

# SUNDAY SCHOOL BANNER

for

## TEACHERS

AND

## YOUNG PEOPLE.

Vol. 23.]

NOVEMBER, 1889.

[No. 11

### TABLE OF CONTENTS.

More Faith and More Patience .....	321
Marks of Progress .....	322
Missionary Aid Fund .....	322
Sunday-School Methods .....	322
Temperance Pledges .....	323
Book Notices .....	323
Opening and Closing Services .....	323
International Bible Lessons .....	324

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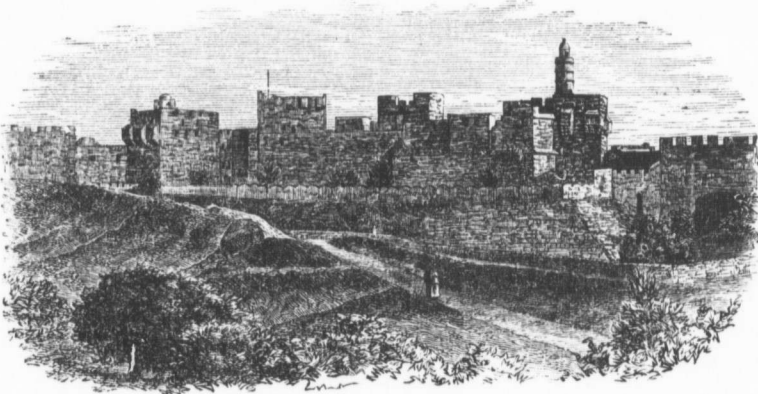
# SUNDAY SCHOOL BARRER

for  
TEACHERS  
AND  
YOUNG PEOPLE.

Vol. XXIII.]

NOVEMBER, 1889.

[No. 11.]



JAFFA GATE AND DAVID'S TOWER, JERUSALEM.

## More Faith and More Patience.

BY MARY F. LATHROP.

"I HAVE about decided to give up my class in the mission. I am utterly disheartened. I have tried so hard and failed. I believe those boys are thoroughly depraved." So wrote my friend on the eighth of December. One week later her letter said: "Do forget what I wrote about my precious boys. Three of them have been converted, and four more are deeply convicted. Isn't God good? I will never be faithless again." As I read the second letter, I thought of Spurgeon's words: "We write bitter things, and God blots them out, and writes gracious things in lieu thereof."

There are many doubting Thomases among Sunday-school teachers, and when results do not come in our time and our way, we are very apt to indulge in sackcloth and bitterness. After earnest, faithful work, it seems very hard that we see no result!

Courage, dear teacher! No true labour ever was in vain. A little more faith, and a little more patience. The brightness of the future will seem all the greater from the darkness of the present. In God's time the seeds you have planted will grow into great trees, in the shadow of which you may find shelter and rest. The waiting seems dreary, but have faith and patience, dear heart, for the recompense is beyond.—*S. S. Journal.*

I WILL love thee, O Lord, my strength.

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## Sunday School Banner.

W. IL. WITHROW, D.D., EDITOR.

TORONTO, NOVEMBER, 1889.

### Marks of Progress.

OUR space is so full that we have only room to note a few marks of progress in anticipation of the meeting of the Sunday-school Board, when a full report will be made. The year has been one of great prosperity, there being an increase of 1,113 in the number of teachers and 7,557 in the number of scholars in our nearly 3,000 schools. The best of all is, that nearly 10,000 conversions—9,728—are reported in the schools, with over 36,000 attending class. The income and expenditure of the Sunday-school Aid and Extension Fund is considerably increased, and the circulation of all the Sunday-school periodicals very largely. Such continued progress, year after year, is a seal of the divine approval on the labours of the nearly 30,000 devoted Sunday-school teachers of our Church, and an inspiration to continued endeavour for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

### Missionary Aid Fund.

DEAR SIR,—I am much pleased with extracts from letters on Extension Fund for Sunday-school Aid, for it revives the early associations of 1839, when first I began to superintend a Sunday-school in South Burgess, in our feeble efforts in the working-days of foundations, to that great and noble structure now with its appliances at work. Shall we not encourage all our Sunday-schools to double their extension fund, so the weak may be encouraged in their labours of love and devotion? Most of my life

has been spent in superintending Sunday-schools. I am now a teacher of sixty-five years of age. It has been my pleasure to build and help to build up four good Sunday-schools, which are a credit to the Sunday-school workers who attend them—a live nursery; and when I look over the past labours of life in the work, I am led to thank God and take courage as I view reports of progress. If our labours have been so successfully blessed to carry the banner for Sunday-school workers, let us hold out some inducement to our weaker schools, to strengthen and encourage them, for I know by early experience how the favor of friends inspires in those days of anxiety to keep Sunday-schools alive during the hot days of July and August. I am so glad that winter-killed schools are now becoming a rarity, and July schools are enlivened by faithful and devoted teachers.—S. S. TEACHER.

PARKHILL, ONT.

### Sunday-School Methods.

A PASTOR tells, in the *Sunday-School Journal*, the story of his success in carrying on a teachers' meeting, and reviving his Church in a community where, for many years, there had been but little life or interest. He found, on entering the work, about twenty-five teachers, of whom less than one-fourth were in the habit of studying the lesson they were to teach. He says:

"Some did not see the lesson until they came to school, and during the opening exercises they hurriedly stole over it. At last I announced that I would be glad to meet, at my study, all the teachers who desired to prepare themselves in that way for their Sunday-school lessons. At the hour appointed a few came. They found me thoroughly prepared to teach the lesson. I had spent the whole day upon it. When they left they were prepared to teach it, its doctrines, its geography, its practical applications, to recite the Golden Text, the outline—in short, they had grasped the lesson. A precious, earnest season was spent in prayer for the Holy Ghost upon ourselves and the school, and we all felt that it was good for us to be there. The next week there was a large increase in the attendance, and so on each evening, until almost all, and many of the older scholars, came. Then the idea began to grow that those who were so indifferent about their sacred work as to go to their classes without thorough preparation, ought not to be teachers. Pressure followed, and finally that class of persons forfeited their classes, not because they did not attend the teachers' meeting, but because they would not qualify themselves to teach. A sweeping revival of religion followed, that resulted in the conversion of almost all the unconverted of the school; and when I left the charge, one of the flourishing features was the teachers' meeting. What were the secrets of the success? 1. The pastor at the head of that Church felt he was responsible for the character of teachers and teaching. 2. The co-

tagion of earnestness fired his corps of teachers. 3. He set apart as inviolable a sufficient time to prepare himself thoroughly to teach the lesson. 4. The hour was made evangelistic in its spirit.

"I believe that these secrets have the swing of conquest."—*Pilgrim Teacher*.

### Temperance Pledges.

A Sunday-school secretary in New Brunswick, asks the best way to get scholars to sign the temperance pledge. Will some superintendent or secretary, who has been successful in this work, kindly send us a brief account of his methods? Address the Editor of the Sunday-school BANNER.

### Book Notices.

*The Psychology of Attention.* By TH. RIBOT. Translated by J. FITZGERALD. New York: The Humboldt Publishing Co., 28 Lafayette Place. Paper, price 15 cents.

Another interesting monograph by the same distinguished author who has already enriched the literature of psychology with three very remarkable works on "The Diseases of the Will," "The Diseases of Memory," and "The Diseases of Personality" respectively. The works named have been translated into English, and are published in "The Humboldt Library." Like them, the present work is a study of very recalcitrant problems of psychology—the nature and workings of the mind of man—presented in language understandable by every intelligent reader. That it is instructive "goes without saying." But furthermore, it is highly entertaining. In the series of works to which it belongs are found illustrations of abnormal psychic states more striking than the "double personality" portrayed in "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde."

*The Childhood of Jesus, and other Sermons.* By ADOLPHE MONOD. Translated by REV. J. H. MYERS. Pp. 196. Paper, 40 cents; cloth, 75 cents. Congregational Sunday-school and Publishing Society, Boston and Chicago.

Adolphe Monod, a Swiss Protestant minister, who died in 1856, was one of the most eminent preachers of his day. He lectured on theology and Hebrew at the college of Montauban from 1836 to 1852, and then became minister of the Reformed Church of Paris. Abbé Lacordaire, himself an orator of great power, said of him: "We are all children in comparison." It was a happy thought of the translator to give us these sermons from the great preacher. Any sermons would have been welcome, but these are peculiarly so, since they are about children and to children, and take up the problem of their Christian training and development in such a way as to be a help both to them and to parents. Parents should read them to their children, and by reading them learn how to influence their children for good.

## Opening and Closing Services.

### OPENING SERVICE.

- I. Silence.
- II. Doxology.
- III. Responsive Service.  
*Supt.* How excellent is Thy loving kindness,  
O God!

*School.* Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings.

*Supt.* They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house.

*School.* And Thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of Thy pleasures.

*Supt.* For with Thee is the fountain of life.

*School.* In Thy light shall we see light.

*Supt.* Commit thy way unto the Lord.

*School.* Trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass.

*Supt.* Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him.

*School.* Those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth.

IV. Singing.

V. Prayer.

### LESSON SERVICE.

- I. Class Study of the Lesson.
- II. Sing Lesson Hymn.
- III. Recitation of Title, Golden Text, Outline, and Doctrinal Suggestion by the school in concert.
- IV. Review and Application of the Lesson, by Pastor or Superintendent.
- V. The Supplemental Lesson.
- VI. Announcements (especially of the Church service, and week-evening prayer-meeting).

### CLOSING SERVICE.

*Supt.* My son, forget not My law; but let thine heart keep My commandments; for length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

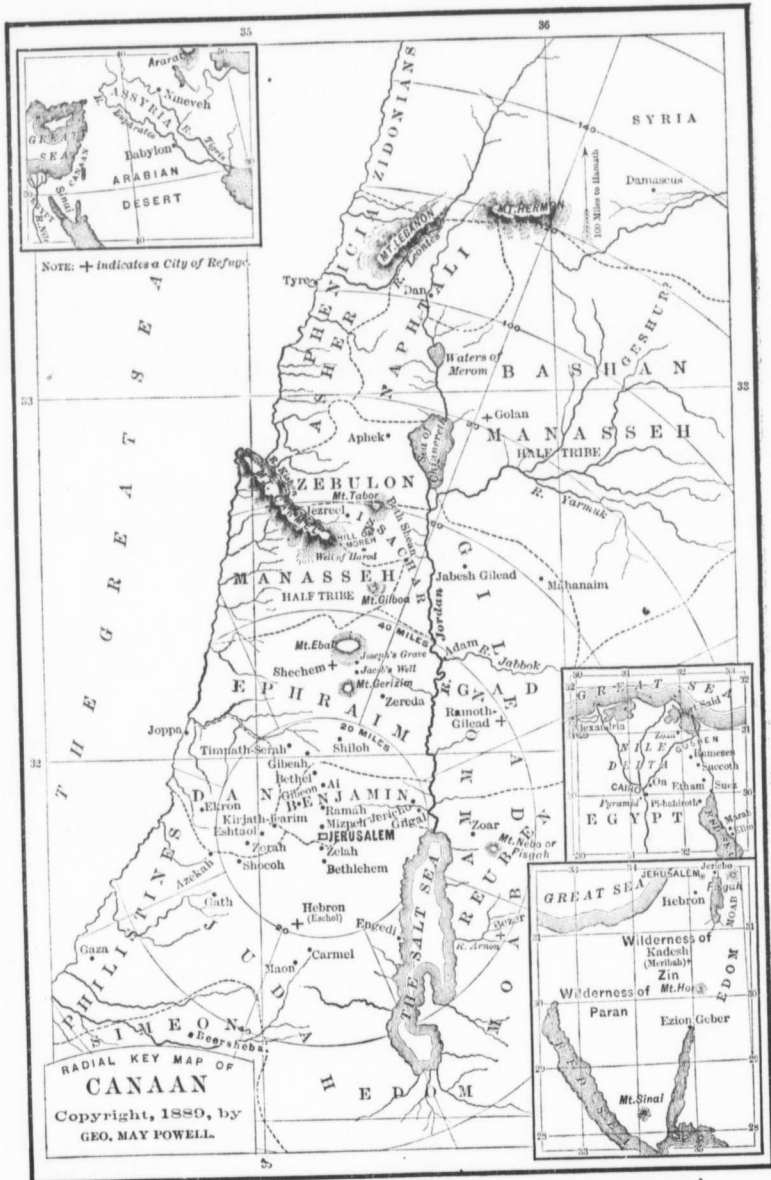
*School.* The Lord our God will we serve, and His voice will we obey.

Dismission.

### APOSTLES' CREED.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord: who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.



## INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS.

## FOURTH QUARTER: STUDIES IN JEWISH HISTORY.

B. C. 1024.]

LESSON V. DAVID'S REBELLIOUS SON.

[Nov. 3.

## Authorized Version.

2 Sam. 15. 1-12. [Commit to memory verses 4-6.]



1 And it came to pass after this, that Ab'sa-lom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.

2 And Ab'sa-lom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Ab'sa-lom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Is'ra-el.

3 And Ab'sa-lom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee.

4 Ab'sa-lom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!

5 And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him.

6 And on this manner did Ab'sa-lom to all Is'ra-el that came to the king for judgment: so Ab'sa-lom stole the hearts of the men of Is'ra-el.

7 And it came to pass after forty years, that Ab'sa-lom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the LORD, in He'bron.

8 For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Ge'shur in Syr'i-a, saying, If the LORD shall bring me again indeed to Je-ru'sa-lem, then I will serve the LORD.

9 And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to He'bron.

10 But Ab'sa-lom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Is'ra-el, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Ab'sa-lom reigneth in He'bron.

11 And with Ab'sa-lom went two hundred men out of Je-ru'sa-lem, that were called: and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing.

12 And Ab'sa-lom sent for A-hith'o-phel the Gi'lo-nite, David's counselor, from his city, even from Gi'loh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Ab'sa-lom.

## Revised Version.

1 And it came to pass after this, that Ab'sa-lom prepared him a chariot and horses, and fifty men to run before him. And Ab'sa-lom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man had a suit which should come to the king for judgment, then Ab'sa-lom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, 3 Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Is'ra-el. And Ab'sa-lom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king 4 to hear thee. Ab'sa-lom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I 5 would do him justice! And it was so, that when any man came nigh to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took hold of him, and kissed 6 him. And on this manner did Ab'sa-lom to all Is'ra-el that came to the king for judgment: so Ab'sa-lom stole the hearts of the men of Is'ra-el.

7 And it came to pass at the end of forty years, that Ab'sa-lom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the

8 LORD, in He'bron. For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode in Ge-shur in Syr'i-a, saying, If the LORD shall indeed bring me again to Je-ru'sa'lem,

9 then I will serve the LORD. And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to He'bron.

10 But Ab'sa-lom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Is'ra-el, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Ab'sa-lom is king in

11 He'bron. And with Ab'sa-lom went two hundred men out of Je-ru'sa-lem, that were invited, and went in their simplicity; and they knew not any thing.

12 And Ab'sa-lom sent for A-hith'o-phel the Gi'lo-nite, Da-vid's counselor, from his city, even from Gi'loh, while he offered the sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Ab'sa-lom.

## EXPOSITORY NOTES.

BY REV. MILTON S. TERRY, D.D., GARRETT BIBLICAL INSTITUTE.

**Introductory.**—Although David's heinous iniquity might receive a full gracious pardon, and his relieved spirit exult in the divine mercy, the stern necessities of the divine justice inflicted on him some bitter penal sorrows. The word of prophecy by Nathan forewarned him that, because of his sin, the sword should never depart from his house, his wives should be openly dishonored, and the child of Bathsheba should die. Comp. 2 Sam. 12, 10-14. These judgments followed one another in too rapid succession for David's peace. The child was stricken and died; his sin became known, and its evil influence, like a foul leaven, worked in the court and in the nation. Amnon's incest with Tamar soon followed, and not long after Absalom accomplished the assassination of Amnon, and then fled away for safety beyond the Jordan into the mountains of Bashan. Thus heavy judgments came upon the king, and it seemed indeed that the sword was making great havoc in his house. Absalom was the son of Maacah, daughter of Talmal, king of Geshur. When and how David first met her, or came to form an alliance with her father, we are nowhere told. But Absalom was specially dear to David, and he yearned to have him brought back from the land of his self-exile. This was

length accomplished, but only, as we shall see, to add other pang to the heart of the pitiable king. Absalom was filled with mighty ambition, and could not rest. He was lifted up with pride and self-confidence, and probably fearing that he was not likely to attain the throne of his father by regular succession, he sought by flattery and force to make himself master of the kingdom.

**Verse 1.** After this. After Absalom's restoration and reception by the king, as described in vers. 20-33 of the preceding chapter. Prepared him chariots and horses. Compare the similar act of Adonijah, who at a later day aspired to be king, and endeavored to usurp the throne. 1 Kings 1. 5. Fifty men to run before him. This would be a very conspicuous affectation of royalty. A son of the king riding in a state chariot, with fifty footmen as attendants, would powerfully attract the attention of the populace.

**2. Rose up early.** His intense zeal for himself prompted him to early action. He would be first on the ground. Beside the way of the gate. Not in the gate, where the judges were wont to sit in the old time (comp. Ruth 4. 1), but on one side; literally, "on the hand of the way." Here he intercepted such persons as

came to Jerusalem with complaints of wrong, and by flattering arts sought to ingratiate himself in their good will. These were the arts of a cunning plotter of rebellion. **A controversy.** A case of litigation, a quarrel, which must needs go to the king for judgment. Men under a sense of wrong are easy victims of the flatterer. **Of what city.** Thus showing friendly familiarity, and affecting a particular interest in each new comer. **Of one of the tribes.** This gives the general purport of his answer. The particular tribe would be, of course, in each case named.

**3. Thy matters are good.** Thy cause is a just one and ought speedily to be adjudged in thy favor. **No man deputed.** Rather, "A hearer there is not for thee from the king." As much as to say, the king takes no interest in these wrongs of the people and does not trouble himself to see that justice is done to every one. These were treasonable words, but would have great weight with one who felt himself injured by a lax administration of justice.

**4. Oh that I were made judge.** These words betray his disloyalty and bold ambition. But every malcontent in the land, and vain youths like Absalom himself, would be taken with it. The rank of Absalom, as one of the king's sons, and his great personal beauty and insinuating address, would thus soon gain for him many followers.

**5. Do him obeisance.** As a prince of the court, to whom all loyal subjects were expected to show deference. **Put forth...hand...took...kissed.** Such royal condescension was as ingratiating as it must have been at first surprising. Continued with persistent care and consummate tact, it had its effect in preparing the way for a most serious rebellion.

**6. Stole the hearts.** Got control of them by deception and flattery. This seemed to his base thought the surest road to the throne.

**7. Forty years.** This is an obvious error, and should probably be read "four years," as it is in Josephus, and in the Syriac and Arabic versions. The meaning most natural to the context is that after four years of such artful flatteries and conspiracy, he felt ready to undertake a bolder step. **My vow...in Hebron.** All this was perhaps a mere pretext on the part of Absalom. He wished to go to Hebron with a large company, and yet not excite suspicion. Hebron was where David began to reign, and continued to reign for over seven years. Chap. 5. 5. It has been plausibly supposed that as Hebron was the birthplace of Absalom, he expected to find many adherents there among the friends of his youth, and perhaps many of the people of Hebron felt keen dissatisfaction over the removal of the seat of government to Jerusalem.

**8. A vow...at Geshur.** Compare the language of Jacob's vow at Bethel, Gen. 28. 20-22. It is not improbable that Absalom made some such vow during his stay in Geshur, for such hasty and fickle natures are apt to pass from extremes of emotional piety to most daring conspiracy and crime. But it is also not improbable that all this pretext of having made such a vow was a piece of deception to blind the king to his real designs. Compare a similar plea of David when he would test the feeling of Saul toward him. 1 Sam. 20. 6. **Serve the Lord.** That is, according to the context, offer a great sacrifice to him at Hebron. His taking two hundred men with him (verse 11) would not seem strange or suspicious, when he was known to be going to Hebron for such a pious purpose.

**9. Go in peace.** David seems to have been utterly without suspicion that a fell conspiracy was hidden under Absalom's avowed object of going to offer sacri-

fice at the place of his birth, and where he himself had reigned over Judah for seven years.

**10. Sent spies.** Scouts, working their way among the people, reconnoitering the land, ascertaining the public feeling, and preparing the way for a glad reception of the news that the generous and popular son of David was in power. **Sound of the trumpet.** This was the concerted signal by which the overt act of rebellion was to begin, and all his fellow conspirators were to understand by that sound that Absalom reigned in Hebron, and were to proclaim that fact wherever they had reason to believe it would be acceptable. The emissaries would probably have avoided publishing these tidings where they could not depend on the support of the people.

