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THE
SCHOLAR'S GUIDE
TO THE
HISTORY OF THE BIBLE ;

OR
AN ABRIDGEMENT OF THE SCRIPTURES
OF THE
OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT,

WITH
EXPLANATORY REMARKS :

Intended for the use of Schools and Families.

BY T. STRONG, A. M.

GREENFIELD :
PUBLISHED BY CLARK & TYLER.

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Denio & Phelps, Printers.
1822.

DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS, *to wit:*

District Clerk's Office.

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the eleventh day of September, A. D. 1822, in the forty-seventh year of the Independence of the United States of America, TITUS STRONG, A. M. of the said District, has deposited in this Office the Title of a Book; the right whereof he claims as author, in the words following, *to wit:*

"The Scholar's Guide to the History of the Bible : or an Abridgement of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, with explanatory remarks : intended for the use of Schools and Families. By T. Strong, A. M."

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, "an act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned : " and also to an act entitled, "an act supplementary to an act, entitled, an act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned; and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving and etching historical and other prints."

JOHN W. DAVIS,

Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.

PREFACE.

THE following work contains a relation of the principal events which are recorded in the Holy Scriptures, in the order of the inspired writers, with occasional explanations and remarks, and a concise account of the several preceptive, prophetic and doctrinal books. From the regular and connected arrangement of the whole, and the division into lessons of a suitable length for recitation, it is believed that it will be found well adapted to the use of schools, in promoting that systematic study of the Bible which has hitherto been greatly neglected. It may, also, be profitably applied to the improvement of scholars in reading; to the edification of families, by assisting parents in their instructions, and to the benefit of young persons in general. That it may not, in any case, be adopted as a substitute for the sacred volume, the diligent and attentive perusal of those chapters from which the facts are taken, and a thorough examination of the books which are briefly noticed, are particularly recommended, in connexion with the study of the respective lessons which are here presented.

It may be proper for the author, or rather *compiler*, to acknowledge the assistance which he has received from Kimpton's Universal History of the Bible; the works of Prideaux, Cal-

met, Horne, Patrick and Lowth, and the Bishop of Lincoln's Elements of Christian Theology, the last of which has been freely quoted in the account of the prophecies and epistles.

He submits his labours to the inspection and decision of a candid and discerning public, who will, undoubtedly, do justice to his intentions, whatever may be the opinion which is entertained of the merits of his work.

THE SCHOLAR'S GUIDE, &c.

LESSON I.

THE Holy Bible, containing the scriptures of the old and new testament, is the most valuable and interesting of books, inasmuch as it reveals the character and attributes of the only living and true God; his various dealings with the children of men; the laws to which he requires their obedience; the doctrines which concern their welfare beyond the grave, and the way of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. It presents to our consideration and recommends for our improvement the histories both of nations and individuals, in which are exemplified, in the most impressive manner, the benefits that flow from a course of virtue and piety, and the sad effects of vice and ungodliness; it shews, in the liveliest colours, the vanity and comparative worthlessness of those temporal objects which naturally engage our affections and animate us in our pursuits, and, while it points out the sure way to everlasting life, it urges upon us motives of the most powerful kind, by which we may be persuaded to make the service of God our choice and our delight.

The old testament contains those sacred books which were composed previous to the birth of our Saviour, by the successive prophets and inspired writers whom it pleased God to raise up from time to time through a period of more than one thousand years. These books were originally written in the Hebrew language, and were

divided by the Jews into three classes—the first, consisting of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, which they called, *the Law*—the second, of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, the two books of Samuel, of Kings and of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel and the twelve minor prophets from Hosea to Malachi inclusive, which they called, collectively, *the Prophets*—and the third, of Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon, to which they gave the general name of *the Psalms*. The first five books were composed by Moses, and are generally known by the title of *the Pentateuch*.

Genesis, which derives its name from a word signifying generation or production, comprehends a period of about two thousand three hundred and sixty nine-years from the creation. From this book we learn that God made the world and all that it contains in the space of six days. For wise and benevolent purposes, he determined to bring into being a new and an accountable race of creatures, and, in the accomplishment of his plans, prepared for them a splendid and beautiful abode, filled and surrounded with all things that could minister to their comfort and their happiness. After reducing the confusion of chaos to harmony and order; forming the light; placing the firmament in the midst of the waters; establishing the boundary of the seas; covering the land with verdure and fruitfulness; adorning the heavens with those bright luminaries which we now behold, and diffusing the principle of animal life through the earth, the ocean and the air, the Supreme Creator proceed-

ed to make man in his own image, and to give him dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

When the work of creation was finished, and all things had been pronounced good, God rested from his labours on the seventh day, wherefore he blessed that day and hallowed it, and it became the duty of man to observe and keep it as the Sabbath of the Lord. The first created person, whose name was Adam, being made in purity and holiness, was placed in a beautiful garden, called Eden, which was situated in some part of Asia, in order to dress it and to keep it, with perfect liberty to eat of the fruit of all the trees of the garden, save that of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which he was prohibited from touching, under the penalty of death, in case of disobedience.

Adam being alone, it seemed good to the Lord to provide him a companion; and, accordingly, he took from him, while he slept, a rib, of which he made a woman, whose name was called Eve, and she was given to the man for his wife.

We have no account of the length of time during which Adam and Eve retained the divine favour and their own innocence; but it was, probably, very soon, that the woman was persuaded by the serpent, who was the most artful of irrational animals, to violate the command of her Maker. In compliance with his

suggestions she eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree, and gave to her husband with her, who did, also, eat of the same. The sentence of labour and pain and death was then pronounced upon the transgressors, and the serpent was declared cursed above all cattle and every beast. The trembling offenders were, however, comforted with the intimation of a future Saviour; after which, they were driven out from the garden, and there were placed at its entrance cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way, to prevent their return and approach to the tree of life.

LESSON II.

After the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden, there were born unto them two sons, the eldest of which was named Cain, and the youngest, Abel. These two brothers were exceedingly diverse in their characters; and when they presented their sacrifices to the Lord, that which was brought by Abel was accepted, while the other was rejected. This excited, to a very high degree, the envy and malice of Cain, and he rose up against his brother, when they were in the field, and slew him. The indignation of the Lord was thereby greatly provoked, and he pronounced a severe curse upon the murderer and sent him forth into the earth as a fugitive and a vagabond. And in order that none might lay violent hands upon him and kill him, he was distinguished from all others by a peculiar mark which the Almighty himself stamped upon him. After this, he built a city which he called Enoch, from the name of his son, from whom descended Jabal, the father of such as dwell in tents and

of such as have cattle ; Jubal, who first invented and taught the use of the harp and the organ, and Tubal Cain, the instructor of every artificer in brass and iron.—Adam, after the death of Abel, became the father of a third son, who was called Seth, and from him the scripture genealogy which ends in Jesus Christ is reckoned.

Seth was born when his father was an hundred and thirty years of age. The whole duration of Adam's life was nine hundred and thirty years. Seth was nine hundred and twelve years old when he died. Enoch, one of his descendants, was an eminently holy man, and did not see death, being, at the age of three hundred and sixty five years, translated into heaven. Methuselah, the son of Enoch, died at the age of nine hundred and sixty nine years, and was the oldest person of whom we have any account either in sacred or profane history. Methuselah was the father of Lamech and the grandfather of Noah.

The persons who are mentioned as the descendants of Seth down to Noah are called the antediluvian patriarchs, and from the great age to which they lived their posterity became exceedingly numerous. As the inhabitants of the earth thus increased, a general depravation of morals took place, and the whole world became filled with wickedness, insomuch that, as the sacred historian relates, it repented the Lord that he had made man, and he resolved to destroy the creatures which his hand had formed. We are not, however, to understand by this, that the event was unforeseen by the Creator, or that he can be affected or influenced by the changeable passions which rule in the breasts of

mortals. In language, expressed after the manner of men, we are simply taught that God viewed his rational creatures as free and accountable beings, and that he could, in perfect justice, and consistently with all his other attributes, vary his dealings with them according to the good or evil of their conduct.

But it happened that one family was found which did not participate in the wickedness that prevailed. Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. With him, therefore, a covenant of peace and of safety was established, and he was directed to build an ark, three hundred cubits in length, fifty cubits in breadth and thirty cubits in height, into which he was to enter with his wife and children, together with a certain number of animals of every kind, that they might be spared from the destruction which was about to take place. Noah, having done as he was commanded, went into the ark with his wife, his three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, and their wives, and the appointed number of birds and of beasts, and of creeping things, two and two of all flesh wherein was the breath of life, and the Lord shut them in. This event happened in the six hundredth year of Noah's age, the seventeenth day of the second month, one thousand five hundred and fifty six years after the creation; and on the same day, the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened, and the rain fell incessantly for forty days and forty nights, and the waters prevailed and were increased greatly upon the face of the whole earth, and the highest hills were covered, and every living substance which

remained upon the dry ground was destroyed, man and beast, the creeping things and the fowls of heaven. The time of the continuance of the waters upon the earth without any abatement was one hundred and fifty days, at the expiration of which they gradually decreased, and the ark rested, on the seventeenth day of the seventh month, upon a mountain called Ararat, that rises from the midst of a vast plain in Armenia, the top of which is now said to be inaccessible, both by reason of its great height and the snow which perpetually covers it.

LESSON III.

After successively sending forth a raven and a dove, Noah ascertained from the return of the latter with an olive leaf in her mouth that the waters were abated. He determined, however, to wait a few days longer, and at the end of a week he sent forth the dove again, and she returned to him no more. Upon this, he removed the covering of his dwelling and saw that the land was dry; and, at the command of God, he, together with his family and all creatures that were with him, went forth from the ark. Noah then built an altar to the Lord and offered burnt offerings, and it pleased God to say in his heart, that he would no more curse the ground and smite every living thing as he had done, but that seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night should not cease while the earth remained.

