



LESSON X.—SEPT. 6.

Death of Saul and Jonathan.

I. Samuel xxxi., 1-13.

Golden Text.

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death. Proverbs xiv., 12.

Home Readings.

Monday, Aug. 31.—I. Sam. xxxi., 1-13.
Tuesday, Sept. 1.—I. Chron. x., 1-14.
Wednesday, Sept. 2.—II. Sam. i., 1-16.
Thursday, Sept. 3.—II. Sam. i., 17-27.
Friday, Sept. 4.—I. Sam. xxix., 1-11.
Saturday, Sept. 5.—Job xv., 20-33.
Sunday, Sept. 6.—Prov. i., 20-33.

1. Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in Mount Gilboa.

2. And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab and Melchishua, Saul's sons.

3. And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers.

4. Then said Saul unto his armor-bearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armor-bearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.

5. And when his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him.

6. So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armor-bearer, and all his men, that same day together.

7. And when the men of Israel that were on the other side of the valley, and they that were on the other side Jordan, saw that the men of Israel fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities, and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.

8. And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in Mount Gilboa.

9. And they cut off his head, and stripped off his armor, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish it in the house of their idols, and among the people.

10. And they put his armor in the house of Ashtaroth; and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan.

11. And when the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead heard of that which the Philistines had done to Saul,

12. All the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and came to Jabesh, and burnt them there.

13. And they took their bones, and buried them under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

(By R. M. Kurtz.)

INTRODUCTION.

At last we come to the end of Saul's miserable career as King of Israel. He had disobeyed God, had lost the Spirit's presence, and had missed great opportunities. Now his career comes to its closing day.

Last week we found David again playing a magnanimous and high-minded part in again sparing Saul's life when he and Abishai visited the sleeping king in his camp. Saul again made a profuse confession of his own wrong doing, and promised not to harm him. But David was too

sharp to be caught by any such promise, which Saul had already shown himself so capable of breaking.

Instead of dismissing his followers and returning to his place in the royal household, David took a bold step to put an end to Saul's attempts upon his life. With his six hundred men and their households he went into the country of the Philistines and attached himself to Achish, King of Gath, who gave him Ziklag as a city for himself and his men. So they remained in exile among the Philistines for sixteen months.

Whilst there David carried on campaigns against various enemies, but in the meantime the Philistines prepared for war with Israel. Achish took David with him, but the Philistine leaders were so suspicious of him that they insisted that David should be sent back to his place in the land of the Philistines. So David and his men started back to their city, but found that the Amalekites had destroyed it. In I. Samuel xxx. you will find an interesting account of the way David recovered the stolen people and property and of his justice to his men.

Samuel was dead and Saul had no prophet to seek for advice, now that he was to go against the Philistines again. So, in I. Samuel xxix., we read of how he broke one of the laws of his kingdom, which he himself had been enforcing in order to communicate with the departed prophet. The information the doomed king received was gloomy enough.

Saul's army was encamped at Mount Gilboa, while the Philistines pitched their camp at Shunem, a little to the north. This battlefield was south-west of the Sea of Galilee, and this region has been the scene of a number of great conflicts in ancient and modern times. The time of the battle is not exactly known.

OUTLINE.

1. The Battle Goes against Saul, 1-3.
2. Death of Saul, 4-6.
3. Israel Loses Territory, 7.
4. The Philistines Celebrate their Victory, 8-10.
5. Recovery of the King's Body, 11-13.

THE BATTLE GOES AGAINST SAUL, 1-3.

The day after Saul's visit to the witch of Endor, the battle with the Philistines took place. The first verse shows how the battle was to turn out. The Philistines were soon proving too much for the men of Israel and Mount Gilboa was stained with blood of Saul's men. They began to give way before their enemies so that the Philistines could press forward.