**11. Two hundred men.** Not too large a company for one who had been seen to ride in a state chariot, and have fifty footmen; (ver. 1.) **Called.** Invited guests. These were told wry to Absalom's treasonable plans. **They knew not any thing** about the deep-laid plot with which the spies had been intrusted. This large company of guests consisted probably of as many members of the court and persons of distinction as Absalom could persuade to accompany him. Compare his treacherous generosity on a former festal occasion. Chap. 13. 23-29. Absalom probably thought that when the tidings of his usurpation spread, the fact that, so many persons of distinction were joined unto him would silence opposition, and awe his enemies into submission. He also reckoned, doubtless, that these guests would soon accept the new regime, and not prove false to him after his daring act had been clearly taken. They would, at all events, be in his power.

**12. Sent for Ahithophel.** This verse should be understood as a condensed statement of numerous facts without distinguishing the time of each procedure. We need not suppose that Ahithophel was not sent for until the festal party had assembled at Hebron, nor need the expression **while he offered sacrifices** be explained as requiring such a supposition. This latter expression should be translated "when he offered the sacrifices," and explained as referring to the time of the feast. The thought of the verse is, that Absalom sent and called Ahithophel, notifying him to be present at Hebron at the time when he proposed to offer the sacrifice which they had doubtless already planned privately together. This offering of sacrifice was, with the ringleaders of the rebellion, no holy service to insure the blessing of God, but a means to blind the king and people, and help to inaugurate sedition. Ahithophel is called the **Gilonite** from his native city **Giloh**, which was one of the cities of the hill country of Judah. Josh. 15. 51. He was one of David's most sagacious and influential counselors, and his defection gave the rebellion great power and seriously troubled the heart of David. Comp. ver. 31. It has been supposed that Ahithophel forsok David on account of his sin with Bathsheba, since her father was Ahithophel's son. Comp. chap. 11-3; 23. 34. **The conspiracy was strong.** Owing doubtless to the same reason which alienated Ahithophel from David: the royal crimes; too much laxity perhaps in the administration of justice, which Absalom had seen and turned to his own interests; and David's weakness in the hands of Joab, who seemed at times to lord it over the king. **The people...with Absalom.** The royal flatterer, the fast young man, the handsome courtier, the affable friend, who had insinuated himself into the hearts of multitudes from all the tribes, had a large following.



Among the lessons to be learned from Absalom's rebellion are the following:

1. Political demagogues are generally characterized by pomp, pride, inordinate ambition, and insinuating flattery.
2. False and hypocritical hearts hide their evil designs under the mask of religion.
3. The lack of prompt and rigid administration of justice opens the way for rebellions.
4. Gross immorality in a sovereign will shake a people's confidence, and alienate his once-trusted friends.
5. The offenses of a ruler lead to visitations of chastisement which disturb the peace of a whole nation.

### An English Teacher's Notes on the Lessons.

BY SARAH GERALDINA STOCK.

To the right understanding and appreciation of a picture it is important it should be hung in the right light, so that the eye may well take it in. The effect may be utterly spoiled, either by its being hung in a dark corner, or placed in the full dazzling glare, so that its features cannot be perceived.

It is of equal importance that the portraits of Scripture should be placed in the right light. The teacher has not to draw them; that is done, and done even where there is only a mere sketch, with life-like vividness. But he has so to hold them that the light may fall in the right manner, and that not only the leading features, but the smaller details, shall be plain and clear. It is hard for young people to realize that the characters of Scripture were "of like passions" with themselves; some appear too far removed in goodness, others too deeply sunk in evil, for want of being placed in the right light. Those who read the sad story, the beginning of which is set before us to-day, will naturally detest the baseness of Absalom. But it must be the teacher's aim so to show the picture that not merely the actual history, but the sin recorded in it shall be viewed with horror, and the need of watchfulness against this very sin be impressed on the minds of the class.

Let us endeavor to set in the right light the acts of Absalom recorded in the passage for to-day.

1. He assumed a state which was unbecoming to him. The chariots and horses and runners with which he surrounded himself were the signs of regal dignity, and Absalom, though a king's son, had no right to them. It may be asked, Why not? If he were able to procure for himself all this pomp, why should he not? There was nothing absolutely sinful in it. But being contrary to universal custom it was more than a mere matter of self-indulgence and show. It was an endeavor to appear that which he was not—just one of the besetting sins of young people in the present day. "Why should I not dress handsomely?" is the thought of many a girl. "I have a right to wear what I like if I pay for it." No; if the effect of the dress is to make you appear what you are not, it is wrong.

2. He spoke that which implied a censure on his father. He was early at the "gate" of Jerusalem, where all complaints were brought, and where causes came up for trial. And it appears that at this period David had relaxed his attention to the wants of the people, and that justice was really neglected. What should a dutiful son have done in these circumstances? Certainly not what Absalom did—called attention to his father's neglect, and taken advantage of it to display his own pretended zeal for the national good. Does no son or daughter now refer to a parent's failings, and

hint that father is mean, or mother is foolish, while the child who thus criticizes them is far above such faults?

3. In this manner he "stole the hearts of the men of Israel." It was as much theft as if he had deliberately appropriated and carried away his father's personal possessions. He took by stealth the place in the affections of the people which by right belonged to his father, and which up to now had been David's. And it is as mean and shameful a theft when a child now contrives to get into his own hands the rule and authority which belong to a parent, and to supplant him in the esteem of others.

4. He deceived his father. The story about the vow which he had "vowed unto the Lord in Hebron" may have been perfectly correct. But it was not that vow which after the four years (which seems to be the probably correct version of ver. 7) spent in drawing after himself the hearts of the people, took him away from the capital, but the necessity of acting at a distance from the seat of existing government and choosing a place which had once been a regal residence. No deception is so bad as that practiced on a father or mother.

5. He led others astray. The two hundred who went with him from Jerusalem "knew not any thing" of his rebellious purposes; but they were quickly involved in them. And the greater part of the nation was for a time drawn aside from their allegiance to the king God had given them. No man ever sins alone. His influence and example attract others after him. And one child who slights his father's or his mother's command, disregards their wishes, or resists their authority, is sure to lead others also into the paths of disobedience. It is a solemn question for the class: Has my conduct ever been, in any particular, similar to that of David's rebellious son?

### Cambridge Notes.

BY REV. JAMES HOPE MOULTON, M.A.

[These notes are based on the Revised Version.]

THROUGHOUT these last years of his life, David was to be a constant example of the truth that the divine forgiveness does not interfere with the laws of nature, which demand inexorably that sin shall work out its own penalty. His sin and its successive punishments were alike due to the fatal concession he had made to the polygamous customs of Eastern monarchies. The jealousies between the several households were a constant source of strife; and now that David's paternal fondness, aided doubtless by the recollection of his own guilt, had prevented him from punishing his first-born, Absalom had in executing a righteous vengeance also contrived to remove the only man who stood between him and the throne. Son of the princess Maachah of Geshur, he had inherited in an extraordinary degree the physical beauty of his father's family, but except in this and in his power of winning popularity he owed nothing to his descent. There is scarcely a good word to be said for him, unless it be such to admit that his elder brother was even worse than he. Vain, vindictive, and false-hearted, without a trace of gratitude to his over-indulgent father, or of love to any one but himself, he had not even the poor compensation of brains, which have so often atoned for darker crimes in the eyes of a not too discriminating world. Had his plot succeeded, the new king would have been only the gilded sepulcher of his predecessor's greatness. He perished, and none wept for him save the father, who saw in his vanished happiness the just retribution for his own desolation of another's happy home.

VER. 1. The plot had been meditated for years, and was doubtless suggested by resentment at David's severe punishment of the brother who took into his own hands the justice which was neglected by the royal father. David's unfortunate half-measures—recalling Absalom without a full pardon, and then restoring him without a trace of repentance—stimulated the irritation which bred rebellion. Prepared an imitation of foreign state, which was sure to be popular. *Fifty*. Elijah made use of this custom to impress Ahab. 1 Kings 18, 46; comp. 1 Sam. 8, 11; 1 Kings 1, 5. VER. 2. *Gate*. Of the palace, where the king sat to dispense justice to all comers. Comp. the "High Gate" (*la porte sublime*), which is still the symbol of the Turkish government. Possibly Absalom's early rising was intended to forestall the king, who would certainly sit in the gate during part of the day. *Of me*. In each case, of course, supplying the name. VER. 3. *Said*. Presumably, after hearing him state his case, though the favorable verdict would have been just as certain without that formality. *Deputed*. The form of Nathan's appeal for a judgment (chap. 12, 1, *seq.*) suggests that the suits were often presented to the king by a man of high position who had sifted the case. Absalom suggests that the great mass of work decided by David without such help must be too hastily done. VER. 4. The prince does not express a wish that he were king—he is far too wily—but only suggests that his father might depute him to take his judicial functions in his advancing age. Probably enough, in this time of peace the number of litigants was much too large to be fairly dealt with by one man; and by diligently fomenting this grievance Absalom was able to create a feeling in his own favor in the country surrounding Jerusalem. Litigants at a distance would generally get their cases settled by the elders in their own cities. And so it was that in the eventual division between Judah and the ten tribes, the latter sided with David and the former with Absalom. Comp. chap. 19, 11. VER. 5. Instead of accepting homage as the herald apparent he would give the cordial greeting of an equal. VER. 6. *Stole the hearts of*. So most translate, with the LXX. But there is considerable authority for translating "deceived the men," as in the nearly identical phrase of Gen. 21, 26. The people were too simple to see through Absalom's sham interest in them. VER. 7. *Forty*. It is curious that this palpable blunder should appear both in the Hebrew and the LXX. The easy correction "four," given by Josephus and some old versions, is just what we should expect. But more probably the larger numeral is due to the corruption of some vague word, as "a long time."—*Klosterman*. In *Hebron*. The punctuation of the text leaves us to assume that the choice of a place to pay the vow was arbitrary. A rather stronger sense is obtained by altering the Massoretic punctuation and joining the words closely with "to Jehovah." His pretended vow was to "Jehovah in Hebron," the national God as tutelary deity of the ancient holy place where Absalom was born. Comp. Jacob's offering to the "God of Bethel." Gen. 35, 7, etc. VER. 8. *Geshur* was north-east of Bashan, about half way between Damascus and the Sea of Galilee. Talmi, Absalom's grandfather, perhaps belonged to the giant Anakim. Of course Absalom was not safe there against so powerful a king as David, but he felt sure that his father would not attempt pursuit. *If*, etc. The sham vow is made in the bargaining spirit which marked that of the unregenerate Jacob. Gen. 28, 20-22. The "service" he promised would not be more than the performance of a ceremonial. One text of the LXX. adds "in Hebron" at the end, and this seems right, since the whole point was the place where the vow was

to be performed. VER. 10. These secret messengers were to ascertain how much support there was likely to be for an insurrection, and they would only give the signal where they found sufficient discontent to work upon. Hebron was a well-chosen rendezvous, not only as focusing the grievance and tribal pride of Judah, but as an ancient city chafing at its loss of the position of metropolis. Outside Judah the rebellion found little support. David's rule was wise and lenient, nor was his son likely to improve on it. VER. 11. Apparently these were men of distinction likely to join the plot on finding themselves thus compromised. They went simply as invited guests to a feast like Samuel's in 1 Sam. 9, 22. VER. 12. The Hebrew text is manifestly unsound, and so is the LXX., but the sense of the Rev. Ver. is likely in itself and agrees with Josephus. Absalom's extraordinary shrewdness is vividly commented on (chap. 16, 23) and illustrated by the advice he gave. In brief this was to make the breach with David irrevocable and then to strike a decisive blow before the loyalists had time to recover their alarm. By playing on Absalom's vanity so as to secure delay Hushai broke the rebellion, which had no element of permanence. The similarity between Ahithophel and Judas has often been noticed. There is, however, no evidence that Psa. 41 relates to David's traitorous counselor, so that the application of John 13, 18 does not make Ahithophel the type. *Giloh*. Josh. 15, 5. In the south below Hebron. *While*. He performed the ostensible object of his journey to give time for the assembling of his adherents. Meanwhile that "fool's sacrifice" was not unmarked by Him whose name was vainly used therein.

#### The Lesson Council.

**Question 5.** *To what extent was David responsible for the rebellion of Absalom?*

Had not David sacrificed piety to policy in his marriage alliance with the pagan daughter of a pagan prince there had been no such turbulent character as Absalom. David's twofold sin in this polygamous marriage yielded the bitter harvest he reaped in the life of the ungrateful son. David was further responsible for Absalom's rebellion in that he condoned his crime of murder. Had he dealt with that according to law, Absalom would not have added the crime of rebellion to that of fratricide.—*Rev. O. J. Coules, D.D., Brooklyn, N. Y.*

To that extent that the absence of wise provision and care involve. Absalom was subtle, planning, deceitful, and revengeful, as shown in his course with Amnon. He doubtless knew of his father's purpose to leave the kingdom to Solomon, and yet, as a son by a royal mother, and probably the eldest son living at the time, regarded himself as the rightful heir to the kingdom. This opinion the people would be likely to share. David provided no counteractives to the state of things likely to arise. The king was responsible for the administration of justice in the realm. David had failed to provide the proper tribunals for this purpose. Dissatisfaction of the people was the result. His own sins had diminished the respect and reverence in which he had once been held, and the calamities which his sins had brought upon the nation prepared them to listen to the voice of a demagogue and break out in open revolt.—*Rev. A. Wheeler, D.D., Greenville, Pa.*

David's responsibility appears when we consider the training of his son. Absalom was vain, self-willed, unprincipled. David, governed by excessive love, ignored his faults, excused and palliated his offenses, failing at-

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terly in the duties of reproof and punishment. A disobedient and disrespectful son naturally developed into a disloyal and rebellious subject.—Rev. M. D. Church, Washington, N. J.

### Lesson Word-Picture.

BY REV. E. A. RAND.

SIMPLE-MINDED, weak-willed Abihu! He has a "controversy" with a neighbor, and he must go up to Jerusalem, find the king, and get judgment against the troublesome fellow, if he can. He is on his way now to David's royal city. But what is that coming down the highway behind that big, pretentious cloud of dust rolling along? Is it the great king himself? Such a clatter! Such a shouting! Rattling chariot-wheels and prancing horses, and lo, before all, see the fifty men running! What is this fuss about? It is the great king himself!

"No," says a spectator to Abihu. "It is Absalom, the king's son! See him in that chariot? What a kingly air he has! How royal his dress!"

It quickly goes by, this grand show, and a big, grayish dust-cloud rolls up and hides the clattering, childish display.

On the morrow Abihu is at the city gates. He is in a hurry to get judgment that will break like a thunder-cloud upon his neighbor; and where is the king, to pack that cloud with thunder?

"That must be the king, the man over there," reasons Abihu. "He has such a distinguished look."

Why, no, Abihu! It is not the great king. He lacks a crown, but how he strides about, assuming a fancied kingly strut!

"I would like to find the king!" mutters Abihu.

But see! Abihu, that grand being is strutting your way! Yes, his distinguished eyes are fastened on you. He is asking where you live, how your children may be, and what want may bring you here!

You have been wronged? Poor man! Indeed! Want to see the king? O, if he were only king! He would right injustice. And now, when you make a silly obeisance, he raises you and kisses you like a brother! And then your tardy eyes discover that it is Absalom, whom you met in the highway! O favored Abihu! You have no heart left, for it has all gone to Absalom. As for brains, you had none at the beginning. In that sly way Absalom steals many hearts all over Israel.

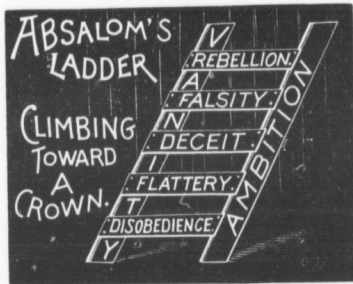
The days run hastily by, and what is Absalom plotting now? He has a vow to pay down in Hebron. How sacred that vow! The king must let him keep it. The traitor! How his sly eyes glisten with fraud as he stands before his unsuspecting father. It is a wonder his false tongue does not trip over his deceitful words. The trustful king says, Go. But who else has gone away? Who steals hence by some secluded path? Who creeps along in the shade of the trees or some high rock? Who travels by night more than by day? Abihu. Other spies have gone with him to whisper, right and left, all over Israel. "As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, 'Absalom reigneth in Hebron!'" O treason! Would that one of these whisperers might swell to a tempest, taking quick warning to David! And now Absalom has gone. Two hundred soft hearts and four hundred swift heels have gone in their simplicity with Absalom. And there is Ahithophel, David's trusted counselor; he has joined the rebellion. David's hydra will rear its head, open its mouth, and cry, "Down with David!"

Wait, though! Let the conspirators wait!

There is a signal trumpet to sound.  
Hark!  
Treason soon will echo forth its peal.

### Blackboard.

BY J. B. PHIPPS, ESQ.



Absalom desired to succeed David on the throne, but he tried to climb up to that height in a wrong way. The lesson on the blackboard is intended to show this. You will notice that the sides of Absalom's ladder are "Vanity" and "Ambition." Call the attention of the school to the steps of the ladder: 1. Disobedience. 2. Flattery. 3. Deceit. 4. False pretense. 5. Rebellion. After bringing out the points of the lesson, make the application to touch on the life of every young person who climbs the wrong way in order to gain worldly fame or riches.

DIRECTIONS FOR COLORS. The ladder can be all brown, but it will be more distinct if you draw it in white, and shade it in brown. The words on the ladder must be of bright colors to show well. "Vanity" and "Ambition" are to be made in bright red.

### Primary and Intermediate.

BY MARTHA VAN MARGER.

LESSON THOUGHT. *The Sin of Ingratitude.*

Make the tables of the law on the board. Number the commandments, and print a suggestive word or two from each. A drill on the commandments is always in order, and will form a good introduction to this lesson.

With an eraser, suggest a break in the table, crossing the fifth commandment. Say that this lesson tells how the breaking of this led to the breaking of others.

Pin up a crown and scepter. Ask who wore the crown of Israel at this time. Question a little about David. Bring out some fact revealing his goodness and greatness. Tell that now he was growing old. He had sons who were men. Print "Absalom," and tell what a handsome face and form he had, how kind and pleasant he could be, etc.

Show something fair and beautiful on the outside, but ugly and wrong inside. A pretty box filled with refuse, or a fair apple with a decayed heart will serve as illustration.

Tell that Absalom's heart was like this—full of impurity—which he kept covered by a smooth outside.

What do we call one who seems to be what he is not? Print "Deceitful" before Absalom. Talk about deceiving ways in children, and show how untrue is the heart that makes believe, even in little things.

Tell the story of Absalom's trouble with his father David—the killing of his brother and banishment from

home for three years. Then the return with wicked plans in his heart, but smooth words on his lips. Tell what means he took to make the people admire and love him. Show a picture of a chariot; tell how he rode in kingly style, and showed himself friendly to all the people. Did he mean to do them good? No; for all the time he was planning to break God's law. Whoever breaks that law harms not only himself, but all whom he meets.



Tell that Absalom wanted to take the crown from his father's head and wear it himself. What commandment did he break in even thinking of this? Yes, the one you see broken here. Teach that in breaking one, all the others are in danger. Absalom not only dishonored his father, but he stole what belonged to him. Read verse 6. Let children tell what other commandments he broke. Dwell upon the sin and danger growing out of lack of obedience to parents. God is our Father. Do we honor and obey him?

### Berean Methods. The Teachers' Meeting.

Obtain from your class as full a description as possible of Oriental court splendors. From histories, books of travel, and such works as the *Arabian Nights* may be gathered many illustrations of this lesson... Absalom a type of the "smart" unscrupulous modern politician. Draw from the class the lineage of Absalom's mother, and the training that he may be supposed to have had from an idolatrous mother... Trace Absalom's history up to the present incident... Bring out the characteristics of Ahiathophel the Gilonite, a most suggestive character, and trace his history after his adherence to Absalom... It might be well in studying this lesson to follow a suggestion already made in the JOURNAL, and appoint one teacher to be a geographer, who should locate Jerusalem and Hebron, Geshur and Gihon; another to be a historian, and trace the careers of Absalom, Ahiathophel, etc.; a third to be an antiquarian, who should explain the manners and customs which are traceable in this narrative; and a fourth, who might consider this lesson from the philosophic standpoint, and trace the deeper causes which led to this great rebellion. Several of them can be found by a study of the last two or three chapters. The leader of the meeting should himself elicit the moral and spiritual lessons... Do not fail to emphasize the offensive depravity of Absalom. He was conceited, tricky, devoid of filial affection, a murderer, an adulterer, and a traitor. But he was "popular"... Public opinion is never a safe guide as to the true moral character of political leaders.

