

Sunday School Lesson

April 13, 1947

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THE KINGDOM ESTABLISHED

Lesson: I Sam. 9:1-2; 11:12-13; 1:22-26; 34-35
Golden Text: Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. Psalm 33:12

Our lesson today takes up the story of Israel's history where we discontinued it at the end of the first quarter last year. Up until the time of our lesson Israel had been governed by prophets and judges. There were different reasons why a change was desired. Other nations had kings to rule over them, and Israel wanted to be like other nations. Samuel's sons were unlike their father and were unworthy to succeed him as judge. These together with other reasons account for Saul being selected as king.

SAUL'S BACKGROUND AND EARLY LIFE

From a human standpoint it seemed that Saul had all that was necessary for greatness. He came from the tribe of Benjamin and was a genuine Israelite. Not only was he favored of nature with unusual height and strength, but he was also favored of God with spiritual blessing. "The Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee; and thou shalt prophecy with them, and shalt be turned into another man." I. Samuel 10:9: "The Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them." I. Samuel 10:10. Thus Saul began his career pointing to unparalleled success. After gaining an outstanding victory with the Amorites, Saul is crowned king at Gilgal.

SAUL'S DISOBEDIENCE

Saul gained the confidence of the people but he failed to keep it. The first step in Saul's downfall was in conflict with the Philistines. Samuel had given instructions to Saul to tarry seven days at Gilgal where they would meet, and Samuel would offer sacrifice to the Lord. Saul tarried seven days and when Samuel did not arrive Saul went ahead and offered the burnt offering. Circumstances were so peculiar and critical that his act would almost seem excusable; however, we note that Samuel reproved Saul with the words—"thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue." As a king Saul was expected to be a leader in civil affairs. In religious affairs the king was to follow the leadership of Samuel. This, Saul did not do, and hence his worship was a farce. He subscribed to the outward form, but his heart was not in it.

Saul's second step in his downfall was more inexcusable than the first. He is commanded to go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and women, infant and suckling, ox and sheep." This Saul did, except that he spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, etc. At the same time he professed full obedience to God's command. Agag, the king and leader of God's enemies is a type of the carnal mind. The trouble with Saul was that he cherished the carnal nature that corresponded with Agag. This resulted in substituting sacrifice for obedience. His conduct was condemned by Samuel with the scathing words—"rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." The carnal mind is both stubborn and rebellious and is the parent of all witchcraft and idolatry. God has one method of dealing with this enemy of man, and that is cleansing or destruction through the precious Blood of Jesus.

SAUL AND THE KINGDOM

Had Saul chosen to obey God he would have been established as a successful king, but because he disobeyed, he met with failure. His life as applied to the believer is a great warning. He started with God's blessing but came

to a suicide's grave. In spite of Saul's failure however the kingdom became established through the leadership of David.

QUESTIONS AND PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

1. Did Israel have worthy motives for desiring a king?
2. What scriptures cause us to believe that Saul at one time knew God?
3. Is there any value in subscribing to forms of godliness if at the same time our hearts condemn us?
4. What did Saul cherish that led to his utter failure?
5. To whom is Saul's life a great warning?

April 20, 1947

THE KINGDOM STRENGTHENED AND ENLARGED

Lesson: 2 Samuel 5:6-10, 17-25

Golden Text: David went on, and grew great, and the Lord of hosts was with him.
2 Samuel 5:10

David was the outstanding man of his day. He was a musician, poet, king, shepherd and soldier. It was through his leadership that Jerusalem was established as the civil and religious capital of Israel.

DAVID'S KINGDOM ESTABLISHED

To get a better understanding of the lesson we should read the first five verses preceding the printed portion. Though David was anointed by Samuel prior to Saul's death, yet he did not come to the throne until after the death of Saul and Jonathon. For the first seven and one-half years he reigns at Hebron which is the capital of Judah. During this time there is more or less civil war between Judah and Israel. Saul's son reigns for a short time over Israel, the northern kingdom. Finally the elders of the northern kingdom make a league with David and he becomes king of the united kingdoms of Judah and Israel. David's patience with Saul and his experiences in battle qualified him as an able king.

