



LESSON IV.—OCT. 22.

Ezra's Journey to Jerusalem.

Ezra viii., 21-32. Memory verses 21-23. Read chapters vii., and viii.

Golden Text.

"The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him."—Ezra, viii., 22.

Home Readings.

- M. Ezra vii., 6-20.—The King's Decree.
 T. Ezra vii., 21-28.—The King's Gifts.
 W. Ezra viii., 21-32.—Ezra's Journey to Jerusalem.
 Th. Ezra ix., 1-9.—Ezra's Prayer.
 F. Ezra ix., 10-15.—The Prayer Continued.
 S. Psa. lxxvi. — God our Refuge,
 Su. II. Cor. vi., 11-16.—Be Separate.

Lesson Text.

Supt. — 21. Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of A-ha'va, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.

School.—22. For I was ashamed to require of the King a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy, in the way; because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him.

23. So we fasted, and besought our God for this; and he was intreated of us.

24. Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sher-e-bi'ah, Hash-a-bi'ah, and ten of their brethren with them.

25. And weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering of the house of our God, which the king, and his counsellors, and his lords, and all Is-ra-el there present, had offered.

26. I even weighed unto their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels an hundred talents, and of gold an hundred talents;

27. Also twenty basons of gold, of a thousand drams; and two vessels of fine copper, precious as gold.

28. And I said unto them, ye are holy unto the Lord; the vessels are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a free-will offering, unto the Lord God of your fathers.

29. Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chief of the priests and the Le'vites, and chief of the fathers of Is-ra-el, at Je-ru'sa-lem, in the chambers of the house of the Lord.

30. So took the priests and the Le'vites the weight of the silver, and the gold; and the vessels, to bring them to Je-ru'sa-lem unto the house of our God.

31. Then we departed from the river A-ha'va on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Je-ru'sa-lem; and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way.

32. And we came to Je-ru'sa-lem, and abode there three days.

The Bible Class.

God is our Guide.—Psa. xlviii., 14; xxv., 9; xxxii., 8; lxxiii., 24; lxxviii., 52; John x., 4; xvi., 13; Psa. xxxi., 3; Rev. vii., 17; Isa. xlix., 10; lviii., 11; Ex. xv., 13; Rom. viii., 14.

Suggestions.

Some weeks ago we studied the first part of the book of Ezra, learning of the return of about fifty thousand of the exiled Jews to Jerusalem for the purpose of rebuilding that city, and the temple of Jehovah.

It was in the year B.C. 458, seventy-eight years after the first return, and fifteen years after the deliverance of the Jews in the Persian Empire through Esther, that Ezra, set out for Jerusalem.

Ezra, a learned scribe, and Levite, a Jew born in captivity, was about forty years of age when Artaxerxes, the King of Persia, that that time, gave to him a letter decreeing that Ezra and as many Jews as wished to follow, should go up to Jerusalem. Not only were they given leave to return to

their own land, but large offerings of gold and silver towards the service of the temple were given them to carry with them. The king also decreed that the priests and all those who in any way served God in the temple, should be exempted from taxes, also that Ezra should set over the Israelites judges well instructed in the law of God. Ezra's mission was chiefly to proclaim and instruct the people in the law, for those who had returned to Jerusalem seventy years before this had grown very lax in their observance of God's law, and were much in need of a revival of the study of the scriptures, just as the Christians of today are in need of such a revival.

On the first day of the first month (April), they set out from Babylon, and exactly four months later arrived in Jerusalem. Before they actually started on their pilgrimage, those who had volunteered to go, about seventeen hundred persons, gathered at the river Ahava to beseech God with humility and faith, to guide and protect them on their journey. It was a long distance which they had to travel, probably five or six hundred miles on foot, and the way was fraught with dangers. Ezra felt that asking the king for an armed escort, would be an acknowledgment that they did not really trust the Lord Jehovah to protect them. And the king would then have very little respect for the God whom his own worshippers could not trust—the world judges our God by the measure of our faith in him, those who distrust God dishonor him in the eyes of the world.

So Ezra and the people prayed, and fasted before God. Deep feeling of any kind is apt to take away one's appetite, so that fasting implies a deep sorrow for sin and humble repentance before God. Fasting in itself is not a means of grace, only as it accompanies true repentance and turning from sin is it acceptable to God. We must confess our sins to God alone and receive his forgiveness through Jesus Christ before we can expect from him further blessings. "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me."

