



LESSON VII.—NOVEMBER 12, 1905.

Ezra's Journey to Jerusalem

Ezra viii, 21-32.

Golden Text.

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

Home Readings.

Monday, November 6.—Ezra viii, 15-23.
 Tuesday, November 7.—Ezra viii, 24-36.
 Wednesday, November 8.—Ezra vii, 6-18.
 Thursday, November 9.—Ezra vii, 19-28.
 Friday, November 10.—Ezra ix, 5-15.
 Saturday, November 11.—Ezra x, 1-14.
 Sunday, November 12.—Deut. vii, 1-12.

(By Davis W. Clark.)

Ezra was a saviour of Judaism. It was a crisis in the national life. Seventy years had passed since the return from the captivity. Zerubbabel, the prince of Judah, had left the little colony in Jerusalem, and gone back to Babylon, his birthplace, to end his days. The defences of Jerusalem were still unfinished. There was a sort of creeping paralysis of indifference in Church and State. There was no enthusiasm, no sturdy faith. There was a widening gap between nobles and rustics. Paganism was making subtle inroads. Then appeared the 'second Moses.' The nobility of Ezra's personal character and his worth to his nation can hardly be overestimated. He put an imprint upon his Church which it bears to this day. And as Christianity is evolved from Judaism, Christianity itself may be said to bear to some extent the marks of the 'good scribe.'

The character and achievements of Ezra would furnish material for a shining and patriotic lyric. He was such stuff as reformers are made of. 'He had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.' He was a man who could bring things to pass in spite of most unfavorable conditions. So that a heathen monarch put a carte blanche order into his hands for such supplies and money as might be necessary to the success of his enterprise.

Ezra's splendid faith and courage shine out in the very inception of his delicate and dangerous enterprise. His path grows brighter as he crosses 1,000 miles of Bedouin-infested desert. It reaches its full splendor as he enters the Holy City and discharges his duty with unswerving and noble patriotism. Ezra's discretion is shown in his three days' pause at the river Ahava, and his careful inspection of his company, and his re-enforcing it with representatives of the priesthood, before starting on the march. His declining the armed cavalcade supplied by the king to guard the caravan was a triumph of faith and prayer. The dangers were real and great. The fact that the company was treasure-laden was matter of common report, and there were robber bands in the way. But the journey was essentially a religious one. Ezra believed that the educational power of the movement would be discounted if he leaned upon the arm of flesh. He had an assurance of safety before he started. How modest the record: 'So we fasted and besought our God for this and He was entreated of us.'

The conditions which Ezra found on entering Jerusalem were deplorable in the last degree. All civic pride and national hope were gone. The people were utterly dispirited. All radiant prophecies were unfulfilled. The city was defenceless; no gates, no walls. Predatory bands made incursions at will. They left their dead and wounded in the streets, and carried away captives, to be sold into slavery.

Under these conditions faith faltered, religious services were omitted, and as usual mutual suspicion and internecine strife had begun.

Ezra was God's man for the hour, then striking in Jewish history.

ANALYSIS AND KEY.

- I. Ezra: a saviour.
 The cause of his expedition to Jerusalem.
 His equipment.
 The journey, route, incidents, etc.
- II. What Ezra found on arriving in Jerusalem.
 Depressed populace.
 Religion decadent.
 City defenceless.
 Internecine strife.
- III. Ezra God's man for the hour.

THE TEACHER'S LANTERN.

Helpful side-lights come from remembering the contemporaries of Ezra. For example: When the journey to Jerusalem began Socrates was a boy of ten years old playing in the streets of Athens, Herodotus, the father of history, was writing his imperishable annals; Pericles, the immortal artist was building his matchless Parthenon.

Ezra's scrupulosity in money matters is well worthy of note. Nothing stuck to his fingers. He took care to guard himself against even the imputation. So he instituted a priestly commission to hold the treasure en route, and required a strict accounting.

The pause at the river Ahavah is very significant. The king of Babylon had given the expedition a fine equipment, but the King of heaven could give it a far more complete furnishing. The one was material; the other spiritual. The former was ingots of gold and silver; the latter, although immaterial, outweighed the former a thousand times. It was subjective and consisted in moral qualities of the soul. The latter was obtained in the three days of religious retreat, of abstinence, meditation, and communion with the Divine.

Religious times, places, and services need not be arbitrary and meretricious, but they are fairly indispensable as human nature is constituted. The soul, on its march to the heavenly Jerusalem, will probably never outgrow its need of a halt at the river of Ahavah.