DAVID'S VICTORIES IN WAR

The rugged life in the open, as a shepherd, developed strength and courage in David, and also helped him to depend on God. There are three wars mentioned in the printed portion. (1) The taking of Jerusalem from the Jebusites. The Jebusites overestimated their own strength and underestimated David's strength, even to the point of making fun of him. "Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion: the same is the City of David." Civil and military considerations pointed to the city of Jerusalem as the capital of the united kingdom. Its position was just within the borders of Judah, but close to the borders of the northern kingdom. As a military post it was unrivaled. It stood on a rocky plateau and was surrounded on three sides by steep ravines. It is known as the Gibraltar of Palestine. (2) The first victory over the Philistines. This was purely a defensive war as far as David was concerned. David being established on the throne of the united kingdom, the Philistines began to fear him. They cannot help recognizing him as a successful soldier. They spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim and David inquired of the Lord—"Shall I go up to the Philistines? And the Lord said unto David, Go up." David did so and won a decisive victory. (3) The second battle with the Philistines on the same battle ground. God instructs David thus: "Thou shalt not go up; but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself." This sound was doubtless the marching of unseen forces to assist David. "Many necessary elements in David's success were as much beyond his control as the march of the stars through the sky." Again David gains a victory over the Philistines. These battles are analogous to our

spiritual experiences. If we inquire our direction of the Lord and are obedient to him we can gain victories and achieve things for him.

DAVID AND THE LORD'S HOUSE

Since David is passed by with only one lesson it might be well to notice David's regard for the Ark of the Covenant and the House of God. David was a man of God and he realized the need of divine worship among his people. He therefore brought the Ark of God to Jerusalem and pitched a tent as a temporary abiding place. He realized it was not right for him to dwell in a house of cedar while the Ark was in curtains. Out of this conviction came the temple that Solomon built.

DEATH IN ADAM—LIFE IN CHRIST

(Continued from Page 2)

Over against this dark and forbidding picture, the apostle holds up another. Listen to what he says: "By man came also the resurrection of the dead—even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Resurrection! Life! How blessed these words! How glorious these facts! As death is ours by man so are these also ours by man—"The man Jesus Christ." He has overcome death by the power of His resurrection. He gives us hope by the light of His life.

Death is to us a mystery, but not to Him: He has sounded its deepest depths. He knows the answer to the greatest problems which it presents to our mind. There are few realms where death cannot come, but none where He cannot. Death has great power, but He has all power. He will call our bodies back from the grave. He will restore again the soul to the body from which death loosed it. He will restore thought to the mind and skill to the hand, and will give again the song, yes, sweeter songs, to the singer.

Our inheritance in Adam brings us darkness, gloom, and sorrow. Our inheritance in Christ brings us light, hope and peace. He redeems our bodies. He saves our souls. He comforts our hearts. He redeems our bodies by the power of His resurrection. He saves our souls by the power of His infinite grace. He comforts our hearts by the gentle yet eternal power of His Word. He says of Himself, "I am the resurrection and the life." He declares to His disciples, "Because I live ye shall live also." He has promised He will never leave nor forsake us, but will be with us to the end of the age. With us when happiness fill ours hearts and joy stirs our souls, but also with us when our hearts are broken with sorrow and our souls are crushed with grief. In darkness He is our light and in despair He is our hope. In weariness He is our rest and in sorrow He is our comfort. He was with us to protect in the strength of our youth, He will be with us to support in the feebleness of our age. In the valley of the shadow He will walk by our side, and in the realm of His eternal glory He has promised to prepare us a place. Because of the life which comes to us through our relationship with Him, we need not fear the death which comes through our relationship with Adam.

Let us notice again the text and that it tells us that it is "In Christ" that we have this blessed hope of the resurrection and life. By the natural birth we are in Adam and inherit death, by the spiritual, or "New birth" we are in Christ and inherit life. And, being in Him we become new creatures, old things pass away and behold all things become new. How thankful we should be that God "Hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead."