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STUDIES IN JEWISH HISTORY.

Fourth Quarter.

Lesson XII. Dec. 22. 1 Kings 11: 26-43.

CLOSE OF SOLOMON'S REIGN.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man."—Eccl. 12: 13.

EXPLANATORY.

I. SOLOMON'S SIN: A REVIEW. In our last lesson we watched the progress of Solomon's fall before the many temptations to which he was exposed, upon the dizzy heights of his worldly prosperity. His heart was turned away from God; he disobeyed God's direct command, and married many heathen princesses; he yielded to their influence and built altars to idols, within sight of the temple itself, thus being guilty of disloyalty, almost treason, to the real King of Israel; he grew extravagant and proud, and to support his extravagance, he oppressed the people with heavy burdens. Solomon's sins were such as would hardly be noted in any heathen emperor of that day. They are so black by contrast with his privileges and opportunities and wisdom. So a great blotch of mud is scarcely noticed on a very muddy garment, while the smallest spot shows as great defilement on a pure white one.

II. CONSEQUENCES TO HIMSELF. (1) *Solomon lost God's especial favor.* God was indignant at his disloyalty and disobedience. He could no longer bless with His favor any one who was openly disobedient to His laws. God did not change, but Solomon changed from the sunshine of God's favor to the shadows and darkness of His anger. (2) Solomon must have had troubles at home. The fact that, so far as is known, "Solomon had but one son, and he was a fool," marks also a disappointment in his family life. (3) *Enemies without.* In the verses previous to our lesson (11: 14-25), two enemies of Solomon are described, Hadad, the king of Edom, and Rezon, king of Damascus and that part of Syria. (4) *The loss of the larger part of his kingdom from his family.* "Civil discord was the only ingredient wanted to fill the cup of Solomon's misery to the brim. (5) The going down to posterity with this stain upon his character; a warning when he might have been an example.

III. CONSEQUENCES TO THE KINGDOM. The ground disgraced by the heathen altars was afterwards called "the Mount of the Destroyer (corruption)." (1) All the evil consequences which fell on Solomon fell also on his kingdom. (2) His moral delinquencies affected unfavorably the morals of the kingdom. (3) His kingdom was rent in twain.

26. *And Jeroboam* (whose people are many) *the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite.* Ephraimite. Ephraim was the ancient rival of Judah, and by reason of its numbers, position, etc., might well aspire to the headship of the tribes (Gen. 48: 17-19; 49: 26; Deut. 33: 17). *Of Zereda,* a town of Ephraim, location unknown. *Solomon's servant:* rather, officer. *Lifted up his hand:* rebelled, came in opposition to.

27. *Solomon built Millo, and repaired* (rather closed up) *the breaches* (or ravine, a part unbuilt) *of the city.*

28. *Jeroboam was a mighty man of valor.* A man of unusual power, and ability, both in war and in peace. *Made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph.* Solomon, *i. e.,* made Jeroboam superintendent of all the forced labor exacted from his tribe—the tribe of Ephraim, the son of Joseph—during the time that he was building Millo and fortifying the city of Jerusalem (see 1 Kings 9: 15).

29. *When Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem:* perhaps toward his own home in Ephraim. *The prophet Ahijah:* perhaps the one who made known to Solomon God's message on account of his sins. *The Shilonite:* belonging to Shiloh. They no doubt knew each other well. *And he* (the prophet) *had clad himself with a new garment:* probably similar to the Arabian burnos.

30. *And Ahijah caught the new garment.* A new garment is one that is whole and complete, *integer,* without a rent or hole; the kingdom was hitherto without split or division. *And he rent it in twelve pieces:* each piece representing a tribe.

31. *Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel.* Thus showing plainly to Jeroboam the source from which the gift came, and presenting strong motives for his adhering to the service of God. *I will rend the kingdom:* as the prophet had rent his mantle. *And will give ten tribes to thee:* all except Judah and Benjamin.

32. *But he shall have one tribe.* Neither Benjamin or Judah alone was meant here, or in ver. 13, by "one tribe," but both together (cf. chap. 12: 20, 21, 23; 2 Chron. 11: 3).

IV. MERCY WITH JUDGMENT. (1) 34. *I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand.* (2) *But I will make him prince all the days of his life.* The rending of the kingdom should not take place till after Solomon had died, but in the reign of his son whom he had not trained as a wise man should, and whose folly was in part due to Solomon's polygamy. *For David my servant's sake.* God had made a solemn covenant with David, and a promise which could not be broken (2 Sam. 7: 10-16).

36. *That David my servant may have a light alway before me.* The idea is not that of a home, but family issue. *In Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there* (2 Sam. 7: 10, 13). David's family never was extinct, for it lives forever in "his greater Son" Jesus, the eternal King. And Jerusalem still exists, and will be completed and rendered eternal in the New Jerusalem, the city of our God.

37. *Thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth.* It was the putting before him of all the possibilities and hopes the most eager soul could desire, and showing him the only way in which they could be realized.

38. *If thou will hearken unto all that I command thee.* The new kingdom could be successful on the same conditions on which David and Solomon had succeeded. *And build thee a sure house:* secure perpetuity to his family in the kingdom.

39. *I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not for ever.* As he had promised to David, that "if his son should commit iniquity he would chasten him with the rod of men" (2 Sam. 7: 14), a temporal and human punishment. God would have two kingdoms, small, and not so glorious or influential as one would have been, since the people refused to be loyal and obedient in one.

