

The Sunday-School.

FOURTH QUARTER, LESSON I.—Oct 4.

DAVID BRINGS UP THE ARK.

2 SAMUEL 6: 1-12.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Blessed are they who dwell in thy house.*—Psa. 84: 4.

The lesson includes 2 Sam. 5: 17-6: 19, and the corresponding account in 1 Chron. 13-15.

HISTORICAL SETTING.—Time. — B. C. 1042 (Ussher) or 1004. Six or seven years after David became king over all Israel. It was quite probable, however, that it was several years later after the completion of David's wars.

Place.—The ark had been for a long time at Kirjath-jearim, about eleven miles west of Jerusalem, in the valley of Sorek (where Delilah lived), a valley which leads up from the Philistine country toward Jerusalem. It was on the western border of Benjamin.

David, now about 44 years old, having been king fourteen years.

David's Counsellors. Ahithophel, a very shrewd man; Nathan, the prophet; and Joab, his chief general.

Place in the History. After the conquests of David. The epoch of religious revival and organization. Jerusalem made the religious as well as the political capital.

RELIGION NEGLECTED. THE ARK OF THE COVENANT LAID ASIDE.—The ark was a chest of acacia wood, two and one-half cubits (three feet nine inches) in length, and one and one-half cubits (two feet three inches) in height as well as width, plated within and without with gold. The lid was of solid gold, and was called the mercy seat. Upon it were two golden figures of winged cherubim, with their wings stretched out over the ark and their faces turned toward one another. Within the ark were deposited the two tables of stone engraved with the Ten Commandments. The ark also contained Aaron's rod that budded and a golden pot of manna. It belonged in the innermost room of the tabernacle, and was to be visited only by the high priest, and by him only once a year, the day of atonement.

The ark was the most ancient and sacred of the religious symbols of the Hebrew nation. (1) It was the sign and expression of the divine presence in Israel. (2) The ark was the place where God revealed his will. (3) The tables of the law within the ark were the covenant of God with the people. They were to keep his law, and then they should be his people. (4) The mercy-seat over the law revealed God as ready to forgive transgressors whenever there was repentance.

Soon after the settlement of the Israelites in Palestine Joshua deposited the ark at Shiloh, twenty miles north of Jerusalem. The sons of Eli carried the ark from Shiloh into a battle against the Philistines, hoping that God would give them the victory for the sake of this symbol of his worship. But God did not reward wickedness in that way. The Philistines captured the ark. But the Lord would not permit them to retain it. The people were smitten with severe sickness wherever the ark was sent. Finally it was restored to Israel, and sent up as far Kirjath-jearim, in the house of Abinadab. Here it remained about seventy years.

When David became king of all Israel, the Philistines made an attack upon him and his kingdom in great force. His first work therefore was to organize his army. He then came down upon them and swept them once and again out of the country.

Again, after the great assembly of his coronation. *David gathered together, after consultation with the leaders. Thirty thousand, representatives of the whole people. And David arose, and went . . . from Baale of Judah. Baale is an ancient name for Kirjath-jearim (forest city). Whose name is called. Better, as in R. V., "which is called by the Name." Lord of Hosts.* The Lord of all the forces in the universe. *That dwelleth between the cherubims.* This was the center of religion to the Jews.

And they set the ark of God upon a new cart. Probably to keep the ark sacred from anything that had been used for common purposes. *Brought it out of the house of Abinadab.* In whose son's care the ark had been placed seventy years before. *That was in Gibeah.* An eminence near Kirjath-jearim, the remains of which can yet be seen.

And David and all the house of Israel played on all manner of instruments made of fir wood. There was music, vocal as well as instrumental. The affair was magnificent and imposing.

PRACTICAL.—1. David enlisted great numbers in this religious work. This gave every one a deeper personal interest.

2. This great work was the result of long preparation and organization.

3. David wisely used all the powers of music and song, uplifting the people and binding them together in harmony.

4. Note the different classes interested. There was something for all.

Came to Nachon's threshing-floor. The place is unknown, but probably it was not far from Jerusalem. *Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God.* To steady the ark and keep it from falling. *For the oxen shook it.* By stumbling. The ark was on the point of being thrown off the cart. *And the anger of the Lord was kindled.* Not passion, but indignation. *And God smote him there.* On the spot, as with a flash of lightning. *for his error.* because he put his hand to the ark.

The whole transaction was contrary to the provisions of the law, which gives specific instructions for the transport of the ark. (Num. 4). Uzzah's act was a part of the whole careless business.

The reasons for this severity were: (1) That it grew out of a procedure which was in direct violation of an express statute (Num. 4:15; 7:9) which required that the ark should be carried by Levites. David and those in care of the ark should have known this law. (2) Uzzah, who had long had charge of the ark, should have been familiar with the law forbidding him to touch it. (3) It was a flagrant violation of God's command. It was needful at the outset to prove to the people the necessity of exact obedience. A neglect now would lead to greater neglect.

And David was displeased. His conscience began to smite him. *And David was afraid of the Lord.* He had rejoiced but had not been reverent enough. It was well for him to be afraid for a time.

PRACTICAL.—1. It is not uncommon, even in our day, to do good things in

a bad way, and right things in a wrong way. We seek to right our wrongs by doing other wrongs. We reprove others in a wrong spirit; build churches, but not with pure devotion to the interests of the gospel.

2. We need to be taught the value and necessity of reverence. Irreverence tends to the destruction of religion itself. There is such a thing as godly fear.

3. Christianity is to save us. Our business is to intrust ourselves to its preserving power.

4. Neglecting God's word leads to disobedience to God's commands.

5. All the people were in a measure to blame for the disaster. The neglect of God's law and of his worship for many years was now bearing its bitter fruit.

So David would not remove the ark. He feared lest he might make some other mistake. *Carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom.* A Levite belonging to the family of Kohath, who was appointed to have charge of the tabernacle and ark. It was not more than three or four miles from Jerusalem. *The Gittite.* That is, *Gathite*, so called because he was a native of the Levitical city Gath-rim-mon. *Continued . . . three months.* Long enough for the Israelites to learn their lesson. *And the Lord blessed Obed-edom, and all his household.* This would show to Israel that the ark itself brought blessing, not death. The death came from disobedience, not from the ark.

True religion in the home, cherished and kept alive by family religious services, is always a great blessing, both for this life and for that which is to come. (1) It binds the family together in unity of spirit. (2) It cultivates a loving, unselfish spirit, which brings joy to the home. (3) It sanctifies and makes pure all home labors and joys. (4) It destroys all those bad passions which mar the happiness of home. (5) It brings God's blessing upon all we do.

And it was told King David, etc. The fact that God blessed the place where the ark was impressed David. *So David went and brought up the ark of God.* Assembling the tribes once more. *Into the city of David with gladness.* It was felt to be a turning point in the history of the nation. The ark was born on the shoulders of the Levites amid great enthusiasm.

PRACTICAL.—1. Religion is the essential element of a prosperous and successful nation. 2. Religious enthusiasm is a great power for good. It is never to be repressed, but only guided.



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Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee.—*Psalmist.*

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Heaven often seems distant and unknown, but if he who made the road thither is our guide, we need not fear to lose the way. We do not want to see far ahead—only far enough to discern him and trace his footsteps. They who follow Christ, even through darkness, will surely reach the Father. —*Van Dyke.*

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