**References.** FREEMAN'S HAND-BOOK. Ver. 1: RICHING footmen, 314. Ver. 8: Vows, 851. FOSTER'S CYCLOPEDIA. Prose, 628, 3682, 4169, 4304. Ver. 3: Prose, 3112, 3114, 3115, 1386, 1618, 1619, 11219, 11674, 9607. Ver. 6: Prose, 2855. Ver. 8: 3113.

### ANALYTICAL AND BIBLICAL OUTLINE. The Fast Young Man.

#### I. HIS VANITY.

*Chariots... horses... men.* v. 1.  
"Much praised... for his beauty," 2 Sam. 14, 25.  
"Man looketh... appearance," 1 Sam. 16, 7.

#### II. HIS AMBITION.

*O that I were made judge!* v. 4.  
"Lay not wait, O wicked man," Prov. 24, 15, 16.  
"Greatest among you... servant," Matt. 23, 11.

#### III. HIS INSINCERITY.

*Put forth his hand... kissed him.* v. 5.  
"By... fair speeches deceive," Rom. 16, 18.  
"Flattereth... spreadeth a net," Prov. 29, 5.

#### IV. HIS FILIAL IMPIETY.

*Absalom said unto the king.* v. 7.  
"Honor thy father," Exod. 20, 12.  
"The eye that mocketh," Prov. 30, 17.

#### V. HIS TREACHERY.

*Sent spies throughout... tribes.* v. 10.  
"Mine own... against me," Psa. 41, 9.  
"Many rise up against me," Psa. 3, 1.

### THOUGHTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

#### Trickery and Rectitude.

1. *All success depends on winning men's hearts.* It is alike true of clergymen, physicians, mechanics, merchants, politicians, and soldiers—of mothers at home and students at school—that those who attain the highest and most permanent eminence are those in whom their fellows have learned to repose the fullest confidence. Even great intellectual power fails of its best effectiveness when it is not based on the heart's affections.

2. *The tricky man may be temporarily successful.* The art of "stealing the hearts of men" is as easily acquired as the art of stealing their watches. Its practice requires no greater ability than the more common kinds of theft, and it is quite as vicious and contemptible as they. There are few lines of life in which duplicity and lack of scruple may not for a while succeed; there are none in which they are not held in contempt when discovered.

3. *The tricky man cannot be permanently successful.* Even skeptical philosophers tell us that there is a natural law which "makes for righteousness;" that "one increasing purpose runs" through all secular events—a purpose of virtue and rectitude. All forces of nature and of society tend to get the stolen watch away from the thief; and hearts are quite as prone as watches to slip from the grasp of an unworthy possessor. It is as impossible for even secular greatness to be well-founded upon tricks and pretense as for an Eiffel Tower to be safely reared upon a quicksand.

4. *Integrity is the highest wisdom.* "Honesty is the best policy" is a lame and limping maxim, for real honesty cannot be a "policy" at all. But sincere, lofty purpose eventually surmounts all life's obstacles. The man of rectitude is the true king of hearts. Temporary defeats only make his permanent success the more glorious. "Godliness is profitable unto all things."

### HOME READINGS.

M. David's rebellious son. 2 Sam. 15, 1-12.  
Th. David's flight. 2 Sam. 15, 30-37.  
W. Absalom's wicked intent. 2 Sam. 17, 1-9.  
Th. David's prayer. Psa. 3.  
F. Folly of disobedience. Prov. 15, 1-10.  
S. Christ's teaching. Mark 7, 5-13.  
S. Honor to parents. Eph. 6, 1-10.

### GOLDEN TEXT.

Honor thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. Exod. 20, 12.

TIME.—1024 B. C.

PLACES.—Jerusalem. Hebron.

DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION.—Ingratitude to God.

### LESSON HYMNS.

No. 274, Dominion Hymnal.

To thy father and thy mother  
Honour, love and reverence pay.

## No. 248, Dominion Hymnal.

O happy is the child who hears  
Instruction's warning voice.

## No. 45, Dominion Hymnal.

God has said, "Forever blessed  
Those who seek me in their youth."

Thy word, Almighty Lord,  
Deep are the wounds which sin has made.  
O how I see the crimson wave,  
Weary of earth, and laden,  
Weary child by sin oppressed,  
I lay my sins on Jesus.  
Tell it to Jesus,  
My Jesus, as thou wilt,  
If my disciple thou wouldst be.

## QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR STUDENTS.

## 1. Policy.

Who was Absalom?  
What trouble had he previously given to his father?  
Who had brought about reconciliation?  
For what did Absalom intend to use his restoration to the king's favor?  
What was the meaning of his acts told in vers. 1-3?  
What personal element in him aided in his purpose? Chap. 14, 25.

What was the wrong in his course?  
How widely did he thus extend his influence?  
In what particulars did he exhibit policy?  
Can you account for the seeming ignorance of Joab and of the king?

## 2. Conspiracy.

Why did Absalom need the king's permission to go to Hebron?  
Can you explain the difficulty connected with the time mentioned in ver. 7?

How long had Absalom been in Jerusalem after his banishment? (Chap. 14, 28.)  
How long, then, must his conspiracy have been growing?

What spirit among the people can be traced by the ease with which Absalom accomplished his purpose?

Who was Ahithophel?  
What is meant by hearing the sound of the trumpet?  
How successful was the conspiracy?  
What is shown by it concerning the character of the people?  
What is shown by it concerning the character of David?

## Practical Teachings.

See how sin overreaches itself. Absalom was heir to the throne. All he needed was to wait. He hastened and lost all.

See how hateful ambition is when sinful. It made Absalom a hypocrite, a liar, a murderer, an adulterer; and at last slew him.

Treachery is always despicable, but the treachery of a son to a father is hell-born.

Sin may run prosperously for a while, but God holds its tether, and when he will it thrusts a dart through Absalom's heart, and hangs Ahithophel.

Learn: To be true to father, friend, neighbor.  
To be loyal to self, to country, to God.

## Hints for Home Study.

1. Find out Absalom's position among the king's sons, and how near the throne he stood. 2 Sam. 3, 2, 3.
2. Study about his life, his relations to his father, his crime, his beauty, etc. 2 Sam. 13, 23-29, 34, 39, etc.
3. Learn about the customs of dispensing justice in Oriental cities. Enumerate the steps in Absalom's conspiracy.
4. Write the evidence that you can find of dissatisfaction with the administration of David.
5. Study the questions on the lesson, and find proofs for the statements made in the practical teachings.

## QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE SCHOLARS

## 1. Policy, v. 1-6.

- Of whose policy does the lesson tell?  
What preparation for display did Absalom make?  
Of what ambitious desire was this a proof? 1 Kings 1, 5.
- Where did he take his station in the early morning?  
For what purpose was he there?  
What did Absalom say about the king's neglect?  
What did he pledge if he were made judge?

What did he do when any one offered him honor?  
What effect had Absalom's policy on the men of Israel?  
Why ought these men to have distrusted Absalom?  
Prov. 29, 5.

## 2. Conspiracy, v. 7-12.

To what place did Absalom desire to make a journey?  
For what purpose did he wish to go?  
Where had he made a vow?  
What was the vow?  
At what date in David's history did this occur?  
What was the king's response?  
Whom did Absalom send out through the kingdom?  
What message did he send?  
Who went with Absalom to Hebron?  
What shows that they were not conspirators?  
For what counselor did Absalom send?  
What is said of the strength of the conspiracy?  
What commandment did Absalom violate? (Golden Text.)

## Teachings of the Lesson.

What does this lesson teach us about—

1. The evil of flattery?
2. The sin of hypocrisy?
3. The wickedness of impiety?

## Home Work for Young Bereans.

Find a prohibition of the use of horses by the Israelites, and learn who first violated this command.  
Find and commit to memory two statements of Solomon concerning the evil of flattery.

Find what David says, in a psalm, about his familiar friend turning against him.  
Learn the fate of Ahithophel, David's counselor.

## QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.

Who was Absalom? King David's son.  
For what was he noted? For his great beauty.  
What was his character? He was vain and envious.

What kind of a son was he? A bad son.  
What did he want to be? King of Israel.  
How did he treat the people of Jerusalem? Very kindly.

Did he have love in his heart? No; he was deceitful.  
What did he succeed in doing? Making the people love him.

What did some of them think? That Absalom was better than David.

Where did Absalom then go? To Hebron.  
Who gave him permission to go? David.  
What wicked plan had he? To declare himself king.

How did he call the people to him? By the sound of the trumpet.

What did he tell the people to cry when they heard it? "Absalom reigneth in Hebron."

How did David feel when he heard this? Very much grieved.

What did he do? He fled from Jerusalem.

Who went with him? His faithful friends.

## Words with Little People.

Good King David loved his beautiful but wicked son, Absalom.

God, our King and Father, loves us, his rebellious children.

Absalom's sin grieved his father, David.

Our sin grieves our Father, God.

## THE LESSON CATECHISM.

1. Who was Absalom? David's oldest living son.
2. What purpose had he formed concerning his father? To dethrone him and become king.
3. What course did he pursue with the people? He turned them against the king.
4. What step did he take to complete his purpose? He began a civil war.
5. Into what sins did his course lead him? Hypocrisy, lying, adultery, and murder.
6. What one of God's commandments did he notoriously break? "Honor thy father," etc.

## CATECHISM QUESTION.

49 How was man the chief creature on earth?  
Because the Creator made man in His own image.  
So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him—Genesis 1, 27.

B. C. 1023.]

## LESSON VI. DAVID'S GRIEF FOR ABSALOM.

[Nov. 10.]

Authorized Version.

Revised Version.

2 Sam. 18, 18-33. [Commit to memory verses 32, 33.]



18 Now Ab'sa-lom in his life-time had taken and reared up for himself a pillar, which is in the king's dale; for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance; and he called the pillar after his own name; and it is called unto this day, Ab'sa-lom's place.

19 Then said A-him'a-az the son of Za'dok, Let me now run, and bear unto him the king tidings, how that the LORD hath avenged him of his enemies.

20 And Jo'ab said unto him, Thou shalt not bear tidings this day, but thou shalt bear tidings another day; but this day thou shalt bear no tidings, because the king's son is dead.

21 Then said Jo'ab to Cu'shi, Go tell the king what thou hast seen. And Cu'shi bowed himself unto Jo'ab, and ran.

22 Then said A-him'a-az the son of Za'dok yet again to Jo'ab, But howsoever, let me, I pray thee, also run after Cu'shi. And Jo'ab said, Wherefore wilt thou run, my son, seeing that thou hast no tidings ready?

23 But howsoever, said he, let me run. And he said unto him, Run. Then A-him'a-az ran by the way of the plain, and overran Cu'shi.

24 And Da'vid sat between the two gates; and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and beheld a man running alone.

25 And the watchman cried, and told the king. And the king said, If he be alone, there is tidings in his mouth. And he came apace, and drew near.

26 And the watchman saw another man running; and the watchman called unto the porter, and said, Behold another man running alone. And the king said, He also bringeth tidings.

27 And the watchman said, Methinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of A-him'a-az the son of Za'dok. And the king said, He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings.

28 And A-him'a-az called, and said unto the king, All is well. And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, Blessed be the LORD thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king.

29 And the king said, Is the young man Ab'sa-lom safe? And A-him'a-az answered, When Jo'ab sent the king's servant, and me thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was.

30 And the king said unto him, Turn aside, and stand here. And he turned aside, and stood still.

31 And, behold, Cu'shi came; and Cu'shi said, Tidings, my lord the king; for the LORD hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee.

32 And the king said unto Cu'shi, Is the young man Ab'sa-lom safe? And Cu'shi answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is.

33 And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, thus he said, O my son Ab'sa-lom! my son, my son Ab'sa-lom! would God I had died for thee, O Ab'sa-lom, my son, my son!

18 Now Ab'sa-lom in his life-time had taken and reared up for himself the pillar, which is in the king's dale; for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance; and he called the pillar after his own name; and it is called Ab'sa-lom's monument, unto this day.

19 Then said A-him'a-az the son of Za'dok, Let me now run, and bear the king tidings, how that the

20 LORD hath avenged him of his enemies. And Jo'ab said unto him, Thou shalt not be the bearer of tidings this day, but thou shalt bear tidings another day; but this day thou shalt bear no tidings, because the king's

21 son is dead. Then said Jo'ab to the Cu'shite, Go tell the king what thou hast seen. And the Cu'shite

22 bowed himself unto Jo'ab, and ran. Then said A-him'a-az the son of Za'dok yet again to Jo'ab, But

23 come what may, let me, I pray thee, also run after the Cu'shite. And Jo'ab said, Wherefore wilt thou run, my son, seeing that thou wilt have no reward

24 for the tidings? But come what may, said he, I will run. And he said unto him, Run. Then A-him'a-az

25 ran by the way of the Plain, and overran the Cu'shite.

26 Now Da'vid sat between the two gates; and the watchman went up to the roof of the gate unto the

27 wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, a man running alone. And the watchman cried, and

28 told the king. And the king said, If he be alone, there is tidings in his mouth. And he came apace,

29 and drew near. And the watchman saw another man running; and the watchman called unto the

30 porter, and said, Behold, another man running alone. And the king said, He also bringeth tidings.

31 And the watchman said, Me thinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of A-him'a-az the

32 son of Za'dok. And the king said, He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings. And A-him'a-az

33 called, and said unto the king, All is well. And he bowed himself before the king with his face to the

34 earth, and said, Blessed be the LORD thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand

35 against my lord the king. And the king said, Is it well with the young man Ab'sa-lom? And A-him'a-

36 a-az answered, When Jo'ab sent the king's servant, even me thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I

37 knew not what it was. And the king said, Turn aside, and stand here. And he turned aside, and

38 stood still. And, behold, the Cu'shite came; and the Cu'shite said, Tidings for my lord the king; for the

39 LORD hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee. And the king said unto the

40 Cu'shite, Is it well with the young man Ab'sa-lom? And the Cu'shite answered, The enemies of my lord

41 the king, and all that rise up against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is. And the king was

42 much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, thus he said, O my

43 son Ab'sa-lom, my son, my son Ab'sa-lom! would God I had died for thee, O Ab'sa-lom, my son, my son!

## EXPOSITORY NOTES.

**Introductory.**—As soon as David was informed of his son's rebellion he seemed to be smitten with agony and fear. As Nathan had forewarned him, evil had risen up against him out of his own house (chap. 12. 11), and his deep consciousness of guilt in what brought this evil upon him unmanned him in the hour of danger, and his first thought was to flee from his capital. That strong war-

rior, whose sword had subdued all nations about him, now turns his back to the foe and seeks safety in ignoble flight! He took his course eastward, and hastened away beyond the Jordan as far as Mahanaim, where Ish-bosheth had once had his court and reigned as a rival prince. How must David have felt the changed conditions of himself and his followers as compared with the time of Ish-

bosheth's short reign! Absalom meanwhile gathered a host of adherents and occupied Jerusalem. Following the counsel of Ahithophel, he most boldly and impudently assumed all royal rights and powers at the national capital, but, contrary to his counsel, he did not hasten to send an armed force after the fugitive king. After some time he went in person over the Jordan, and with a large force engaged in battle with the veteran soldiers of David. His men were defeated by the servants of David, and twenty thousand of them were slain. Absalom himself was caught from the back of the mule on which he rode, and held fast in the branches of a tree, where Joab found him and thrust him through the heart with three darts. Then they cast him into a pit, and cast a great heap of stones upon him, and so the rebellion was quelled. But David's paternal weakness then showed itself in grief for his erring son.

**Verse 18. Reared up for himself a pillar.** This was in thorough accord with his vanity and pride. This pillar was probably a notable monument of stone, but probably not identical with the huge sculptured rock in the Kidron valley, twenty-four feet square and forty in height, which is now known as Absalom's tomb. **The king's date.** Called in Gen. 14 the valley of Shaveh, and not improbably the lower part of the Kidron valley, although its exact location is a matter of uncertainty. **I have no son.** The three sons mentioned, but not named, in chap. 14, 27, had probably died in infancy. **Absalom's place.** Hebrew, "the hand of Absalom," that is, his sign, or monument. This verse seems to have been added to offset the statements of the verse preceding, by showing how different a tomb Absalom had planned for himself from that in which he was contemptuously buried. Those who slew him "took" him, and "reared over him" a "heap of stones" (ver. 17); but he in life "took" and "reared for himself a monument." A sad commentary on those who in life, from vanity and self-conceit, build monuments solely to glorify themselves.

**19. Ahimaz.** Son of Zadok (15, 36), who had already distinguished himself as a fleet messenger in the interest of the king. Chap. 17, 17-21. He was now ambitious to be the first to carry the news of the victory to David. **The Lord hath avenged.** The son of the high-priest sees Jehovah's judgment in this defeat of Absalom and his fellow conspirators.

**20. Bear tidings.** Literally, "not a man of good tidings art thou this day." Joab well knew how the report of Absalom's death would afflict the king, and hence suggests that, because the king's son is dead, it is better for him to wait until another day. He was himself loth to have the king know all.

**21. Joab to Cushite.** The Hebrew is best rendered "to the Cushite." This messenger was probably a foreigner and a slave, whom Joab preferred to send rather than an Israelite. Perhaps he feared that the king might be enraged on hearing of his darling son's death, and treat the messenger as he did the Amalekite who brought him tidings of Saul's death. Comp. chap. 1, 13-16. He would therefore expose the Cushite slave rather than the son of Zadok. **Bowed....and ran.** As a most submissive and obedient servant.

**22. Ahimaz....yet again.** He could not deny himself the delight of bearing the first message, and persisted in his request. **Howsoever.** Rather, as margin, "be what may," or the Rev. Ver., "come what may." He will take all risks. **My son.** Joab feels the tenderness of a father toward him, and hesitates and pleads with him. **No tidings ready.** The exact sense of the Hebrew is not clear. Some render, "no sufficient tidings; others, "no good tidings to get a reward,"

or "the tidings are not profitable unto thee." Perhaps his greatest anxiety was to get a reward. **The one clear thing is,** that Joab tried to dissuade him.

**23. Ran.** He yields at last and lets him have his desire. **Ran by the way of the plain.** The word rendered plain commonly denotes the Jordan valley. The aim of Ahimaz evidently was to outrun the Cushite, and be the first to report to the king. Going by the Jordan plain he probably kept out of sight of Cushite; who, unaware that he was followed by another runner, made no special haste. The position of Joab's camp, and that of Mahanaim, are unknown, and so the routes of these messengers cannot now be precisely determined. **Overran Cushite.** Passed by him, and yet was probably not seen by him.

**24. The two gates.** The city had probably an outer and an inner gate, between and over which were courts and towers, where David waited to hear tidings of the battle. Comp. Eli going out and sitting by the wayside, watching for the coming of some runner from the field of war. 1 Sam. 4, 13. **The watchman.** Such a city at such a time of peril would have every gate and outpost guarded by watchmen. **Lifted...eyes....looked....behold.** Observe the vividness of this description.

**25. Watchman cried.** Such a cry would be the signal of intense excitement. **If he be alone.** This remark reveals the sagacity of the old warrior. He knows that he would not be alone if he were a fugitive, flying from a defeated army.

**26. Watchman....porter.** The one occupied the top of the gate, the tower; the other was below to attend to opening and closing the gate.

**27. The foremost....Ahimaz.** So he accomplished his desire to be the first to announce the defeat of the rebellion. **A good man.** He had had proof of his fidelity during the progress of the war, and felt assured that he was the bearer of good tidings. See above on ver. 19.

**28. All is well.** This in the Hebrew is one word, "shalom," "peace." The messenger appears to have been admitted within the gate, so that he called and addressed his word directly unto the king, and having given the usual salutation, "peace," he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, thus manifesting the most submissive loyalty and homage. **Blessed be the Lord thy God.** Compare his language in ver. 19 above, and note his habit of viewing events with reference to God's hand in them. **Delivered up.** More strictly, "shut up;" a metaphor suggesting the confinement of foes within a narrow space.

**29. Is the young man Absalom safe?** Only the context suggests that this is a question. The words are literally, "Peace to the young man, to Absalom." But in ver. 32 they are in the form of a question. There is tenderness in the words which reveals the yearning of the fatherly heart. He seems more anxious about the welfare of the young man than about the issue of the battle. **I saw a great tumult, but I knew not.** Thus he avoids telling what he knew would be bitter tidings for the king, leaving that part of it for the king's servant, the Cushite, to make known. Here was prevarication, for he kept back a part of the truth, and gave the false impression that Absalom's death was unknown to him.

**30. Turn...stand.** He has given his message, and is thus dismissed to rest after the toilsome running. He is, however, allowed to place himself near, that he may hear what further tidings the Cushite brings.