V. SOLOMON'S DEATH. 40. *Solomon sought therefore.* This is a continuation of ver. 26, the intervening verses being an explanation of the statement that Jeroboam lifted his hand against Solomon. *To kill Jeroboam.* It would appear from this passage, combined with ver. 26, that the announcement of Ahijah was followed within a little while by something like overt acts of rebellion on the part of Jeroboam. *Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt.* The most natural place of refuge. Probably there was a new dynasty since Solomon married Pharoah's daughter, and the Egytians, perceiving the weakening of the kingdom in Solomon's latter days, and longing for the immense wealth gathered in his kingdom, were quite willing to welcome any enemy of Solomon. *Shishak king of Egypt.* Shishak is, beyond doubt, the Sheshonk I. of the monuments.

42. *Solomon reigned . . . forty years.* He must have died when about 60 years old.

DID SOLOMON REPENT? Nothing is said one way or the other, but it does not seem probable that he, with all his wisdom, and with such promises as he had received, should fall entirely away and never in any degree recover. Perhaps nothing is told us because we are thus led to realize the awful danger of walking on the edge of such a precipice.

That Christmas Money.

In the next few weeks people will talk Christmas more than all other subjects combined. And very many will count their pennies to see if they will go around. And some will realize for the countless things offered for sale, "that money talks." Yes, and many a poor tired clerk will wish that they too could talk—back. To give unselfishly without thought of return is the true Christmas spirit; but how many times, oh, human nature, will the thought occur this month, "Now if I will make so and so a Christmas present, wonder if I will get a return next year." The growing Christmas present custom comes hard among certain classes, who do not always have plenty of ready money; among farmers and people near towns, who keep poultry, the egg supply is a great source of Christmas money, because prices are always very high at this season. If the old hens will only shell out the eggs now, thinks many a mother, I can soon get back all the money taken for Christmas. The surest way we have heard to get it back is this—E. A. Hubbard, of Hatfield, Mass., says, "About one year ago I sent $5 for six cans of Sheridan's Condition Powder to make hens lay and in January my 23 hens' laid 29 dozen eggs. I have sent $5.00 this year for six more cans and the Farm Poultry monthly." Certainly that Christmas money came back in short order. Mrs. Warren Delano, Hampden, Me., said recently to the manufacturers of this wonderful Powder, "I send $6.00 for Farm Poultry two years, and six large cans of Sheridan's Powder. It is the very thing needed. Last winter my hens did so poorly, I almost lost heart, but this year 50 hens have cleared me $125." All for a little courage and Sheridan's Powder, her hens paid her more than double the average usually allowed per hen, so that her Christmas money returned manyfold. Husbands, a word to the wise is sufficient: Make your wives a Christmas present of six cans of Sheridan's Powder and take no other. For 50 cents I. S. Johnson & Co., Boston, Mass., will send two 25 cent packs; five packs for $1.00; or for $1.20, one large 2½ pound can of Powder, postpaid; six cans for $5.00, express prepaid. The best poultry paper, Farm Poultry, one year, and a can of Powder for $1.50.

Doing Her Work.

About thirty years ago a young girl in a western city was given charge of a Sabbath-school class of rough boys, usually known as "river rats," who had never been in any school before. When she entered the room she found them lounging on the desk and benches, wearing their hats, puffing vile cigars, a defiant leer on every face. They greeted her with a loud laugh, and one of them exclaimed:

"Say, sis, you going to teach us?"

She stood silent until the laugh was over, and then said, quietly, "Do I look like a lady?"

An astonished stare was the only reply which they gave.

"Because," she continued, gently, "gentlemen, when a lady enters the room, take off their hats and throw away their cigars."

The lowest American secretly believes himself to be a gentleman, and in a moment every hat was off, and the lads were ranged in orderly attention.

So remarkable was the success of this girl in managing and influencing men of the roughest sort that she made it the work of her life. She established clean and respectable boarding houses for sailors and boatmen, and reading and coffee rooms for laborers, and founded an Order of Honor, the members of which strove to lead sober, Christian lives themselves and to help their fellows to do the same.

Some of the members of her first class were her efficient helpers for twenty years in all her work. It was a favorite saying with them, "Once let Miss—— get her hold upon a man, and she never lets him go."

She never did let go, but followed him to sea, to the most distant parts of the world, or even to prison, with letters and little gifts. With all the tender pity of a mother, she strove, as many a mother does not strive, to bring the wanderer back to the faith and innocence of his childhood.

Thousands of men passed under this single woman's influence, and learned something of her Master through her wonderful purity and strong faith in Him.

Such instances of helpfulness are not rare in this country. Every year the zeal of educated Christian men and women finds new and practical methods of reaching and elevating the more ignorant people.

Singularly, these efforts are more common in cities than in smaller towns and villages, where everybody knows everybody, and where the gradations of caste are, perhaps, fixed by strong prejudices.

Many a young lad or girl who reads these lines leads an idle life in such a village, indulging, it may be, in occasional vague visions of going to India or Africa to teach the heathen how to be Christians, while the wharves or taverns of their own native village are filled with heathen for whose souls no man has cared.

Let every Christian ask himself as the day closes, "have I stood idle in the market-place? Has not my Master hired me with a great price to do his work?"

—*Presbyterian Observer.*

A Jady in Syracuse writes: "For about seven years before taking Northrop & Lyman's Vegetable Discovery and Dyspeptic Cure, I suffered from a complaint very prevalent with our sex. I was unable to walk any distance, or stand on my feet for more than a few minutes at a time, without feeling exhausted; but now, I am thankful to say, I can walk two miles without feeling the least inconvenience. For female complaints it has no equal."

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