The persons who were saved, having acknowledged, in a suitable manner, their wonderful preservation, while millions around them were destroyed, received the blessing of their Maker,

who established his covenant of mercy with them, and appointed the bow in the heavens to be a token of the same, that whenever it appeared in the clouds, it might be considered as a pledge and an assurance that the waters should no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

After the event of the deluge, Noah applied himself to the concerns of husbandry, and from the fruit of the vineyard which he had planted, he became drunken and lay uncovered in his tent. In this situation he was seen by Ham, who exposed and derided him; but his other sons, with filial reverence, threw a garment over him and thus concealed his infirmity and his shame, which conduct brought upon them the blessing of their father while Ham was subjected to his curse. Noah lived to the age of nine hundred and fifty years, when he died, just three hundred and fifty years from the time of his entering the ark.

From the account of the children of the three sons of Noah, we learn that the posterity of Japheth divided the Isles of the Gentiles; that Nimrod the mighty hunter, who founded Babylon, the capital of Chaldea, was descended from Ham, as was, also, Ashur, who built Nineveh, and from whom Assyria derived its name, and that the posterity of Shem extended their settlements generally to the east.

For the period of about one hundred years after the deluge, the descendants of Noah possessed one common language; but at the expiration of this time, when they were assembled together for the purpose of building a city and a tower, whose top might reach unto heaven, the Lord confounded them in their speech so that they

could not understand one another, in consequence of which a separation of the families took place and they were dispersed through the earth. The work which they had commenced was called Babel, a name, signifying confusion, and it is supposed to have been the origin of the celebrated city of Babylon.

We do not learn that any immediate revelation was made from God to man between the time of Noah's leaving the ark and the days of Abraham, a period of about three hundred and sixty years; but while the latter, who was the son of Terah, and descended in a direct line from Shem, dwelt in Haran, with Lot his nephew, and Sarai his wife, to which place they had been carried by his father from Ur of the Chaldees, where they had previously resided, the Lord was pleased to renew his communications with mortals, and to signify his intention of selecting from the nations of the earth one family to be his peculiar and chosen people. He appeared unto Abraham and commanded him to depart from his country, and his kindred, and his father's house, and go into a land which would be shewn him, where he was destined to become a great nation, and to inherit a distinguished blessing. This land was the country of the Canaanites, now called Palestine, and, in obedience to the divine word, Abraham, with Lot his nephew, and Sarai, his wife, immediately commenced his journey thither, being at that time seventy five years old. This event is termed the call of Abraham, and happened two thousand one hundred and eighty three years after the creation.

While Abraham was pursuing his course

through Canaan, there was a famine in the land, in consequence of which he went down into Egypt and remained there for a time. At length, he returned to Bethel, where he had before built an altar, and called upon the name of the Lord. In this place a strife happened between the servants of Abraham and those of Lot, which, however, was amicably settled, and a separation of the two companies was mutually agreed upon, Lot choosing the plain of Jordan and pitching his tent near Sodom, which was then distinguished for the depravity of its inhabitants, while Abraham established his dwelling in the plain of Mamre in Hebron.

Soon after this a war commenced among several princes of the country, four kings against five; and in the consequences of the battle which ensued, Lot, with his family, was involved, being taken prisoner by the conquerors, spoiled of his goods, and carried away captive, together with his household. Abraham, on hearing of the occurrence, immediately armed his servants, to the number of three hundred, and pursued after the enemy, and recovered his nephew, with all the effects which had been seized. It was on his return from this expedition that Melchizedek, priest of the Most High God and king of Salem, met him and blessed him, to whom Abraham gave a tenth part of all that he had.

LESSON IV.

Abraham, having returned with success from the pursuit of those who had taken captive his nephew, the Lord again appeared to him and renewed the promise which had before been

made. He then, in order to confirm the faith of the patriarch, directed him to prepare certain sacrifices by which they might enter into a formal covenant upon the occasion. This being done, Abraham fell into a deep sleep, during which it was revealed to him that he was not to expect an immediate fulfilment of the divine promise, for though he himself was to die in peace, and at a good old age, yet his posterity were afterwards to sojourn and be afflicted in a strange country. It was, however, declared that at the expiration of four hundred years, the Almighty would both punish their oppressors, and establish his own people in the land which he had promised. Upon this communication Abraham awoke; and, in ratification of the covenant, the Lord caused the symbol of his presence to appear before him. It consisted of a smoking furnace and a burning lamp which passed between the pieces of the divided victims and entirely consumed them. Ten years afterwards, Abraham, at the request of Sarai, took unto him her handmaid Hagar to wife, who bore him a son that he named Ishmael. Hagar, having conceived, seemed to consider this as a mark of the Lord's favour directed to her in preference to her mistress, whereby the latter became despised in her sight, which provoked the hatred of Sarai to such a degree that she treated Hagar with great severity, and thus caused her to flee from her presence into the wilderness. There, the angel of God found her and comforted her, and after directing her to return to her mistress, foretold the multitude and the character of her posterity. Abraham was eighty six years old when Ishmael was

born, and from the latter are descended the Arabs, who, as a people, answer to the declaration of the angel:—"He will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man and every man's hand against him, and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren."

When Abraham was ninety nine years old the Lord again appeared to him, and, having declared the Almighty character and perfections, renewed the covenant with his servant, at the same time changing his name, which before was Abram. He, also, instituted the ordinance of circumcision which has been observed by the descendants of Abraham even to the present day. At this time the name of Sarai was changed to Sarah, and she was told that she should be a mother of nations.

The inhabitants of the cities of the plain, where Lot dwelt, had become exceedingly corrupt, insomuch that the Lord determined to destroy them. His intention in this respect he was pleased to make known to Abraham; and, accordingly, he commissioned three angels, one of whom appears to have been the peculiar representative of Jehovah, to visit him as he sat at his tent door in the plains of Mamre. By these the promise of issue to Sarah was repeated, at which she manifested a great degree of surprise and incredulity. From the subsequent account it appears that two of the heavenly messengers then went on to Sodom while the other remained with Abraham, and declared to him the divine intentions in regard to that corrupt city. The benevolent and pious patriarch interceded with his Lord for the place, and, at length, obtained a promise that if there could be found

ten righteous persons among its inhabitants, it should be spared for their sake. There were not, however, so many; and the two angels, having entered into the house of Lot, prepared to execute their awful commission. Lot was commanded to depart from the city with his family; but it was in vain that he endeavoured to persuade his sons in law to accompany him. With his wife and two daughters, being hastened by the angels, he fled towards the plain, but obtained favour, at his earnest entreaty, to stop at a place called Zoar.

Then the Lord rained fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah and destroyed all the people within them. Those places are supposed to have stood where the Dead sea or lake Asphaltites is now to be seen. The wife of Lot, looking back, was turned into a pillar of salt. He, with his two daughters, afterwards went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountain, where he unconsciously became the parent of two sons, Moab and Ammon, from whom descended the Moabites and Ammonites who were always inveterate in their enmity to the children of Israel.

After these events, Abraham removed towards the south country, and dwelt in Gerar, the king of which was Abimelech. Him he deceived in relation to his wife Sarah, declaring, through fear, that she was his sister, and thus exposing himself to great difficulties, from which, however, the Lord mercifully delivered him.

When Abraham was an hundred years old, his son Isaac was born unto him of Sarah, and on the eighth day after his birth, his father circumcised him agreeably to the command of God.

Soon after this, Ishmael, having excited the anger of Sarah, was, together with his mother, and against the will of Abraham, banished from his family. They went into the wilderness, where the angel of God relieved them in their necessities. Hagar, at length, took an Egyptian woman to be the wife of her son, and he became the father of twelve tribes, which in process of time dispersed themselves throughout the whole land of Arabia. In the mean time, Abraham entered into a friendly covenant with Abimelech, in whose land he resided and planted a grove and erected an altar in a place which was afterwards called Beersheba, and there he invoked the name of the Lord, the everlasting God.

LESSON V.

Abraham had experienced many heavy afflictions in the course of his life, but he was now to be exposed to a trial far more severe than any thing which he had as yet endured. This was nothing less than obedience to a command from heaven that he should slay his beloved son Isaac. But he did not hesitate in preparing himself for a compliance with the divine requisition. He took his son and his servants and went to the mountain of which God had told him, where, having made all things ready for the offering, he stretched forth his hand for the destruction of the victim. But he was permitted to proceed no farther. The Lord was satisfied with this proof of his faith, and provided a substitute which was sacrificed in the room of Isaac. After this, the angel of the Lord called again to Abraham out of heaven, confirming the divine

promise in relation to his family, and declaring with reference to Christ, the Saviour, that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed.

Sarah, the wife of Abraham, having reached the age of an hundred and twenty seven years, was now removed from him by death. This event happened in Hebron, in the land of Canaan, where the sons of Heth then dwelt. Of these people, Abraham requested a place in which he might bury his dead, and they generously offered him the choice of their sepulchres. He insisted, however, upon a fair purchase, which he at length made of the cave of Machpelah, which was owned by Ephron the Hittite, of whom he bought it for four hundred shekels of silver; and there he buried Sarah.

Not long after Sarah's death, Abraham called unto him his eldest servant, and required of him an oath, that he would not take for his son Isaac a wife of the daughters of the Canaanites, but that he would go, for that purpose, to his own country and among his own kindred. The servant, afterwards, made ready ten of his master's camels, and departed for the city of Nahor, the brother of Abraham. In this place he found Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Nahor, who was persuaded, with the consent of her parents, to accompany the man into the land of Canaan, where she became the wife of Isaac, who was, at that time, forty years old.

Abraham lived to be an hundred and seventy five years old, when he died, and was buried in the cave of Machpelah, leaving Isaac the sole heir of his possessions, although, by his other wives he had many children. After the

death of Abraham, the Lord blessed Isaac, and he became the father of two sons, whose names were Jacob and Esau, the latter of whom received the peculiar love of Isaac, and the former that of Rebekah. The character of Esau was that of a cunning hunter, a man of the field, but Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. On a certain occasion, he purchased of his brother the birth right, for a mess of pottage, and thus laid the foundation of future contention and hatred.

To avoid the effects of a famine with which the land was afflicted, Isaac removed, with his family, into the country of the Philistines, and dwelt under the protection of Abimelech, at Gerar, where the Almighty appeared unto him and renewed the covenant which had been made with his father Abraham. In this place a strife arose between the herdmen of Isaac and the inhabitants of the land concerning certain wells of water; but the difficulty was amicably settled, and Isaac went up and dwelt in Beersheba, where he entered into a covenant of peace and friendship with Abimelech, the king of the country. At this time, Esau, being forty years old, married the daughter of a Hittite, which was displeasing to both his parents.

Isaac, having arrived at a great age, and wishing to bless his favorite son, according to the custom which prevailed among the ancient patriarchs, directed him to go into the field and kill some venison, of which savoury meat might be made, such as his father loved, that he might eat thereof, and that his soul might bless him before he died. Esau accordingly departed, in compliance with his father's request

but Rebekah, his mother, having a partiality for Jacob, sent him immediately to the flock for two kids, and when he returned with them she made savoury meat for his father. Then, clothing Jacob with the garments of Esau, and covering his hands and neck with skins, she directed him to carry the provision to Isaac, who not being able to see, was deceived in the person of his son, and supposing him to be Esau, did eat of that which was prepared, and gave him his fullest blessing. Soon after Jacob had gone out, Esau returned, and was deeply grieved and offended to find in what manner he had been supplanted by his brother. Isaac, also, trembled exceedingly, and was greatly distressed at the event; but believing it to be the will of God, who had providentially interfered in the case, that Jacob should inherit the blessing, he confirmed what he had done, although Esau sought with prayers and tears to induce him to reverse the transaction. Esau, upon this, hated his brother Jacob, and determined that when his father was dead, he would kill him. But by the advice of Rebekah and the subsequent direction of Isaac, Jacob left the country to go unto Padan aram, where Laban, his mother's brother dwelt, and from whose family he was commanded by his father to take a wife. It was on his journey thither, that he saw in a vision, as he slept upon the ground, with the stones for his pillow and the sky his covering, a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. In this situation he received from the Lord a ratification of the blessing which had before been pronounced, together with a promise of divine

protection and defence. When Jacob awoke, he dedicated to God a pillar of the stones upon which he had slept, and called the place Beth-el, that is, the house of God, vowing, at the same time, that of all that should be given to him he would dedicate one tenth part thereof to his Almighty Benefactor.

LESSON VI.

Jacob, after the vow which he had made, proceeded on his journey and came into the land of the people of the east. There, while he stood by a well, conversing with certain persons who had come thither with their flocks, he first saw Rachel, the daughter of Laban. To her he made himself known, and she immediately ran and told her father. Laban, after this, engaged Jacob to remain in his service, and agreed to give him Rachel, his daughter, to wife, as a compensation for seven years' labour. At the expiration of this period, when Jacob claimed his wife, Laban deceived him, and brought unto him Leah, his eldest daughter, instead of Rachel. Upon the remonstrance of Jacob, however, he consented that he should have Rachel also provided he would continue in his service seven years longer. To this Jacob agreed, and thus became possessed of two wives, polygamy, at that time, being common in the east.

From the time of his marriage Jacob continued with Laban thirteen years, and the Lord blessed them both in the increase of their flocks and their herds. At length, the sons of Laban became envious of Jacob, and alienated the affections of their father from him. This determined Jacob to leave the place and return to

the land of Canaan. Taking, therefore, his wives and his children and his cattle, he departed without the knowledge of Laban, who, on the third day, pursued after him, but in consequence of a vision from the Lord, he offered him no harm. After upbraiding Jacob for his secret removal, and searching, without success, for his images, which Rachel had stolen and concealed, he entered into a covenant of peace with him, and then returned to his own house. Jacob proceeded on his way, and the angels of God met him at a place which he called Mahanaim. Beginning at this time to feel some uneasiness from the apprehension of what his brother Esau might do unto him, he sent forward messengers to the latter to conciliate his favour. The messengers returned with information that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men. This intelligence greatly alarmed Jacob, and he immediately prepared a valuable present from his flocks and herds to be given to his brother. In the mean time, an angel of God appeared unto him and wrestled with him, after which, he blessed him, and changed his name from Jacob to Israel.

When the two brothers met, they tenderly embraced each other; and Esau, having received the present from Jacob, returned on his way to Seir. Jacob slowly proceeded on his journey to Succoth, and from thence he removed to a place in the neighborhood of Shechem, where he bought a field of the children of Hamer, the king of the country, for an hundred pieces of money, and erected in it an altar, which he called El elohe Israel. Soon after his settlement in this place, the prince of Shechem

brought dishonour upon his family, in consequence of which, Simeon and Levi, two of his sons, entered the city and slew all the male inhabitants, carried the rest away captive, and entirely spoiled the place.

It was not the will of God that Jacob should continue where he had pitched his tent; and, in obedience to the divine command, he prepared to go up to Bethel, where he had seen the vision of the ladder, at the time when he fled from his brother. When he arrived at this place, Deborah, the nurse of Rebekah, died, and she was buried under an oak. From Bethel, Jacob proceeded on towards his father's habitation, at Mamre, and after burying his beloved Rachel by the way, who died at the time Benjamin, his youngest son, was born, he arrived in safety at Hebron. Near this period, Isaac, his father, being one hundred and eighty years old, died, and Esau and Jacob, with filial piety, buried him.

The sons of Jacob were twelve, eleven of which were born unto him of his two wives, and his two concubines Bilhah and Zilpah, while he remained with Laban in Padan aram, but only two of the whole number, Joseph and Benjamin, were the sons of Rachel. Their names were Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Napthali, Gad, Asher, Joseph and Benjamin. Of these, Joseph was the dearest in his father's affections and distinguished by many tokens of his partiality, among which was a coat of many colours. When Joseph was seventeen years old, he had two remarkable dreams which indicated his future superiority over his brethren. These, being related, gave great offence to the older sons of Jacob, and excited

their envy and hatred. It happened, soon after, that the ten brethren went to a distant place in order to find pasture for their flocks; and, on Joseph's visiting them, by direction of his father, to inquire after their welfare, they resolved to kill him that his dreams might not be fulfilled. But God frustrated their wicked purpose by enkindling the flame of fraternal affection in the breast of Reuben, at whose persuasion they stripped Joseph of his many coloured coat, and, instead of slaying him, put him into a pit, in which there was no water. It was the design of Reuben to deliver him from this place, and restore him, in safety, to his father. But, during his absence, a company of Ishmaelitic merchantmen passed by, and, at the instance of Judah, Joseph was taken out of the pit and sold to the strangers for twenty pieces of silver. The sons of Jacob then dipped the coat of Joseph in the blood of a kid, and carried it to their father, thus leading him into the sorrowful belief, that his beloved child had been slain by a wild beast, and the good old man mourned for his son many days. But Joseph was carried into Egypt, and sold to Potiphar, a captain of Pharaoh's guard.

LESSON VII.

While Joseph was in the house of Potiphar, he was greatly prospered by the Lord and highly favoured by his master, who was blessed for Joseph's sake, and who gave to him the oversight of all that he had. But, by the wickedness and falsehood of Potiphar's wife, he became deprived of his honour and his place, and was cast into prison. The Lord, however, did not forsake

him, but gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison, who committed to his charge the other prisoners, and, by many acts of kindness, alleviated his afflictions.

At this time, there were in confinement with Joseph two of the servants of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, the chief butler and the chief baker. These persons, being troubled with certain dreams, which had happened to them on one and the same night, made known the cause of their sadness to Joseph, who interpreted their dreams, as signifying the restoration of the chief butler to his office and the execution of the chief baker; and in this way they were strictly fulfilled. Joseph requested the chief butler to remember him when he should be reinstated in his honours; but, amidst the splendour and profusion of a court, he forgot the inmate and the wretchedness of a dungeon.

At the end of two years, the mind of the monarch was greatly disturbed by certain dreams, in which he saw, in a meadow, seven well favoured and fat fleshed kine devoured by seven other kine that were lean fleshed and ill favoured; and, also, seven ears of corn, rank and good, devoured, in like manner, by seven thin and blasted ears. In the morning, Pharaoh sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt to explain his dreams, but they were unable to give him any satisfaction. Then it was that the chief butler remembered Joseph, and immediately acquainted his master with the circumstances which had taken place in the prison relative to himself and the chief baker. Upon this, Pharaoh caused Joseph to be brought into his presense and made known to him his

dreams. The pious Hebrew, who had been instructed by his God in the answer which he was to give, faithfully interpreted the visions of the monarch, declaring the seven well favoured oxen and the seven good ears to signify seven years of great plenty, and the seven ill favoured oxen and the seven blasted ears to denote seven years of general and severe famine. At the same time, he recommended to Pharaoh to appoint certain officers who might gather the food of the good years and lay it by for the use of the people when the famine should come upon them.

The admiration and astonishment of Pharaoh were greatly excited by the wisdom of Joseph, and he not only freed him from his bonds, but raised him to great power and made him the second person in the kingdom. And Joseph gathered together all the corn that he was able to procure while the years of plenty continued, and thus made preparation for the support of the people during the approaching famine.

Joseph was thirty years of age when he first stood before Pharaoh; and he had given him to wife Asenath, the daughter of Potipherah, priest of On, by whom he had two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.

