

The Sunday School

BIBLE LESSON.

Abridged from Peloubet's Notes.

Fourth Quarter, 1905.

OCTOBER 1 TO DECEMBER 31.

Lesson IV.—October 22.—Rebuilding the Temple—Ezra 3: 10-4: 5.

GOLDEN TEXT.

The Temple of God is Holy, Which Temple Ye Are

EXPLANATORY.

1. Settlement of the Returned Exiles at Jerusalem.—In our last lesson we saw a large body of exiles leaving Babylon with high hopes, and triumphant songs of joy. But the journey was long, tedious, and full of hardships. There were 42,360 of them, according to each of the three versions extant. But the detailed numbers all came short of this sum, and it is supposed that the 11,000 or 12,000 not ranked in the 1st under any place or family name were Israelites of the northern tribes. If these left Babylonia in March (Apoc. Esdras 5: 6), they could not well reach Jerusalem, after a journey of nearly eight hundred miles, before some time in July. It took Ezra four months to make the journey (Ezra 7: 9). They found the city in ruins, as it had lain for fifty years since its complete destruction by Nebuchadnezzar. "Trees were growing wild on the Mountain of the House, and the jackals prowled among heaps of shattered masonry. Crumbling stone-work and charred timbers marked the site of palaces and towers, and choked the streets. The city walls and gates were leveled with the ground." The first business of the returned exiles was, of course, to provide some kind of dwellings for themselves and their families. They accordingly settled in the small cities surrounding Jerusalem, perhaps repairing the houses and walls that had been ruined by the besieging armies years before, or contenting themselves with huts or tents.

II. Revival of Religious Services.—Vs. 2-7. Seventh month, October, 535. Within two or three months after their arrival, they arranged for the religious life which was the very heart of the nation's existence, and the central motive and inspiration of the Return. It would require years to build the Temple. It was not wise to wait for that. It was essential that all needful helps to devotion and religion and righteousness should be provided immediately, to sustain them in the work to be done amid oppositions and temptations which were to try their souls as gold is tried in the fire.

III. The Foundation of the Temple Laid.—Vs. 8-11. Begun in May, 535, the second year of their coming. In six months the site had been cleared, so that in May the builders were ready to lay the foundations.

10. Builders Laid the Foundation. The corner stone, or the first course. This was

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made the occasion of a great ceremonial Priests in their apparel. The elegant and beautiful official robes used by the priests in their celebrations, especially the blue and scarlet and purple robes, with gold and gems, of the high priests and others, described in Exod. 39. With Trumpets. Not for music; but, like our church-bells, for summoning assemblies and joyful announcements. Sons of Asaph. A guild of singers named after the famous singer and leader in the time of David. After the Ordinance (order) of David. (See 1 Chron. 15: 16-21.) David first organized choirs and music for the temple services.

11. Sang Together by Course, i. e., "one to another," responsively. He is Good, etc. See 1 Chron. 16: 34, 41; Psa. 106, 107, 118. Some of these songs may have been composed and sung at that time.

The young men rejoicing. They Praise the Lord. The joy of the younger people who remembered the Exile, but had no memory of the Temple of Solomon, was very great.

The Old Men Weeping. 12. Ancient men, that had seen the first house, which was destroyed B. C. 586, fifty-one years before. They must have been sixty or seventy years old. Wept with a Loud Voice. The weeping was not because the new temple was smaller than the first, for it was larger (comp. Ezra 6: 3, 1 Kings 6: 2; 2 Chron. 3: 3, 4). They wept (1) Because of the contrast between the beauty, the magnificence, the gold and gems of the old temple, and the simplicity and poverty of the new structure (Hag. 2: 3; Zech. 4: 10). (2) Because of the absence of the old associations, the ark of the covenant, the sacred fire, and all that came to Israel through the former temple. (3) Because the past was idealized; "distance lent enchantment to the view," the golden age was in the past.

