

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS.

FIFTH YEAR, 1877. JANUARY. FIRST QUARTER: STUDIES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.

B.C. 975. LESSON II. THE SIN OF JEROBOAM: or, Falling into sin. Jan. 14. 1 Kings 12, 25-33.

EXPLANATORY.

BUILT. Fortified it for his capital. Abimelech had destroyed it. Judges 9. Precious memories crowded and sanctified the place. Abraham, Jacob, Joseph. It had been a refuge city. Josh 21, 20, 21. Location beautiful to this day. A place of gurgling streams and pleasant groves, and fruitful fields and noble scenery. PENTEL. The place beyond Jordan where Jacob wrestled. Jeroboam forgot what Jacob learned at Pennel—the strength of man is in God. He was far-seeing as a ruler, and fortified this important point east of the Jordan in order to command the route from the south and by Gilead to Damascus. Here, then, is the new kingdom, with its enterprising, shrewd, and able king. He had some experience in public life under Solomon, and had observed closely affairs in Egypt during his exile.

IN HIS HEART. Self-centered. Reasoned with himself and did not consult God. RETURN. There were strong reasons for fearing a revulsion of popular sentiment. By ties of blood, by marvellous experiences as a nation from the coming of Abraham into Canaan to the death of the royal Solomon, they were bound together. HOUSE. And yet God had promised (1 Kings 11, 38) to build Jeroboam a sure house. But he must distrust God.

GO UP TO DO SACRIFICE. Said Napoleon on his accession as first consul, "France must have a religion." Gibbon remarks, "By the common people all religions were esteemed equally true; by the philosophers all equally false; by the statesmen all equally useful." Jeroboam distrusted the divine promise and the popular prejudice. However wise his distrust of the latter, he was culpable in the former particular. KILL ME. Selfishness dominant. His personal safety was paramount. No wonder that ruin came to a people so unstable with a leader so consummately selfish. THIS LORD. A self-assertion of Jeroboam's right to reign over the people.

CALVES. He was indifferent to all religions save as they served his selfish aims. He had just returned from Egypt where idolatrous worship was common. There was a flavor in this form of worship grateful to the degenerate Jewish mind. Solomon had prepared them for it. Golden. Probably of brass overlaid with gold. It is too much for you. "Let it suffice you—you have done this long enough." Easy to find reasons for doing what we desire or purpose to do. How full of falsehoods are the lips of the king Jeroboam—Falsehood first, "Too much for you." Falsehood second, "Thy gods." Falsehood third, "Which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Alas for him who might have led Israel to the Lord, but did most infamously make "Israel to sin!"

BETHEL. The "house of God," where Jacob saw the ladder and the angels, where the fathers built their altars and prayed, and where was the "school of the prophets." Now a golden calf is there to be worshipped by the descendants of the old patriarch. The place is now Bethin, about ten miles north-east of Jerusalem. Dan in the extreme north. Where Micah had set up images. Judges 18. Behold a kingdom bounded and guarded by two golden calves!

A SIN. A taste, and a habit, and, therefore, a bondage and a curse. And all through the influence of a wicked king. National unity promoted by one religious worship. The necessity for political disruption led to an abandonment of the one God. This brought ruin. Jeroboam the cause of it all. He is scarcely ever mentioned that this fact is not associated with his name.

The expression HIGH PLACES was used to describe any sacred places wherever situated, even in valleys. It became synonymous with sanctuaries, shrines. Thus a house of high places was a house of shrines. One manuscript reads "houses in high places." LOWER. Without reference to tribe, family, education or character. The Levites forsook him (2 Chron. 11, 13-16) and settled in Judah. Jeroboam was perhaps on the whole glad to get rid of the priesthood. At first it chagrined, but finally gratified him. He could be at the head of his priests, and would not suffer from their plottings.

EIGHTH MONTH. A transposition of the great autumn festival from the seventh to the eighth month. This was acceptable to the people in the northern kingdom as harvest was then over. Perhaps he wanted to change as far as possible, but gradually, the old time institutions.

HE OFFERED. He had seen the Egyptian king, no doubt, attending to priestly duties. Again he wanted to encourage the newly constituted priests whose awkwardness and superstitious fears and lingering scruples of conscience may have embarrassed them in the performance of their new duties. It was a desperate game he was playing. He had cast himself away from the temple at Jerusalem, and had thus abandoned the God who had given him his throne.

Boston has a new notion this year, and, as usual, the new notion takes the crowd. This year it is the "Monday Lectureship," as it is somewhat ambitiously styled by the lecturer the Rev. Joseph Cook. A year ago Mr. Cook delivered a short course of lectures under the auspices of the Young Men's Christian Association, which attracted some attention, and led to arrangements for a more extended course this season, on the relation between science and religion. Thus far they have been a careful examination of the latest results of scientific investigation, of the living and not-living matter. The lectures are given at twelve o'clock on Monday—a convenient hour for the large number of ministers attending the Monday ministerial meetings, as well as for business and literary men.

The very large attendance has necessitated the removal first to Park street Church and then to Tremont Temple.

Mr. Cook is a man of marked individuality, tall, broad-shouldered, heavily built, with large head, broad face, light hair and beard, loud-voiced, assured and positive in manner, inclined to self-assertion, not to say egotistic. He is a graduate of Harvard and Andover, ordained to the ministry, but never a settled pastor, and has been an enthusiastic student, both here and in Europe. His addresses are liberally strewn with quotations from a wide range of authors, are not wanting in wit, and have frequent references to the great men of the day both in science and religion, most of whom he has personally known. In listening to Mr. Cook one would conclude that he is a natural interviewer of great men, and has largely cultivated his talents. He has much more the air and manner of the advocate than of the philosopher, or the humble and impartial inquirer for truth; and this partisan spirit detracts somewhat from the listener's confidence in his conclusions, though it seems rather to increase the momentary enthusiasm of his audience. Nevertheless, he is evidently a man of culture, and thoroughly acquainted with the literature of the subjects of which he treats, and especially sharp in discriminating between the facts of science and the theories of scientists.

The lectures are valuable to a large class of people—professional men and others—who desire to know the latest results of science as related to or affecting religious truth. Many have not the time, and, perhaps, not the previous training, to read profitably the details of investigations into chemistry and microscopy, who are yet eager to know the latest discoveries in that dim border-land between organic and inorganic matter, or that between nerve and soul. Many want to know Mr. Huxley's facts, who care little for his theories. Mr. Cook is doing a good work in giving direction to clerical study in these matters of science, so closely related to their own department of labor. Withal, it isn't a bad thing for science to have a sharp and capable critic examine the theories and the reasonings of scientists. Moses has been very thoroughly examined for a good while. Let us see if Huxley can bear it as well.—Exchange.

Six contiguous churches above Girard Avenue, Philadelphia, namely, the Lutheran Evangelical, Methodist, Reformed Episcopal, Reformed Heidelberg, Plymouth Congregational, and Presbyterian, have, for some weeks past, held a concert of prayer, two meetings each week, passing from church to church. The "Presbyterian," in noting the fact, says: "In the one precious name, Jesus, all their different names are sweetly lost, and the united prayer for the reviving of religion has been a blessed experience to this family of churches."

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