The seven years of plenty having expired, the predicted famine commenced, and prevailed throughout the whole earth, and the inhabitants of all countries resorted to Egypt to buy corn. Thither, also, came the ten sons of Jacob for the same purpose, and humbly prostrated themselves at the feet of that brother whom twenty years before they had sold as a slave. When Joseph saw his brethren, he immediately knew them, and charged them with being spies, but

they did not recognize him. Having vindicated themselves against his accusation, and candidly stated the number and circumstances of their father's family, they received permission to return home with a supply of corn for their families, upon condition that they would, on their next journey to Egypt, cause their brother Benjamin to accompany them. Simeon was detained in bonds as a surety for their compliance with this requisition. As the ten brethren were proceeding on their way to Canaan, one of them discovered that his money had not been received for his provisions, but was placed in the mouth of his sack. This gave them great concern, and when they arrived at their habitation and had related to their father all things that had befallen them, they found, to their extreme surprise, that the whole of their money had been brought back from Egypt. Jacob was much afflicted by the events which had taken place, and, at first, positively refused his consent that Benjamin should go down with them. Upon the entreaties and arguments of his children, he, however, gave, at length, his permission, and the eleven, with a present for the governor, and double money in their hands, in order to rectify the mistake which they supposed had been made, departed again for Egypt. When they arrived, Joseph received them with great kindness and hospitality, and released Simeon from his confinement. He was deeply affected at the sight of his brother Benjamin; and, at a subsequent entertainment which he made, distinguished him by a peculiar mark of his favour.

LESSON VIII.

When the sons of Jacob were prepared to return to their own country, Joseph commanded his servant to put his silver cup into the sack of Benjamin; and, as soon as they were gone out of the city, he caused them to be pursued and arrested upon a charge of stealing his goods. Conscious of their innocence but trembling for the issue, they unloaded their asses and permitted their sacks to be searched for the cup, which, to their utter astonishment, was found in the possession of their youngest brother. With heavy hearts they returned to the city; and, being come into Joseph's house, Judah, in strains of the most touching eloquence, supplicated the governor in behalf of Benjamin. This, indeed, was what Joseph wished; and when he had thus made proof of their affection for his brother, he refrained himself no longer, but, causing the Egyptians, who were present, to retire, made himself known to his brethren, saying, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Nothing could exceed their consternation and surprise at so unexpected a discovery. But Joseph soon dispersed their fears and established their confidence; and, after directing them to return to their father, and to bring him, with his household, into Egypt, to be nourished during the five years of famine which were yet to be fulfilled, he loaded them with gifts, and dismissed them, with kind and suitable advice, from his presence. The joyful intelligence was soon conveyed to the venerable patriarch that his favourite son, for whose supposed death he had so long mourned, was alive, and that it was he who was governor over all the land of Egypt.

He was almost overcome with the news, but resolved; at once to go and see his child before he died. This resolution was soon accomplished, and Jacob, with his sons and their families, departed for Egypt. Joseph, in his chariot, went up to meet his father, at Goshen, and there they indulged in all the tenderness of parental and filial affection. At the request of Joseph, Jacob and his family were permitted to settle in the land of Goshen, where the former kindly nourished and supported them.

The famine continued, after this, with great severity, and Joseph purchased of the Egyptians, for corn, after their money was spent, all their flocks and herds together with their lands and their persons. Jacob lived in Egypt seventeen years; and having received from Joseph an oath that he would bury him in the sepulchre of his fathers, in the field which Abraham bought of Ephron the Hittite, he proceeded to give his blessing to Manasseh and Ephraim, the two sons of Joseph, placing the youngest before the eldest; after which, he blessed all his sons in order, predicting the future advent of the Messiah from the line of Judah. Having concluded his blessing, he repeated the charge which he had given to Joseph respecting his burial, and then gave up the ghost, being one hundred and forty seven years old. Joseph caused his father to be embalmed by the physicians; and after the days of mourning were ended, he went up to bury him as he had promised, being accompanied not only by his brethren, but by the servants of Pharaoh, a very great company of chariots and horsemen. And when they came to a place which was afterwards called Abel

mizraim, they there renewed their mourning for Jacob, and continued it seven days. When these were ended, they buried him, as he had given them in charge, and returned to Egypt, where Joseph lived, in great favour with the king and the people, to the age of one hundred and ten years, when he died, having declared to his brethren, in the spirit of prophecy, that God would visit them, and that they should carry up his bones from thence. And he was embalmed and put in a coffin in Egypt.

REMARKS.

1. It has been objected to the fact of our first parents' eating the forbidden fruit, that the condition was of too trifling and unimportant a nature for the consequences which were made dependent upon it. But it is to be considered that such was the character and situation of man, when in paradise, that he could not be exposed to a violation of any of those laws which are now called moral. The prohibition under which he was placed was sufficient to try his obedience, and this was what the Almighty intended by it.

2. The distinction which was made between the sacrifice of Abel and that of Cain was probably owing to the difference of their nature; the former being of the firstlings of the flock, and, therefore, pointing, through the shedding of blood, to the atonement of the Messiah, while the latter was of the fruits of the ground, and thus constituted an offering destitute of any such allusion. Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin; and, by faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.

3. By the sons of God, mentioned in the beginning of the sixth chapter, the children of Seth, are supposed to be meant, and by the daughters of men the descendants of Cain.

4. The exact measure of the ark is calculated as follows—five hundred and forty seven feet in length, ninety one feet in breadth, and sixty four feet in height. A cubit contains about twenty two common inches.

5. Traces of the deluge are still to be found in various parts of the world, and its certainty is proved from the traditions which have been held by all nations, heathens as well as Jews, respecting it.

6. Melchizedek, to whom Abraham paid tithes was, undoubtedly, one of the princes of Canaan, who, like many others of later days, united in themselves both the kingly and the priestly office. He was a worshipper of the true God, and by some it is supposed that he was Shem, the son of Noah, who, according to the account of his age, must then have been alive. He is mentioned by the apostle as an eminent type of Jesus Christ.

7. The amount of a shekel of silver being about the half of a dollar, as money is now reckoned, Abraham must have paid Ephron the Hittite, for his field what would now be equal to two hundred dollars, which was, probably less than its real value.

8. We have several accounts of strifes in relation to wells of water. This was in consequence of the great necessity of that article, in a country where it was exceedingly scarce, and where flocks and herds were so numerous.

9. The names of Abram, Sarai, and Jacob,

were changed upon certain occasions. It is to be noted, that in ancient times, all names of individuals and of places were indicative of some quality or circumstance, connected with their character or situation. When any thing, therefore, of great importance occurred, the name was so changed, as, by an apt allusion, to perpetuate the remembrance of the transaction.

10. It was common, in former ages, to call all the kings of the same country by one common title, which was different from their real names. Thus the sovereign of Gerar was uniformly called Abimelech, and the king of Egypt, Pharaoh.

11. The place where Isaac was carried by his father to be sacrificed was the same mountain on which the temple of Solomon was afterwards built. One part of it was called Calvary, and there the Son of God expiated upon the cross the sins of the world.

12. In the book of Genesis, there are several predictions of the Messiah. The first is contained in the declaration of the Lord to Adam in the garden, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. A second appears in the promise made to Abraham that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed;—and a third we discover in the blessing which Jacob pronounced upon Judah.

13. The character of Joseph is deserving our attention from its close resemblance to that of the blessed Redeemer, of which it may be considered typical in a great variety of particulars. The former, like the latter, was distinguished by the love of his father; he was sold by his brethren; he was unjustly accused; he was placed in prison between two criminals, the

one of which was restored to favour, and the other punished with death; he was exalted to the right hand of Pharaoh; he supplied the wants of all people when there was provision in the hands of no one else; he was called the Saviour of the world, and his brethren, at length, prostrated themselves before him and humbly entreated his favour and protection.

LESSON IX.

The second book in the Bible is named Exodus, a word signifying *departure*, and comprehends the history of about one hundred and forty five years. After repeating the names of the sons of Jacob, and the number of his family which accompanied him into Egypt, the sacred historian acquaints us with some interesting circumstances which took place after the death of Joseph and his brethren and the generation which succeeded them. The Israelites remained in the land of Goshen, where they were greatly increased and multiplied. But upon the accession of a monarch to the throne who had no regard for the character or services of Joseph, they were, by his orders, severely afflicted and oppressed. He caused them to build for him treasure cities; and made their lives bitter in hard bondage with brick and mortar and in all manner of service in the field. But notwithstanding the rigour with which they were treated, they continued to multiply exceedingly, inasmuch that the sovereign, from his jealousy of their increasing strength, decreed that all their male children should be destroyed as soon as they were born.

At this time, there went a man of the house

of Levi and took a wife of the same tribe, by whom he had a son that was concealed for three months after his birth, by his mother. But when she saw that she could no longer elude the cruel edict of Pharaoh, she prepared an ark of bulrushes, and having placed her child within it, deposited it among the flags which grew upon the brink of the river, hoping that it might be found by some one whose compassion would lead to the preservation and support of the infant. There it was discovered by the daughter of the king, who, on beholding the babe, was touched with pity, and at once determined to save and protect him. This child she called Moses, and he was educated in the house of Pharaoh, under the immediate care and direction of the princess, being nursed, by a special providence, at the breast of his mother.

