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### The Sabbath-School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Third Quarter-Lesson III.—July 28.

ISRAEL ASKING FOR A KING.—  
1 Sam. 8: 4-20.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel: and they said, Nay, but we will have a king over us.*—1 Sam. 8: 19.

A season of peace and prosperity followed upon the victory at Ebenezer. The Philistine yoke was no longer felt, and there was freedom from invasion of other enemies. Samuel, as he grew old and feeble, appointed his sons as judges in the southern and more distant part of the country, at Beersheba; but they were unworthy of their father, and sought their own gain rather than the good of the people. This led to the petition for a king, which we study to-day.

ISRAEL ASKING FOR A KING.—  
Vers. 4, 5. *Then all the elders of Israel: the heads of families and those who by age, wisdom, and natural ability were the leaders of the people and chosen by the people. Gathered themselves together, came to Samuel unto Ramah: to ask him to form them into a kingdom. Behold thou art old: sixty or seventy years old. They wanted some one of activity, and endurance, and military skill, in whose leadership they could trust. Samuel being old, could not long remain with them, and his sons, his natural successors, were not fit to take his place. And thy sons walk not in thy ways. They were judges in Beersheba, 45 or 50 miles from Samuel. They took bribes and perverted justice for reward. Now make us a king to judge us. An hereditary monarchy seemed the only means of combining the tribes into one nation, putting an end to their mutual jealousies, and subordinating tribal to national interests. All nations around had their kings; and whether for war or in peace, the want of a strong hand wielding a central power for the common good must have been increasingly felt. There was also a cloud gathering beyond Jordan, which threatened to sweep the Hebrews from the land their fathers conquered. All saw it coming. That cloud was a horde of Eastern plunderers, led by Nahash, king of Ammon. The Hebrew commonwealth was breaking up into fragments. They would be like all the nations. The Eastern mind is so essentially and prevalently regal, that to be without a sovereign is scarcely an intelligible state of things to an Oriental. The want of a royal head must often have been cast in their teeth by their neighbors as a kind of stigma.*

THE PROPHET DISPLEASED WITH THE REQUEST.—Ver. 6. *But the thing displeased Samuel. Not because it was an absolutely wrong request in itself, but the request seemed to be a condemnation of himself and his administration. He had devoted himself to the good of his country; he had taught them; he had provided schools of the prophets for their education; he had led them back to God from idolatry; he had won victory for them over their enemies; he had brought them to large prosperity; he had given his whole life for them, and now in his old age the people want a king to take his place. Ingratitude, distrust of their leader, and dissatisfaction, seemed to lurk in the request. It disappointed Samuel's hopes for his country; his splendid ideal of a holy people, self-ruled, and subject only to the eternal King of Heaven.*

SAMUEL GOES TO GOD FOR WISDOM.—Ver. 6. *And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. Because his chief desire was to learn God's will and to do it. It might possibly be the time for the monarchy. He wanted to know.*

THE ANSWER TO HIS PRAYER.—  
Vers. 7-9. *And the Lord said unto Samuel. In what way we are not told, but in such a way as made it clear to his mind that it was God's message to him. Hearken unto the voice of the people. The prayer was answered. For they have not rejected thee: thee only or chiefly. But... me, that I should not rule over them. The course of the people was a practical rejection of God as king.*

How Israel rejected God. The request, in the sense made to Samuel was a virtual denial of the sovereignty of Jehovah. They did not ask God what he wished them to do, but demanded a king, as if they were wise enough to decide this matter themselves. They were unwilling to be such a kingdom as God had planned as the best for them. It was a distrust of God's ability or willingness to give them the victory over Ammon and other enemies.

Their motives were contrary to the divine motives. Pride, vanity, fashion, seems to have a strong influence. They wished to be like the surrounding nations. People now reject God by determining to follow their own wills instead of God's; by refusing to perform a known duty; by rejecting God's word; by not believing on Jesus Christ; by neglecting the influences of the Spirit; by all deliberate sins against God; by neglecting the worship of God, by keeping him out of their hearts and thoughts.

