

The Sabbath School.

LESSONS FOR JUNE.

FIRST SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*Samuel the Judge*, 1st Sam. 7, 5-12. Golden Text, Prov. 11, 11. Parallel passages, Gen. 18, 2^d. Job 12, 8. James 5, 15-16.

In verses 5 & 6 we have the account of a day of fasting and humiliation. We read nothing of Samuel till this time from the beginning of Chap. 4th, but we may suppose that he had been labouring incessantly to turn his countrymen from their idolatry, and probably preaching repentance and reformation in all parts of the land. The Spirit blessed his efforts, and in v. 4th we are told that the Israelites forsook their idols and turned again to the Lord. A national feast was proclaimed—from all parts of the land the people assembled at Mizpeh—and Samuel, as their mouth piece, confessed their sins and prayed for pardon and acceptance. The drawing and pouring out of water seems to have indicated their sense of national corruption, of their need of that purification of which water is an emblem; and of their need to pour out their hearts in repentance before God. From the statement that Samuel judged Israel in Mizpeh, we may infer that he was at this time installed as chief ruler, and that he commenced his administration by a general reform of all public abuses.

In verse 7th we have an alarm of war. The Philistines, hearing that the Israelites had assembled, and dreading an attack, determined to anticipate them, and to assault them in their own land. They who are themselves conscious of evil designs, are ever ready to suspect others. The Israelites, having met for religious worship, were not prepared for war, and were greatly alarmed. It would seem strange to them that this great trouble should overtake them when they were returning to God, but thus he often tries his people. But troubles are blessings in disguise. Evil here seemed to come out of good, but good really came out of it. This attack led to a victory on the part of Israel, which gave peace and prosperity to them, and weakened their enemies for many years.

In verses 8 and 9 we have the best national defence. Unprepared with arms, they were otherwise, though they knew it not, well prepared. They had fasted and humbled themselves before God. Their previous experience had taught them that arms, courage, and discipline, were of no avail without God's favour. So they call on Samuel to pray for them, and he cried to the Lord and offered sacrifice, thousands of hearts, we doubt not, being poured out in private supplication. Note their obedience to Samuel, and their reliance on him. So, ought we, in national and private trouble to trust in Christ, and seek His intercession. His love, wisdom, and power with God, are greater than those of Samuel; and he intercedes on the ground of a more precious and all prevailing sacrifice.

In verses 10th and 11th we have a glorious

victory. God accepted their sacrifice and answered their prayer. When the battle began, He sent a terrible thunder storm; and we cannot doubt that the lightnings flashed amidst the host of the Philistines in such a way as to terrify and bewilder them, and to encourage and stimulate the Israelites. So great was the slaughter that the Philistines were rendered powerless during the whole period of Samuel's rule. Contrast with this the result of the battles described in Chap. 4th. The Ark of God was then in the camp, but the love of God and of his laws was not in their hearts. Then Ritualism prevailed—and they were moved by principles and emotions truly religious. In each case respectively the defeat and the victory were certain.

Lastly, in verse 12th we have the grateful celebration of God's wonderful goodness. A stone is set up, to testify to future generations that "hitherto the Lord hath helped us."

We learn from this lesson, first, that national reformation brings national blessing; secondly, that God's favour is the best defence against national calamities.

SECOND SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*A King desired*, 1 Sam. 8-14. Golden Text, Psalm 118: 9.

In connection with the lesson read Deut. 17: 14-20, and 1 Sam. 11: 4-15.

Samuel's two sons, Joel and Abiah, were judges in Israel, but they were unjust judges (v. 3) perverting judgment to satisfy their cupidity. As might have been expected, the people were dissatisfied with their conduct, and through the elders they expressed their dissatisfaction to Samuel at Ramah. When they go further, they suggest, nay they demand that a king be given them, instead of judges. They don't want the unjust judges removed, and just judges put in their place; they want government by a king rather than government by judges. It is plain that they were dissatisfied, not only with the existing judges, but with the order of judges. They wanted a change, and this was the time to ask for it. And as things were there was some reason in their asking for it. But the reason was not the corruptness of Samuel's sons, but the desire to be like the heathen round about. Vs. 19 and 20 express plainly. They made the existing state of matters, which was no doubt bad enough, a pretext to ask for and urge that a king be set; and that which they should have known it was not the will of God that they should have.

V. 6.—Samuel is displeased when he hears their request. But like a good man he does the matter before the Lord. The Lord answers him, (v. 7). And His answer to them is: Let the people have their own way. Let them have a king of their own choosing. Let them know what sort of a king he will be, how he will rule and oppress them. In other words God's answer was: Let the people act in their own way, the way in which they are determined to act, but let them take the consequences of their act.