When Moses arrived at the years of manhood, he did not hesitate to espouse the cause of his afflicted brethren; and, on a certain occasion, he slew an Egyptian whom he saw abusing an Israelite. To avoid the wrath of Pharaoh, which had been greatly provoked against him in consequence of this action, he fled into the land of Midian, where he married the daughter of Jethro, the priest or prince of that country, and was employed in keeping the flocks of his father in law. One day, as he was engaged in his usual occupation, upon the side of Mount Horeb, his astonishment was excited by the appearance of a bush which burned with fire, but was not consumed. As he approached to gaze upon the prodigy, a revelation was made to him from the Lord, who spake from the bush, and declared himself to be the God of Abraham, of Isaac and

of Jacob, at the same time making known his benevolent designs in relation to the Hebrews in Egypt. He, also, commissioned Moses to return to his brethren and communicate to them the divine purpose and will, that it was the design of God to restore them to the land of their ancestors, and that, to this end, they should request, of Pharaoh, liberty to go three days journey into the wilderness under the pretence of offering a sacrifice and holding a feast unto the Lord.

Moses expressed his fear that the Israelites would not believe him unless he exhibited to them some sign or token that God had met with him, and he, also, hesitated in his compliance with the command which he had received from a consciousness of his deficiency in that kind of eloquence which he supposed necessary to his success. To remove his doubts and apprehensions, he was directed to prove his authority by three miraculous signs, which were then given to him, of two of which he was caused to make immediate trial. The first was manifested in casting his rod upon the ground, when it became a serpent, but, on putting forth his hand and catching it, it returned to its former state. In the second, his hand being put into his bosom and taken out, was covered with leprosy, but on putting it into his bosom again, it became like his other flesh. The third sign was to be shewn to Pharaoh and the Hebrews, by changing the waters of the river, when they were poured upon the dry ground, into blood. To remedy the defect in his speech, Moses was ordered to associate with him in his office and labours, his brother Aaron, who, in this par-

ticular, was eminently qualified to assist him. The commission being thus rendered ample and sufficient, and every objection removed, Moses hastened to the dwelling of his father in law, and obtained his consent to return into the land of Egypt. For this place he immediately departed with his wife and children, being determined to involve his whole family in the reproaches which the people of God might be called to suffer, and which he deemed far preferable to the pleasures of sin. On his way, he met with Aaron in the wilderness, and gave him a faithful relation of all that had taken place. They then went on together, and having come into the presence of their brethren, they called an assembly of the elders to whom they declared what God was about to do in their behalf, at the same time exhibiting the signs which had been received in attestation of their authority. And the people believed; and, rejoicing in the prospect of speedy relief and deliverance from the calamities with which they were oppressed, they bowed their heads and worshipped.

Soon after the return of Moses to Egypt, he, with Aaron, went in unto Pharaoh and told him that the God of the Hebrews required of his people a sacrifice, wherefore, they requested his permission to go three days journey into the wilderness, that they might there perform the solemnity agreeably to their own feelings and the customs of their fathers. Pharaoh, instead of consenting, treated the petitioners with scorn and contempt, and having commanded them to retire from his presence, greatly increased the burdens of the Israelites. The latter, in con-

sequence of the added severity of their tasks, complained to Moses and Aaron as if they had been the cause of their accumulated sufferings, and Moses expressed his concern and disappointment to the Lord.

LESSON X.

In answer to the complaint of Moses, the Lord declared to him that Pharaoh should be compelled to let the Hebrews go, and that, by an outstretched arm and with great judgements, they should be delivered from all their burdens. At this time God made himself known by his name JEHOVAH, signifying, the *self-existent*, a name which was afterwards held by the Jews in extraordinary respect, and used with the utmost reverence. Moses was, also, commanded to return, with Aaron, to the royal palace, and to renew his former request, with an assurance, however, that such would be the perversity and obstinacy, of Pharaoh as to cause him to refuse a compliance with their petition until he and his subjects had experienced the severest judgements. The two brethren then repaired a second time to the king, and Aaron, according to a direction which he had received, shewed one of his signs, by casting down his rod, which was immediately changed into a serpent. This made no impression upon the stubborn heart of Pharaoh, before whom the magicians of Egypt counterfeited the miracle which had been wrought by Aaron, and he refused, as he had done before, to comply with the request of the Hebrews.

Then it was, that the Lord commenced a course of dreadful plagues upon the land ; and,

in quick succession, the following calamities were experienced by the Egyptians:—

1. The water of the river Nile was turned into blood :

2. Frogs were caused to come up into every part of the country, even into the bed chambers of the king and his nobles :

3. The dust of the ground was converted into lice :

4. An immense swarm of flies was produced :

5. A grievous murrain destroyed the cattle :

6. Boils and blains broke out upon the Egyptians, both upon man and beast :

7. The country was laid waste by a dreadful storm of thunder, hail and rain, in which the fire of the lightning ran along upon the ground :

8. Locusts destroyed every herb of the field, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left :

9. There was a thick darkness over the land of Egypt which prevailed for three days, so that, during the whole of that time, no object could be perceived.

None of these plagues, however, extended into that part of the kingdom where the children of Israel dwelt.

While Pharaoh and his people were actually suffering under the severity of the various evils which were brought upon them, the heart of the proud monarch appeared, for the time, to relent, but as soon as they had severally ceased, which they did upon the earnest supplication of Moses, he relapsed into his previous obduracy, and refused to fulfil the promise which his dangers and his fears had extorted from him.

After the plague of darkness, Pharaoh pe-

remptorily ordered Moses to retire from his presence, and to appear before him no more, whereupon the latter declared that the injunction should be strictly obeyed, and that he would not renew his visits. But the Lord had determined to bring a tenth plague upon Egypt, more severe and distressing than any which has been mentioned, and he made known his intention to Moses, at the same time giving him directions to prepare the people for their journey by causing them to borrow of their neighbours jewels of silver and of gold. Having received this communication, Moses appeared before the people and declared to them that, at midnight, the Lord would go out into the midst of Egypt and slay all the first born of the inhabitants, from the first born of Pharaoh to the first born of the maid servant behind the mill, and, also, all the first born of beasts. This event was to be an important epoch in the history of the Hebrews; and, as they were not to be involved in the plague which was about to be inflicted, a feast was to be instituted that they might annually commemorate their deliverance forever. Being told that this should be the first month of the year to them, they were required to provide themselves, on the tenth day of the same, in each of their families, or where the household should be too small, in an association of families, with a lamb without blemish, and to keep it until the evening of the fourteenth day, when it was to be killed, and they were to eat it, on that night, roast with fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs, having first sprinkled the two side posts and the upper door post of their houses with the blood of the victim. This was

to be a token to the destroying angel to pass by the dwellings of the Israelites when he should go forth to slay the first born of the Egyptians, and such was the origin and institution of the passover which was celebrated by the Jews through subsequent ages with great joy and solemnity.

All things being done agreeably to the divine command, the event which had been predicted was speedily accomplished. At midnight, the angel of God passed through the land and smote all the first born of the Egyptians, and there was a great and an universal cry among the inhabitants, for in every house there was one dead.

Pharaoh then, not only gave his consent for the departure of the Israelites, but was exceedingly anxious to have them leave his dominions without a moment's delay. He sent them away in great haste, and such was the alarm of his people, that they readily supplied them with all things necessary for their journey. The Lord gave them favour in the sight of the Egyptians, and they spoiled them by receiving from their hands as loans, or which is more probable, the just wages of their service, jewels of silver and jewels of gold, with raiment.

The Israelites commenced their journey at Rameses and proceeded on as far as Succoth, in number about six hundred thousand on foot, that were men, besides children. Moses and Aaron were, at this time, instructed by the Lord in certain regulations to be observed in the future celebration of the passover, which they communicated to the people.

LESSON XI.

After the Israelites had commenced their departure from the land of Egypt, and the observance of the passover had been commanded as a memorial of their deliverance to all generations, it was, also, established as an ordinance, to perpetuate the remembrance of the same event, that the first born, both of man and of beast, should be forever sanctified or dedicated to the Lord, with a privilege of redemption in favour of the former, and of one class of the latter. The Lord then conducted the people on their journey, and they were led by the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea, instead of that of the Philistines, which was nearer, lest the opposition with which they might meet should so terrify them as to induce their return to Egypt. They were accompanied and encouraged in their travels by the divine presence, which went before them, by day, in a pillar of cloud, and in a pillar of fire, by night.

Pharaoh, reflecting upon the loss which he had sustained by the departure of the Hebrews whose labour had been so profitable to the interests of his kingdom, and being unmindful of the power by which he had been afflicted, resolved to pursue them with an army, and by force compel them to return. With horses and chariots, therefore, he went out after them and overtook them by the sea where they had encamped by direction of their Almighty Leader. When they saw the vast force and determined purpose of the enemy, they were greatly terrified, and began to reproach Moses for conducting them into such imminent danger. He, however, commanded them to be still and wait for the

salvation of the Lord, which was then miraculously granted them. The waters of the Red Sea were divided for their passage, and they were permitted to go through upon dry land, while Pharaoh and all his host, in pressing on after them were overwhelmed and destroyed. The confidence of the people in God and his servant Moses seemed established by this event, and they united with their leaders in a song of triumphant praise to their divine protector and defender.

From the Red Sea, the Israelites proceeded three days journey into the wilderness, but, finding no water, they continued their march until they came to a place called Marah, where there was a prospect that their necessities would be supplied. In this, however, they were at first disappointed, for the springs which they discovered were found to be affected with such a quality of bitterness that they could not drink of them. They then repeated their murmurs against Moses, who cried unto the Lord, and thus obtained relief by being shewn a tree which, when it was cast into the waters, rendered them sweet. From Marah they went on to Elim, and there encamped by twelve wells and sixty palm trees.

On the fifteenth day of the second month, the children of Israel came into the desert of Sin between Elim and Sinai, where they again murmured against Moses and Aaron for bringing them out of Egypt to die with hunger in the wilderness. To quiet their complaints, the Lord supplied them with flesh to eat in the evening, by sending quails into the camp, and with bread for the morning, by depositing upon

the ground, with the dew, a small round substance which they called manna. This they collected in certain prescribed quantities every morning, with the exception of the Sabbath, a supply for which was gathered on the day previous. By command of the Lord, Aaron laid up a portion of the manna in a vessel, in order to preserve it for the inspection of future generations, that they might see the bread which was given to their ancestors in the wilderness.