According to all the works. Their conduct was characteristic. What they had done to Samuel was only another illustration of a settled national trait,—their idolatrous tendency. *So do they also unto thee.* It is in the spirit of our Lord's saying to the apostles, "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his Lord." *Yet protest solemnly unto them.* Give them one more opportunity of showing a better spirit and making a better choice.

THE PROTEST; THE MANNER OF THE KINGDOM.—Vers. 10-20. *And Samuel told all.* The greatness of Samuel's character is shown in nothing more strikingly than that, after finding the change sanctioned by God, he not only waived further opposition, but led the new movement to a successful issue. *This will be the manner of the king.* The following is a very just and graphic picture of the despotic governments which anciently and still are found in the East, and into conformity with which the Hebrew monarchy gradually slid. A modern missionary describes the palace of an Eastern monarch in the present day in the following terms: "There is an immense multitude, amounting, it is said, to about 2000 persons, employed in and around the palace. In fact, we saw many professions and trades going on in it—soldiers, horse-breakers, carpenters, blacksmiths, scribes, cooks, attendants both male and female, many of them pressed into the service unwillingly, yet by a mandate they durst not disobey. There was in the air of this mingled assemblage something which forcibly brought to my recollection the description of a royal household in the East, as given by Samuel." *Set them to ear his ground.* To ear is an old English word, now obsolete, for to plough. *Ye shall cry out in that day, etc.* This was exactly fulfilled in the revolt of the ten tribes from Rehoboam, which was caused by the grievous burdens to which they had been subject. The evils which would follow the establishment of a monarchy may be summed up under three heads: luxury of the court and pomp of war, destroying the peaceful simplicity of the people; diminished liberty; high taxes draining the wealth of the land. *Nay; but we will have a king.* They preferred to run the risk of future evils for the sake of the advantages they hoped would come to them immediately from a king.

Men are continually following the example of these Israelites. God foretells the terrible results of sin, and yet men choose present pleasure. Drinking men drain the intoxicating cup in the very presence of the picture of a drunkard's home and a drunkard's grave. Men tell lies for the hope of present good, though they hear God's warning voice, saying, "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."

### PRACTICAL HINTS.

The very best of men sometimes have bad children.

We often earnestly desire things which are not best for us.

There may be sin and danger, as well as folly in the desire to be like other people.

In times of trouble and of doubt, God himself is our best resource.

We should be very careful of the feeling of the old, and not push them out of their places.

In rejecting God's messengers, we may be rejecting God himself.

Every teacher and preacher ought to be so identified with God's cause, that to reject them is to reject God.

Those reject God who refuse to obey his commandments.

God sometimes yields to our requests because he sees that we are not fitted for the higher blessings he wishes to bestow upon us.

And yet God shows us clearly the evils and dangers of our course.

God will bring good out of our evil, and do the best possible for those who will not accept the very best.

### STYLES IN COFFINS.

The Earth-to-Earth Casket of Rattan the Latest Novelty.

Gable-Roofed Coffins, Carved Wood Coffins and Coffins That Are Made in Imitation of Marble—Evening Funerals—Undertakers' Bills.

"The latest and newest thing in coffins," said Rev. Stephen Merritt, to a New York Sun reporter, "is the earth-to-earth casket. It is an oblong casket made of rattan stripped of its outer gloss. It is called 'earth-to-earth' because through its open-work meshes the air has free access to the remains, dissolution follows quickly, and the body soon assimilates with the earth. The cost is about the same as that of an ordinary coffin, from \$75 up, according to the trimmings. The present construction is an American idea, but similar caskets have been used in England. They are strong enough for the purpose, yet they will sooner disappear in the ground than any that have ever been used."

Within a few years the business of the undertaker has undergone a complete revolution. In 1854 a mahogany coffin was sold for \$12. Now a mahogany coffin is rarely used, and, if used, would cost a great deal more. Then a funeral cost \$75 to \$100 that would now cost three or four times as much. The fashions have changed. For a timber-wood and black walnut were generally used; now the greater part are cloth-covered caskets of various shapes. The old-fashioned coffin shape has entirely disappeared. For young people caskets are used covered with various delicate shades of plush. The interior trimmings of the caskets, the shrouds and flowers all contribute to take away the old-time ghastly appearance of a corpse.

