

# INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

By KEITH L. BROOKS

(Managing Editor "The King's Business," Secretary Correspondence Courses of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles)

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Review—The Early Kings of Israel.

THE lessons of this quarter, which have attempted to cover a period of history of 120 years, have necessarily been very fragmentary. For the review lesson, the writer suggests a brief character study of the three principal kings whose reigns have come before us, namely Saul, David and Solomon.

It might prove of interest in many classes to have members of the class present papers on these characters. These could be discussed with great profit. A prize could be awarded to the one bring out the greatest number of beneficial points.

Another plan would be to submit to the class members, a Sunday in advance, review questions concerning these characters. These questions should be formed by the teacher to recall outstanding points brought up in the class.

## SAUL

"I have played the fool."

Saul summed up his own life in the words: "I have played the fool" (1 Sam. 26:21). Mighty man that he was in the beginning, he confessed himself at the end "a self-made fool."

This confession had reference to his childish acts toward David, the young man whom at first he so much admired and loved. The same confession, however, well applies to his whole life. He chose the role of a fool because he chose to set up his will against the will of God.

Splendid physique had much to do with putting Saul on the throne to begin with. He cut a stylish figure. There was a princely bearing about him. A good strong body is no small asset in bringing a man to the front, but it counts for little in keeping him at the top when he hasn't sense enough to walk with God. Many a man handicapped by physical weakness, has made a better success than Saul.

Let us realize, however, that a strong body is a great advantage, other things being equal. We heard of a young man who was sent to a railway station to meet a visiting preacher. Seeing a sickly, neurotic type of man alight from a coach, he at once jumped to the conclusion that this was the minister. Many seem to have the idea that dyspepsia goes along with piety. The preacher who has a body like Saul's, has much to be thankful for, but the greatest asset, after all, is to have a will surrendered to God.

Saul seemed to be a very modest young man. When Samuel came to anoint him king he felt it was far beyond him. He was not too big to continue at humble tasks even hunting for his father's asses, although he was at the time anointed king. Those are fine qualities if one can keep them alive after he gets power to himself.

God gave Saul a great friend—Samuel. Through thick and thin, Samuel stuck to him as his pastor and advisor. With patient devotion, Samuel loved him, keeping after him whenever he went wrong, and to the end of his life never ceasing to pray for him. Yet what heartaches Saul must have given his loyal friend!

No man ever had placed before him more magnificent opportunities than Saul. What use did he make of them? Answer: "Played the fool." He left God out of his plans. The tragedy of his life was that when he sinned, he never could be brought to face it, confess it, and get right with God. David, his successor, perhaps sinned in a more hideous way than Saul ever did, but he became penitent and gave God a chance to put away his sin.

Saul was given to half-obedience, and that is something God counts as pure rebellion. If Saul was told to utterly wipe out the Amalekites for the good of the human race, he would wipe out what he wanted to and keep what spoils attracted him. Obeying God as far as it suits us, is trifling with God, and is bound to bring chastisement.

Saul was full of excuses. He was clever at devising explanations when Samuel would face him with his fail-

ures. Someone else was always to blame. The man who will not confess himself guilty, is in no position to receive pardon and divine blessing. Saul would never put himself in that position. He was always putting a religious face on his sins.

But someone will say, "Did not Saul many times say: 'I have sinned'?" Yes, many, but under what circumstances? In every case, he was in a corner. The prophet had the goods on him. He did not want to lose the kingdom. But where is there evidence of heart repentance?

Saul ended up a suspicious, peevish, childish man. The green-eyed monster, jealousy, wound itself around him. One who is a prey to envy, suffers the pangs of hell in this life. The once brave man ended up the plaything of veil forebodings. There was no relief, for he had been too busy to learn how to pray. He turns to a witch for help. He asks his armor-bearer to kill him, and ends up by falling upon his own sword. How differently the story might have ended, but "he played the fool."

## DAVID

"Against thee have I sinned."

If we are called to follow the promising Saul into the valley of humiliation, what shall we say of that even more remarkable character, David? The Bible is written to show us the subtleties of Satan and the utter folly of sin. No character has been whitewashed. The faults of men who were greatly used of God, are laid bare before us that we might know how human and like ourselves they were.

David is called in Scripture, "a man after God's own heart," not because he was sinless, but because he was a man of faith and when he sinned, confessed from the depth of his heart and took up his walk with God again.

The history of even the most obscure believer, will be found to exhibit, although perhaps on a smaller scale, the same inconsistencies as those seen in David. Who is there who has not at times been assailed by unbelief, like David when he fled for refuge to the king of Gath?

What sincere Christian worker has not had mistaken notions about the Lord's service, like David when he tried to build a house for the Lord before the time?

What Christian has never been taken in by notions of self-complacency and pride, like David when he sought to number the people?

Is there one who has never known, even in the thought life, the vile lustings of nature, like David in the matter of Uriah the Hittite?

It is all this that makes David peculiarly interesting to us. But what discouragement the picture would bring us except that the Scripture story also reveals the divine grace that met David in his sins and again lifted him up. That makes the story precious to every heart that knows its own plague.