As the people proceeded on their journey, they again thirsted for water, and, as before, censured their leader, and evinced their distrust of the divine care and protection. They were then furnished with water from a rock in Horeb, which Moses was commanded to strike with his rod. Afterwards, they were engaged in a contest with the Amalekites and prevailed against them. In the battle which took place, Joshua exercised the chief command; and while Moses, who went up to the top of the hill with Aaron and Hur, held up his hands, success was on the side of Israel, but when his hands fell, the Amalekites prevailed. At length, his hands being weary, they were supported by Aaron and Hur, and in this manner continued steady until the enemy was discomfited and overthrown. Moses was then directed to write an account of this victory in a book, as a memorial of God's displeasure towards Amalek; and, having complied with the command, he there erected an altar to the Lord and called it Jehovah nissi.

Being now near the place where he had formerly resided, Moses received a visit from his father in law, the priest of Midian, to whom he related all that God had done for Israel. Je-

thro, having blessed the Lord and offered a burnt offering and a sacrifice, observed that the duty of Moses, in hearing and deciding controversies and questions among the people, was too arduous for one man, and, therefore, advised him, in order to lessen his labours, to appoint subordinate officers, rulers of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens, and to delegate to them authority to determine all the lesser matters which might be made subjects of dispute among the congregation. With this counsel, Moses readily complied, and Jethro returned to the place of his residence.

LESSON XII.

In the third month from the departure of the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, they came into the wilderness which extended along the foot of Mount Sinai, where they encamped. Here the Lord communicated with Moses from the mountain, and directed him to assure the people, that if they would be obedient to the voice of God and keep his covenant, they should be unto him a peculiar treasure above all other nations. And when they were informed of this declaration in their favour, they solemnly promised a faithful compliance with what had been spoken.

An interesting transaction was now about to take place. The Lord was preparing to come down upon Mount Sinai, with great majesty, in the sight of the whole congregation, and he commanded Moses to sanctify the assembly against the third day, and to set bounds around the mountain, that it might not be touched by man or beast. This being done, on the appointed

morning there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the sound of a trumpet exceeding loud, which produced great terror in the minds of all the people. The Lord then descended in fire, and the congregation came out of the camp to meet with him and to receive his laws. Under these solemn and impressive circumstances, the ten commandments were delivered; but the people were so much agitated by the wonderful sublimity of the scene, and all the occurrences which accompanied the immediate revelation of the great Jehovah, that they requested Moses to speak unto them in God's stead. They were, however, assured that the Lord was come, not to produce in them a slavish dread of him, but to prove them, and to cause his fear to fall upon them that they might be preserved from sin. They, then, retired, to a distance, and Moses alone approached the thick darkness where the divine presence remained. To him God delivered sundry laws of a ceremonial, moral, and political nature, for the future regulation of the Hebrews as a nation. In these, it was commanded them that, they should not make unto themselves idols; that they should punish with death man-stealers, and all who were guilty of smiting or cursing their parents; that they should not vex and afflict strangers, widows, or fatherless children; that they should not lend upon usury, nor detain their neighbour's raiment, which had been received as a pledge, until after the sun had gone down; that they should offer the first of their fruits, their cattle and their sons to the Lord; that they should avoid slander, partiality in judgement, inhumanity and op-

pression; that on every seventh year, they should neglect to cultivate their lands in order that the poor might have the benefit of them; that they should strictly observe the weekly Sabbath, and that they should annually keep three feasts unto the Lord, namely, the feast of unleavened bread, or the passover; the feast of harvest on receiving the first fruits of their labours, and the feast of ingathering at the end of the year.

Moses was told, after he had received the laws of God, that an angel would be commissioned to go before the Israelites on their way to the land of Canaan, and that if they continued in their obedience, and united themselves to none of the abominations of the heathen, the most distinguished success should attend them in their progress. Upon this, he returned to the congregation, having been previously directed to come up again to the Lord, with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. When he had descended from the mountain he erected an altar and offered thereon burnt offerings and peace offerings, after which, he caused the statutes that had been enjoined and which he had written down, to be read to the people, who promised a compliance with all that had been said. Moses then returned to the mountain, accompanied by Aaron and his two sons and seventy of the elders of Israel, who were indulged with a view of the majesty of Jehovah. Here he committed the care of the people to the elders, and taking Joshua, the son of Nun, with him, proceeded on his way to meet with God. For six days the glory of the Lord covered the mount, but no communication was

made until the seventh morning, when Moses was called from the cloud, and went up alone into the midst of the mountain where he remained with the Lord forty days and forty nights.

While Moses was in the mountain with God he received particular instructions in regard to the erection of a tabernacle which was to be consecrated to the service of the Most High. He was told how to make the ark for the reception of the laws which had been enjoined ; the mercy seat with its cherubim, to be placed upon the ark ; the table of shew bread, with its dishes, spoons and covers ; the candlestick with its appurtenances ; the curtains of the sanctuary, and the vail to separate the most holy place, in which the ark and the mercy seat were to be placed. In addition to these, he was directed to build an altar, and to prepare with it all things necessary for the offering of sacrifices ; to form the court of the tabernacle and to make holy garments for Aaron and his sons, with a breast plate, in which were to be put the Urin and Thummin, and a mitre, bearing the inscription, "Holiness to the Lord," that they might be duly consecrated and arrayed to minister in the priest's office before the Lord. At the same time the manner of sacrifice, which was to be observed at the consecration of the priests, was pointed out, and the form of an altar of incense, before which they were to stand, and a laver of brass, in which they were to wash themselves, were described. The composition of the holy oil, also, with which they were to be anointed, was made known. When all the directions in relation to these things were finished, the Al-

mighty proceeded to inform Moses that he had selected and endowed with extraordinary wisdom two persons, whose names were Bezaleel and Aholiab, to make all the articles which had been mentioned. He then renewed the command of the Sabbath, and delivered unto Moses two tables of stone upon which he had written his testimony with his own finger.

LESSON XIII.

The long absence of Moses in the mount, caused the people to fear that he would never return to them; and, forgetting at once the presence of God which they had so lately witnessed; his engagements of protection and defence in their behalf; and their own solemn and repeated promises of obedience, they assailed Aaron with a request that he would make them a graven image, which, as a god, might go before them. He complied with their solicitations, and formed from their golden ear rings, which they readily gave him for that purpose, a molten calf, before which they were guilty of the grossest idolatry, and thus denied the Lord, their deliverer. When this transaction had taken place, God commanded Moses to hasten down from the mount, at the same time informing him what had happened in the camp, and expressing his determination to destroy the idolaters. But upon the intercession of his servant, he restrained his vengeance; and Moses, with the two tables in his hands, went down to the people, whom he found rejoicing in their wickedness with feasting and revelry. Being greatly incensed at their presumption, he cast the tables to the ground with such violence, that

they were immediately broken in pieces. Then, taking the image which had been made, he burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and caused the people to drink it with water. After this, he commanded the Levites, who had declared themselves on the Lord's side, to go from gate to gate through the camp, and to slay every man his brother and neighbour and companion. In consequence of this order there fell by the sword about three thousand men. Then Moses returned to the Lord, and made earnest intercession in behalf of the people, and he was directed to proceed with them on their journey, with a promise that the angel of God should accompany them, but that, in the day of visitation, they should, nevertheless, be punished for the sin which had been committed.

By reason of the iniquity of the Israelites, the Lord, afterwards, declared to Moses that he would not go with them personally, on their way to the land which had been promised to their fathers. When this intelligence was received in the camp, it caused great mourning and lamentation among the people; but Moses interceded in their behalf, and he was comforted with an assurance, that the divine presence would not forsake them. The glory of the Lord was now partially discovered to his servant, and he was commanded to prepare two tables of stone similar to those which had been broken, and to come up again into Mount Sinai, that he might there receive a renewal of the laws of God. These directions being obeyed, the Lord passed before Moses, and declared to him his merciful and forgiving character, with his attributes of truth and justice. The injunc-

tions which had been formerly given, requiring the Israelites to keep themselves separate from the inhabitants of the several countries through which they were to pass; to observe certain feasts, and to dedicate their first born to God, were at this time repeated. At the expiration of forty days and forty nights, Moses received the tables with the commandments written upon them, and went down to the congregation, who, upon his approach, witnessed a remarkable splendor in the appearance of his face inso-much that they were afraid to come nigh him. In addressing them, therefore, he concealed his countenance with a veil, and proceeded to inform them of the directions which had been given him in the mount. All the people, without distinction, readily contributed, even more than was necessary, to the building of the tabernacle, which was soon completed, with all its appurtenances, by Bezaleel and Aholiab.

The event of raising and anointing the tabernacle took place on the first day of the second year after the departure from Egypt, when, all things being placed in order, a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. The cloud upon the tabernacle was intended as a signal to the Israelites to direct them on their march, for when it was taken up, they were to set forward, and when it descended, they were to rest. And through all their journeyings this cloud was over or upon the tabernacle, by day, and fire was on it by night, in the full view of all the assembly.

REMARKS.

1. It has been supposed by some, and is particularly stated by Josephus, that the celebrated pyramids in Egypt were erected by the Israelites during the time of their oppression.

2. The king of Egypt, from whom Moses fled, died during the residence of the latter in Midian. It was his successor therefore, who refused to let the people go.

3. The burning bush which Moses discovered on Mount Horeb, was designed as an encouragement to him to enter upon the mission before him. It represented the Israelites in their affliction, persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed, enduring almost every evil, but miraculously supported by the angel of God who was in the midst of them.