Ezra and the people prayed until they received an answer. He was entreated of us—they knew that God had heard their prayer, and received the assurance from him that he would indeed guide and protect and bring them safely to their journey's end. When we are planning a trip or travel of any kind, we should be sure to ask our Father to protect and be with us. When we are praying we should be very careful not to be just saying words, we should realize that our Father is longing to hear his children, and to speak to them in return. The reason so many prayers are not answered is because they are just said—talking about God is not the same as talking to him. If we really want God to answer our prayers, we must be in earnest about it, we must be honest with him and with ourselves, we must be willing to wait for the assurance of his willingness to answer.

As soon as the people received from God the assurance of his presence and protection they were ready to start out. Their Ezra appointed some of the chief priests as treasurers and gave into their charge the gold and silver presented by the King for the work at Jerusalem. This relieved Ezra of all responsibility as to the money, and of all liability of accusations concerning it. The Apostle Paul also adopted this wise plan of appointing a trusty treasurer for the handling of other people's money, (II. Cor. viii., 18-21). The whole treasure was worth about four or five million dollars.

The Lord God brought his people safely to Jerusalem, where they offered great burnt offerings unto Jehovah. Ezra's work was to teach the people the scriptures, and to enforce the law as far as possible. God used him mightily for the purifying and building up of his people.

Primary Lesson.

"The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him." This is what Ezra, the learned scribe, or writer, had told to the king of Persia, Artaxerxes.

The king was convinced by Ezra's testimony that his God was indeed great and powerful. So he allowed all the Jews who

wished to go home, to go with Ezra and worship God in the holy city of Jerusalem.

Ezra was constantly testifying of God's goodness and greatness. When he wanted special help of any kind he asked God for it, and when it came he did not say that it 'happened to come.' He acknowledged God's hand in all the affairs of life. When we are kept from illness and sorrow and when things go well with us, it is not just a chance, it is God's kindness to us, and we should thank him for it. Nor does it chance that we are sometimes sick or sad; for God in his goodness allows these things also to come to us, so as to draw us nearer to himself. We could never know the mercy of God if we did not need it. We could never feel his boundless compassion and love, did we not first feel our awful need of it. So we must learn from Ezra to thank God for all the blessings he sends us. And to tell others of his goodness to us.

C. E. Topic.

Oct. 22. An old-time missionary. Jonah iii., 1-10. (A missionary meeting.)

Junior C. E.

Oct. 22.—A righteous nation; how can we help to make ours such? Isa. xxvi., 1-7. (A patriotic meeting. — Home missions.)

**Tobacco Catechism.**

(By Dr. R. H. McDonald, of San Francisco.)
 CHAPTER XX.—OPINIONS OF EMINENT MEN.

1. Q.—What does Prof. Mead, of Oberlin College, say of effects on character?

A.—The tobacco habit tends to deaden the sense of honor as well as decency, and none are more likely to practice deception than those who use tobacco.

2. Q.—What does a New York judge say of the filthy habit of smoking?

A.—Cigar smoke puffed in a man's face by another is assault and battery.

3. Q.—What does Neal Dow remark upon the same practice?

A.—The forcibly taking away one's pure air by tobacco smoke, is as much stealing in the moral sense, as picking one's pocket.

4. Q.—What did Wm. Lloyd Garrison, the great anti-slave champion, say of the users of tobacco?

A.—He said: 'I have known some tobacco users who were not knaves, but I never knew a knave who did not use tobacco.'

5. Q.—What does the new Edinburgh Encyclopedia say?

A.—The peculiar effect produced by using tobacco bears some resemblance to intoxication, and is excited by an essential oil, which, in its pure state, is so powerful as to destroy life, even in a small quantity.

6. Q.—What said Henry Ward Beecher?

A.—The following is taken from the last article ever written by the late Henry Ward Beecher, a short time previous to his death: 'I rejoice to say that I was brought up from my youth to abstain from tobacco.'

'It is unhealthy, it is filthy from beginning to end.

'I believe that the day will come when a young man will be proud of not being addicted to the use of stimulants of any kind.

'I believe that the day will come when not to drink, not to use tobacco, not to waste one's strength in the secret indulgence of passion, but to be true to one's nature, true to God's law, to be sound, robust, cheerful, and to be conscious that these elements of health and strength are derived from the reverent obedience to the commandments of God, will be a matter of ambition and endeavor among men.'

7. Q.—What does Dio Lewis say?

A.—Within fifty years no young man addicted to the use of tobacco has graduated at the head of his class in Harvard College, though five out of every six have used it.

8. Q.—What does Dr. Willard Parker say of those who use tobacco?

A.—That they are more apt to die in epidemics, and more prone to apoplexy and paralysis than those who do not use tobacco.

9. Q.—What does Dr. Brodis say?