most of its families had removed. Fell to him. There is something in sincere, single-hearted piety which distinguishes its possessor, and draws men to him as the magnet attracts kindred metal. The people love to follow leaders who have God with them, or who, as Mr. Lincoln said, "on God's side." Gathered themselves. Not only called by the king's proclamation, but led by their own desires. It was the nobler, purer element from all the tribes meeting at their religious center, as the silver in solution gathers around the pole of the galvanic battery. [Teacher, show the value to young people of attending religious meetings, church, prayer-meeting, etc.]

THEY OFFERED. When the heart is awakened to realize God's grace, it is led to hearty and willing surrender. Religion that is real and thorough will open the purse. Spoil. Perhaps a part of the booty taken from the Ethiopian host. Of what God gives us a portion should be given back to him, to betoken his ownership of all. [Let children learn early to give their own money in the Sunday-school and the church.] They entered into a covenant. The revival enthusiasm swept over the vast assembly. Each person present pledged himself to an entire consecration to God and his cause. All their heart. "We make nothing of our religion if we do not make heart work of it."—M. Henry. God will have no partial service: he accepts only all.

PUT ME TO DEATH. This was no new law, but simply the enforcement of the old one. If it had been maintained throughout the earlier history it would have been better both for Israel and for the world. Now, religion is more widely spread abroad, and can depend upon spiritual forces only; but in those ages the truth of God and the salvation of mankind hung at issue with one small people. Let those who censure this sternness remember that, but for these "Old Testament severities," our civilization and our enlightenment would not exist. Loud voice. It was one day of true living. For once the heart of the nation throbbled in unison with its God—a type of what shall be hereafter when the church on the footstool becomes the church before the Throne. Rejoicing. Entire submission to God gives entire joy. [Teacher, let your scholars know that sin is bitterness, and religion is joy.] Rest. There was peace without, and there was peace within; foes around were stilled, and hearts at home were calm and rejoicing with the overflowings of divine love.

GOLDEN TEXT: Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded. 2 Chron. 15, 7.

DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION: True consecration. The next lesson is 2 Chron. 17, 1-10.

BREAK HIM OF IT.

In our homes we are liable to overlook noisy measures, and overlook more powerful influences which work silently. Some years ago, when I was Principal of the New Jersey Conference Seminary, a gentleman came to place his son in the institution. When he had made his arrangements, and was about to depart, and had got as far as the door, he stopped to make a final remark. Said he, "You will find John truthful, obedient, and affectionate. He is a good boy in general, but (here he assumed a stern look, and spoke in a stern voice) he has one very bad habit. He has learned to smoke, and (more sternly) I want you to break him of it" (looking fiercely at John, to make the tremendous declaration more impressive and overwhelming)—"I want you to break him of it, if you have to break his neck!" And then, taking off his hat, he drew a cigar from the lining, put it in his mouth, and said, "John, go and get me a match." Of course I could only let "expressive silence" signify my sense of the important duty I was expected to undertake; but I inwardly determined that if John's neck was to be broken for following his father's example, the father himself must do the deed. I will not affirm that cases of gross inconsistency like this are numerous; but who will say that they are few? Too often parental precept goes in one direction, and parental example in another. A man of forty years, who prides himself on his strength of character and his intelligence, calls upon his sons of ten or fifteen years to show a degree of wisdom which he himself has not attained, and a degree of self-mastery to which he fails to prove himself equal. He gives a noisy command and adds a noisy threat, and then, by his own conduct, utterly undoes his own attempted good work. The silent power is the greater.—J. J. Crane, D. D., in S. S. Times.

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