

The Sunday-School.

THIRD QUARTER,
LESSON XI.—Sept. 13.

DAVID BECOMES KING.

2 SAMUEL 2: 1-10.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity.—Psa. 133: 1.

HISTORICAL SETTING.—Time.—David became king of Judah B.C. 1055 (Ussher) or 1017 (Assyrian Inscriptions). He became king of Israel B.C. 1048 (Ussher) or 1010 (Ass. Ins). See Hastings' Bible Dict. "Chronology."

Place.—Hebron was his first capital, and Jerusalem, when he became king of all Israel.

David was 30 years old when he became king.

Contemporary Ruler.—Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, was nominal king of the northern tribes, with his capital at Mahanaim, east of the Jordan. Civil war existed all this time in a mild form, with only one great battle.

THE LESSON includes the two coronations of David, first as king of Judah (2 Sam. 2: 1-11); and second as king of Israel (2 Sam. 5: 1-10).

Compare 1 Chron. 11: 1-9; 12: 23-40.

LEARN BY HEART.—Matt. 25: 21, 29; Rev. 3: 21.

THE LONG YEARS OF PREPARATION. A REVIEW.—David is now entering upon the great work for which God had been preparing him during thirty years.

1. He had a good inheritance of an honest, intelligent, and pious parentage. The atmosphere of a home of piety and intelligence is one of the greatest and most blessed factors in a child's training.

2. Just what his education was we cannot tell, but he certainly had an education, especially in religion and in the Scriptures then known, which would include the history of his nation.

3. David was trained to work. His daily duties with the sheep gave him an opportunity for training in business, skill, attention, courage, government. Through them he became physically active and strong. There was full opportunity also to develop his musical talent.

4. When David was 18 or 20 year old he was anointed by the prophet Samuel to be the future king of Israel. It is a good thing for a young man to know somewhat early what he is fitted for, and to choose his life work, and be filled with a noble ambition to fulfil his mission.

5. David's life at court gave him a new experience. A knowledge of that life was necessary to his future work. He learned the art of war. He was trained in courage. He had experience in acting wisely under great difficulties, and rightly amid great temptations. He became acquainted with the leading men of the nation.

6. David's exile life taught him lessons of another side of life, which every wise ruler needs to know. See under Lesson IX.

7. David's religious life, expressed in many of his Psalms, was an essential factor of his preparation. None but a deeply religious man could have accomplished David's task. He was far from faultless. He was wounded in

some battles with temptation. He was affected in his outward conduct by some of the moral ideas of his time.

DAVID KING OVER JUDAH.—Vs. 1-10. Capital at Hebron. Reigned seven years and six months.

The Opportunity.—David was now 30 years old (2 Sam. 5: 4). The death of Saul and Jonathan and two other sons of Saul in the battle of Gilboa opened the way for David to the throne. At this time David's home was at Ziklag. He and his band had gone north with the invading Philistine army against Saul. But the Philistine leaders distrusted him, and sent him back to Ziklag. He found this town ravaged by Amalekite marauders. David immediately pursued them and gained possession of the spoil they were carrying away. It was at this juncture that news came of the death of Saul and Jonathan.

David Goes to Hebron.—After this. The death of Saul and the events connected with it. Enquired of the Lord. Probably "through the high priest Abiathah. David desired divine direction. The kingdom was from God, and God would guide him into the best way of reaching it. Whither shall I go up? The northern part of the kingdom was held by the Philistine invaders. The portions open to David were the regions beyond Jordan, and the hill country of Judea of which Hebron was the center. And he said, Unto Hebron. This was plainly wise. Hebron was centrally located about an equal distance from Jerusalem on the north and Beersheba on the south. And his two wives. Because he was intending to settle down. Nabal's wife. His widow. (See 1 Sam. 25). And his men. The six hundred of his chosen band. Every man with his household. Henceforth there was to be no roaming in exile.

The Coronation.—And the men of Judah. . . . anointed David king. David had been anointed by Samuel. But this was his public, formal inauguration by the people. The kingdom came to him, not only by divine appointment, but by choice of the people themselves.

Wise Measures.—First. He had already sent presents to the chiefs of the various districts of Judea (1 Sam. 30: 26-31).

Second.—He sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead . . . that buried Saul. The Philistines, in glorying over the death of Saul, had put his armour in an idol temple and hung his body and those of his three sons upon the wall of the city of Beth-shan. But the men of Jabesh-gilead, whom Saul had once helped (1 Sam. 11: 1-11), valiantly entered the lines of the victorious enemy, took down the bodies and burned them, so that they could suffer no further indignity. I also will requite (manifest to) you this kindness. David assures these men that they need have no fear of harm from him. The house of Judah have anointed me king over them. This gave them an opportunity to join David if they wished.

An Attempt to Restore the Kingdom to Saul's House.—Abner the son of Ner, a cousin of Saul, not friendly to David. Captain of Saul's host, who would naturally seek to retain the kingdom to the house of Saul. His power would be almost supreme if Ish-bosheth, called Eshbaal (1 Chron. 8: 33), the eldest surviving son of Saul, became king, for he was a weak man. Brought him over

to Mahanaim, a walled city of Gilead, east of the Jordan. And made him king, gradually extending his nominal sway over the Ashurites . . . and all Israel. Ish-bosheth's dominions included all the country which afterwards formed the kingdom of Israel as distinguished from that of Judah. Ish-bosheth . . . reigned two years. The duration of Ish-bosheth's reign is probably reckoned from the time when Abner succeeded in establishing his authority over all Israel.

The Civil War.—During most of the seven and a half years of David's reign over Judah at Hebron there was a mild civil war between the kingdoms, which increased as Abner regained control over northern Israel. This was wholly defensive on David's part. He did not try to conquer his northern brethren, but waited till they were ready to come to him. But at length they assembled a great army at Gibeon and he was compelled to meet them, and gained the victory.

Practical Lessons.—1. Note the commingling of the human and the divine in a man's life.

2. David was chosen, not so much for the excellences of character he already possessed as for the possibilities of excellence to be developed by the grace of God, through his obedience.

3. Life is full of tests of character. They come at every step to prove whether one is worthy to take the next higher.

4. Faithfulness in lesser things is the only way to greater things.

5. It takes a great variety of experiences to make us complete and fitted to do the greatest good.

DAVID KING OVER ALL ISRAEL.—While David's power was increasing "the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker" (2 Sam. 3: 1). A once united people was broken up into a number of little fragments. Both Abner and Ish-bosheth were murdered. All the northern tribes sought David. Their leaders came to him (2 Sam. 5: 3) representing, according to 1 Chron. 12: 23-40, 339,600 warriors.

The Coronation.—The book of Chronicles contains further interesting details about this assembly at Hebron (1 Chron. 12: 23-40). The joy was universal, for the fame of David was on all lips.

The New Capital.—Hebron was the natural capital of Judah, but not in a fitting situation to be the capital of all Israel. David therefore conquered the city of Jerusalem and made it the capital. Political, civil, and military considerations pointed to this city as the most suitable capital for the united kingdom. A circle of thirty miles radius with Jerusalem for a center embraced almost every enemy and almost every achievement in Hebrew history. As a military post it was a natural fortress of almost impregnable strength. This choice of a capital was made by David under divine direction (Deut. 12: 5-21; 1 Kings 11: 36). Jerusalem thus became both the religious and the civil capital of Israel, inaugurating a new epoch in the nation's history.

The New Era.—David found the kingdom divided, distracted, subdued by enemies, and in a very low religious condition.

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