4. The Egyptians, in their sacrifices, never offered the blood of any creature; for this was an abomination to them. On this account the Israelites had a good reason for asking liberty to go three days journey into the wilderness to serve the Lord, that being thus out of the sight and observation of their oppressors, they might not excite a greater degree of their hatred and ill will.

5. The four hundred and thirty years which the children of Israel are said to have resided in Egypt are generally computed from the time of Abraham. The actual sojourning of the Hebrews in Egypt could not have been more than two hundred and fifty years.

6. The calf which the Israelites made in the wilderness was in imitation of the gods of the Egyptians who worshipped their deities under

the form of various animals, and particularly that of the ox.

7. When Moses went into the mountain to commune with God, it appears that Aaron and his two sons with seventy of the elders accompanied him to the borders thereof, and that Joshua proceeded with him to a greater distance from the camp, where he remained until Moses returned.

8. The wilderness of Sinai, where the Israelites lay encamped almost a year, is a plain in Arabia Petrea, about twelve miles in length, and two hundred and sixty miles distant from the capital of Egypt. The two mountains Horeb and Sinai are towards the northern extremity of this plain, the former standing little west of the latter. Sinai is, at least, one third part higher than Horeb, and its ascent is much more steep and rugged.

9. It has been objected to the account of the tabernacle that the expensive articles which were used in its formation, as well as in the composition of the altar, the ark, the holy garments and the various utensils of the sanctuary, were such as the situation of the Israelites in the wilderness would not admit of procuring. But when it is remembered that the people amounted to six hundred thousand, and that they had all, probably, received from the Egyptians gold and jewels and raiment, and that they must, also, have taken a considerable spoil from the Amalekites whom they had defeated, the difficulty is easily removed.

10. Among the distinguishing ornaments of the high priest was the breast plate, which was a piece of cloth doubled, of a span square, in

which were set twelve precious stones, bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, which being fixed to the Ephod, or upper vestment, was worn on all solemn occasions. In this breast plate the Urim and Thummim were fixed. What these were it is impossible to ascertain. The words signify *light* and *perfection*, or as they are translated in the Septuagint, *manifestation* and *truth*. They were used in asking counsel of God in difficult and momentous cases relating to the whole state of Israel. Whether the answer was given by an audible voice or by mysterious characters on the breast plate has been a subject of unprofitable controversy.

LESSON XIV.

The book of Leviticus, which is so called, because it describes the office and duties of the Levites and priests, follows that of Exodus, and records the transactions of only one month. From the tabernacle which had been built the Lord spake unto Moses and pointed out the manner in which burnt sacrifices should be offered. He, also, gave directions concerning the meat offering; the peace offering; the sin offering, for the priest and the congregation, for rulers and for subjects; and the trespass offering in case of ignorance, in which those who were unable to give from the flock or the herd were to bring two turtle doves or two young pigeons, or a small portion of fine flour. Many particulars of a ceremonial nature were also described, after which Moses, in obedience to the divine command, solemnly consecrated Aaron and his sons to their respective offices, and clothed them with the garments which had been made for glo-

ry and beauty, putting upon Aaron, as the high priest, the breast plate and the mitre. The priests were then sprinkled with the blood of a sacrifice, and commanded to abide at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. Aaron offered a sin offering, a burnt offering and a peace offering for himself and the people, which being done, he blessed the congregation, and there came out fire from the Lord and consumed all that was upon the altar.

The two sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, greatly provoked the Lord to anger, by taking common, or, as it is called, strange fire, and applying it to the sacrifices. For this act of disobedience they were instantly slain, and their bodies were ordered to be carried out of the camp from before the sanctuary which they had profaned. Aaron manifested a pious resignation at this distressing event; and at the same time received a prohibition that neither he nor his sons should drink wine or strong drink when they went into the tabernacle, from which circumstance it has been thought that Nadab and Abihu were drunken at the time of their trespass against God. Soon after these events, Moses was excited to anger against Eleazer and Ithamar, the two other sons of Aaron, whom he severely reprov'd, on account of their not eating the remains of the meat offering before the most holy place, but they were excused by their father, and Moses was satisfied with the vindication which he offered. This affair being settled, the Lord delivered to Moses a great number of laws concerning the use of clean and unclean animals; purifications and offerings; the discovery and treatment of diseases, partic-

ularly the leprosy, with the rites and ceremonies which were to attend the cleansing of the leper, and the manner of selecting the scape goat to bear into the wilderness the sins of the people. Sundry directions which had been previously given were, also, repeated, and the whole concluded with precepts relating to the celebration of the several festivals which had been instituted.

Soon after the promulgation of these laws, an opportunity was afforded the congregation to shew their zeal for the honour of the Lord, and their readiness to obey his commandments. The son of a certain Israelitish woman of the tribe of Dan, but whose father was an Egyptian, had been guilty of blasphemy, in consequence of which he was apprehended and imprisoned until the will of God could be made known respecting his punishment. Upon the declaration of this, and agreeably thereto, he was carried out of the camp and stoned to death.

Among the laws given to the Israelites, was one appointing a general jubilee, which was to be observed every fiftieth year, when they were neither to sow, nor to reap that which should grow of itself; when liberty was to be proclaimed to all prisoners and slaves throughout the land, and when every man was to return to his possessions which had been alienated from him. According to the number of years which preceded the jubilee, all sales of lands and of slaves were to be regulated. A solemn charge and injunction to obedience follows the record of this appointment, in which the people were promised distinguished blessings as the reward of

faithfulness, and threatened with severe judgments in case of ingratitude and rebellion.

The book of Leviticus concludes with a regulation concerning vows, and the dedication of property to God, in which the redemption of things devoted to religious purposes was expressly forbidden.

REMARKS.

1. Many of the laws, which were given to the Israelites, may seem, at first view, trifling and unworthy the character of the great God, who exercises unlimited dominion over all worlds. But it is to be noticed that the people were still in their infancy as a nation; that they were under the immediate and special care and direction of the Almighty, and that the minutest observances were necessary parts of a system of government which was to preserve them distinct from the rest of mankind, and to furnish the strongest barriers to their natural propensity to idolatry.

2. Nadab and Abihu, the two sons of Aaron, were struck dead for making use of common fire in the sacrifices, when none was permitted but that which came out from before the Lord. This was not suffered at any time to be extinguished, and was, therefore, called the everlasting fire of the altar.

3. The various sacrifices which were required of the Israelites, had reference to the great atonement of the Messiah which was one day to be made for the sins of the world, and, thus, those who offered the former in faith, became entitled to the benefits of the latter.

LESSON XV.

The book of Numbers commences with an account of the enumeration of the people who were able to carry arms, by Moses and certain persons selected to assist him from the several tribes. It was found that there were in the congregation six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty males, from twenty years old and upward, able to go forth to war in Israel. In this number the Levites were not included, as they had been appointed to the charge of the tabernacle and its vessels, and it was made their duty to carry it forward on the march, to take it down and to set it up. When the census was completed, directions were given to Moses and Aaron in regard to the pitching of the tents by the different tribes. The Levites were to station themselves around the tabernacle, and, at a distance from them, the rest of the people were to pitch by their respective standards, commencing with the camp of Judah towards the rising of the sun, and proceeding on by the south and the west to the tribe of Dan on the north, which was to be the last; and in this order they were to march, with the tabernacle in the midst. These regulations being established, the service of the Levites was more particularly described, and it was declared by the Lord that he had received them to himself, to assist the priests in their office, and as a substitute for the first born of all the children of Israel. The Levites were then numbered by divine command and a due arrangement was made of their services with their relative stations. The whole number of their males from a month old and upward was twenty two thousand,

which was nearly the amount of all the first born males among the children of Israel. The excess of the latter was two hundred and seventy three, and, for the redemption of these, five shekels a piece were required, which were ordered to be given to Aaron and his sons. A further enumeration of the families of the Levites was then required of all, from thirty years old and upward to fifty years, that entered into the host to do the work of the tabernacle, and their offices were separately described. Upon the completion of these matters, some additional laws were delivered to Moses which concerned cases of leprosy, of restitution for injuries, of jealousy, and of vows to the Lord in the separation of Nazarites. A solemn form, to be used by Aaron and his sons in blessing the congregation, was also appointed.

On the day when the tabernacle was set up and anointed and sanctified, with its instruments and vessels, the princes of Israel, heads of houses of their fathers; presented a variety of splendid and costly offerings, which Moses was commanded to take for the use of the tabernacle to be given to the Levites according to their respective services. They, also, offered for the dedication of the altar, and the number and value of their gifts are particularly recorded.

The Levites, being separated from the rest of the tribes to do the work of the tabernacle, and to attend upon the priests in the ministration of holy things, were solemnly set apart and consecrated to their office, according to the divine command, by the laying on of the hands of the children of Israel, and the offering up of burnt

sacrifices, after which they entered upon the discharge of their duties, and it was ordered by the Lord that their services in the tabernacle should commence when they were twenty five and cease when they were fifty years old.

The Israelites were now commanded, and they accordingly made preparation, to celebrate the first anniversary of their deliverance, in the appointed feast of the passover, which was near at hand. And they kept it, on the fourteenth day of the first month, in the second year after their departure from Egypt, in the wilderness of Sinai. At this time some farther precepts were given respecting its observance, in consequence of the doubts of certain persons who had been defiled by touching a dead body.

