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INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Fourth Quarter-Lesson VIII.—Nov. 24.

SOLOMON'S WISE CHOICE.

—1 Kings 3:5-15.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Wisdom is better than rubies.*—Prov. 8:11

INTRODUCTION.

Solomon reigned perhaps six months in conjunction with his father, and then David "slept with his fathers," and Solomon became sole king. He first took various measures to carry out the last instructions of his father, and to establish himself firmly on the throne, and then, very early in his reign followed the lesson for to-day.

THE GREAT FESTIVAL. As soon as the kingdom was established in peace and free from danger, Solomon summoned the captains of thousands and of hundreds, the judges, governors, and the chief of the fathers, to inaugurate his reign with a great religious festival. They met at Gibeon, the great high place near Jerusalem, because here stood the ancient tabernacle constructed by Moses, and the brazen altar made by Bezaleel, nearly 500 years before, under the shadow of Sinai. Solomon here offered 1000 burnt offerings. A large part of the flesh of the sacrifices was used for feasting the multitude of guests during the several days of the festival. The object was to unify the people under Solomon, to show the nation that he stood by the religion and the God of his fathers, to extend the influence of religion over the nation, to learn the sentiments of the people, and to bring all into harmony with himself and his plans.

THE VISION IN THE NIGHT.—Ver. 5. *The Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream.* It was probably at the close of this season of worship. *And God said, Ask what I shall give thee.* This was the answer to the sacrifices and Solomon's seeking the Lord.

GOD'S OFFER WEIGHED IN THE BALANCE OF REASON.—Vers. 6-8. Solomon, before deciding what to choose, carefully considered his circumstances and needs. *Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy.* Solomon realized that all that God had done for David had been in mercy. *According as he walked before thee in truth.* In sincere devotion to God. Such was the general course of David's life. This conduct did not present a claim, but rendered it possible for God to bestow favors upon him. *And thou hast kept (or reserved) for him this great kindness.* That which thou didst not reserve for Saul, whose posterity thou didst cut off. *That thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne.* It is a great favor to have God's blessings to us continued to our children. *Thou hast made thy servant king.* He was chosen by God to be king. It is a source of great strength and great blessing to be in the position and doing the work to which we are conscious that God has appointed us. *And I am but a little child.* So he felt in comparison with his father, and in view of the vast responsibilities laid upon him. He was but 18 or 20 years old, and inexperienced in government. Absalom, who was a fool, wished himself a judge; Solomon, who was a wise man trembles at the undertaking. *I know not how to go out or come in. Thy servant is in the midst of thy people:* i. e., is set over them as a king. They were a turbulent people, often going astray. Probably there was a strong party opposed to him, and brothers of full age ready to lead it. *Which thou hast chosen.* It was not only a great nation, but the nation chosen to represent God before the world, and carry out his kingdom, and teach the world his truths. *A great people that cannot be numbered.* There seems to be a reference in these words to the promise made by God to Abraham, more especially to Gen. 13:16.

THE WISE CHOICE.—Ver. 9. *Give therefore. . . . an understanding heart.* At this period one of the chief functions of the Eastern king was to decide all difficult cases; and hence the wisdom for which Solomon prayed was that which he justice among his people. But intellect alone did not embrace all that a Hebrew meant by such a character; it was essential that it should rest on profoundly religious convictions. Solomon's own descriptions of wisdom imply that it rests upon a moral basis. No man can be a wise judge or a wise king who is not first a good man. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." *To judge thy people.* Administer the government. *Thou may discern between good and bad:*

i. e., right and wrong, justice and injustice. *For who is able to judge this thy so great a people?* The larger the number of people, the more wisdom and ability it requires to govern them. Many officers can command a hundred men; few can wisely manage an army of a million.

The Wisdom of this Choice. Solomon asked nothing merely for himself, but everything for the best doing of the work put into his hands. He sought real worth, not outward show. The higher good brought with it all the lesser blessings, and doubled their value.

