

Sunday School.

DAVID ANOINTED KING—1 SAMUEL 16.

The Lesson for April 11.

From his first victory over the Philistines to his final defeat Saul's sword was rarely, if ever, idle for want of enemies. To quote from my History of the Hebrew People: "The Philistines with unconquerable persistence continued to return, and other enemies appeared from time to time; and they came from almost every direction. There were wars with the Moabites on the east, the Edomites and Amalekites in the south, and with Zobah on the north. In these wars Saul seems to have been generally successful. He did not take advantage of his victories and push on to conquest, and therefore did not secure for his people a lasting peace; but his wars taught the surrounding nations that the Hebrews were a people to be reckoned with, and, what was better, they gave his people confidence in themselves and faith in their possibilities as a nation. Moreover, they must have wonderfully developed the valor of his people, for when he began his reign they were notoriously lacking in courage, and when his successor came to the throne he found himself surrounded by a multitude of mighty warriors.

But while Saul was thus in a large measure successful as a military leader, as a man he ranks as one of the most distressing failures in history. After his pitiful lapse at Gilgal, he does not seem to have made any serious effort to recover himself, though some years afterward we find him responding readily to Samuel's call to act as Jehovah's agent in the extermination of the Amalekites. Before he was through with this business, however, he displayed such stubbornness and such utter indifference to Jehovah's will that Samuel, realizing that he was incorrigible, refused to have anything further to do with him. From this time onward his career, aside from his military enterprises, was an unbroken series of blunders. Recognizing no will but his own and no right but might, his judgment became utterly perverted, and he often acted like a madman, deliberately seeking his own destruction. At times, indeed, he was really insane, for after his natural rashness had broken through all bounds he grew intensely jealous and suspicious, and eventually (probably from brooding over imaginary wrongs) became a victim of Melancholia."

Golden Text—Man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart.—1 Sam. 16:7.

Memorize verses 12, 13, Home Readings—Mon., 1 Sam. 16:1-13. David Anointed King. Tues.—1 Sam. 16:34-23. David with Saul. Wed.—2 Sam. 7:4-17. The Covenant with David. Thurs.—Jer. 33:14-26. The Covenant Renewed. Fri.—Acts 2:22-36. The Covenant Kept. Sat.—Ps. 132. Pleading Promises. Sun.—Ps. 110. The Triumphant King.

Historical Setting—Time—Perhaps about 1020 B. C. Place—Bethlehem.—Five or six miles south of Jerusalem. It was anciently called Ephrathah. It was near Bethlehem that the light of Jacob's life went out; for here Rachel died—the wife for whom he labored so many years, and "the years were but as a few days for the love he had to her." Here Ruth gleaned in the fields; and here David was born; and, by-and-by, the Son of David himself.

Notes on the Lesson Text.

Verse 4. Elders of the town—the official heads of the place. Trembled at his coming—Samuel was the recognized representative of Jehovah, and in a time of religious decline his visits were probably oftener for rebuke than for blessing. Comest thou peaceably—"Is thy coming peace?" 5. To sacrifice unto the Lord—while the ark was still at Kirjath-jearim (1 Sam. 7:1-2). Samuel seems to have occasionally offered sacrifices in other places in order to keep alive, as far as possible, the religious faith of the people. Sanctify yourselves—by washing their persons, and putting on clean clothes as the symbol of inward purity (Ex. 19:10, 14). He sanctified Jesse and his sons—personally looked after the sanctification of this family, because God was to choose therefrom: The sacrifice probably took place the following day, after which (but before the feast which followed the sacrifice), Samuel had an interview with Jesse. During this interview Jesse's sons were called before him. 6. Eliab—supposed by some to be the Elihu whom David appointed ruler of the tribe of Judah (1 Chron. 27:18). Surely the Lord's anointed is before him—from the next verse it would appear that Eliab was tall and of magnificent appearance. By "the Lord's anointed" is meant one whom God had set apart. 7. The Lord said unto Samuel—probably by an inner voice—a voice speaking in his consciousness. I have refused him—that is, God had not chosen him to be king. From 1 Sam. 17:28 it would seem that Eliab did not feel kindly toward David, but whether this was due to his rejection here referred to cannot be determined. The Lord seeth not as man seeth—(1 Chron. 28:9; Luke 16:15). The outward appearance—literally, "the eyes." The eyes were used to indicate the outward form in contrast with the heart which was used to indicate the character. 9. Shammah—called Shimea in 1 Chron. 20, 7. 10. Again, Jesse, etc.—rather, "so Jesse," etc. 11. Are here all thy children—besides these seven sons were two daughters (Zeruiah and Abigail) and David (See 1 Sam. 17:12). There remaineth yet the youngest—probably regarded as too young to be considered, or possibly too young to attend the feast. We will not sit down—to the sacrificial feast which was held after the sacrifice. The Hebrews were accustomed to sit on mats or cushions around a low table until they were subjugated by the Romans, when the Roman fashion of reclining came into vogue. 12. He was ruddy—had a fair, rosy complexion. The word, however, may refer to the hair. Auburn hair is regarded as extraordinarily beautiful by Orientals. Of a beautiful countenance—literally, "beautiful of eyes." 13. Horn of oil—the sacred oil for anointing was composed of oil of olives, myrrh, cassia, cinnamon and sweet calamus (see Ex. 30:22-23). In the midst of his brethren—in their presence. The Spirit of the Lord came upon David—the word implies a sudden impulse pervading the whole nature. From that day forth—the presence of the Spirit was permanent and not temporary as was the case with Saul. Went to Ramah—Saul's home.

The Lesson Story.

Samuel never did a harder thing than when he told Saul of his rejection. It nearly broke the old man's heart, and for days he was bowed to the earth by the great calamity which had overtaken his king and nation. There is a time to weep, but there

are tasks waiting to be done while we weep, and the man whose business it is to lead is allowed less time than others to pour out his grief. If matters were to be mended, it was time for Samuel to be up and doing, and so when the time for mourning was past, and the old prophet still sat with covered head, God called him.

Doubtless it seemed hard to the old man to be compelled to put away his grief and go off on a new errand, but it was the best thing for him, as it was for the cause which he loved so well. Working for God, going on an errand for him, even if our tears fall as we go, is sure to bring relief, because in going we drop the black pall which covers us when we sit at home, and the sunbeams have a chance to reach our hearts.

God had provided (God is always providing!) another king in the place of Saul, and Samuel was to go to Bethlehem and anoint him. It was a dangerous thing to do—nothing less than high treason in the eyes of Saul—and the old prophet naturally wanted to know how he must go about it. "And the Lord said, Take a heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the Lord."

The coming of Samuel to Bethlehem threw the little town almost into a spasm. It was natural. Samuel was Jehovah's representative and ordinary folk cannot take a visit from Jehovah's representative calmly. Besides Samuel's visits in his latter days had been oftener for rebuke than for blessing. "Do you come to us peaceably?" asked the people. "Peaceably," replied the old prophet calmly: "I am come to offer sacrifices for your town; get ready for the service." And all that day the people busied themselves with their ceremonial purifications. It was probably the following day, after the ceremonies were over, that Samuel sought a private interview with Jesse and directed him to call his sons into his presence. Jesse did not understand, but he felt that the Lord was about to choose one of his sons for some great service or honor, and he naturally thought that the choice would fall upon Eliab, his eldest, who looked every inch a king. And when the young man came before him Samuel was so deeply impressed that he thought so, too, probably remembering at the time that the man God had chosen before was a man of great stature. "No," said a voice in his heart, "you are mistaken; don't look upon his countenance or on his height, for I have rejected him. For Jehovah does not see as man sees, for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." Six other sons passed before Samuel and the sign from the Lord was still wanting. "Are these all thy children?" asked Samuel. There was one more, the youngest, whose presence it had not been thought worth while to require. He was in the field watching the sheep and practicing on his harp. The youth was sent for and it turned out—as it so often has turned out—that the one earth had overlooked was the one heaven had chosen. "This is he," said the Lord, "arise and anoint him." And Samuel, taking the horn of sacred oil, poured it upon the head of the handsome youth in the presence of his brothers.

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