IV. Discouragements and Delays.—Ezra 4: 1-5. Fifteen years B. C. 535-520. When the Adversaries of Judah, the Samaritans, and the foreign colonists from Babylonia, Persia and Elam (vs. 9, 10), which Esar-haddon king of Assyria (v. 2), (B. C. 720-715) and also Sargon and Assur-banipal (B. C. 665) had sent to Samaria (2 Kings 17: 24). Thus they had lived in Samaria 130 to 180 years. See Rawlinson's "Ancient Monarchies," Vol. II, p. 415. For We Seek Your God . . . and We Do Sacrifice Unto Him. But they did it in a different way, partially in connection with other things which would destroy the perfection and power of the Jewish worship.

3. But Zerubbabel and the other leaders refused the alliance. Two views of the course pursued by Zerubbabel have been taken.

First—Many have regarded it as a great mistake, a piece of narrow-minded, bigoted folly, which made enemies of those who should have been friends, and kindled hatred and jealousy, and lowered the moral tone and cooled the zeal of the new colony. Such seems to be Geikie's view.

On the other hand, Rawlinson calls it "an heroic refusal to accept the material aid of a rich and powerful people at the risk of imperiling religious purity." "Thus was a great peril averted." "They saved a nation, for the time at any rate, from the danger of having their religion corrupted and adulterated by intermixture with a form of belief and practice which was altogether of an inferior type, and to a considerable extent tainted with heathenism."

5. All the Days of Cyrus. About seven years, to 529; and of his son Cambyses who began to reign a year or two before his father died. He reigned till 522. He was succeeded by his general Gomates, for a few months till 521 when Darius Hystaspes began to reign. Cambyses was a fierce and cruel ruler after the type of Ivan the Terrible, a man of ungoverned impulses, violent passions, armed with unlimited power. He was too busy with efforts to conquer Egypt to give thought to the few Jews in Jerusalem. But his undisciplined armies spread terror and desolation over Palestine. Morals relaxed, the temple was neglected, the rich busied themselves in building beautiful homes for themselves; but blight and drought came, water failed, the vines were unfruitful. It was a most discouraging period.

V. A French Revival. The Temple Completed.—Work begun B. C. 520—completed 516. The change of rulers made it possible at this time to renew work on the temple. Darius was a monotheist, and relates in the Behistun inscription that he revered the temples of the gods, and was inclined to toleration. Moreover, for the first few years of his reign he was engaged in desperate fighting for supremacy, putting down rebels first in one part of his great realm and then in another; so that he had no time to notice at first what was being done in the insignificant community in Judea.

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Baltimore, Md., Nov. 11, 1903.
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SYNOPSIS OF CANADIAN NORTH-WEST

HOMESTEAD REGULATIONS.

ANY even numbered section of Dominion Lands in Manitoba or the North-west Provinces, excepting 8 and 36, not reserved, may be homesteaded upon by any person, who is the sole head of the family, or any member of a family, or any male over 18 years of age, to the extent of one-quarter section, of 160 acres, more or less.

Entry may be made personally at the local land office for the district in which the land to be taken is situated, or if the homesteader desires he may, on application to the Minister of the Interior, Ottawa, the Commissioner of Immigration, Winnipeg, or the local agent for the district in which the land is situated, receive authority for some one to make entry for him.

HOMESTEAD DUTIES: A settler who has been granted an entry for a homestead is required to perform the conditions connected therewith under one of the following plans:

(1) At least six months' residence upon and cultivation of the land in each year during the term of three years.

(2) If the father (or mother, if the father is deceased) of any person who is eligible to make a homestead entry under the provisions of this Act, resides upon a farm in the vicinity of the land entered for by such person as a homestead, the requirements of this Act as to residence prior to obtaining patent may be satisfied by such person residing with the father or mother.

(3) If the settler has his permanent residence upon farming land owned by him in the vicinity of his homestead, the requirements of this Act as to residence may be satisfied by residence upon the said land.

APPLICATION FOR PATENT should be made at the end of three years, before the Local Agent, sub-Agent or the Homestead Inspector.

Before making application for patent the settler must give six months' notice in writing to the Commissioner of Dominion Lands at Ottawa, of his intention to do so.

W. W. CORY,
Deputy of the Minister of Interior.

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Newcastle, N. B.
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