GOD IS PLEASED WITH THE CHOICE, AND THE REQUEST IS GRANTED.—Vers. 10-12. *And the speech pleased the Lord.* The choice was made in a dream or vision, but it was none the less real. *Because thou hast. . . not asked for thyself.* He had not selfishly asked things which would merely give glory and pleasure to himself. *Lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart.* Wise in earthly and in heavenly things; wise in judging men, wise in ordering and governing his kingdom, wise in teaching others moral precepts and the way to happiness and success, wise in all manner of learning. *So that there was none like thee before thee,* etc. He was to be the wisest of all mere men. He doubtless studied and toiled like other men for his acquirements; but he was divinely and supernaturally assisted, in a manner and to an extent which no other man ever enjoyed.

WORLDLY BLESSINGS ADDED TO THE SPIRITUAL.—Vers. 13-15. *I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked.* Here we see a striking illustration of that law of divine government, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." *Both riches and honor.* Incalculable wealth flowed into the country, and the magnificence of the Hebrew monarch exceeded that of any of the most opulent and luxurious courts of the ancient world. The vast and almost fabulous resources which Solomon possessed were well and wisely applied; the largest share was appropriated to the building of a fitting temple for the abode of the God of Israel. *And if thou wilt walk in my ways. . . . I will then thy days.* The promise here is only conditional. As the condition was not observed, the right to the promise was forfeited, and it was not fulfilled. Solomon can scarcely have been more than 59 or 60 at his death. *And Solomon awoke; and behold it was a dream:* i. e., a revelation by dream, or a divine appearance in a dream. *And he came to Jerusalem:* his home, and the other sanctuary where the ark was placed. Here he continued the sacrificial feast.

PRACTICAL HINTS.

To every one comes the offer, Ask what I shall give thee.

What we ask, tests our characters and determines our destiny.

What we ask decides what it is possible for God to bestow upon us.

We should answer this question in our early youth.

The best time for deciding is under the best religious influences.

We should seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness, and all other things will be added unto us.

Wisdom to serve God, to fulfil the work he has given us to do, to become a blessing to others, should be our sincere choice.

But the gift does not, cannot, come to us without study and work, but by God's blessing and help upon the ordinary means.

God loves to give the best, the most, abundantly and richly, and so much of worldly good as will not interfere with the highest blessings.

Where is the West?

Where is the West, anyway? Here are the Chicago papers commenting on the Western ideas of justice that obtain in Omaha, while doubtless Omaha locates the West in Montana or Colorado. And when you get to these localities you find somehow or other that the West has eluded you altogether, while the Pacific slope looms before you as the ultima thule.

How Opium is Secured.

Opium is gotten by cutting the capsule of the poppy flower with a notched iron instrument at sunrise, and by the next morning a drop or so of juice has oozed out. This is scraped off and saved by the grower, and after he has a vessel full of it is strained and dried. It takes a great many poppies to make a pound of opium, and it goes through a number of processes before it is ready for the market. In a liquid state it looks like a dark strawberry jam.

A New Article of Food.

At a recent meeting of the Paris Academy of Medicine Dr. Dujardine-Beaumez exhibited a new alimentary substance, which he named Fomentine. It is obtained from wheat by the aid of special millstones, and is the embryo of the wheat reduced to flour. It contains three times more nutritious substance than meat and a large proportion of sugar. It is thought it may advantageously replace powdered meat as a concentrated food. It may be employed for making soups, even for making biscuits.

WORN AND TORN BILLS.

Single Ways in Which Paper Money Has Been Lost and Destroyed.

When a small portion of a United States note is returned to the Treasury with sufficient proof that the remainder of it has gone out of existence, the Treasury will give the full value of the original note, says the Washington Post. Naturally the greatest destruction of money is wrought by fire, and bits of bills with charred edges are constantly coming in for redemption.

But several instances have occurred where men, in their desperation at their loss, have simply boxed up a lot of ashes, in which there was not the slightest trace of the original material, and demanded hundreds and thousands of dollars for them. Such requests are, of course, refused, and the senders are informed that their only recourse is to ask Congress by special act to indemnify them.

Next to fire the young baby is put down in the department as the most destructive agent. Innumerable affidavits are received in which John Jones, or whatever his name may be, "being duly sworn, deposes and says," that his infant son did chew up and swallow the missing portions of certain five dollar bills, and that the said missing portions were thereby wholly destroyed and are now no longer in existence.