The second verse says that 'the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons.' Three of them, including Jonathan, were in the battle with their father, and all three were slain. Perhaps, in view of the loss of his father, brothers, and the throne, and other disasters, it was best for Jonathan that he was taken while fighting nobly for his country.

'The battle went sore against Saul.' The Vulgate says, 'The whole weight of the battle was directed against Saul.' That is, the Philistines were determined to kill or capture the Hebrew King, and, as his army gave way, it left Saul and those immediately about him to bear the attack.

Soon the archers, or bowmen, of the enemy found him out and began to direct their arrows against the ill-fated king. It was not long until they penetrated the weak places in his armor, or struck exposed parts of his person, so that he was badly wounded.

DEATH OF SAUL, 4-6.

Saul was now in such a desperate strait that he must choose between death, probably by torture, at the hands of the enemy, or suicide. He decides to put himself out of the way.

How different from the royal young man we first met, who was hailed as Israel's first king, and who was given God's Spirit. But disobedience has brought him to the hour when, deserted, defeated, his sons slain, his kingdom taken away, and God

departed from him, he begs his faithful armor-bearer to slay him.

But the armor-bearer was afraid to take the life of his king, so Saul sets the hilt of his sword upon the ground and falls upon the point, dying without honor in the very presence of his victorious enemies. The armor-bearer, perhaps because he feared to survive the battle that has cost the life of the king whom he was to protect or acting under an impulse, followed Saul's example and perished with his master.

ISRAEL LOSES TERRITORY, 7.

Israel not only lost a great battle, and her king, but also considerable territory. When the news spread through the valley of Jezreel and even beyond the Jordan, a panic seized the inhabitants and they fled, leaving their cities to the possession of the victorious Philistines.

Saul's disobedience not only brought punishment upon himself, but loss to his kingdom.

THE PHILISTINES CELEBRATE VICTORY, 8-10.

The day after the battle the Philistines, coming to strip the slain, found Saul and his three sons. Carrying out their barbaric notions of a victory they proceeded to dishonor the bodies. They cut off the king's head and sent it to the temple of Ashtaroth, at Beth-shan, not far from the battlefield. It seems probable, from the wording of verse 9, that the king's armor was sent about as a trophy of victory to various cities before being placed in this temple.

The bodies of Saul and his sons were hung upon the wall of the city of Beth-shan, where they might be objects of derision as well as further tokens of victory.

RECOVERY OF THE KING'S BODY, 11-13.

But their defeat had not taken all spirit and sense of honor from Israel.

Years before this, in the day of Saul's better deeds, he had delivered the people of Jabesh-gilead from the Ammonites. See I. Samuel xi. Now, as if in grateful remembrance, the valiant men of Jabesh-gilead came by an all night march, took the mutilated bodies from the wall of Beth-shan, and brought them to Jabesh, where the now decaying flesh was burned, after which the bones were gathered and buried. This was followed by a fast of seven days as an expression of public sorrow.

The story of Saul is full of suggestions of a spiritual character, and, in reviewing it, the teacher can profitably apply them. Next week we enter upon the study of David's reign, the lesson being 'David Becomes King,' II. Samuel ii., 1-10.

C. E. Topic

Sunday, Sept. 6.—Topic—The allied forces of righteousness. John xvii., 20-23; I. Cor. i., 10-13.

Junior C. E. Topic

MY FAVORITE BEATITUDE.

Monday, Aug. 31.—Not being offended. Matt. xi., 5.

Tuesday, Sept. 1.—Peter blessed. Matt. xvi., 17.

Wednesday, Sept. 2.—Blessed for seeing. Luke x., 23.

Thursday, Sept. 3.—Blessed for hearing. Luke xi., 28.

Friday, Sept. 4.—Blessed for almsgiving. Luke xiv., 14.

Saturday, Sept. 5.—Blessed for obeying. Rev. xxii., 14.

Sunday, Sept. 6.—Topic—Which one of the Beatitudes helps me most, and why? Matt. v., 1-12.

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