In old times undertakers made their own coffins. Now the business has got into the hands of enormous concerns that keep only offices in the large cities and maintain great factories in the country near lumber districts, where labor and materials may be had to advantage. Some of these big firms publish large books with cuts of the different styles of coffins. Each firm will have hundreds of styles and often carry a stock of \$50,000 worth of coffins.

The old-fashioned ice box is going out of date. Embalming is rapidly taking its place. Shortly after death about three pints of a colorless liquid is injected into the arteries, and then the body may be kept for an indefinite period. The natural color and expression are preserved, and, in cases of emaciation, appearance is even improved. The cost is but a trifle beyond the cost of ice.

Metallic coffins are now made at much cheaper rates than ever before. They are much used in cases of contagious diseases or in sarcophagi, or where transportation for long distances is necessary.

The most durable wood is cedar. The cloth-covered coffins are made of pine or cherry. A late style of cloth coffin has carved work over which the cloth is closely pressed. For young people light-colored cloth caskets are frequently used. Metal caskets are largely used in Cuba and the South. There is a peculiar white casket made to imitate marble. It is ornamented with raised plaster figures, scrolls or flowers imitating the carving of marble. There is a peculiar oak casket made with a cover in the form of a cross. Some of the crosses are mounted on three steps—one step for each member of the Trinity.

There is a late tendency to expend most money upon the coffin and things that show in the house or at the church, and there is less disposition to have a long line of carriages. Evening funerals are largely in vogue for the reason that men are less likely to be kept away at that time by business. At day funerals it is customary for the intimate friends only to go to the cemetery. A late fashion is to line the coffin of an elderly person with black satin.

Practically, cremation has not decreased the cost of funerals much. In many cases expensive caskets have been used, as they would have been if the bodies had been buried in the ordinary way. There seems to be an ineradicable idea that any sort of economy about a funeral shows a want of respect for the dead. A good deal of the disputation and dissatisfaction over undertakers' bills comes from this source. People overwhelmed with grief do not care to haggle about prices. They say to the undertaker, "Do everything in the best style and send the bill to me." They do not think that there are many details of a funeral that can best be attended to by some members of the family, and that when the undertaker looks after them it takes a great deal of time, trouble and expense, for which he is justified in charging.

The cost of a funeral varies from nine dollars, the lowest charge for burying an infant, to \$14,163.75, which was Stephen Merritt's bill for the burying of General Grant. There is every reason why, when there is a death in a family, some clear-headed member of that family should go to the undertaker and make all the requisite arrangements, and ascertain precisely what the funeral is going to cost. People who intend to pay are more apt to do this. People who do not intend to pay are likely to order every thing in lavish style. In some instances the undertaker can collect from a man's estate, but in many he does not collect at all.

Sometimes people promise to pay on the day of the funeral, and then, when all the arrangements are made, they refuse to pay. Not long ago an east side undertaker stopped the funeral, took the body out, and walked off with the casket under his arm. But it brought such a storm about his ears that it ruined his business. Much more successful was the action of another undertaker who had been earnestly promised that his bill would be paid before the funeral left the house in the morning. When all was ready to start the undertaker asked for his pay according to agreement. The person who refused it said, tauntingly: "You can't help yourself, if you stop this funeral it will ruin your business."

"Good morning," said the undertaker, meekly, as he walked off. And he didn't go to his place of business until nine o'clock p. m. Then he found the relatives of the deceased meekly awaiting his arrival and anxious to pay their bill. They had gone to the cemetery, but they had to postpone the funeral because he had the burial permit in his pocket!

There are about five thousand varieties of handles made for burial caskets. The latest are covered with plush or cloth the color of the casket. Different fashions prevail in different localities. In Philadelphia they have an odd custom of using a coffin with a sort of a gable roof.

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