



LESSON V.—JULY 30.

Manasseh's Sin and Repentance.

II. Chronicles xxxiii., 1-13.

Golden Text.

Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people. Prov. xiv., 34.

Commit verses 10-13.

Home Readings.

Monday, July 24.—II. Chron. xxxiii., 1-10.

Tuesday, July 25.—II. Chron. xxxiii., 11-20.

Wednesday, July 26.—II. Kings xxi., 1-9.

Thursday, July 27.—II. Kings xxi., 10-18.

Friday, July 28.—Joel ii., 11-20.

Saturday, July 29.—Prov. iv., 14-27.

Sunday, July 30.—Ps. xxxiii., 10-22.

(By Davis W. Clark.)

If the son had reigned like the father, Jewish history would have to be rewritten. Hezekiah blended piety and patriotism. He threw the exemplary power incident to high position entirely on the side of a pure faith. He did more; he broke down and swept away the symbols and shrines of a base and corrupt religion. He did not waver from this high stand during a reign which extended over nearly a third of a century.

Instead of perpetuating this admirable policy, Manasseh reversed it. He went through the whole catalogue of pagan vices. He was not content to go through it alone; he led his people and forced those who were unwilling. From augury and sorcery he went on to human sacrifice. He did not hesitate to throw his own children into the fiery embrace of Moloch. The chronicler says he caused the people to do worse than the heathen. These perversities rivalled and surpassed those who had been born and reared in their dark faith. There was the greater condemnation, for they sinned against light; and when God spoke to them in terms of warning and entreaty they would not hear him, but were defiant.

The depths of this apostasy can scarcely be fathomed. Cults never practiced on Jewish soil were now introduced. Putrid streams of lasciviousness flowed everywhere. The climax was reached when what was perhaps a phallic emblem was set up within the very courts of the temple of the God who had said to his people, Be ye holy, for I am holy. The bitterness of it was that the worst king of Judah reigned the longest. He had more than half a century in which to unmake his nation. A complete recovery was never made from this dreadful lapse.

Persecution naturally attended this apostasy. Tongues were raised in protest. There were knees that would not bend. Even royal patronage of idolatry was without weight with some pious souls. Manasseh made a short shift of such. He hurled the recalcitrant nobles from the cliffs, filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and introduced a Jewish reign of terror.

But it is a long lane that has no turning. Manasseh was warned before he was struck; but he was insolent and defiant. He sinned against light and grace; and he was obstinate and inveterate in his sin. The turn was sharp when it came. The haughty king was brought to the dust. Under the barbaric customs of the day, with a heavy double chain, hand and foot, and a ring through his nose, he was led captive to Babylon.

The glory of divine justice is, that its penalties are not inflicted as matter of vengeance, but are intended to be reformatory as well as exemplary. The moment the exiled and

suffering King came to himself, the God of his fathers heard his supplication and restored him to his country and to his throne.

THE TEACHER'S LANTERN.

Heathenism smoldered during Hezekiah's reign. Only a spark of it remained at his death. Manasseh might have quenched it forever. Instead, he fanned and fed it.

For nations as well as individuals ascent is always difficult. Descent is easy. Moral heights are reached by the pains of self-denial. They are held by continuous watchfulness.

There is a moral gravitation which accelerates the descent of man or nation which turns to the nether way. Power of resistance diminishes. Entangling compromises seem imperative. Velocity toward hell increases in incalculable proportion.

These conditions call for a moral earnestness on the part of both nations and individuals which will not tamper with or allow the beginnings of evil.

The prophets Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and Micah paint the nocturn of these evil times.

During his exile Manasseh had opportunity to study paganism on its native heath. He saw the fruits of its ascendancy during long ages. He could compare and contrast them with the fruits of the pure theistic faith of the Hebrews. Perhaps this was one purpose of his exile.

The exemplary power of the divine clemency in the case of Manasseh can hardly be estimated. In a brutal and unforgiving age, when the conqueror delighted in torturing his prisoners to death inch by inch, the Lord set his prisoner free the moment he was genuinely penitent. His punishment was reformatory, not vindictive.

But Manasseh's past could not be effaced. He could no more stop the course of the evil example of half a century, than he could call back the sons he had devoted to Moloch. Sin is a fire that leaves its scar.