**31. Tidings, my lord, the king.** Or, "Let my lord the king receive good tidings." He assumes to be the bearer of a joyful message. **Avenged.** He appropri-

ates the language of Ahimaaz, as given in ver. 19, above.

**32. Enemies . . . be as that young man.** He has no reserve in uttering in bold and emphatic form the penal woe that has overtaken the treacherous youth. But it is given in such form and with such an appeal to the divine retribution discernible in the fall of an impious enemy, that David has no spirit to charge any thing against the messenger.

**33. Much moved.** Thrown into violent commotion of soul. **Chamber over the gate.** An apartment in one of the towers of the gate. See on ver. 24. **Wept.** His grief evidently took the form of loud lamentation, so that all without might hear him. **My son, my son.** Five times repeated in this verse. The deep emotion of his grief was pitiable, and the people stole away quietly from the place as men ashamed. See 10. 3. **Would God I had died for thee.** With all the emotion of a heart-broken father there was added the thought that Absalom's ruin was in some sense a penalty for which he (David) was responsible. How terribly the words of Nathan (chap. 12, 19-26) smite him now! Surely the sword has entered his own soul; would that it might have taken his life! Compare the language of Moses and Paul, Exod. 32, 32; Rom. 9. 3. David composed several touching elegies, but none so moving as this cry over his son Absalom.

Let us observe:

1. No monument of stone, whether erected during one's life-time or after his death, is worth as much as a noble monumental character.

2. Absalom's life, says Dr. Clarke, was quadruply forfeited to the law: 1) In having murdered his brother Amnon; 2) In having excited insurrection in the state; 3) In having taken up arms against his father (Deut. 21, 18, 21); 4) In having lain with his father's concubines. Lev. 18, 29. Long ago he should have died by the hand of justice.

3. Absalom the representative of "the fast young man," who generally comes to a miserable end.

4. A doting father's weakness in dealing justly with a malicious child may make him a partaker both of the crimes and punishment which are likely to follow.

5. A ruler's pity and grief for a rebellious son may justly put his people to shame.

#### English Teacher's Notes.

Most of us know how pleasant it is to return from a journey, or even from an ordinary errand, and find some one at home watching for us. And many know what it is to watch with eager delight for the arrival of an expected friend. But there are other kinds of watching—such as that of the lion for his prey, the murderer for his intended victim, the tempter for the person he hopes to ensnare. And there is the watching of sorrow, of anxiety, of fear, when hours pass by and the expected one does not arrive, and there is no news concerning him.

Our passage for to-day tells us of one who was watched for, Absalom little thought, when he rode to the battle in the "wood of Ephraim," that in spite of all his wickedness a father's heart was yearning over him, and that, while he led his forces against the army of his father, David was seated at the city gate watching not so much for tidings of the battle as for news of his still much loved son—although that son had cast to the winds every shred of filial piety that had clung to him, and was seeking not merely his father's kingdom, but his father's life. Chap. 17, 1-4. All through that day of slaughter there was a heart beating with love and long-

ing for Absalom; a father's arms were ready to receive him even though he were brought in an unwilling prisoner. He indeed could not have said, "No man careth for my soul."

We have no more wonderful picture in the whole of Scripture than this, of the love that yearns over the sinner—over the sinner even while "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2, 1); his heart "at enmity with God" (Rom. 8.); rebellious, careless, impenitent. We are bound to tell sinners of the "wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," but the teacher should take such an opportunity as is presented by this passage to draw attention to the love that watches for the wanderer even while there is yet in his heart no thought of arising to return to his Father.

There is another, too, watching for the sinner. The great enemy is watching that he may drag him into irremediable ruin. Thus he watched for Absalom, and Absalom, intoxicated with pride and ambition, went straight into the snare. But God is watching also, and not one of his wandering ones, rebels though they be, is forgotten by him.

But what came of David's anxious, pitying, longing watch for Absalom? There was only the news of his death to carry to that tender father. And in a moment that loving watch was turned to the bitterest sorrow. The deliverance that had come to David, the victory, the restoration to his throne, which was to follow, were all turned to gloom; the king's one thought had been for his son, and that son was lost! Such is the love of a parent, and such the sorrow that comes when that love is disappointed in its selfish longings. Little do children imagine the grief they bring on father and mother when they go astray—the sorrowful, anxious, weary watch that is kept for them, and the terrible blow when the hope that has long been nursed is crushed and killed. Many a heart-broken father and mother could echo David's words, "Would God I had died for thee!"

But what David could not do for Absalom has been done for the sinner. There has been a life laid down for him. In the person of his Son God has given himself for the rebellious. The lamentation of David over his son was resented by God and grievous to his followers, as involving a want of justice, and a failure toward those who had been loyal to his cause. But in Christ the crucified One "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psa. 85); and "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Will any one of the class reject that love, disappoint that plan of mercy, and steer away from the shore where God himself, his saints, and his angels are waiting and watching to greet him?

#### Cambridge Notes.

SOME three months' interval had given the people time to take sides with deliberate choice, and the effects of delay had justified Hushai's anticipations. Probably Absalom's general levy had added but few from Israel to the hosts of Judah who followed him, while David's army would be daily re-enforced by men fired by an enthusiasm to which the rebels could show no sort of parallel. The royal troops were commanded by three brave and experienced leaders, any one of whom would have been more than a match for Amasa. Add to this the nature of the battle-field, a dense and unfamiliar forest, and the rout of the insurgents needs no explaining. For the narrator the personal element alone has



importance enough to call for attention. Even the scene of the battle is left in uncertainty; how did a place probably on the east of Jordan get the name "Forest of Ephraim?" In place of such information we have described with deeply pathetic emphasis how the royal father strove for the life of his worthless and unnatural son, and how the fierce soldier ruthlessly disregarded commands which might well have laid up another civil war in store. And throughout the story a keen sympathy seeks to draw a veil over the wickedness of the unhappy prince as it portrays the tragedy of his end.

VER. 18. Thus is contrasted the splendid monument which the vain youth designed for himself and the grave of dishonor wherein he was at last laid. *King's dale*. A broad open valley; the word in itself goes far to discredit the traditional site in the ravine of Kidron close to Jerusalem, albeit attested by Josephus and to this day receiving from Jewish passers-by the stones flung in token of abhorrence. The name "king's dale" is applied in Gen. 14, 17, to a "valley of Shaveh," apparently near the Dead Sea. *No son*. The text notes that in chap. 14, 27, the naming of the daughter without naming the three sons suggests their early death. No reader can fail to notice the intensity with which every Hebrew man and woman longed for offspring. In the haziness of belief in a life beyond, the hope of posterity really fitted that place in the heart which generally belongs to the instinctive hope of immortality. The people existed for their coming Messiah, and every individual hoped to share, through his descendants, in the glories of that kingdom. *He called*. Comp. Psa. 49, 11. *Monument*. Hebrew, "hand." See Isa. 56, 5; 1 Sam. 15, 12, and note, August 18. *Unto this day*. It will be remembered that between this and the age of Josephus a palpably false tradition has had time to fix itself. The whole verse is involved in some difficulty by the variations of the LXX., for he said he reads, "But David reared for him... for he which he hath no son...." In itself the change is not unlikely, but the LXX. is not strong enough witness to set aside the Hebrew when supported by Josephus. VER. 19. *Ahimaaz*, son of Zadok the high-priest, who had been acting as spy at Jerusalem. *Avenge*. The metaphor is that of a judicial sentence putting an end to oppression. See margin and comp. Psa. 43, 1; 1 Sam. 24, 15. VER. 20. *Tidings*. The word almost always implies good tidings. *Because*. The Hebrew writer text has here a fragment of a word which the Masorete editors seem to have completed wrongly. Klostermann's reading "for perchance" involves very slight change and introduces a tempting sense. We may understand that only Joab and his bodyguard knew so far of Absalom's death, and that Joab kept Ahimaaz back on the ground that he would be unable to assure the king of the one thing he longed to know, his son's safety. The young man, who had already risked his life for David, strikes as eager to bring the king what he would accept as good tidings, and it is quite possible that all he knew is given in his words, vers. 19 and 20. VER. 21. *The Cushite*. That is, an Ethiopian slave of Joab's. If the conjecture above is right, we may suppose that his anxious haste blinded Ahimaaz to the sinister suggestion of Joab's message. VER. 22. The rough tenderness of Joab to the eager youth is very striking. He would spare him the task of taking news in which he knew the king would take no pleasure. *No reward*. This is the probable rendering of a hard phrase. Ahimaaz knows that his news is not clear enough to win the reward of good tidings, but he longs to be the first to relieve the king of suspense. VER. 23. *Come*. That is, "reward or no re-

ward." *The Plain*. Probably a longer but easier route along the Jordan valley is indicated, but the sites are too obscure to make certainly possible. VER. 24. *Troop*. The outer gate was level with the city wall, and the gateway would leave some space between that and the inner. *Roof*. That is, the flat roof of the gateway on the side of the outer wall. VER. 25. *Tidings*. Still the same word, tidings of victory. The soldier-king could forecast the result well enough to know that a massacre was impossible; the worst he could suffer would be an ordinary defeat, which would have been heralded by crowds of fugitives. VER. 27. *Good*, and so not likely to be chosen for the thankless work of bearing bad news. Whether a peculiarity of trait or merely his noted swiftness identified him we cannot say. VER. 28. *Peace* (margin). It is a pity that we should obscure the exquisite Hebrew salutation. There is a strange irony in Absalom's name, "father of peace," given in the warrior's weariness of strife far less than what that very son should bring. *Delivered up*. Literally, "shut up." Comp. Psa. 31, 8, etc. VER. 29. Ahimaaz cried, "Peace!" and the king's answer is "Peace to the young man, to Absalom?" Comp. 2 Kings 4, 25. The father speaks as if he would excuse his son because of his youth. *The king's servant*. The words are probably a gloss, and the true reading "sent me thy servant." Or we may conjecture with the help of a Greek text, "There was behind me a great shout of men rejoicing among the servants of the king, when Joab sent me thy servant." *I knew not*. The tempting conjecture in verse 20 enables us to accept this as a truth, but of course it is only conjecture, which is not safe ground at best. On the ordinary view we make this an evasion, the youth's loyal affection making his heart fail him. Kirkpatrick's strictures on his untruthfulness seem hardly called for. VER. 31. *Tidings*. Better, less abruptly, "Let my lord... receive the good tidings, that Jehovah...." VER. 32. The stolidity of the slave and the alien comes out strikingly; he is quite unable to apprehend how his words stab. VER. 23. *Moved*. The LXX. translates "sore troubled," the word of John 14, 1. *Chamber*. The nearest place where he could be alone. *Would God*. Literally, "who will give my death, me in place of thee?" Comment must only weaken the unutterable pathos of this verse, revealing the anguish of the father at the sudden death of the son in the midst of his wickedness, mixed doubtless with remorse for the evil which his own sin had set before a too ready imitator. Let us read in this and every story of parental tenderness, unquenched by the utmost ingratitude and sin, the faint earthly reflection of the love of Him "from whom every fatherhood in heaven and earth is named."

### The Lesson Council.

**Question 6.** What were the elements of failure in Absalom's rebellion?

1. Extreme selfishness and love of power were its inspiration. 2. There was no central thought; it gave no watchwords to the people. 3. Appealing to selfishness only, it went to pieces at last by the action of the very sentiment which inspired it. 4. It was subversive, destructive, and godless, and such rebellions invariably fail.—*Rev. M. D. Church.*

1. The rebellion of Absalom was wrong; and wrong, in the economy of God, has arrayed against it all the forces of earth and skies. "The stars in their courses fought against Senn." God was against him. 2. Absalom was too slow. Wicked men have need to make

haste; their opportunity is soon gone. The good only can afford to wait. Absalom's delay in striking the first blow occasioned his failure. Had he followed the counsel of Ahithophel instead of that of Hushai, it is probable that he would have succeeded.—*Rev. O. J. Coules, D.D.*

1. If successful, the rebellion must become so by victorious war. Absalom had neither military experience nor genius. His father had both. 2. He had failed to secure the adhesion of the great captains of the army. Had Joab alone been with him the result might have been different. 3. His delay in pursuing his father before Jordan had been crossed was fatal. It gave opportunity for the organization of the loyalists, so that when the battle came they were prepared. It also gave opportunity for the calm, sober thought of the people to come to the rescue and to judge of the consequences of putting a conceited coxcomb at the head of affairs. 4. The loyalty of Abiathar stood him in good stead. 5. The providence of God as revealed in the counsels of Hushai.—*Rev. A. Wheeler, D.D.*

### Lesson Word-Pictures.

**AHIMAAZ** is thinking. He is the king's great friend. He is saying, "I would like to run and tell my king that he is victor." He stands before Joab; the swift runner, with pliant, supple limbs, before the mighty captain with a famous sword. Ahimaaaz says, "Let me now run."

Joab shakes his head. He is thinking of somebody with white, bruised face, still and dead under a great heap of stones. Joab turns away. He beckons to Cushl. This servant may go. He prostrates himself, rises, leaps away. But Ahimaaaz pleads again. Can he not go? Joab is shaking his head. Ahimaaaz begs again. Run, Ahimaaaz! Joab's willing. Like a swallow Ahimaaaz skims the plain. Faster, Ahimaaaz! Cushl is ahead! Outstrip him! Run, faster, faster! Cushl hears footfalls. He turns. He looks behind. Ahimaaaz is coming, closer, closer! He springs away, and leaves Cushl in the rear! Ahimaaaz must get to the king as speedily as possible. Let the great victory be proclaimed!

One thought makes a shadow in his soul; it is the scarred, still face under the heap of stones.

Will he tell David about that?

And David, the sad, troubled king, the poor, heavy-hearted father, thinking about the battle, wishing for victory and yet hoping Absalom is alive, sits between the two gates. No news yet? Let the watchman go upon the wall and look off. Ah, he sees; yes, shading his eyes, he sees a man running! He hurries down and excitedly tells the news of that lonely runner. Alone? Then it is a messenger, the king says. Ah, what will the news be! What about Absalom? But the watchman, shading his eyes, looks off again. There is—there is another man running! He tells the exciting news.

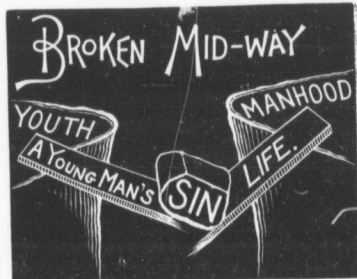
"Another messenger," the king declares.

O what will the news be? What about Absalom? It is Ahimaaaz, that first runner. Yes, and here he comes, panting, his face flushed, his strength nigh gone, and yet holding on. He falls down before the king—no; before this prostration he shouts "All is well!" Then he bows himself, and reverently pronounces God blessed for the victory vouchsafed. But—what about Absalom? the king wants to know; not first about the army or Joab. He is eager to learn about Absalom. And Ahimaaaz, he blushes, stammers, and says that there was a tumult when Joab sent him, but really—he—he—could not say what its meaning may have been.

Ah, Ahimaaaz! That white, battered, motionless face under the heap of stones! You are not telling all. But here is Cushl, that other panting, breathless runner. Give way, Ahimaaaz! Stand aside! Now, Cushl, speak! Ah, it is victory he announces. Yes, yes, but—what about Absalom? That face, you know, under the heap of stones! And then Cushl travels round the corner, and in a plying paraphrase loyally wishes that all the rebels against the king may be as that young man is. What, Cushl? The king starts. The luster leaves his eyes. The color fades from his cheeks. He trembles. Absalom dead? Somebody lead him! Somebody help him up to the shadowy little chamber over the gate! He covers his face with his hands. He pitifully moans. He flings himself upon the floor, groaning, sobbing, his heart breaking. Did you hear him cry as he went to the dusky room of sorrow? "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" They have shut the door of the room. They are keeping every body away. And yet you can catch the heart-breaking moans in the shadows, "O Absalom, my son, my son!" Alas! It moves to tears every soul that may hear.

But the face under the heap of stones hears not, sees not, stirs not.

### Blackboard.



This diagram represents a young man's life broken midway between youth and manhood by the weight of sin. After reviewing the facts of the lesson, in which the death of Absalom is set forth, apply them to the life of each boy and young man present, as a solemn warning against the evil effect of sin. Many a young man has had his life hopelessly broken in its very outset by the burden of sin. Absalom might have been a power for good had he lived right, but his life was broken midway.

### Primary and Intermediate.

**LESSON THOUGHT.** Sin works ruin.

**Blackboard.** A sword. Bowed head wearing a crown. A pillar broken at the top. A ladder.

**A disobedient son.** Teach that Absalom learned while very young to love his own way best. He loved himself so well that he was ready to push even his own father to one side in order to carry his point. Show that before he dishonored his father he dishonored God, and impress the lesson that every time we put self first we have to push God away from us. Tell how Absalom raised an army and was ready to fight for the crown which did not belong to him.

*A sorrowful father.* Tell of David's surprise and sorrow. Absalom had deceived him about going to Hebron. He pretended that he was going to pay a vow to the Lord. Instead he was going to raise an army to fight his father. King David loved his son. Ask if children think he loved him when he knew of his rebellion. Teach that a good father goes on loving his child, whatever sins the child may commit. And an earthly father is a type of the heavenly Father. This is a good place to impress the lesson that God loves sinners, though he does not love their sins.

*A ruined life.* Tell briefly the result of the rebellion. All promised well at first, but the end was death and defeat. Satan makes false promises. He made Absalom believe that if he would break God's law he should wear a crown and rule a great kingdom. Poor Absalom trusted him. Only those are safe who trust the Lord's promises.



Tell how Absalom died. The beautiful young life God gave him was ruined. Why? Use lesson-symbol. On first round place "Self-love." Ask what this causes. Illustrate by some simple, every-day instance. A child takes the largest orange, chooses the best seat, etc. Self-love leads

straight to self-will. The child who loves self thinks he knows best. "Tell how fast self-will grows. It is but a little way from "I will" to "I must." The self-lover who must have his own way plans how to get more and more power for himself. He trusts himself, and forgets that others have rights. And then defeat and loss follow, for this is not God's way and cannot succeed.

Teach that Absalom's ruin began when he was a child, and warn against listening to any of self's promises.

#### Herean Methods.

##### The Teachers' Meeting.

Before the lesson is studied, the full development of Absalom's rebellion must be made plain to the class. Make a map, tracing David's flight across the Jordan; locate the battle, and Mahanaim, where David waited his issue. Have the class describe the persons of the lesson, Ahimaz and Cushl—probably a foreigner—and Joab. This lesson and its surroundings present a most picturesque and characteristic Oriental scene. The wild onset of the battle; the accident to Absalom, very possibly because of his long hair; the cold-blooded calculating ability of Joab; the watchman on the wall; the two runners, and David's broken-hearted wail are not merely picturesque incidents which lend themselves readily to descriptive talent, but are deeply instructive to the student of Bible manners and customs. The great lesson of this passage is contained in the Golden Text. Absalom's wickedness broke David's heart.

**References.** FREEMAN. Ver. 18: Absalom, 217. Ver. 24: Double gates, 282. Ver. 26: Watchman and porter, 283. Ver. 33: Chamber over the gate, 284, 333. . . FOSTER'S CYCLOPEDIA. Prose, 1576, 1578, 2324, 2328, 4166. Ver. 18: 7083, 10634. Ver. 31: 5502, 5503, 5509, 5510; Poetical, 8, 3084, 3085, 3086; Prose, 2730, 5025, 5794, 5796, 18 v, 320-330.

#### ANALYTICAL AND BIBLICAL OUTLINE.

##### The News of the Victory.

#### I. THE MEMORIAL.

1. *Reared up for himself a pillar.* v. 18. Their inward thought... forever." Psa. 49. 11.
2. *Called after his own... name.* v. 18. "The name of the wicked shall rot." Prov. 10. 7.

#### II. THE WATCHER.

1. *Sat between the two gates.* v. 24. "His heart trembled." 1 Sam. 4. 13.
2. *Is the young man... safe?* v. 29. "In the nurture... of the Lord." Eph. 6. 4.

#### III. THE TIDINGS.

1. *All is well.* v. 28. "To the righteous... shall be well." Isa. 3. 10.
2. *Hath delivered up.* v. 28. "All enemies under his feet." 1 Cor. 15. 25.
3. *As that young man.* v. 32. "Ungodly... like the chaff." Psa. 1. 4.

#### IV. THE SORROW.

1. *The king was much moved.* v. 33. "A son that causeth shame." Prov. 19. 26.
2. *Went up... and wept.* v. 33. "Others which have no hope." 1 Thess. 4. 13.
3. *Would God I had died.* v. 33. "Yet sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. 5. 8.

#### THOUGHTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

##### Sins Cause Sorrow.

1. *If all the sorrow which is the direct result of sin were removed from the world to-morrow, the millennium would be already well introduced.* Not merely in a general theological sense is it true that death entered the world by sin, but in detail. The heartaches and headaches of to-day, the wrinkles and gray hairs, the anguish of body and mind, the deformities and diseases and lunacies—even when suffered by the innocent—are nearly all resultant from the sins of the last quarter of a century.

2. *He who checks sin lessens sorrow.* If he converts a soul from the error of his ways, if by his vote he secures the passage of a nobler law, if by his moral bravery he makes effective a law already on the statute book, if by any action of his he makes it harder for the sinner to sin, he may take this comfort to his soul, that many an earthly pain has been lessened by his holy energy.

3. *He who lessens sorrow lessens temptation.* It is one of the most awful thoughts connected with sin, that its very penalty tends to increase it. For instance, a drunkard by his criminality degrades his family and debases his children, surrounding them with circumstances which deaden their moral sensibilities, and bring them up from infancy to a lower grade of life than he himself started out upon. Every man who goes through his world with a cheery face and a kind heart, who in the fear of God strives to lighten the sorrows of his fellows, is at the same time lessening the temptations which beset them to sin.

4. *The cause of righteousness and the cause of joy are one.* Sin and sorrow are united by a bond that can never be loosened, and neither can righteousness and peace be divorced from each other. The anguish of hell is as naturally the outcome of sin as the felicity of heaven is the outcome of virtue.

#### HOME READINGS.

- M. David's grief for Absalom. 2 Sam. 18. 18-27.  
 Tu. David's grief for Absalom. 2 Sam. 18. 28-33.  
 W. Absalom's death. 2 Sam. 18. 4-17.  
 Th. A sorrowful victory. 2 Sam. 19. 1-8.  
 F. A rebellious people. Isa. 1. 1-6.  
 S. A foolish son. Prov. 17. 22-28.  
 S. The Lord's pity. Jer. 31. 15-20.

#### GOLDEN TEXT.

A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him. Prov. 17. 25.

TIME.—10:30 B. C.

PLACE.—Mahanaim, where David waited the issue of the battle.

DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION.—Personal responsibility.

## LESSON HYMNS.

No. 79, Dominion Hymnal.

Just as I am, without one plea  
But that thy blood was shed for me.

No. 62, Dominion Hymnal.

I will go and tell my Saviour  
How I long his child to be.

No. 69, Dominion Hymnal.

Come to the Saviour, make no delay;  
Here in his word he has shown us the way.

The Lord's my Shepherd.  
Though troubles assail, and dangers affright,  
There's a wideness.  
Holy Spirit, faithful guide,  
Father, I stretch my hands to thee.  
Weary of earth.  
Is this thy day of trouble?  
I need thee every hour,  
Dare to do right.  
Must Jesus bear the cross alone?

## QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR STUDENTS.

## 1. Evil Tidings.

What was the first result of Absalom's rebellion?  
Whither did the king flee?  
By what device did he gain time for secure escape?  
Chap. 15, 32-37.  
From what source did help come to the king? Chap. 17, 27-29.  
After the first success of the rebellion what did David and Joab accomplish? Chap. 18, 1, 2.  
Where was the battle fought which ended the rebellion? ver. 6.

What trait of David's character was shown in ver. 5?  
What was Absalom's end?  
Can you justify Joab's action?  
What messengers bore the tidings of the battle to David?

At what place did David await tidings?  
Why did not Ahimnaz tell David the truth?

## 2. Great Grief.

Who broke the news of Absalom's death to the king?  
What was the meaning of his message?  
Was there any thing strange about David's forgetfulness of the numbers slain in battle?  
How did he once before act when a child was dead?  
chap. 12, 21-23.  
What circumstances could make the difference?  
Can you connect David's sin (chap. 11) with Amon's sin (chap. 13) and Absalom's sin (chap. 13) as productive of this disastrous battle?  
On whom can the whole responsibility of these sorrows be laid?  
Does this view excuse Absalom from sin?

## Practical Teachings.

Here is a wonderful illustration of this truth, "Whosoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." David sowed to the flesh; from the flesh he reaped corruption. Here is another truth illustrated, "Last bringeth forth sin; sin bringeth forth death."

Absalom looked for mercy, with the lust of the eyes for the pride of life. It plunged him into sin against his father, his nation, his God; sin brought to him death, physical and spiritual.

Here is a momentous question: "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Are you?

## Hints for Home Study.

1. Read all the chapters between this lesson and the preceding one.
2. Write the story of the battle, and its ending.
3. Give the reasons that led Joab to disobey the king.
4. Locate on the map of Palestine the place of the battle, and the city where David waited.
5. Think out the political causes of Absalom's rebellion, and the political results of it. Did it affect Joab's after-life?

## QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE SCHOLARS.

## 1. Evil Tidings, v. 18-32.

What memorial had Absalom built, and why?  
By what name was the pillar known?

What monument did Israel erect over him? ver. 17.

What request did a priest's son make?  
Why was he not permitted to go?  
What did Joab promise him?  
Who was sent to the king?  
What request did Ahimnaz then make?  
How was his request answered?  
What shows that Ahimnaz was a fleet runner?  
Where was the king's watchman stationed?  
What did he see, and say?  
What did he say of the second runner?  
What was the king's reply?  
What message did Ahimnaz bring?  
What question did the king then ask?  
What was the reply?  
What was Cush's message?  
What did the king ask him?  
What was his reply?

## 2. Great Grief, v. 33.

Where did the king go in his sorrow?  
What was his lament?  
What says the Golden Text about the source of this grief?

## Teachings of the Lesson.

From what in this lesson are we taught—

1. That sin brings weakness and defeat?
2. That sin brings dishonor and death?
3. That sin brings great sorrow?

## Home Work for Young Bereans.

Read the account of the battle between the armies of Absalom and David, and learn how Absalom came to his death.

## QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.

Where did David and his soldiers stop? At a walled city.

Who followed with his army? Absalom.  
Where did they pitch their tents? Before the city.  
Did David want to fight against Absalom? He did not.

Who begged David not to go to the battle? His soldiers.

Where was the battle fought? In a wood.  
Which army conquered? David's army.  
Who fought for them? The Lord.  
How many men were killed? Twenty thousand.  
What did Absalom try to do? To escape.  
By what was he caught in one of the trees? By his hair.

Who found and killed him? David's men.  
What had David asked? That Absalom might be spared.

Who brought the news to David? A messenger.  
Where was he watching? At the city gate.  
How did David feel? Very sorrowful.  
What did he wish? That he had died in Absalom's stead.

## Words with Little People.

Absalom is a type of—  
Self-love.  
Self-will.  
Self-seeking.

David is a type of—

Who pleased not himself,  
JESUS, who came not to do his own will;  
(who laid down his life for us.  
"Whoso curseth his father or mother, his lamp shall be put out." Prov. 20, 20.)

## THE LESSON CATECHISM.

[For the entire school.]

1. Where was the decisive battle between the king and Absalom fought? In the wood of Ephraim.
2. What was the result? The triumph of the king.
3. What had been his command concerning his rebel son? That his life be spared.
4. Was his command obeyed? No; for Joab slew him.
5. What truth did David prove in his old age? "A foolish son is a grief," etc.

## CATECHISM QUESTIONS.

50. In what part of man is the image of God?  
In his spirit or soul, which was breathed into him by the Creator. (Genesis ii. 7.)
51. Is then the soul of man created to live forever?  
It is immortal, and will not die as the body dies.  
Ecclesiastes xii. 7.

B. C. 1018.]

## LESSON VII. DAVID'S LAST WORDS.

[Nov. 17.]

## Authorized Version.

2 Sam. 23. 1-7. [Commit to memory verses 3, 4.]



1 Now these *be* the last words of Da'vid. Da'vid the son of Jes'se said, and the man *who was* raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Ja'cob, and the sweet psalmist of Is'-ra-el, said,

2 The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word *was* in my tongue.

3 The God of Is'-ra-el said, the Rock of Is'-ra-el spake to me, He that ruleth over men *must be* just, ruling in the fear of God.

4 And *he shall be* as the light of the morning, *when* the sun riseth, *even* a morning without clouds; *as* the tender grass *springing out* of the earth by clear shining after rain.

5 Although my house *be not so* with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: *for this is* all my salvation, and all *my* desire, although he make it not to grow.

6 But the sons of Be'l'al *shall be* all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands:

7 But the man *that* shall touch them must be fenced with iron and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the *same* place.

## Revised Version.

1 Now these be the last words of Da'vid.

Da'vid the son of Jes'se said,  
And the man who was raised on high said,  
The anointed of the God of Jacob,  
And the sweet psalmist of Is'-ra-el:

2 The spirit of the LORD spake by me,  
And his word was upon my tongue.

3 The God of Is'-ra-el said,  
The Rock of Is'-ra-el spake to me:

One that ruleth over men righteously,  
That ruleth in the fear of God,  
4 *He shall be* as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth,

A morning without clouds;  
*When* the tender grass *springeth* out of the earth,  
Through clear shining after rain.

5 Verily my house is not so with God;  
Yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant,  
Ordered in all things, and sure:

For it is all my salvation, and all *my* desire,  
Although he maketh it not to grow.

6 But the ungodly shall be all of them as thorns to be thrust away,

For they cannot be taken with the hand:

7 But the man that toucheth them  
Must be armed with iron and the staff of a spear;  
And they shall be utterly burned with fire in *their* place.

## EXPOSITORY NOTES.

**Introductory.**—Absalom's rebellion was put down, and David returned to Jerusalem, but the remainder of his reign does not appear to have been eventful. He measured plans and gave directions for the building of the temple, and passed them over to Solomon with many words of advice and command. These facts are recorded in the books of Kings and Chronicles. No character in Old Testament history is so many-sided, no genius so versatile, as that of David, the red-haired shepherd boy, the youthful hero, the passionate lover the romantic friend, the chivalrous chief, the mighty warrior, the great king, the wise statesman, the sacred poet, the tender father. In him were wonderfully combined all the qualities needful to make him master of whatever he earnestly took in hand. "In him we recognize," says Ewald, "the glorious originality of a creative spiritual power, such as rarely shows itself in any people." His lofty genius and creative originality early identified him with the glorious songs of Israel, and his psalms will ever linger in the hearts of men. He seems to have been the first who gave Hebrew poetry a fixed place in the public worship. He was also skillful in the use of the harp, and probably of other musical instruments. In the following psalm, entitled the last words of David, we have one of his most beautiful poems, but one which, like his elegy over Saul and Jonathan, did not obtain a place in the Hebrew psalter. It has the nature of a prophetic oracle, and opens a vision of the Messianic kingdom.

**Verse 1. The last words of David.** The compiler of the Book of Samuel thought it proper to insert these immediately after the words of the song of chap. 22, which celebrate his deliverance out of the hand of all his foes. There is always something solemn and impressive in the last words of great and good men. The old Jewish translation of this, as given in the Targum of Jonathan, is, "These are the words of the prophecy of David, which he prophesied concerning the end of the age, concerning the days of consolation which are to

come." David the son of Jesse said. In this verse we have four statements which may be better appreciated by being seen in separate lines:

Utterance of David son of Jesse,  
And utterance of the man raised up on high;  
Anointed of the God of Jacob,  
And pleasant in the songs of Israel.

The word translated "utterance" means a divine saying of the nature of a prophecy. Compare the language of Balaam in Num. 24. 3, 4, 15, 16. David exhibits admirable modesty in showing that up to the last he did not forget that he was Jesse's son, and had been exalted from low estate to his royal seat. Anointed. On three separate occasions had he been thus honored (1 Sam. 16. 13; 2 Sam. 2. 4; 5. 3), and in these facts he devoutly recognized the providence of the God of Jacob. Comp. Psa. 89. 20. Sweet psalmist of Israel. This has become a familiar and beautiful expression, and is worthily bestowed on David; but the Hebrew does not admit of this as an accurate translation. The sense is that David was pleasantly or delightfully associated with the songs of Israel. In fact, the name of David is so inseparably connected with the Psalms that we can rarely mention the one but the other comes immediately to mind. See the Introductory remarks above.

2. Spirit of the Lord spake by me. He is consciously the instrument of the divine Spirit, and so speaks with the authority of an inspired oracle. Compare Jesus's reference to David's inspiration in Matt. 22. 43. My tongue. While the Spirit spoke within him, the word did not remain a hidden revelation, but found public utterance on his tongue. Comp. Psa. 45. 1.

3. God...Rock of Israel. Significant metaphor, frequent in the Psalms, and depicting Israel's God as the strong immovable basis of all their hopes and promises. He that ruleth...just. Here is a fundamental doctrine of all sound and safe civil government, and in this statement and the words that follow we have the portraiture of an ideal king. Ruling in the fear of

God. If "righteousness exalteth a nation" (Prov. 14. 34), the ruler of an exalted nation must be a God-fearing man. Piety in the king and his officers is a mighty educating power for the whole people. But, on the other hand, when the king has not the fear of God before his eyes, so as to govern him in his conduct and administration, the whole land is in jeopardy.

**4. As the light of the morning.** The righteous, God-fearing ruler, is now thought of as a rising sun; or rather his reign conceived as a glorious day, is poetically painted as breaking in with all the charm and beauty of an Oriental morning. **Without clouds.... after rain.** In the East, after the rain of the previous day, or after a night of storm, the atmosphere becomes transparent, no clouds linger, and the sky takes on a deep dark blue such as one never sees in the suddenly changeable climates of the West. Then the **tender grass** springs up as if to greet the **clear shining**, and every prospect charms. Beautiful image of a righteous and prosperous reign, dawning like the morning after storms and a night of political darkness, anarchy, or revolution. This gorgeous picture is a worthy prophecy of the Messianic reign, and has been so understood by many expositors. But nothing in the text warrants us in making its immediate reference to the Messiah. It is, as we have said above, the picture of an ideal reign, and is applicable to the righteous administration of any ruler whose godly example and acts are a source of countless blessings to the people and the land. Such a reign is a type and representation of the Messiah's.

**5. Although my house be not so with God.** If we accept this translation, we should understand that David's thought here reverts for the moment to the sad facts in the history of his family, as those contemplated in Nathan's words to him in chap. 12. 10, 11. But it greatly relieves the whole verse of difficulty if we take the passage interrogatively: "For is not my house thus with God?" Then the reference throughout is to the **everlasting covenant** announced to David in the prophetic words of chap. 7. 16: "Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee; thy throne shall be established forever." **Ordered in all things, and sure.** A covenant confirmed by such a pledge as that just quoted could only be reckoned as indissoluble. Even the sins of David's sons would not, according to 2 Sam. 7. 14, 15, be allowed to alienate the divine mercy pledged to perpetuate his throne. **All my salvation.** All the safety, glory, and greatness promised to me and my house rest upon this sure covenant. **All my desire.** The "my" is not in the Hebrew, and the "desire," or "delight" may be understood either as that of God or of David. **Although he make it not to grow.** This rendering is very unsatisfactory and without relevancy and meaning. Better to take this sentence interrogatively also, and render: "For will he not make it grow?" Will not this covenant spring up and grow into greater beauty and grandeur with the coming years?

**6. Sons of Belial.** The word "Belial," so frequently taken in the common version as a proper name, means "worthlessness." In Deut. 15. 9, it is rendered "wicked;" in Psa. 41. 8, "evil;" in Prov. 6. 12, "naughty;" in Prov. 16. 27, "ungodly." The best scholars hold that it should nowhere be taken as a proper name. The words the **sons of** in this verse are without any warrant in the Hebrew text. The abstract expression "worthlessness" is used here by metonymy for the concrete collective "the worthless," or, as in the Revised Version, "the ungodly." He puts these now in contrast with the stability and salvation of his own house. He may have here thought of the malicious enemies who had troubled his own life and reign, like

Shimei and his sympathizers. **As thorns thrust away.** Hated and destroyed by cultivators of the soil, as not only worthless, but harmful to the field in which they grow. **Cannot be taken with hands.** Without probable laceration of the flesh with wounds and pain. So contact with the godless is like handling thorns.

**7. Fence with iron. Staff of a spear.** One needs an iron instrument with a long handle, like the long wooden spear of a warrior, so that he can cut the thorn bush without a near approach or touching it with his hand. **Burned with fire in the same place.** Burned to ashes on the spot where they grew. This illustration furnishes a prophetic word touching the doom of the wicked.

In this lesson study four qualities of an ideal ruler:

1. He springs from the common people, and never forgets it or their feelings and wants.
2. He is possessed of lofty literary genius and taste, and at the same time has communion with the Holy Spirit.
3. He is a sun of righteousness and blessing to the righteous.
4. He is a terror to evil-doers.

#### English Teacher's Notes.

THERE are few boys or girls who have not at some time or other built "castles in the air," have made to themselves beautiful pictures of what is to happen some day, when there is no prospect and perhaps no possibility that such things can ever be realized. Seen from a human point of view the picture drawn by David in his "last words" has just the appearance of such a "castle." Let us look briefly at the picture and the circumstances under which it was drawn.

First, as to the circumstances. It was at the close of a long and eventful reign and a still more eventful life. David had been "raised on high," "taken from the sheepfolds" (Psa. 78. 70) to be the ruler of Israel, anointed with the Spirit of God for the work he had to perform, inspired to write those psalms which have been the heritage, not only of Israel, but of the Church of God. And yet, mingled with the glory and beauty of his reign, how much there had been of sin, of shame, and of sorrow! He had solemnly resolved to serve the Lord, and to put away wrong-doing from his home and his kingdom. Psa. 101. 2, etc. But lamentably had he failed. He had been compelled to confess that the "sons of Zeruiah," whose ruthless deeds he disapproved, were "too hard" for him. See chap. 2. 39; 1 Kings 2. 5. Not merely weakness and temporary neglect, but the dark shadow of sin had stained his own rule (in the matter of Uriah the Hittite). And two rebellions, one led by his own son, had disturbed the internal peace of his kingdom. Since then had pestilence, the chastisement of his own pride, had brought mourning into many a home. These were sad memories for David's last days. And in handing on the rule of a large and powerful kingdom to his son Solomon, he knew that he was leaving him in a place of temptation and danger. It may be that he discerned in his son's character an element of weakness which boded him no unmixed good. Nor could he hope that a long line of successors would do better than he had done, and that the idea of a perfect ruler and of a powerful kingdom could be fulfilled by them. He knew the heart of man too well to suppose this. If the reading of the Revised Version, "Verily my house is not so with God," be correct, David confessed in his last words the failure of his race. Yet with all this he draws with a few master-strokes a glorious picture of what is to come.

Look at the picture. First, there is a perfect sunrise—

clear, calm, cloudless—not a speck to stain its luster—ineffably pure, and yet gladdening all things and throwing its own beauty over all—far above the loftiest mountain, and yet stooping to light up the meanest blade of grass—heavenly, and yet mingling with the things of earth, and drawing all into its warm and genial embrace; here we see the figure of the righteous ruler, ordering all things "in the fear of God," that is, according to his commands. Secondly, there is the "tender grass springing out of the earth," nourished by rain and sunshine, answering to the influences shed upon it from above, and clothing the earth with wealth and beauty; here we see the people, become "willing" in the day of the ruler's power (Psa. 110. 3), growing "in the beauty of holiness," and sending up their grateful tribute of praise.

No such picture had ever been seen by earthly eye. Nor was there any earthly prospect of its being realized. The history of David's successors is in entire contrast to it. Was it a mere dream—a "castle in the air?" No; when David wrote this, "the Spirit of the Lord spake" by him, and God's "word was in [his] tongue." What was far beyond the reach of man was provided for in the "everlasting covenant" of God—all these things were "ordered" and "sure."

There are fascinating pictures often drawn now of a "good time coming" for all men, of universal brotherhood, and peace and prosperity. And yet the whole history of man gives the lie to such a prospect. Selfishness, sloth, dishonesty, wickedness of all kinds, are as strong on earth as ever they were, and human nature is powerless to root them out.

I had nearly omitted the background of David's picture. But what does it show? The ungodly; the "thorns that cannot be taken with the hand," so piercing and dangerous are they, "thrust away" and destroyed out of the kingdom. Comp. Matt. 13. 41.

In the "everlasting covenant" of God there is provision made for the putting away of sin, so that "instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle-tree." Isa. 55. 13. Let all look to it that they have a part in the covenant through faith in Christ as the Saviour and the King. Then they may look forward to such a "good time" as cannot be fully pictured or expressed.

A young girl lay on her sick bed. She had been pronounced to be dying. The dark river was before her. The last struggle was to come. But after an interval of silence she said brightly to her father, "I have been examining the ropes, and they are all taut and right." No fear for her, for she had part in the "everlasting covenant," and all heaven's glories were before her, no "castle in the air," but a blessed reality. May all in the class make it their own.