There are seventy silent years between the completion of the temple and the enterprise of Ezra.

The scribe is an important link in the evolution of letters. From the crude shipping clerk, keeping tally of goods, or soldiers and prisoners, there was an advance to the royal secretary, and finally the recorder of the sayings of the prophets.

The object of Ezra's journey was twofold: To embellish the temple, but chiefly to re-announce and enforce the Hebrew law.

The weighing of the silver and gold was no unusual custom. As there was little or no coining of money in those days, commercial transactions were performed by means of scales, in which ingots of gold and silver were weighed. In this instance upwards of \$30,000,000. (Rawlinson.)

The simplicity of this account is described by the fact that four words describe the journey, 'We came to Jerusalem.'

C. E. Topic.

Sunday, November 12.—Topic—The dangers of indulgence. Prov. xxiii, 29-35; Isa. v, 22-25. (A temperance meeting.)

THE DANGERS OF INDULGENCE.

Israel's poet-king and prodigy of wisdom sets himself to the task of painting the drunkard's portrait. It is a faithful likeness and horrid because faithful. The royal artist persists in his undertaking, though his canvas grows lurid and frightful under each successive stroke of the pencil. His picture has proved a veritable danger-signal, flashing its warning color upon successive generations for three thousand years. Its red light has proved a powerful deterrent to multitudes. Nowhere in literature is the woe, the sorrow, the folly, the fate of the drunkard so powerfully depicted.

That such a picture could be painted thirty centuries ago sufficiently proves the antiquity of the vice. Drunkenness is no modern sin

or mere accident of our civilization. It is as old as Noah, and older.

This is no pleasing fancy sketch of genius nor happy aesthetical study, but it deserves the close, respectful attention of every one who loves himself and his neighbor. No Christian can push this picture nonchalantly aside unless his Bible permits him to say, 'I am not my brother's keeper.' No truly philanthropic spirit, Christian or not, can turn with indifferent coolness from this inspired canvas. It pictures the all-embracing 'woe,' making its piteous appeal to every one who professes to love his species.

Junior C. E. Topic.**A LOVING DAUGHTER.**

Monday, November 6.—The journey to Moab. Ruth i, 1-5.

Tuesday, November 7.—The return. Ruth i, 6-22.

Wednesday, November 8.—An industrious daughter. Ruth ii, 1-12.

Thursday, November 9.—A kind friend. Ruth ii, 13, 17.

Friday, November 10.—The mother and daughter. Ruth ii, 18-23.

Saturday, November 11.—Ruth's reward. Ruth iv, 9-17.

Sunday, November 12.—Topic—A story of a loving daughter. Ruth i, 14-18; ii, 11, 12.

Band of Hope Members.

('League Journal.')

Band of Hope members are, in the first instance, drafted from the Sunday School, but there all effort to increase the membership generally seems to cease, and the numbers, as a rule, become fewer and fewer as time goes on. The original members must, of course, be kept by never allowing them to miss attendance at more than two consecutive meetings without visiting them, while the increase of members can be secured in the following ways:—

1. By annually canvassing the Sunday School and ascertaining the names and addresses of scholars who are total abstainers, but who do not belong to any society, together also with those who are non-abstainers. These should afterwards be visited at their homes, and every effort made, and persuasive power used to induce them to become members of the Band of Hope.

2. By interesting the Sunday School teachers in the work, and seeking their co-operation by the use of their influence with all new scholars to become members. They might also be asked to occasionally introduce the subjects in the lessons.

3. By periodically arranging with the minister and superintendent of the Sunday school for Temperance addresses to be given to the scholars 'en masse.' Temperance Sunday might well be used for this purpose.

4. By encouraging the members to bring their friends, and by offering a medal or prize for the introduction of three or more new members during the year.

The consent of the parents should be obtained before a member is admitted, and every member should sign the pledge in the book kept for that purpose. He should be given a membership card, together with a card on which his subscriptions should be registered, and which should bear the distinctive number by which he is known and entered in the books. This latter card should be brought to every meeting. In very poor districts it is sometimes not advisable to make members pay; but, as a general rule, it should be done, as there is not the slightest doubt that the children will appreciate their membership all the more if they are, as it were, made proprietary members by reason of their payments. The regular attendance of the members should be recognised by prizes, occasional teas and other enjoyments, so dear to the heart of every child.

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