The fashion of keeping small pet dogs has also been the cause of many solemn affidavits being sent to the department. Your pug and your poodle seem to take especial delight in masticating the fruit and reward of the many days of severe toil of the head of the house.

The fancy of mice for ten dollar bills as lining for luxurious nests has been impressed upon the redemption bureau by a long series of examples. Only a few days ago several hundred dollars worth of nest lining was redeemed for a Southern man who had for many years given up all idea of finding his missing treasure. There was \$700 of it in the first place, notes of almost the first issue made by the Government early in war times. It had been hidden away in a place supposed to be secure, and had disappeared. A quarter of a century later, in repairing the porch of the old house, the nest of the wealthy mouse had been discovered, and enough of the fragments recovered to secure more than half of the original deposit.

Also from the South come most of the moldy, worm-eaten bills which have been hidden in bottles or buried in the earth for years. There are not as many savings banks in the South as in thrifty New England, and hiding places are used.

But the habit of using the parlor or kitchen stove as a safety deposit vault is not confined to any one section of the country. Neither is the custom of burning up this treasure by some other member of the family who is all unaware of its value. Years ago the clerks in the redemption bureau ceased to declaim upon the stupidity of such people. It has become a matter of course with them, and they expect about so many letters every week from people who have warned two dollar pair of hands with \$1,000 worth of silver certificates.

Evidence of a family row crops out in a queer way in the bureau occasionally. Mr. Blank sends on the half of a ten dollar note with a torn edge and an affidavit that the remainder of the note has been destroyed. Presently comes the other half with a correspondingly ragged edge and an affidavit from Mrs. Blank that the first half has been destroyed. Then the redemption bureau people know that there has been an exciting time over money in the Blank family, and there is before them a vivid picture of Blank clinging to one end of the note and his wife to the other end until it parts in the middle.

Counterfeit money comes from every part of the country, mutilated probably by design, with requests for its redemption. It is always indelibly stamped "counterfeit" and returned to the sender. The redemption bureau is not a good place for "shoving the queer" even in a fragmentary condition.

There is in the Treasury vault a brown, wooden box eighteen inches long, a foot wide and eight inches deep, which contains paper money of the nominal value of several hundred thousand dollars. It is not worth a dollar. The queer thing about it is the manner in which it was collected. Every bit of it came from the dead-letter office of the Post-Office Department. Some portion of it is counterfeit, but most of it was genuine money many years ago. The banks which issued it and the officers who signed it are gone and forgotten. It was all sent to the Treasury Department some years ago, and Assistant-Treasurer Whepley undertook to trace up the various banks and get as much as possible of it redeemed. Occasionally he found descendants of some of these old bank officials, themselves bankers, who were willing to redeem some of the notes for the sake of the signatures of their fathers, and in this way he succeeded in getting several hundred dollars worth of it redeemed. But of that remaining not a bill can be redeemed. A little of it is Confederate money, but most of it is of banks, State and private, that went out of existence many years ago. The oldest notes are dated back as far as 1812. One package contained \$54,000 and another \$8,000. The mystery is how so much money could have been lost in the mail. Neither the men who sent it could be found by the Post-Office Department, nor could Mr. Whepley find any trace of them or their descendants. The \$8,000 package was sent from Brandon, Miss., to Jackson, Miss., in 1840, and the letter accompanying it shows that it was sent in consequence of repeated demands. The most diligent search fails to discover the slightest trace of any such banking company as that in Brandon, Miss., which issued the notes, most of which are of the \$1,000 denomination. The notes are handsomely executed, as are a majority of those in the box.

Ridding a House of Rats.

An interesting, not to say valuable, discovery has been made by Captain Weedon, in charge of the Smithsonian Institute at Washington. The building is infested by rats, and how to get rid of them has long been a perplexing question. Traps were used, but nothing would tempt the rodents to enter. In a store-room drawer was placed a quantity of sunflower seeds, used as food for some of the birds. Into this drawer the rats gnawed their way, a fact which led the Captain to experiment with them as bait in the trap. The result was that the rats can't be kept out. A trap which appears crowded with six or eight rats is found some mornings to hold fifteen. They are turned into the cages containing weasels and minks. The latter will kill a rat absolutely almost before one can see it, so rapid are its movements. The weasels are a trifle slower, but none of the rats escape them.

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