#### Cambridge Notes.

THE hymn best known as the eighteenth psalm, whose conclusion we have here, has a stronger claim to Davidic authorship than any in the psalter. Even the critics who date the Hebrew anthology during or after the exile allow this psalm an antiquity reaching to the age of Hezekiah. On the general question of "Davidic" psalms see notes for October 27; in the present case it is enough to say that if Psa. 18 is David's it accounts for his reputation; if it is not, one of the world's grandest lyrics has left no name behind. Splendid as the poem is in English, it is immeasurably more so in Hebrew, where the pithy phrases, startling assonances and nervous rhythm produce an overwhelmingly powerful effect. The relation of the two recensions of the text is still much debated. Some think

Samuel preserves the better text, but most will agree with the greatest living Hebraist, Deitzsch, that hardly any of the changes in that recension are improvements on the text in the psalter. He shows that the variations arise mainly from careless tradition, more natural in historical books than in poetical collections. Note the echoes of the psalm in Prov. 30. 5, and Hab. 3. 19.

VER. 47. *Jehovah lieth*. See note on 1 Sam. 17. 36 (September 1). *Rock*. Suggesting the cliffs and rocky strongholds wherein David took refuge in his outlaw days. *Exalted be*. May his creation learn how high and holy he is. *The rock of*. The words are an obvious repetition, and the psalm text confirms their omission. VER. 48. *Vengeance*. Literally, "giveth vengeance." Vengeance "belongeth unto God," being "a vindication of the inviolability of right by means of penal consequences."—*Deitzsch*. Such was the ruin of Nabal, Saul, etc. *Peoples*. Kirkpatrick's interpretation is confuted by the plural; the phrase refers to foreign nations, not, as in ver. 44, to Israel. VER. 49. *Bringeth forth*. The opposite of "shutting up," chap. 18. 23, note. *Violent man*. Saul, if any one man is meant. VER. 50. This verse is quoted by Paul (Rom. 15. 9) as one of his proofs that, despite the narrow nationalism of the Jews, the Old Testament writers contemplated the salvation of the Gentiles. David here declares that his successful defensive wars against heathen nations shall be the means of spreading the truth of him whose power they learned. Comp. Psa. 47 and 67 (Rev. Ver.). VER. 51. The marginal reading (Authorized Version) is only a conjecture of the Masorites, and has nothing to recommend it. *His king...his anointed...David*. Thus David emphasizes at the end of the hymn his joy in the thought of God's ownership; at the outset he exulted in the complementary thought, that he could call Jehovah his own. *Seed*. Evidently echoing the divine assurance of chap. 7. 11, *sq.*, see notes for October 20. From the hymn which describes David's life at the zenith of prosperity we come to a retrospect of prophetic inspiration, looking back on a life so imperfect, and forward with grateful wonder to the promises of a glorious future. The ode is inserted here to accompany the other autobiographical poem which the compiler selected for a place in the appendix of his narrative. It is extremely obscure, and its poetry comes rather in brief flashes than in the steady brilliance of the hymn we have just left. VER. 1. *Last words*. The last prophetic utterance. His last recorded words were that dark testament of blood which showed that even David was the child of his age. *Said*. Better, "The oracle of David." Except in Num. 24. 3, etc., and Prov. 30. 1. The phrase is elsewhere only "The oracle of Jehovah." *Raised*. David was always proud of recalling the signal wonder of Jehovah's choosing the shepherd boy. He had none of that contemptible snobishness which "self-made" men so often show. *Jacob*. Chiefly poetical for "Israel." *Sweet*, etc. See margin, which admits a more satisfactory sense. "The darling of the songs of Israel." The last line spoke of his relation to God: this, of his relation to the people. VER. 2. The verse probably refers to the divine words of vers. 3 and 4. The length and emphasis of this introduction, reminding us of Balaam's solemn prologue (Num. 24. 3, *sq.*; 15 *sq.*), show what supreme importance the theocratic king has attached to the divinely portrayed ideal. VER. 3. *Rock*. See above, ver. 47. *One*, etc. The oracular words which follow are rather a picture than a statement, as the italics show. They set forth the Messianic King, his ideal justice, and the blessings that come to his people. Each successive age was to see more in that conception as prophetic inspiration

taught more of God's truth to man, and at last the ideal should be realized in the perfect "Son of David." Note how the poetic parallelism brings out the fact that the ruler is "righteous" because he rules "in the fear of God," recognizing that he is only a viceroi. VER. 4. The imagery reminds us of Psa. 72. 6; Isa. 44. 3, sq.; Mal. 4. 2, and other passages in the prophets drawing the same portraiture. The Messianic rule following oppression and wickedness is compared to the two loveliest sights in nature: the sunrise after night and the springtide after winter's desolation. *By clear*, Literally, "from sunshine, from rain." In Palestine the summer heat burns up every vestige of vegetation over the plains, and when the rains have fallen there bursts forth a sudden wealth of verdure. Comp. Isa. 32. 15; 35. 1, sq. VER. 5. It is extremely difficult to decide between text and margin. If the former, David looks back on the sins of himself and his sons and feels that the ideal has not been reached, yet rejoices that God has made his covenant with him. But the last two lines are almost unintelligible, and perhaps the margin is better (Theinus and Kirkpatrick). David assures himself that his house, however undeserving, has received that privilege of Jehovah's covenant, and that God will at last cause the promised salvation to spring from his favored line. *Ordered*, The metaphor is from a formal and duly attested legal document. *All [my] desire*. Or, "all good pleasure;" that is, God's. Comp. Isa. 53. 10. VERS. 6, 7. The contrast is familiar from innumerable passages in the Psalms; the reign of the Messianic King must involve the destruction of all persistent evil-doers. Comp. Matt. 13. 41. *Ungodly*. It would be well if "bellial" were always as here translated; the personification began as early as New Testament times, but is unknown in the Old Testament. *For they cannot*. If the text is sound, the description will be intended to bring out the kingdom's danger from wicked men and the strong measures needed to extirpate them. They are past treating gently, like weeds that can be removed with the hand; they need the sharp knife at the end of a long shaft to cut them off for the burning. The latter phrase will suit both the thorns and the men they figure. *In their place*, Clearly corrupt. Klostermann's emendation, "with fire of the Almighty," is plausible. So ends this prophetic outburst, clearly with reference to those fierce men who had stained David's reign with their ungovernable violence, and whose crimes weighed on the king's thoughts as he gave his last commission to Solomon.

#### The Lesson Council.

**Question 7.** *Wherein does Hebrew poetry differ from the poetical literature of other ancient nations?*

It would require an essay to answer this question with any degree of fulness. 1. It differs in form. Compared with the old Greek poetry, for instance, it has not its measure or its rhythm or cadence. 2. In expressing the deepest passions and the purest emotions of the heart, and the loftiest thoughts and holiest aspirations of the soul, being the medium through which the most rapt contemplations of God and the most intimate communion with him found expression. 3. Ancient poetry was often used in the interest of unhallowed passion; Hebrew, never. 4. Hebrew poetry was pre-eminently religious, and employed for purposes of purest devotion. 5. It subordinated imaginative fancy to the truthful and realistic. 6. It was divinely inspired as the other was not, and is truer to nature and to God than any other, and the loftiest and the most sublime on record. —*Rev. A. Wheeler, D.D.*

1. Hebrew poetry is national, its inspiration being the crises and great events in the life of the nation, also the hopes and expectations of the Jew. 2. Merely sentimental, abstract, or philosophic poems are not found in Hebrew poetry; its character is lyric, not epic or dramatic. 3. It is not merely religious, but worshipful, monothelistic, and rich in expression of those attitudes of the soul which declare a belief in one personal God.—*Rev. M. D. Church.*

1. In its purpose, which is intensely religious. In this respect Hebrew poetry far surpasses the poetical literature of other ancient nations. 2. In its form. Sometimes an alphabetical arrangement characterizes the poem, as in the one hundred and nineteenth psalm. This psalm is divided into twenty-two sections, corresponding to the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Each verse of the first section begins with the first letter of the alphabet, each verse of the second section with the second letter, and so on through the psalm. Another poem of this character is Lam. 3. But, according to Lowth, the most striking peculiarity of Hebrew poetry is what he calls "parallelism," which is a correspondence in thought or language, or both, between the numbers of each period. Examples of this are to be found in many of the psalms and in Proverbs; as Psa. 8. 4; 10. 2; Prov. 10. 7.—*Rev. O. J. Curtis, D.D.*

#### Lesson Word-Picture.

LAST words! How touching, significant, solemn! Sitting down to utter some message, and for the last time! Never again will it be spoken!

It is David, the king, who would place on record this last utterance. It may have been at evening when he breathed out his last message, the sun going down, flashing out his last rays like expiring torches, and inviting the soul to serious meditation. It may have been at dawn, when the sky was all ablaze with a golden expectation, and ere the light of an eternal day breaks upon the king he makes his soul a guest-room for these solemn last thoughts. Many years burden him. Many storms have broken about his soul. The same David though! Raised of God from lowly places, the lonely sheep-pastures, the still waters, the winding foot-paths, the valley of the death-shadows! Anointed of God there amid the hushed, wondering circle of father and sons, the hoary prophet lifting the sacred horn and solemnly setting apart the young shepherd, as ruler and king! And O, hark! It is Israel's sweet singer. I hear him strike the harp, I hear his rich voice, out in the lonely fields, before the gloomy Saul, in the profound depths of his remorse, in the darkened chamber of his sorrow. David, lowly shepherd, God's anointed, Israel's sweet, impassioned singer—it is he breathing forth these last, solemn words. Listen! As he reverently speaks, how Israel's Rock towers, throwing its shadow over pilgrims in the noon-tide glare, from its cliff sides pouring sparkling streams for the thirsty, sheltering in its recesses the storm-driven.

Listen again! David is portraying Israel's ruler. Does he think of Solomon, who will come after him? O that his reign might be like the morning sun!

What a scene! The eastern sky glorious in the sunrise! Not a cloud to veil his splendor! The sky one wide audience-room where sits and shines the king in undimmed glory. Then a hiding beneath the assailing mists, but finally that sun bursting out of the vapors that would have quenched his light in the rain, but now dazzlingly triumphant, while millions of grass-blades glitter with jewels that he royally gives this hour and

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may take the next. How those blades rise higher and higher, springing up in this "clear shining after rain!" O that the coming King might be glorious like that sun-glorious in righteousness, and the nation prospered and rejoicing in that glory! Happy the people under such a ruler and with such a God!

And that God is to be David's in an everlasting covenant! O glorious vision granted to faith!

The soul is bowed down in sorrow.

"That everlasting covenant goes on!" he murmurs.

The body is torn with pain.

"Still goes on that covenant," whispers that voice tremblingly—sinking, dying. He is passing away. That covenant survives, and goes on and on forever!

### Primary and Intermediate.

#### LESSON THOUGHT. *Goodness a Light.*

*Review.* Give a few minutes to a rapid review of David's life. A little blackboard work will help greatly to hold the eyes and thoughts of the children. Make a shepherd's crook, as you talk, to suggest his youth; a sword to recall the stormy days of his trouble with Saul; a crown or scepter to suggest his kingdom. Especially dwell upon the Lord's leading as shown in his life, and teach that every obedient child will be as certainly led by the Lord as David was.

*Object Lesson.* A few wheat heads, ripe and full. Show a few grains of wheat. Tell how these were dropped in the ground, sprang up, grew, and ripened at last into this good, sweet grain, ready for use. Liken this to David's life. Now he was old, and ready for use in God's upper kingdom. Ask what Absalom was like, and show that good grain only ripens under the shining of God's sun and in yielding to the laws of his kingdom.



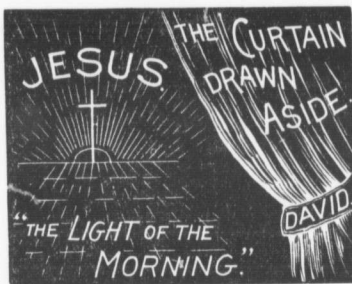
*The True King.* What does a king do? Yes, he rules over men. Talk a little about kings, and those in authority, their responsibilities and burdens. Teach that all of God's children are called "kings and priests." A kingdom of the heart is given each to rule over. There are

enemies to be subdued: every thing that belongs to Satan must be conquered; Let children name some things to be fought: Temper, selfishness, laziness, untruth, etc. All these enemies must be subdued. The boy or girl who is not eager to rule the kingdom God has given justly, and in the fear of God, will not succeed. We must really care about being rulers, or we never shall be.

*God's Promise.* Tell how King David trusted the Lord when he was old. God had made him a promise, and David believed it. It did not look as though he was keeping it, but David felt sure that he could not break it. Tell story of a child who had been promised a ride on a certain day. The father who had promised it was not at home when the day came. Noon came; three o'clock, four o'clock; but all the time the child was happy in anticipation of the ride. "for," said she, "papa always keeps his word;" and her sweet faith was rewarded.

How much more secure is God's promise than any earthly pledge! With the best intention the father might have been unable to keep his promise. But God can do all things. Nothing can hinder him from keeping his word! How fully we may trust him!

### Blackboard.



In the lesson of to-day David's vision of the true King is set forth. The blackboard endeavors to represent this by a curtain drawn aside, revealing the cross in the light of the rising sun, for David had said that the true King "shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth." This description was completely fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness. By means of questions, the superintendent may draw forth from the school how this was true. The world was in darkness. He came as its light. He is the source of light and of life and of power. Draw the cross white, the sun yellow, the curtain light blue.

### Berean Methods.

#### The Teachers' Meeting.

Lead the class into a brief consideration of the Psalms. Many of them were written by David, not all. They were written at different times, and probably were not collected into one book until long after the death of their authors. They formed a book of national hymnology, such, indeed, as has never been equaled in modern times. If possible get your teachers to tell you about the date of several of David's most popular psalms. What was he, for instance, probably, a shepherd or king, when he wrote the twenty-third psalm? At what stage of his career did he write the first? What is remarkable about the one hundred and nineteenth? Find, if possible, one or two specimen psalms of the earliest part of his career, and then contrast these with his last words.

*References.* FOSTER'S CYCLOPEDIA. Ver. 1: Poetical, 2516. Ver. 1-4: Poetical, 631. Ver. 3: Prose, 2548, 3438, 5050, 3428-3442, 9915-9917. Ver. 4: Prose, 749, 747, 758, 772, 784, 790, 795, 9620, 3633, 3638, 10283, 10285, 10289. Ver. 5: Prose, 7593, 7783, 11231-11235, 11238, 11239, 4750, 4551.

### ANALYTICAL AND BIBLICAL OUTLINE.

#### David's Last Psalm.

#### I. THE PSALMIST.

1. *David the son of Jesse.* v. 1.  
"A rod out of . . . Jesse." Isa. 11. 1.
2. *The man who was raised up.* v. 1.  
"Took thee from the sheep-cote." 2 Sam. 7. 8.
3. *The avointed of . . . God.* v. 1.  
"With my holy oil." Psa. 89. 20.
4. *The sweet psalmist of Israel.* v. 1.  
"Spake as they were moved." 2 Pet. 1. 21.

## II. THE RULER.

1. *He that ruleth . . . must be just.* v. 3.  
"With righteousness shall he judge." Isa. 11. 4.
2. *Ruling in the fear of God.* v. 3.  
"Faithfully, and with a perfect heart." 2 Chron. 19. 7.
3. *As the light of the morning.* v. 4.  
"The path of the just." Prov. 4. 18.
4. *As the tender grass.* v. 4.  
"He shall grow as the lily." Hos. 14. 5.
5. *An everlasting covenant.* v. 5.  
"The sure mercies of David." Isa. 55. 3.

## THOUGHTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

## The Ideal Ruler.

1. *The ideal ruler must be just,* ver. 3. The severest curses of God have been directed against public servants who take bribes. Many an ignoble politician manages by adroitness to secure responsible public office, and sometimes such men retain for years the favor of their constituents. But no "popular favor" can blind God's eyes to the real character of the ruler. God demands that he shall be just.

2. *The ideal ruler must be reverential,* ver. 3. America has reason to thank God that most of the founders of our Republic were devout men. Public justice, like private virtue, when genuine, is founded on the fear of God.

3. *The ideal ruler must be identified with God's cause,* ver. 5. God establishes "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure," with every man who with all his heart enlists in the divine service. A ruler who is God's servant need have no fears.

4. *The ideal ruler in seeking rectitude, finds success.* Worldly success, like happiness, is seldom found by those who seek it directly. He who pursues any noble ambition finds happiness in its pursuit; and he who does right, regardless of success, wins the very success he disdains to seek.

## HOME READINGS.

- M. David's last words. 2 Sam. 22. 47-51.  
T<sub>W</sub>. David's last words. 2 Sam. 23. 1-7.  
W. David's charge to Solomon. 1 Kings 2. 1-10.  
T<sub>W</sub>. An everlasting covenant. Isa. 55. 1-5.  
F. Reliance upon God. Psa. 16.  
S. Confidence and service. Psa. 40. 1-10.  
S. Paul's confidence. Rom. 8. 31-39.

## GOLDEN TEXT.

He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure. 2 Sam. 23. 5.

TIME.—1018 B. C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION.—The Rock of Israel.

## LESSON HYMNS.

- No. 256, Dominion Hymnal.  
He lead th me! oh! blessed thought,  
Oh! words with heavenly comfort fraught.
- No. 109, Dominion Hymnal.  
Oh, sometimes the shadows are deep,  
And rough seems the path to the goal.
- No. 107, Dominion Hymnal.  
Stand up! stand up for Jesus!  
Ye soldiers of the cross!

Abide with me.  
Father most holy.  
Love divine.  
Keep me, hide me, O my Father.

Art thou saddened?

Come, my soul, thy suit prepare.  
O could I speak the matchless worth.  
He leadeth me.  
Father, what'er of earthly bliss.  
Child of a king.

## QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR STUDENTS.

## 1. The Psalmist.

How long was David's reign?  
In what sense were these David's last words?  
To what three facts of his life is allusion made in ver. 1?

Where can the evidence of his literary power be found?

To whom does he ascribe all his worth as king and poet?

What doctrine of theology has been founded upon such expressions as this of ver. 2 and 2 Pet. 1. 21?

## 2. The Song.

What is the subject of this song?  
What characteristics of a good ruler are here given?  
In what respects is ver. 4 an illustration of a ruler's character?

From what origin had David's family arisen?  
What was the covenant which God had made with David? 2 Sam. 7. 16.

What desire of David's heart had not God allowed to grow?

To what are the wicked here likened?

What will be their end?

## Practical Teachings.

Last words are always noticeable.  
The Christian's are wonderful words of joy. The sinner's have many times been the wails of those without hope. Which will ours be?

How piety ascribes every thing to God!  
A beautiful character is like a morning without clouds.

God's covenant to us is surer than to David. Ours is in Christ, unalterable, eternal.

O the woe of perishing—thrust out of the way like thorns; burned with fire. So end the wicked.

## Hints for Home Study.

1. Commit these verses to memory.
2. Repeat the story contained in the phrases "raised up on high," and "anointed of God."
3. Find proof that the covenant with David was kept.
4. Find the history of the word "Rock" used as a title of God, and all the passages that contain it.

## QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE SCHOLARS.

## 1. The Psalmist, vs. 1, 2.

What psalmist is here referred to?  
What is said of his lineage?  
By whom was he promoted to honor?  
For what people did he sing?  
In what book may we find his songs?  
Who helped David to sing his songs?  
What says Peter about the Holy Spirit's help? 2 Pet. 1. 21.

## 2. His Song, vs. 3-7.

Whose words did the psalmist utter?  
By what names does he speak of God?  
What does he say about rulers?  
To what is the just ruler likened?  
What covenant had God made with David? (Golden Text.)

What did he say about this covenant?  
To what did he liken the sons of Belial?  
What defense must he have who touched them?  
What would be their final doom?  
What will be the doom of all who persist in doing wickedly? Matt. 25. 41.

## Teachings of the Lesson.

Where in this lesson are we taught—  
1. That God makes his servants joyful?  
2. That God makes his servants useful?  
3. That God makes his servants to be honored?

## Home Work for Young Bereans.

Find in a book written by Moses a description of a just judge.  
Find where Moses speaks of God as a "Rock" five times in one chapter.  
Learn the names of two other psalmists in Israel.

## QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.

To what city did David return after Absalom's death? **To Jerusalem.**

What do we get in this lesson? **His last words.**

Whose son was David? **The son of Jesse.**

Who chose David to be king? **The Lord.**

What did David write? **The Psalms.**

Who spoke to David? **The Spirit of the Lord.**

What did the Lord say a king must be? **Just.**

In whose fear must he rule? **In the fear of God.**

To what is a good king compared? **To a morning without clouds.**

What did God make with David? **An everlasting covenant.**

What is a covenant? **An agreement.**

Whose promises are sure? **The Lord's.**

What did David believe? **That God would keep his covenant.**

What did this give him? **Great peace.**

Who are kept in perfect peace? **Those who trust God.**

What does David say of the wicked? **They shall be destroyed.**

## Words with Little People.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH DAVID.

Thy throne shall be established forever. 2 Sam. 7. 16.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH ME.

I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters. 2 Cor. 6. 18.

## THE LESSON CATECHISM.

[For the entire school.]

1. What was the character of David's last words? **They were a psalm of praise.**
2. For what principle of government does he praise God? **For justice that fears God.**
3. To what does he liken such a ruler? **To a morning without clouds.**
4. What does he say will be the end of those who oppose God's righteous ruler? **They shall be thrust away like thorns.**
5. In what confident trust does the singer of this song rest? **"He hath made with me," etc.**

## CATECHISM QUESTION.

62. What is the other part of man?

His body, which is flesh and blood, and will die.

Be not afraid of them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.—Matthew x. 28.

B. C. 1014.]

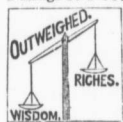
## LESSON VIII. SOLOMON'S WISE CHOICE.

[Nov. 24.]

## Authorized Version.

1 Kings 3. 5-15.

Commit to memory verses 12, 13.



5. 1. Gilb'e-on the LORD appeared to Sol'o-mon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.

6. And Sol'o-mon said, Thou hast showed unto thy servant Da'vid my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.

7. And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made my servant king instead of Da'vid my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in.

8. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude.

9. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?

10. And the speech pleased the LORD, that Sol'o-mon had asked this thing.

11. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment;

12. Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.

13. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honor: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.

14. And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father Da'vid did walk, then I will lengthen thy days.

15. And Sol'o-mon awoke: and, behold, it was a dream. And he came to Je-ru'sa-lem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and offered up burnt-offerings, and offered peace-offerings, and made a feast to all his servants.

## Revised Version.

- 5 In Gilb'e-on the LORD appeared to Sol'o-mon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. And Sol'o-mon said, Thou hast showed unto thy servant Da'vid my father great kindness, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of Da'vid my father: and I am but a little child; I know not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude.
- 9 Give thy servant therefore an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and evil; for who is able to judge this thy great people? And the speech pleased the LORD, that Sol'o-mon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; behold, I have done according to thy word: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there hath been none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.
- 13 And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honor, so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee, all thy days.
- 14 And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father Da'vid did walk, then I will lengthen thy days. And Sol'o-mon awoke, and, behold, it was a dream: and he came to Je-ru'sa-lem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD and offered up burnt-offerings, and offered peace-offerings, and made a feast to all his servants.

## EXPOSITORY NOTES.

**Introductory.**—The transition from David to Solomon is natural and interesting. The latter part of David's reign, with his counsels and admonitions for his son Solomon, is narrated with considerable fullness in the

last two chapters of first Chronicles and the first two chapters of the first book of Kings. Adonijah, the fourth son of David, born at Hebron while his father was reigning over Judah (2 Sam. 4. 5), had an ambition to be

king, and got for himself chariots and footmen to affect royal dignity much as Absalom had done. But his attempt at usurpation was nipped in the bud by the prompt action of David, who caused Solomon to be anointed and proclaimed king over Israel. So there was no violent break in the succession, and Solomon's formal assumption of the regal office was an occasion of great rejoicing in Jerusalem. Solomon's reign was therefore a continuation of that of his father, and the rule of the great conqueror and chieftain, who had subdued the enemies of Israel round about, was fittingly consummated in the quiet accession of the peaceful Solomon to the throne. After David's death Solomon went to a Gibeon, a few miles north-west of Jerusalem, to offer a great sacrifice unto Jehovah; for that was the principal place of worship at the time, the temple not having been yet erected. The Chronicles inform us that Solomon assembled a great congregation with him, and that the brazen altar made in the days of Moses by Bezaleel, and the old "tabernacle of the congregation," were still existing at that place. See 2 Chron. 1. 1-6.

**Verse 5. In Gibeon.** This was called a great city in the time of Joshua. Josh. 10. 2. It was the ancient capital of the Hivites, situated on one of the rounded hills which form a noticeable feature of the country, and forming at the head of the pass of Bethoron the key of central Palestine. It is represented by the modern El-jib, a small village about five miles north-west of Jerusalem. Here the tabernacle was set up, and public worship maintained under David and Solomon. Hence it is called in the preceding verse "the great high place." **Appeared to Solomon in a dream.** The dream is noticeably prominent as one of the forms of receiving divine revelations. See Num. 12. 6. Many ordinary dreams are of a striking and impressive character, and readily suggest to us what latent possibilities of the human soul may have often served as a channel for the communication of revelations from God. In dreams the soul has images set before it, and often after waking retains vivid recollection of what appeared. In Solomon's dream Jehovah probably appeared in some such form or symbol as those seen by the prophets in their night visions. **By night.** The night following the day of his devout offerings at the great altar. **God said.** In ordinary dreams the soul not only discerns what appear like visible forms, but also hears the voice of words, and carries on conversation. **Ask what I shall give thee.** Here was a gracious condescension and regard shown to Solomon by the Most High, which stands a monumental exhibition of particular divine love to a mortal man. The doctrine of God which such grace inculcates is worthy of our careful study.

**6. Thou hast showed...my father.** Observe how Solomon begins his petition by devout acknowledgment of past favors, especially his great mercy to his father David, and recognizes as the noblest facts of his father's life that he walked...in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart before God. Such becoming acknowledgment of merites and keen appreciation of moral excellence disclose the appropriate spiritual condition both of asking and receiving God's best gifts. **This great kindness.** The same words translated great mercy above, but made emphatic by the article and the demonstrative pronoun. David himself, in chap. 1. 48, blesses Jehovah, God of Israel, that he has given him one to sit upon his throne, and this is the great mercy here referred to.

**7. Thou hast made.** He acknowledges God's hand in his elevation to the throne, and hence might claim for himself all the comfort and confidence of divine care. **I am but a little child.** In 1 Chron. 29. 1, the

aged David speaks of him as "young and tender." His age at the time of his accession is nowhere stated, but he was probably not more than twenty years old. His modesty and humility appear in this acknowledgment of youth and inexperience. **How to go out or come in.** A proverbial or idiomatic way of denoting one's going about the ordinary duties of life. Comp. Deut. 31. 2; Josh. 14. 11.

**8. Thy people...a great people.** He is alive to the fact that the nation he is called to rule is God's people, divinely chosen and honored by marvelous displays of power and mercy in past ages; a people so great as to be in fact the first of nations (comp. Amos 3. 2; 6. 1, 2) must be truly great. **Cannot be numbered.** So that the promise made to Abraham (Gen. 13. 16; 15. 5) is fulfilled.

**9. An understanding heart to judge thy people.** More exactly, "A heart hearing to judge;" that is, a heart giving the most diligent attention and care to execute right judgment in the sight of God and man. **Discern between good and bad.** To distinguish keenly between right and wrong is a quality absolutely fundamental and indispensable to the righteous ruler and judge. The one who holds a position of authority, and can "call evil good and good evil" (Isa. 5. 20), or say that "every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord" (Mal. 2. 17), is himself a moral wreck, and can bring only ruin on others. The hearing of causes of litigation, the decision of what is right, and the ordering of appropriate execution of judgment are all a part of the duties of an Oriental king. Hence Solomon's great wisdom in desiring above all other things a competency to perform aright the high duties of a judge and ruler of a great historic nation.

**10. Pleased the Lord.** Such requests and such disposition of heart are always well-pleasing in the sight of God. Hence the New Testament word, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally." Jas. 1. 5.

**11. Hast not asked for thyself.** His request is here estimated by what he did "not" ask, and its excellence is enhanced by allusion to three things which one in Solomon's place might very naturally have desired: long life...riches...the life of thine enemies. These are the good things which the worldly mind most prizes. **Understanding to discern judgment.** An allusion back to verse 9, which contains this idea in fuller form.

**12. Behold, I have done.** The prayer is already answered, the thing is as good as done. It is spoken of as complete, for it was fully determined in the mind of God. **A wise and an understanding heart.** He was gifted with a sound, well-balanced mind; a genius for government; a taste for the fine arts; a love for the good and great. He was a poet and a philosopher, for "he spake three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five." Chap. 4. 32. He was a famous naturalist, for he made a special study of trees and plants, beasts and birds, insects and fishes. Chap. 4. 33. He was a shrewd observer of men and things, noted for his political and practical sagacity, a skillful diplomatist, and far-sighted enough to open his empire to an extensive commerce with nations near and far. **None like thee before...after.** Solomon of course was ignorant of many things which later ages have discovered or invented, and some of these descriptions of his wisdom and power are doubtless colored by the glowing habit of Oriental hyperbole. But in view of the extent and variety of his gift and knowledge above referred to, and of his enjoyment of signal favors of God, we must ac-

cord him a rank without any exact parallel in human history.

**13. Also...riches and honor.** Two New Testament sayings of our Lord are suggested by these words, Matt. 6, 33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," etc.; and Matt. 13, 12, "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance." He who obtains God's favor obtains God's vast possessions. **Among the kings.** It was no small matter to outrank all contemporary kings of the nations.

**14. If thou wilt walk.** He must not forget that the great favors and promises bestowed do not release him in the least from the obligations of righteousness. So, too, in the midst of blessed assurance which David received touching his royal seed, it was declared, "If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men." 2 Sam. 7, 14. **Ways...statutes...commandments.** Comprehensive summary of moral obligation. The **ways** are the habits and manner of life; **statutes** denote more particularly those divine decrees which exhibit the distinctions of right and wrong; **commandments** are the revealed laws which, like the decalogue, are designed to regulate moral conduct. Comp. David's words to Solomon in chap. 2, 3. **As thy father.** An allusion back to what Solomon said in verse 6. **I will lengthen thy days.** As Solomon failed in the later period of his reign to keep God's laws, his own life was cut short, and he attained not the good old age which the Israelite looked upon as a special token of divine favor.

**15. It was a dream.** But none the less a divine revelation, and made a profound impression on his soul. **Came to Jerusalem.** Having finished his offerings at Gibeon, he proceeded to the capital to offer there also, **before the ark of the covenant of the Lord,** what seemed to him a becoming sacrifice. Here he offered not only burnt-offerings as at Gibeon, but also **peace-offerings,** which were commonly observed by a joyful feast of the people. Thus the great heaven-favored monarch sought to inaugurate his reign by insuring the favor both of God and his people.

The above lesson suggests the following thoughts:

1. The biblical idea of wisdom embraces sound moral sense, and religious integrity, as well as political sagacity and knowledge.

2. Not a few of the most important revelations of God's grace and truth have been given in dreams and night visions.

3. The heart that meditates much by day upon God's law will be likely to meet God also in his dreams.

4. A child-father and a yearning for wisdom are the delight of Jehovah.

5. The earnest prayer of such a heart will be answered by an abundance of blessings over what was asked for.

6. The doctrine of God's tenderness and interest in man, which lies at the basis of this lesson, should cultivate a holy confidence and comfort in every devout heart.

### English Teacher's Notes.

There are three things which sometimes render it difficult to make a choice. Imagine a child being shown a number of toys, pictures, or other things equally attractive and desirable, and then bidden to make his choice between them. The difficulty will lie in the equality of the things offered.

Suppose, however, that one of these objects is visibly superior to all the rest, of far greater beauty and value.

The question might arise, whether it would not be greedy and selfish to fix on the best of all. I remember a little boy who, on being offered his choice between three silver coins, fixed, after some deliberation, on the one of smallest value, feeling that he ought not to ask a larger gift. The difficulty lay in an uncertainty as to the intention of the person who offered them.

The third difficulty is that expressed in the old saying that "you cannot eat your cake and keep it too." When you choose one thing, by that act you give up the other.

Let us see how these three things affected the choice which is held up for our example in the passage for to-day.

1. The offer made to the youthful king of Israel was unlimited. "Ask what I shall give thee." His thoughts might have freely ranged over various objects of desire, until he was puzzled which of them to select. But it was not so. His eye singled out one thing which immeasurably surpasses all others. His affection was at once set upon this, and his choice quickly made. In after years he recorded his conviction about it in words from which our Golden Text is taken: "Wisdom is better than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared to her."

It is not every one who has such a choice before him as Solomon had. Riches, fame, the glories of this world, seem very far beyond the reach of some of us, though they may be offered to others. But the best gift of all—the one infinitely superior to all others—is offered to each one, from the oldest to the youngest, the highest to the lowest, the richest to the poorest. Ought there to be any difficulty at all in choosing that perfect gift—the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as our "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption?" 1 Cor. 1, 30.

2. Was there any difficulty in Solomon's mind as to whether he might ask for such a great gift as the "wisdom" he desired? None whatever. He knew who had made that unlimited offer to him. He remembered God's mercies to David his father (see ver. 6), and had not the slightest misgiving. And "it pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing."

God is pleased when we ask for the best things. He is pleased when we trust him to give them. He has unmistakably, in the Scriptures, declared his desire that we should have them. When he says, "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find," etc., we can have no difficulty as to his intentions toward us.

3. But now comes the third difficulty. The decision for one thing does always mean the giving up of the rest. It was so with the merchantman in the parable, when he had "found one pearl of great price." Matt. 13, 45, 46. It was so with the young ruler to whom Jesus said, "Go and sell that thou hast... and follow me." Matt. 19, 21. And in asking for wisdom from above, Solomon deliberately turned his back on those things so fascinating to a young king—riches, victories, honors. God afterward bestowed these also upon him, but none the less had he, in making his choice, given them up.

The heart's choice of Christ and all the blessings there are in him must be absolute and unadulterated. In a material sense, it is not every one who is called upon to suffer the loss of "all things" that he may "win Christ" (Phil. 3, 8), but in a spiritual sense this is the only way to win him. The choice is between Christ and self; Christ and the world; Christ and ease, pleasure, popularity—all that the natural heart desires. All must be counted as dross for his sake. And then, God has promised to give "with him" all that is really "good" for those who have taken him as Saviour, Lord, and Friend.

## Cambridge Notes.

(1 Kings 3. 3-15. Comp. 2 Chron. 1. 3-13.)

THE book on which we now enter is a continuation of the Book of Samuel, compiled at a date which may be fixed with fair certainty as between B. C. 561, the release of Jehoiachin, and B. C. 536, the Edict of Cyrus. The documents used by the unknown editor seem to have been contemporary prophetic memoirs (see introductory notes, July 7); for Solomon's reign there was a chronicle called "the book of the acts of Solomon," which the parallel 2 Chron. 10. 29, enables us plausibly to identify with works by the prophets Nathan, Ahijah, and Iddo. The keen human interest which makes the portrait of David so living fails when we come to his son. The narrative of our lesson is our only help toward realizing Solomon as any thing but a splendid statue. He is best known by his works, as the builder of the temple and the founder of the Jewish philosophy, which dominated literature so largely after his day. A very small and uncertain proportion of his writings has come down to us, incorporated in the collection of "proverbs." But his name was associated with the whole class of "sapiential" literature. Centuries later such wonderful writings as Ecclesiastes and Wisdom were given to the world as Solomon's—of course merely as written in his character—and a nearly contemporary love-poem, one of the most exquisite lyrics of antiquity, was called the "Song of Solomon." Later legend was busy with his name. He became the great magician, invested with power over demons, and knowing all the secrets of the spirit world. We have only to do with the sober narrative of the wise king, his power, and his splendor, and the sad fall in which we may hope he learned that the fear of Jehovah is the only object of human endeavor that is not "vanity and a striving after wind." VER. 3. *Loved Jehovah*. For "Jehovah loved him." 2 Sam. 12. 24, *sqq.* *Walked*, etc. Comp. chap. 2. 3. The example of David becomes the model for the good kings, just as that of Jeroboam for the bad ones. *Only*. The "high places," that is, altars to Jehovah upon eminences, were in common use until the Deuteronomic Law came into the general possession of the people. Then it was realized that the law had only sanctioned such worship while no fixed sanctuary was possible. Exod. 20. 24; Deut. 12. 13, *sqq.* *Sacrificed*. The tense indicates the continuance of a previously existing custom. VER. 4. See the chronicler's fuller account of the great assembly at Gibeon. For the history of this ancient city see Josh. 9. 18, 21, *sqq.*, and (as the abode of the tabernacle) the introductory notes for October 13. *Great*. Doubtless because of the tabernacle. *A thousand*. In the name of the great assembly. It is the last recorded sacrifice at Gibeon. Its scale was quite in accordance with Solomon's love of magnificence; the great prophet Samuel was content with a single victim. VER. 5. Note the concurrence of the two divine names; "Jehovah" appears, "God" speaks. Generally one or the other, the personal name or the universal, appears throughout a narrative alone, except when stress is to be laid upon the meaning.—*Dream*. Throughout Scripture so constant a medium of revelation. Comp. especially 1 Sam. 28. 6, 15. VER. 6. *Kept*. That is, prolonged even after his death. VER. 7. *Little child*. Clearly figurative, for Solomon can hardly have been much less than twenty. According to chap. 11. 42, and 14-21, Rehoboam was born before Solomon's accession, but his forty-one years are very hard to understand. *Go out*. Engage in the duties of life. Comp. Deut. 31. 2; Num. 27. 17; Psa. 121. 8, etc. VER. 8. *Great*. Comp. Gen. 13. 14-22. One Greek text adds here the characteristic

comparison with the sand. VER. 9. Solomon showed his wisdom by asking for it. The Hebrew conception of "wisdom," in which comprehensive word the chronicler sums up the prayer, was a very practical one. Unlike the Greeks, whose word *sophia* meant intellectual acuteness, and often thus degenerates into mere cleverness, the Hebrews always made wisdom as much a function of heart as of head. It was the endowment which brought men safely through the problems of every-day life. Hence, for the religious man, "the fear of Jehovah" was "the beginning of wisdom," and the "fool" was he who presumed to rely on human weakness. *Hearing* (margin) must mean ready to hear the inward voice of God. *Judge*. Of course implying every function of government. *Great* (margin). Describing the rule of such a people as a heavy burden. VER. 10. *The Lord* (not "Jehovah"). Suggesting the thought that he to whom the earthly monarch called was "King of kings and Lord of lords," VER. 11. *Hear*. The margin must be kept as before, because it shows that the "judgment" was not of his own "discerning," but directly received from God. VER. 12. *There hath been none*. Enlarged upon chap. 4. 29-34. VER. 13. *Riches and honor*. Two gifts are thus given unconditionally, as a help to win the third by following Jehovah's will. *Hath not been* (margin). The only possible translation of the text, which the LXX. does not encourage us to alter. In that case "all thy days" must be closely joined to the preceding words, "None hath had such prosperity as thou shalt have all thy days." VER. 14. *As thy father*. Of course the commendation does not belong to his whole life, but to its general purpose and effort. *Lengthen thy days*. The crown of earthly blessings to a Hebrew, whose ideas of future bliss were so vague. Solomon, alas! failed of this, dying probably before he was sixty. VER. 15. *A dream*. Comp. Gen. 41. 7. The parallel shows that there was no suggestion of unreality, for both Pharaoh and Solomon acted on the dream at once. The phrase describes the transition from the ideal world in which the sleeper moved to the prosaic realities of waking life. But though the vision faded, the reality remained. *Ark*. In the new tent of David on Zion. *Offered up*. The sacrifices and the feast were signs of rejoicing at the goodness of Jehovah revealed in the dream. *Peace-offerings*. A eucharistic sacrifice, while the "burnt-offering" signified consecration. See the lessons of July 1 and August 5, 1888.

## The Lesson Council.

**Question 8.** *What were the excellences and what the defects of Solomon's wisdom?*

The excellencies of Solomon's wisdom, as recorded in Proverbs, are great. The purpose of the author, as stated in the outset, is to "give a young man knowledge and discretion." Any man who will guide his life by those most excellent counsels of Solomon will certainly be saved from going far astray. The great defect of Solomon's wisdom is that he failed to practice what he preached. In his youth he loved and feared God; in his mature age he turned aside from the paths of righteousness and became a besotted voluptuary and an idolatrous apostate. He was wise in his guidance of others, but failed to exemplify his own teachings.—*Rev. O. J. Coates, D.D.*

*Excellences*. 1. Its practical nature. The utterances of Solomon as well as his administration of justice are peculiarly free from mere speculation and theory. 2. His minute analysis of human nature, in its passions, virtues, excellences, and characteristic temptations. *Defects*.