We may profit much from the fine traits of character seen in David, but let us be sure we do not miss the warnings to be derived from a close study of the causes of his sad fall. It was when he retired from the post of duty, and lay around at Jerusalem, that the enemy got the advantage over him.

That is just when the darts of the enemy are most apt to hit us. Keep busy for God; keep nature under pressure. There is safety in it! Satan never fails to find mischief for idle hearts and hands.

We have a watchful enemy. The moment we are unoccupied, Satan knows his hour. When we are up and doing for God, and maintaining communion with Him, we are in the attitude of positive hostility to the Devil. That is not his opportunity to make us instruments for his own ends.

When David failed in energy as the captain of the Lord's hosts, he became the slave of lust. Likewise, we are either dominated by the energy of the Spirit or the energy of the flesh. "At the time when kings

go forth to battle," David was at rest in his own house and Satan presented the fatal bait before him.

To what length will this nature of ours go when it is out of touch with God! Who would have thought that a man like David would first degrade his character to indulge nature and then, in order to maintain his reputation at all cost, put a man out of the way?

No man becomes suddenly vile. White ants can pick a carcass clean sooner than a lion can. A long train of evil thoughts led David into all this. Our only safety is in watching the beginning of things and avoiding the first steps that lead down.

Did David forget that the eyes of the Lord were upon him? God help us not to forget that He sees. Had David kept himself conscious of this, he would have faltered ere he added the sin of murder to adultery.

God will maintain His holiness. He cannot be trifled with. If His child wanders into sin, he is bound to be dealt with. So in David's case, much as God loved him, we find Him pronouncing most solemn judgments upon his house because of sin. "We are chastened of the Lord that we should not be condemned with the world."

## SOLOMON.

"All is vanity."

The comparative scantiness of material concerning the life of Solomon is significant. The story of David occupies more than sixty chapters; that of Solomon fills only 11 chapters of 1st Kings and 2nd Chronicles.

No person occupies so important a space in sacred history of whom so few personal incidents are related. Solomon's name hardly occurs after the close of his reign.

The position to which Solomon became heir, was certainly unique. Large resources, accumulated through many years, were at his disposal. The people were for the most part true to Jehovah. Knowledge, art, music and poetry had received a new impulse. There was a great outlook.

Solomon's reign marked the climax of the Hebrew monarchy. With Solomon came the beginning of its decline. Never again did Israel take its place among the great nations of the East. Starting out with great wisdom, Solomon later prepared for the downfall of the kingdom by luxury and arrogance.

He was the author and compiler of the richest maxims of wisdom in the world's literature. But sad to say, Solomon so dissipated himself through sensual pleasure, that he sums up with the confession: "Vanity of vanities—all is emptiness and vexation of spirit." Thus may very intellectual men come to nothing because they attempt to exercise their wisdom independently of God.

Solomon's great piece of work was the building of the Temple. Beyond that, there is little in his history to record beside the description of his

magnificence and wealth.

In Solomon, we see the utter powerlessness of mere culture and intellectualism, even of the highest kind, when it is not vitally related to the love and reverence of God. Dr. Plummer has well said: "The lesson of his life is to a large extent that of Samson's and Saul's combined—miraculous powers neutralized by self-indulgence—great natural gifts rendered baneful by desertion of God."

Solomon seems never to have known the bracing influences of difficulty and adversity, which largely made his father the man he was. He had been brought up in expectation of a glorious crown, and when it came to him, it swelled his head until his character could not stand the strain.

You can't convince a self-made man that he gave himself the worst of it.

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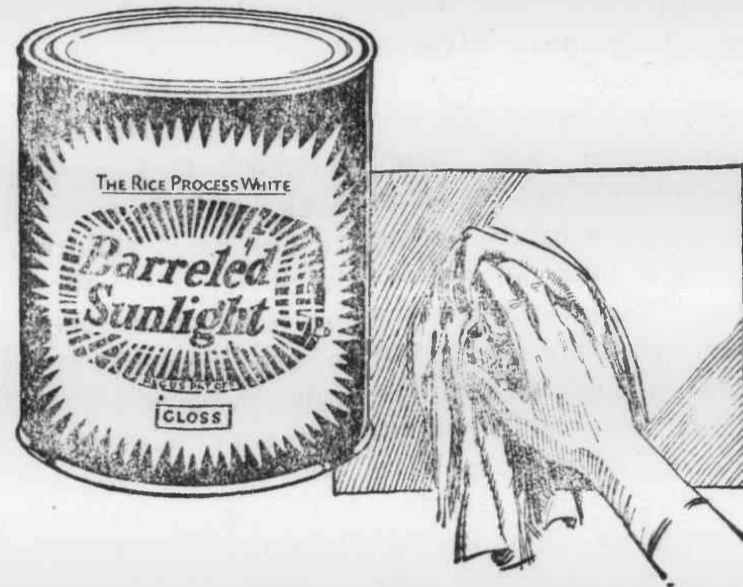
Having qualified as administrator of the estate of Ida J. Ray, deceased, late of Hemp, Moore County, N. C., this is to notify all persons having claims against the estate of said deceased, to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before Sept. 6, 1928, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

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