

Sunday School Lesson

April 27, 1947

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NATIONAL GLORY AND DECAY

Lesson: I. Kings 3:5-9 5:13-16 11:4-9

Golden Text: Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. Proverbs 3:5

At David's death, Solomon his son succeeded him to the throne. There was a sharp contrast in the early life of David and that of Solomon. David was a man of war from his youth. His reign was given to conquering the enemies without, and keeping peace within. Solomon reaped the harvest of his father's effort and enjoyed times of peace and prosperity.

SOLOMON'S CHOICE

There are three factors which make up human personality. (1) Environment. Solomon had the best of his day. His father was a "man after God's own heart." David was loyal to God and faithful to his people. A good christian environment is conducive to godliness. (2) Heredity. To the question—"When should a child's training begin?" the answer comes—"Fifty years before the child is born." Solomon's background was the very best. He has all the prospects of a bright future. His people were godly people. (3) Will. Personality is clothed in the will, regardless of environment or heredity. The will is the deciding factor in man's character and destiny. Solomon's choice before God corresponded with what he had been taught and what he had inherited. Thus he prays—"Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people." This was indeed a noble choice. Practical wisdom was his need and Solomon was wise enough to acknowledge it. He was inexperienced in civil affairs and he recognized he must have special wisdom if he is to make a successful successor to his father.

SOLOMON'S BUILDING PROGRAMME

Solomon took advantage of his father's achievements in war and set himself to make Jerusalem great. The wealth and extravagance in that city made a sharp contrast with the poverty existing in other parts of the realm. His most important achievement was the building of the temple which required seven years. The temple was made by skilled workmen and the stones that were made at the quarry were so exactly measured and so cut for their place in the building "that there was neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in the building." Solomon obtained cedars from Lebanon for his building. Vast quantities of gold was used in building the temple and also for the many vessels of the temple. To do all this work Solomon drafted many into forced labor. This did not appeal to the people of the north as their country was not enriched to correspond with Judah in the south.

SOLOMON'S APOSTACY

"It came to pass when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father." God's promises are conditional. God made a second appearance to Solomon after the temple was completed. "If thou wilt walk before me . . . and wilt keep my statutes and judgments: then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel forever." But if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments . . . then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them." The "if" of these scriptures place great responsibility upon Solomon. It implies freedom of the will to walk in God's way or not to walk in them. Solomon broke God's commandments

by marrying heathen wives. His reason for doing so was because he trusted more in human politics than he did in God. As a result the evil influence of his wives upon himself and his kingdom caused it to decay and decline.

May 4, 1947

THE REVOLT OF THE NORTHERN TRIBES

Lesson: I. Kings 12:1-5; 12-15, 19, 20

Golden Text: A man's pride shall bring him low: but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit. Proverbs 29:23

There are two main characters in our lesson today—Rehoboam and Jeroboam. The former was the son of Solomon and the latter the son of an Ephraimite. From our lesson last Sunday we learned that in Solomon's reign that the Northern tribes were not enriched to correspond with the Southern. This naturally brought hard feelings among those in the north. Accordingly at Solomon's death the northern tribes (called Israel) as distinguished from the southern (called Judah) were ready for revolt. Rehoboam succeeded his father to the throne, and "all Israel" had gathered at Shechem to make him king. Meanwhile request had been sent to Jeroboam in Egypt to appear on the scene as a leader of the Israelites to request that the new king lighten the burdens that were oppressive during Solomon's reign.

JEHOBOAM'S PROBLEM

Rehoboam asks for three days to consider the request of the northern tribes. It was not necessary for him to postpone his answer thus, and the request should not have been any problem to him whatever. It was reasonable that all the tribes be treated equal and that their burdens be lightened.

REHOBAM'S DECISION

"My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." Let us notice the elements in Rehoboam's decisions. (1) He did not inquire of God what he should do. If there was any doubt (there aught not to have been) then he should have made it a subject of prayer. (2) He followed the council of young men that flattered the young king and appealed to his vanity. (3) He rejected the council of the older men who had gained valuable experience through the years. (4) He was not careful to answer the people in humility. (5) He was unwilling to render service to the people as was advised by the older men. Needless to say the northern tribes would not tolerate such tyranny. They revolted against the new king and made Jeroboam king over all Israel. "There was none that followed the house of David but the tribe of Judah only."

JEROBOAM'S OPPORTUNITY AND FAILURE

Jeroboam had a wonderful opportunity to establish the northern kingdom in righteousness, but instead he turned his heart away from God. In order to prevent his people from going to Jerusalem to worship the true God, he set up golden calves and established a priesthood and feasts that imitated the worship at Jerusalem. The time for this worship was such that it was almost impossible for the people to go to Jerusalem and also attend his substitute worship. This not only divorced the two kingdoms, but literally turned the people away from the true God. Instead of trusting in God to perpetuate his kingdom, he trusted in himself and as a result he was punished as was predicted by Abijah in I. Kings 14:7-16.

THE LOVE THAT TRANSCENDS HUMAN AFFECTION

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when Jesus enters upon his ministry and pursues it for three years, what a small part Mary

plays in his life. We see Jesus in that little home at Bethany, refreshed and comforted by the fellowship of Lazarus, Mary and Martha. We do not see him in the old home at Nazareth. In all the Gospels little is said about his mother. True she was a beautiful character, but had not been born without the taint of original sin, as Rome teaches. She to Christ's work and kingdom stood in the same relation as did Mary Magdalene. She needed forgiveness for her sins and sanctification of her nature. She was probably at Pentecost and received that blessing that enabled her to really understand the mission of Jesus.

But Rome deifies Mary. Only through her intercessions have we access to Jesus. They call her the "Mother of Sorrows" and the one who can console the sorrowing. But mariolotry is gross idolatry. Thank God, we can come boldly to a throne of grace and obtain grace and mercy and salvation. That salvation that will give us the same place in the heart of Jesus as his mother had. "He that doeth the will of God the same is my mother, my sister, and brother."

THE CAMEL

From our beds in a military hospital in the Sinai Desert, many of us watched the camel caravans which passed our doors daily to the Holy Land. Every morning each camel was commanded to undertake a burden. It could not take it standing up, so the command was given for it to kneel. Its master then put on the load. The day's journey started. As the hours went by and the sun grew hotter the load was sometimes shaken out of place. The ropes worked loose. The burden was not properly balanced and the poor beast started to grunt and complain. So at midday the master bade him kneel again. The load was re-adjusted, balanced carefully and the ropes tightened. Then the journey was resumed in comfort. Approaching sundown, once again the camel started to grunt and complain. Once again the command was given to kneel. This time the load was taken off and rest and refreshment given.

It knelt in the morning to have the load put on; it knelt at midday to have the load adjusted; it knelt in the evening and the burden was taken away.

In Psalm 55, verse 17, we read, "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud: and He shall hear my voice." God does not relieve us of our necessary burdens, but He does help us to bear them when we kneel.

—"The Church of England Newspaper".

GIVE

"Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35).

"But this I say, He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

And God is able to make all grace amount unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work." (2 Cor. 9:6-8 R. V.)

"Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers, but for powers equal to your tasks."

—Phillips Brooks.