1. The merely prudential nature of much of his wisdom, tending rather to secular success than to religious excellence. 2. The absence of a life harmonious with his precepts. He said, "Be wise," but was himself foolish.—*Rev. M. D. Church.*

Knowledge is not wisdom, but a proper adaptation of means to ends is: 1. Solomon was a great merchant prince and he sought large wealth. The means he employed were successful. 2. It was excellent wisdom to apply himself so diligently to the acquisition of knowledge as revealed in both men and things. 3. He qualified himself for, and discharged wisely, the functions of a judge among his people. 4. In building the temple he created a bond tending to the unity of the nation and its preservation. 5. In living in peace, for a long reign, with adjoining kingdoms much political sagacity comes to light. The defects in his wisdom are quite obvious; in constituting an immense harem, laying great burdens on the people for its maintenance; in contracting marriage relations with idolaters, and then allowing the practice of idolatry; in forsaking, in large measure, the religion of Israel; in carrying on a civil administration so prodigiously expensive that it could not be continued after its glamor had departed. Serious defects in a ruler must be admitted when, upon his death, a large portion of a nation rebels because of the hardships imposed and a refusal to remove them.—*Rev. A. Wheeler, D.D.*

### Lesson Word-Pictures.

#### NIGHT-TIME at Gibeon.

How hushed it is about the king's resting-place! The only noise is that of the steady tread of the king's sentries watching and guarding during the night. Overhead the stars are out in their ceaseless march around the great king's pavilion. How hushed it is amid those vast, golden spaces!

As Solomon sleeps, a voice breaks the stillness. What a solemn, impressive summons to the young king! Jehovah speaking! Jehovah saying, "Ask what I shall give thee!"

It is God making for Solomon the grand opportunity of his life-time. Opportunity more than merit may make people. Let the king seize his opportunity!

What shall be the petition?

Bewildering pictures of blessing may pass before his mind.

Length of days, time to enjoy earth's cup of blessing to its bottom, to see a great nation growing in power, to witness the fruits of a long and happy reign—what a boon! Power, marshaled in armies, paraded in fleets, reflected in the submission of the nations crouching before Solomon's throne—how much to be craved! Riches, stores of silver like the banks of snow on Lebanon, gold, fiery as the sunshine, horses of swiftness, chariots of strength, fields of emerald, granaries bursting with wheat—how much to be coveted!

All these displays may stretch before the monarch's eyes and bewilder his judgment.

He sees something else influencing him more powerfully. O, the faces that he sees about him; a great nation gathered around his throne, and all looking to him for relief and guidance! He must be not only king over all, but arbiter between man and man.

He sees men unjust. How hard it may be to detect the wrong and punish it! He sees men dishonest. Who shall put their guilt into scales, weigh it, and then weigh back proper penalty? He sees men wandering from the ways of reverence, forsaking God's law, and how shall

he bring them back? He may be hasty. How can the king be patient?

Before this great multitude of wants filling up his night-vision, he is so perplexed and feels so dwarfed, contracted, small, just a little child that knows not "how to go out or come in!" If God would only let down his firm, wise, guiding hand, and lead this little child! If he would lead Solomon forward to be just and true when the ruler shall go among the ruled!

And lo, a voice again!

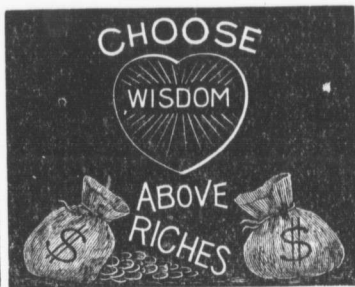
God stoops, and in his greatness and gentleness lays hold of that lifted hand.

And look, Solomon, at that parade of power! God gives this. See that accumulation of riches! God gives this. Recall that picture of lengthened days! Make them days of God, and they shall be thine.

The voice has died away. Solomon awakes. How his heart beats! How his brain tingles! He rises on his elbow. He looks around. He listens. What has he seen? What has he heard? All an empty dream? It cannot be a reality, and yet—why not? How strange, and yet how comforting!

He accepts it. God has told him how blessed he will be, and now he must tell God how thankful he is! He goes to Jerusalem. He stands before the solemn ark of the covenant. He makes joyful offering to God. He turns away and spreads a table of feasting for his happy servants.

### Blackboard.



**DIRECTIONS FOR COLORS.** Draw the heart in outline with light red or crimson; the word "wisdom" in yellow. Draw the bags of money with white, and represent loose money between them with yellow. The words may be made with purple or blue or green. Colors on the blackboard in lettering are generally selected for the purpose of making certain words more striking than others. At other times it may be best to have them all one color, so that one seeing them will have the whole sentence involuntarily impressed on the mind. In this case the whole thought of the lesson is, "Choose wisdom above riches."

### Primary and Intermediate.

**LESSON THOUGHT.** *A right choice.*

**Introductory.** Print "Solomon" on the board. Ask what children know about King David's sons. Have a little talk about them. Tell that he had one good son—Solomon. This was the one who was to build the Lord's house. Before David died he asked the high-priest to anoint Solomon king. Now David was dead, and Solo-

mon had the kingdom of Israel to rule. Tell that he did not feel proud, but very humble and ignorant. He did not know how to rule a great nation. What ought we to do when God gives us work for him? Ask him how to do it.

**The Great Meeting.** Tell about the great meeting Solomon called after he became king, at Gibeon. It was for the worship of God. At night, in a dream, the Lord spoke to Solomon, telling him to ask any thing he wanted from him. God was pleased to see Solomon not only calling the people to worship him, but humbly joining in prayers and praises and sacrifices. Solomon was a rich and powerful king, but he began by showing his people how to worship God. A good king will lead his people in doing the right thing.



**The Right Choice.** Solomon knew that he could have what he asked of the Lord. Tell story of a little boy who had been ill a long time. He had loving friends who did all they could for him. He had heard about a beautiful excursion, and thought how lovely a time he would have if he could take the trip. One day his kind father offered to give him any thing he asked. He thought a little, and then asked that some children he knew, who had very few good times, might go on this excursion! His father gave him what he asked, and was so pleased with his selfishness that he gave him something very nice for himself also. Solomon chose for his people. He wanted to rule them well, and so he asked God to give him wisdom, so that he would know what was right.

**God the Great Giver.** God is the source of all wisdom. Make a fountain. Print in the falling drops, "Wisdom," "Love," "Goodness," etc. Teach that any child who wants any of these can have them only by coming to God. He has plenty. The great Fountain will never cease to flow. Teach that if we ask his gifts, so that we may help others, God will be pleased. Tell how different is God's wisdom from that of this world, and why it is worth more than all earthly riches.

### Berean Methods.

#### The Teachers' Meeting.

Bring this lesson into immediate contrast with the last. There the old king idealizes the perfect ruler, but confesses his own failure to realize his high ideal. Here the young king sets aside tawdry ambitions and asks for an understanding heart.... Some serious difficulties that beset the earlier weeks of the young king's reign.... Dreams: They are the creation of a wakeful fancy which often capers frantically when observation and reason have been overcome by sleep. God occasionally made miraculous use of them, just as he occasionally did of thunder-storms, oil-jars, and baskets of loaves and fishes. It is the height of superstitious folly to interpret ordinary dreams, but this dream was a vision of God.... What a man's fancy is most engaged in by day he is likely to dream of by night, and the best recipe for horrible dreams is to be found in Phil. 4. 8.... God's favor (ver. 5) and Solomon's choice (ver. 9). Consider how far there were exceptional, and how far this lesson is typical of the moral choice made sooner or later by every human soul.... Wisdom. Precisely what was it that Solomon here asks for? Ver. 9 indicates that it was largely power of discernment, what might be called practical wisdom—discretion, acuteness, and rapidity in de-

cision which the young monarch coveted. A careful reading of the Proverbs, which were collected in the noblest part of Solomon's reign, will make plain that, like his father David, Solomon believed that the best human discretion waits the most closely on God's providential direction; that true wisdom and true piety are one.

**References.** FOSTER'S CYCLOPEDIA. Ver. 5: Poetical, 2543, 2550. Prose, 8148. Ver. 9: Prose, 10130, 10135, 10137. Ver. 11: Prose, 3489, 3493. Ver. 12: Poetical, 2299; Prose, 3499, 3500, 6040, 6049, 6054, 12237, 12239, 12240. Ver. 13: Prose, 3040.

### ANALYTICAL AND BIBLICAL OUTLINE.

#### The Choice of a Life-time.

#### I. AN OFFERED CHOICE.

*God said, Ask.* v. 5.

"Ye shall ask what ye will." John 15. 7.

"What would ye that I should do?" Mark 10. 36.

#### II. A KING'S CHOICE.

*Has made thy servant king.* v. 7.

"Washed us.... made us kings." Rev. 1. 5, 6.

"A chosen generation, a royal priesthood." 1 Pet. 2. 9.

#### III. A YOUTHFUL CHOICE.

*I am but a little child.* v. 7.

"Yet young and tender." 1 Chron. 29. 1.

"Who is sufficient?" 2 Cor. 2. 16.

#### IV. A WISE CHOICE.

*An understanding heart.* v. 9.

"Happy.... that findeth wisdom." Prov. 3. 13.

"Lack wisdom.... ask of God." James 1. 5.

#### V. AN ACCEPTABLE CHOICE.

*The speech pleased the Lord.* v. 10.

"Not as pleasing men, but.... God." 1 Thess. 2. 4.

"Working in you.... well-pleasing." Heb. 13. 22.

#### VI. A REWARDED CHOICE.

*Given thee that.... not asked.* v. 13.

"All these things.... added." Matt. 6. 33.

"Trust in the Lord.... shalt be fed." Psa. 37. 3.

### THOUGHTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

#### Praying for the Best Gifts.

1. *Blessings which God does not rate high are given conditionally.* Riches and health, beauty and long life, are not promised to all comers. "All real good will God bestow," but what we think most desirable may be bad for us. "E'en crosses from his sovereign hand are blessings in disguise." So that prayers for temporal blessings must always include the proviso, "If it be thy will."

2. *Great blessings God grants unconditionally.* Pardon of sin, perfection in holiness, divine wisdom, daily providence—such priceless endowments may be had for the asking.

3. *The greatest promises include all the others.* Solomon found it so. God having given his Son to die for us, "how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

4. *Many men miss the highest good by praying only for the lower blessings.* "Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss."

#### HOME READINGS.

M. Solomon's wise choice. 1 Kings 3. 3-9.

W. Solomon's wise choice. 1 Kings 3. 10-15.

W. True wisdom. Job 28. 20-28.

Th. Hold fast. Prov. 4. 1-13.

F. Spiritual wisdom. 1 Cor. 2. 1-10.

S. Wisdom from God. James 1. 1-7.

S. One thing needful. Luke 10. 38-42.



**GOLDEN TEXT.**

Wisdom is better than rubies. Prov. 8. 11.

TIME.—1014 B. C.

PLACE.—Gibeon.

DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION.—True Wisdom.

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Father of mercies, in thy word  
What endless glory shines!

No. 114, Dominion Hymnal.

Holy Spirit, faithful Guide,  
Ever near the Christian's aid.

Lord, we come before thee now.  
Come, Holy Ghost, in love.  
Grace! 'tis a charming sound.  
Hasten, sinner, to be wise!  
O for a heart.  
Saviour, like a shepherd lead us.  
Father, lead me day by day.  
O my Saviour, hear me.  
Lord, I care not for riches.  
Come, ye that love the Lord.

**QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR STUDENTS.**

**1. Solomon's Request.**

To whose reign have we now come?

Who was Solomon?

How came he to be king instead of David's oldest son?

In what respect did his religious character differ from his father's? ver. 3.

What occurred to him at Gibeon?

What did our last lesson say should be the character of a king? 2 Sam. 23. 3.

What is the character that Solomon as king says he desires?

On what did Solomon base his plea?

For what particular reason did he desire wisdom?

**2. God's Answer.**

Was the nature of Solomon changed by this occurrence?

Was it a real occurrence? ver. 15.

What other instances can you find of God's revelation through dreams? Find five: two in Genesis, one in Judges, two in Matthew.

How much did God promise in the answer?

What should have been the effect in Solomon's life?

Solomon died aged about sixty. What commentary does the fact furnish on ver. 14?

What truth did Solomon experience as the result of his dream? Jas. 1. 5.

What has been the common experience of men who have sought after God? Jer. 29. 12, 13.

What word of the Lord Jesus is like it? John 16. 24.

**Practical Teachings.**

God says, "Ask of me and I will give."

The world says, "Prayer is only idle words."

God says, "Keep my statutes, I will lengthen thy days."

The world says, "Do what you will, you cannot die till your time comes."

Solomon began well: he was humble, devout, sincere. Let us learn the value of right beginnings.

He showed his one weakness at the beginning—the love of display. ver. 4. It was the leak in the dyke.

Let us learn the lesson of self-examination; for "who can understand his errors?"

Let us pray, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults."

**Hints for Home Study.**

1. Study carefully the close of David's life.

2. Study as carefully the beginning of Solomon's reign.

3. Study chapter 4 to see a proof of his wisdom in ruling.

4. Be careful to understand that this wisdom asked and promised was only in one direction, namely, that of government.

5. Find Solomon's age at accession, and such evidences as you are able concerning the number of inhabitants of his kingdom.

**QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE SCHOLARS**

**1. Solomon's Request, vs. 5-9.**

Of whom did Solomon make a request?

Where and how did Solomon see the Lord?

What did the Lord say to him?

In what two respects had the Lord shown mercy to David?

What did Solomon say of himself as king?

What about the people whom he ruled?

What was his request for himself?

What says the Golden Text about Solomon's request?

**2. God's Answer, vs. 10-15.**

What did the Lord think of this request?

Why was the request granted?

What eminence would God's gift confer on him?

What was given which was not sought?

What promise of Jesus is thus illustrated? Matt. 6. 33.

Among whom would Solomon be without a rival?

Upon what conditions was he promised a long life?

Where did Solomon go after he awoke?

Where did he offer worship?

What thank-offering did he make?

What promise of wisdom does God make to us? Jas. 1. 5.

**Teachings of the Lesson.**

Where in this lesson are we shown—

1. An example of true humility?

2. An example of true wisdom?

3. An example of true piety?

**Home Work for Young Bereans.**

Find in the New Testament an account of a man who three times in a dream received a message from God.

**QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.**

Which one of David's sons was a good man? Solomon.

Who had chosen him to be king after David? The Lord.

When was he anointed as king? Before David died. Where did Solomon go at one time, to offer sacrifices? To Gibeon.

Who spoke to him there in a dream? The Lord. What did he say? "Ask what I shall give thee."

What did Solomon ask? A wise heart. Why did he need wisdom? To judge the people.

What did this request show? An unselfish heart. What pleased the Lord? Solomon's unselfishness.

What did he give Solomon? A wise heart. What more did he give him? Riches and honor.

What did he promise if he would obey him? Long life.

Where did Solomon go after this? To Jerusalem. What did he offer to the Lord there? Sacrifices.

What will God give to those who ask him? True wisdom.

**Words with Little People.**

A Selfish Heart. An Unselfish Heart.

(Riches, Wisdom,

Seeks Honor, Seeks Truth,

(Pleasure, Love,

All for Self. All for God.

"To him that hath shall be given."

**THE LESSON CATECHISM.**

[For the entire school.]

1. Under what circumstances did Solomon have his revelation from God? While worshipping God at Gibeon.

2. How did God make his revelation? In a dream by night.

3. What was his command to Solomon? "Ask what I shall give thee."

4. What was his request of God? To have an understanding heart.

5. What was the effect of his request? The speech pleased the Lord.

6. What testimony did Solomon give concerning wisdom in after years? "Wisdom is better than rubies."

## CATECHISM QUESTIONS.

53. In what else is your soul different from your body?  
My soul is that within me which thinks and knows, desires and wills, rejoices and is sorry, which my body cannot do.

54. Is not your soul then of great value?  
Yes; because it is myself.

What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose or forfeit his own self?—Luke ix. 25.

## LESSONS FOR DECEMBER, 1889.

- DEC. 1. The Temple Dedicated. 1 Kings 8. 54-63.  
DEC. 8. Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. 1 Kings 10. 1-13.  
DEC. 15. Solomon's Fall. 1 Kings II. 4-13.  
DEC. 22. Close of Solomon's Reign. 1 Kings II. 26-43.  
DEC. 29. Fourth Quarterly Review.

## What the Sunday-School Is Not.

BY REV. JESSE S. GILBERT, A.M.

THE old-time writers had a way of treating a subject, first, negatively, and then positively. They would first tell what a thing was not, and afterward what it was. It may not be amiss to look at the Sunday-school from this first stand-point, and see what it is not.

1. It is not a substitute for family religion. It cannot take the place of the family altar, parental example, and home instruction. Of course, there are many children whose parents are not Christians, and who receive whatever of religious precept they enjoy through the Sunday-school; but this is no excuse for Christian parents. If Christian fathers and mothers neglect the home instruction of their children because they go to the Sunday-school, they make that institution an injury instead of a blessing. An hour of religious teaching cannot counteract an entire week of worldliness and irreligion.

2. The Sunday-school is not a substitute for the church. It is a part of the church, but only a part. Membership in the Sunday-school cannot take the place of a public profession of faith in Christ by uniting with the church. Attendance upon Sunday-school should never be allowed to take the place of attendance upon church. We want the children to attend the public preaching of the word, and to sit in the pew with father and mother. In this way the good habit of attendance upon public worship is early formed.

3. The Sunday-school is not a place for instruction in secular knowledge. At the first this was tried, but soon gave way to the proper aim of the Sunday-school. The time allowed us in our work is so short that very little could be accomplished in secular teaching any way. There is a certain amount of geography, history, etc., that must be employed in order to properly teach God's word; but even this should not be allowed to press upon the more distinctively spiritual and religious work. There is a way in which the time may be pleasantly occupied in bringing out the history, chronology, and geography of the lesson, and yet not a single religious impression made. Such teaching may be popular for a while, but fails at the most vital point.

4. The Sunday-school is not a place of social entertainment. It is a very pleasant place. There should be kindly greetings, friendly hand-shakings, and cheery words. It must, however, never be forgotten that it is a place for earnest and most important labor. There should never be an interim between the lesson and the closing exercises filled up with idle chit-chat about the fashions, local gossip, coming entertainments, etc. Five minutes of such talk will scatter to the winds every impression made by the teaching of the lesson.

Thus have we seen some things that the Sunday-school is not. What the Sunday-school is or should be hardly needs to be explained to the readers of the JOURNAL.

## Beirut and the Bible.

BEIRUT, in Syria, is called the "crown jewel of modern missions." It was taken from the bed of Moslem degradation, cut and set by the deliberate planning of a handful of American Christians. As late as 1826 Beirut was a straggling, decaying Mohammedan town, without so much as a carriage-way through it, a wheeled vehicle, or a pane of window-glass in it. The missionaries who came to it were persecuted by the authorities and mobbed by the populace. Some were driven to the Lebanon; others fled to Malta. They matured their plans, chimerical to all but the eye of faith. They projected Christian empire for Syria, not the gathering of a few converts. Schools, colleges, printing-houses, churches, Western culture in science, art, and religion, were all included in their plan. They returned to Beirut, bringing a hand-press and a font of Arabic type. Night after night a light gleamed from a little tower above the mission building—a prophetic light seen out on the Mediterranean—where Eli Smith, and after he was gone the still living Dr. Van Dyck, labored in translating the Bible into Arabic. When, in 1865, Dr. Van Dyck flung down the stairway the last sheet of "copy" to the compositor, it marked an era of importance to Syria and Asia Minor, to Egypt and Turkey, and all the Arabic speaking peoples, greater than any accession or deposition of Sultans and Khedives. There is nothing more eloquent than the face of the venerable translator, in which can be read the making of the grandest history of the Orient. The dream of the exiles has been accomplished. Beirut is to-day a Christian city, with more influence upon the adjacent lands than had the Berytus of old on whose ruins it has risen. Stately churches, hospitals, a female seminary, a college whose graduates are scattered over Syria, Egypt, and wherever the Arab roams; a theological seminary, a common-school system, and three steam-presses, throwing off nearly a half million pages of reading matter a day; a Bible house, whose products are found in India, China, Ethiopia, and at the sources of the Nile; these are the facets of that "crown jewel" which the missionaries have cut with their sanctified enterprise.—Rev. Dr. Ludlow, in *The Homiletic Review*.

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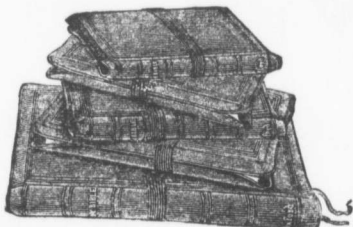
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Edited by the REV. JAS. JOHNSTON, F.S.S.,

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