

THE LESSON EXPLAINED

Time and Place—Probably B.C. 621; at Jerusalem, chiefly in the temple there.

Connecting Links—This lesson follows immediately the lesson of last Sunday.

I. Finding the Law, 14-17.

V. 14. *The money*; referred to in v. 9, which had been gathered from the people of Judah and from the people left in the Northern Kingdom as well. *Hilkiah*. There are at least seven other men mentioned in the Old Testament bearing this name which literally means, "Jehovah is my portion." *The priest*. We know from the context that Hilkiah was the high priest. *Found*; accidentally. It has been thought by some that Hilkiah himself had placed the book in the temple, and then professed to have discovered it, while all the time he knew that it was there. But there is no suggestion of this in the simple, straight-forward narrative here. The book had likely been placed in the temple for safe-keeping, perhaps in the troubled times of King Manasseh. *The book of the law* (Rev. Ver.); not the whole of the Five Books of Moses, nor the whole of the Book of Deuteronomy. It was probably that part of the Book of Deuteronomy consisting of chapters 5 to 26 with chapter 28. It is called "the book of the covenant" in v. 30.

V. 15. *Answered and said*; although no question had been asked. It is possible that Hilkiah carried the book when he met with Shaphan, and by telling what he knew about it he answered the unspoken question evident in the countenance of the scribe. For a similar use of this expression, see 2 Chron. 29 : 31; Job 3 : 2 (Rev. Ver.).

Vs. 16, 17. *Carried . . . to the king*; as the king, from his well known concern in the religious life of the nation, would be sure to be deeply interested. *Committed*; the English word literally means, "made over in trust." *Have gathered together*; better, as in Rev. Ver., "have emptied out." *Overseers . . . workmen*. See comment in last Sunday's lesson, v. 10.

II. Reading the Law, 18, 19.

Vs. 18, 19. *Shaphan read it*; better, as in Rev. Ver., "read therein." The Hebrew

expression means that Shaphan did not read the whole book, but only a part, or parts of it. Shaphan, being the scribe to the king, was the natural person to do this. *Rent his clothes*; it being a common Eastern custom to express grief in this figurative way. The word for "clothes" is plural, because both the inner and the outer garments are meant. The king's grief arose from the fact that the book of the law laid down certain commands which the nation was neglecting.

III. Obeying the Law, 29-33.

V. 29. *The king sent*. Josiah's renewal of the covenant may be compared with Hezekiah's great service of atonement for the breach of the covenant (see 2 Chron. 29 : 20, 21). *All the elders*. In early times age was regarded as a necessary qualification for any position of authority, hence the title of elder. Afterwards the word came to designate dignity rather than age. The elders of the city acted as judges.

V. 30. *Went up*; referring, perhaps to the causeway or ascent by steps leading up to the temple (see 1 Chron. 26 : 16). *All the men . . . all the people*; the accumulation of terms emphasizing the greatness of the multitude which listened to the reading of the Law. *The Levites*; "the prophets," in the account given in 2 Kings. *Great*; those who were powerful, rich, or influential. *Small*; the obscure among the people. *All the words*; the whole book, rather than a part of it, as in v. 18.

V. 31. *Stood in his place*; in 2 Kgs. 23 : 3, "by the pillar" (Rev. Ver.) or "on the platform" (Rev. Ver. Margin). *A covenant before the Lord*. Usually the covenants in the Old Testament were made either among men or between God and men. This covenant of Josiah is made in the presence of the Lord rather than with the Lord. It was an engagement or bond assumed by the king, differing little from the idea of a vow. *To walk after the Lord*, etc. Compare Deut. 10 : 12, 13. *Testimonies*; hardly ever used in the Old Testament in our sense of evidence. The word rather means God's laws regarded as a solemn declaration of his will for men. *Statutes*; laws which have been enacted rather