It seems curious that Hezekiah should have given his son the name of one of the tribes in the northern kingdom. If it was in honor of the zeal in which that tribe had joined in Hezekiah's reforms, then the son strangely perverted the father's meaning, and deeply sullied a good name. If the name was given in hopes that the wearer of it should reign over the reunited kingdoms, the father's hope was sadly disappointed. The son ignominiously lost a kingdom, instead of acquiring another.

History affords many parallels to the lapse under Manasseh. Witness the English Restoration after the Commonwealth, and the Florissant reaction after Savonarola.

Junior C. E. Topic.

Sunday, July 30.—Topic—Missions in Japan. Micah v., 2, 4, 12, 13.

C. E. Topic.

KINDNESS.

Monday, July 24.—Two spies sent out. Josh. ii., 1.

Tuesday, July 25.—Their danger. Josh. ii., 2, 3.

Wednesday, July 26.—Kindness shown them. Josh. ii., 4-7.

Thursday, July 27.—Kindness in return. Josh. ii., 8-14.

Friday, July 28.—The escape. Josh. ii., 15-22.

Saturday, July 29.—The return. Josh. ii., 23, 24.

Sunday, July 30.—Topic—A lesson in kindness. Josh. ii., 12-14.

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How to Prepare the Sunday-School Lesson.

SUGGESTIONS.

1. Be in earnest.
2. Keep in the spirit of prayer.
3. Begin preparation early in the week.
4. Work along some plan.
5. Avoid ruts.
6. Adapt your preparation to your class.
7. Be on the outlook for illustrations.
8. Think out some appropriate and pertinent questions.
9. Use pencil and paper.
10. Expect results.
11. Do not get discouraged.

STEPS IN PREPARATION.

1. Read the lesson through several times.
2. Read the lesson again verse by verse, with prayer for spiritual guidance.
3. Consider the context.
4. Make good use of the marginal references.
5. Study lesson helps.
6. Post yourself on the meaning of the words and verses not easily understood.
7. Take time for meditation.
8. Review your work, pray for help, and go to your class with faith and enthusiasm.

REMINDEES.

1. Success is not reached without labor.
2. Ability to hold a class is important, but does not necessarily imply teaching power.
3. No one can teach right unless he has been first taught of God.
4. Brightness holds the attention; earnestness impresses the mind; instruction builds the character, but love wins the soul.
5. The true order of teaching is, first, explanation; second, application; third, exhortation.—'Living Epistle.'

Unless a grain of mustard-seed be bruised, the full extent of its virtue is never acknowledged. Without bruising, it is insipid; but if it be bruised, it becomes hot, and gives out all those pungent properties which were concealed in it. Thus every good man, so long as he is not smitten, is regarded as insipid and of slight account. But if ever the grinding of persecution crush him, instantly he gives forth all the warmth of his savor, and all that before appeared to be weak or contemptible is turned into godly fervor; and that which in peaceful times he had been glad to keep from view within his own bosom, he is driven by the force of tribulation to make known.—Gregory

Visit the Sick.

(The Rev. A. Y. Haist, in the 'Evangelical S.S. Teacher.')

'Don't neglect your sick scholars.'—'The sick need the physician.' Write the golden text or a few of your teaching points on a card and send it to them till you can call on them at their home; but be sure you see them before the next Sunday. If it requires some self-denial, pay the price and win the prize of a scholar's good will and confidence that you are intensely interested in him.

Life's Burden a Recompense.

Though the burden crush you down,
Life is a burden, bear it;
Life is a duty, dare it;
Life is a thorn crown, wear it.
Though it break your heart in twain,
Though the burden crush you down,
Close your lips and hide your pain;
First the cross, and then the crown.
—'British Weekly.'

Frequently questions come to me in regard to the expediency of teachers studying books upon the inspiration, the authenticity, the credibility, and the integrity of the Bible. Let me say, do not unduly discount such study, but at the same time beware lest such study pre-occupy the mind to the exclusion of the word itself. He is a foolish boy who becomes so absorbed in examining the shell of the nut as to drop the kernel untasted in the mud.—Prof. Dager.