When the passover and its services were ended, and Moses had been commanded to provide two silver trumpets to be used by the priests in calling together an assembly of the princes and of the people, in summoning the camps to the march, and in sounding alarms in time of war, the cloud which rested upon the tabernacle was taken up, and the tribes of Israel commenced their journey for the first time in that regular order which had been prescribed to them. A solemn ceremony attended the setting forward and the resting of the ark, in which the power, the presence and the protection of God were invoked by Moses. The Israelites who had, for a long time, been unaccustomed to exercise and fatigue, soon began to complain of their hardships which so displeased the Lord that he sent fire amongst them, and consumed those that were in the uttermost parts of the camp. But upon the intercession of Moses, the fire was

quenched. Again they murmured because there was nothing given them to eat but manna, whereupon the anger of God was kindled against them, and Moses was also displeased. To satisfy their cravings quails were sent, in vast numbers, into the camp, but while the people were eating, they were smitten with a plague, and many of them died, and were buried in a place which was afterwards called Kibroth hat-taavah, signifying the graves of lust. From this place they journeyed to Hazeroth, where Miriam and Aaron preferred a complaint against Moses on account of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married, and the Lord was offended with them, insomuch that Miriam was punished by being struck with the leprosy, in consequence of which she was removed from the camp seven days, and the whole congregation during that time remained stationary.

LESSON XVI.

From Hazeroth, where the children of Israel remained during the exclusion of Miriam from the camp, they removed, and at length, pitched in the wilderness of Paran. Here the Lord commanded Moses to select certain men, one from each tribe, who might go up as spies into the land of Canaan, and acquaint themselves, particularly with its situation and fertility; the number and strength of its inhabitants, and the condition and defence of their dwelling places. Twelve persons were accordingly appointed, who departed immediately upon their expedition. After traversing the country for forty days, they returned and brought with them a cluster of grapes, with pomegranates and figs, as

a sample of the fruit which they had seen. The report which they made to Moses, was, however, unfavourable and discouraging in the extreme; for, although they assured him that the productions of the country were remarkable for their excellence and abundance, yet the inhabitants were of extraordinary strength and stature, and their cities were great and strongly fortified, so that there was no probability that the contemplated invasion would be attended with success. This intelligence filled the Israelites with alarm, and they murmured against their leaders as the authors of all their calamity. They, also, expressed their regret that they had not been suffered to die in Egypt or in the wilderness, and resolved to deprive Moses of his command, and to make to themselves a captain, under whose authority they might return to the place from which they had been so miraculously delivered.

The mutinous disposition which was thus discovered, greatly astonished and perplexed Moses and Aaron, who, not knowing what course to take, fell upon their faces before the congregation. Upon this, two of the men, who had been up to search the land, Joshua, the son of Nun, and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, rose up and rent their clothes, and declared to the people that the discouragements were not so great as they had represented, and that, if they continued faithful and obedient, the Lord would protect and defend them from all their enemies. But this only provoked their rage against Joshua and Caleb, whom they prepared to stone, and would probably have accomplished their purpose, had not the glory of God appeared, at

that instant, in the tabernacle. It was then made known to Moses that the divine displeasure was greatly excited against the congregation, and a determination was expressed to disinherit and destroy them. The intercession of Moses again prevailed in their behalf; but he was assured that not one of the people who had come out of the land of Egypt, and who had rebelled against God ten times, notwithstanding his promises and his wonderful works in their favour, should enter into the land of Canaan, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb. It was decreed that their carcasses should fall in the wilderness, where their children should be obliged to wander forty years, until the purpose of the Almighty in regard to the first generation should be wholly accomplished.

When the will of God was communicated to the people they were greatly distressed, and the next morning manifested a renewal of their courage and confidence, at the same time expressing a determination to proceed immediately to take possession of the land of the Canaanites. But Moses informed them that the Lord would not assist them in the enterprise, for they had wickedly rebelled against him, and that nothing would avail to prevent the execution of the sentence which he had pronounced. They, nevertheless, presumed to go forward, and the Amalekites and Canaanites came down from the hill and smote them and discomfited them. Previous to this event, all the men who had been sent to spy out the land, except Joshua and Caleb, who withstood the evil report of the rest, died by the plague before the Lord.

While the Israelites abode in the wilderness

of Param, sundry laws were given to them concerning the offerings and sacrifices which were to be made in the land of Canaan when the same should be fully possessed. At this time, also, a man, who had been found transgressing the law of the Sabbath, was put to death by command of the Lord. But a transaction, attended with more awful and destructive consequences, soon engaged the attention of the congregation. A considerable number of the people entered into a wicked conspiracy against Moses and Aaron, envying them their authority and distinction, and manifesting a disposition rashly to invade the offices to which they had been appointed. The leaders of this rebellion were Korah, Dathan and Abiram, the first a descendant from Levi, and the other two of the house of Reuben. With them were united two hundred and fifty of the most eminent men in the camp. In the issue, the leaders of the band were visited with a signal and an extraordinary punishment, for the earth was caused to open its mouth and swallow them up alive with their families and all that appertained to them; while the two hundred and fifty who offered incense as priests, without being consecrated to the office, were consumed by fire from the Lord. The congregation was, at first, much affected at these visitations, but the next day, accused Moses of having destroyed the people of the Lord. Upon this the divine indignation was greatly increased, and a plague was sent forth, in which one hundred and forty seven thousand of the transgressors died. But its ravages ceased through the intercession of Aaron who made an atonement for the people with incense.

LESSON XVII.

After the plague was stayed, the Lord commanded Moses to take of the princes of the several tribes twelve rods, one for each house, and to write every man's name upon his rod, with the name of Aaron upon the rod for the house of Levi. This being done, the rods were laid up in the tabernacle of witness, and on the next day, when they were examined, it was found that the rod of Aaron had budded and blossomed and brought forth almonds. This was a sign appointed by the Lord to denote the family from which the priesthood was exclusively to descend, and the rod which had thus blossomed was ordered to be preserved as a token against the rebels. Aaron then received a communication from God in relation to his office, and the portions which were to be given to the priests and Levites, as the reward of their services, were determined. These consisted of the heave offerings of the gifts of the people; the best of the oil, wine and wheat, with the first fruits; the price of the redemption of the first born, and certain parts of the victims which were sacrificed, with tithes from all Israel. What they thus received was to be considered as a substitute and an equivalent for their inheritance in lands. This regulation being made and certain laws given respecting the water of separation, and its use in purifications, the Israelites removed into the desert of Zin, and abode in Kadesh, where Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, died and was buried. While they remained in this place, they were again afflicted with a great scarcity of water, and in consequence thereof, according to their former cus-

tom on all similar occasions, they uttered their complaints against Moses and Aaron. But their necessities were miraculously supplied as they had been before, by receiving water from a rock which Moses was commanded to strike with his rod. In doing this, he, with Aaron, offended the Lord, and as a punishment, they were told that they should not enter into the land of promise.

The encampment was now upon the borders of the territory which belonged to the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, and Moses sent messengers to their king, from Kadesh, for his permission that they might pass through his country. This was refused, wherefore they turned another way and journeyed on to Mount Hor. Here Aaron died and was buried, and Eleazer, his son, succeeded him in his office of high priest. After this, some of the Canaanites, under Arad, their king, came out against the children of Israel, but they were overthrown and destroyed together with their cities.

In pursuing their course by the way of the Red Sea, in order to pass round the land of Edom, the people began again to complain of their fatigues and discouragements, and the Lord sent fiery serpents among them, and many of them were bitten and died. But Moses, by divine command, made a brazen serpent and put it upon a pole or standard, which he raised in the midst of the camp, and all who had been wounded on looking upon it were immediately healed. The Israelites continued their march forward, and on their way slew Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, the king of Bashan, who

came out to oppose their progress, and defeated their armies and took possession of their land.

They had now reached the borders of Moab, and Balak, the king of the country, who had heard of their extraordinary achievements, was exceedingly alarmed at their near approach to his dominions. Being apprehensive that he should not be able to conquer them in open battle, he resolved upon a different method to accomplish their ruin. At a considerable distance from him, there dwelt a famous soothsayer or false prophet, whose name was Balaam, and in whom he placed the utmost confidence as a person favoured by the gods, and endowed with the power of establishing the prosperity of nations by his blessing and of bringing them to desolation by his curses. To him, therefore, Balak sent messengers, requesting him to come without delay and curse the people who were preparing to invade his territories, and offering him great rewards in case of his compliance. Balaam, however, having received a communication from God, refused to accompany the messengers, and they returned to their master without having accomplished the object of their embassy. Balak, in no wise discouraged, and supposing that the prophet required greater respect, sent to him a second time by princes more honourable and distinguished than the former, renewing the request that he would come and curse Israel. This application proved successful; for Balaam, having received what he considered to be a permission from heaven, made ready his ass and returned with the servants of the king. His conduct however, was displeasing in the sight of God, who sent his angel to

withstand him in the way, but it was not until he was reproved by the animal upon which he rode, speaking with a man's voice, after having been the object of his violent abuse, that he perceived the messenger of the Lord. On being addressed by him, he acknowledged his sin and consented to go back to his house. He was, however, directed to proceed on his journey, with an assurance that he would be permitted to say nothing of the Israelites but what the Lord should declare to him. When he arrived at the borders of Moab, he was met by Balak who conducted him to one of his cities where they offered sacrifices. He was afterwards presented, three several times, with a view of the Hebrew camp, for the purpose of loading it with his maledictions, but in every instance he was compelled by the Spirit of God to pronounce a blessing, declaring not only the future success and prosperity of the people, but the advent of the Saviour of the world from their tribes. Balak was highly incensed at this unexpected termination of the affair, and in his anger and disappointment hastily dismissed Balaam from his presence.

LESSON XVIII.

While the children of Israel remained in the plains of Moab, near Jericho, they began to transgress the laws of God by sinful communications with the inhabitants of the land. In consequence of this, they were visited with a plague which destroyed twenty four thousand of the people. It was, at length, caused to cease upon the manifestation of a pious zeal for the honour of the Lord by Phinehas, the son of Ele-

azar the high priest, who slew, with his own hand, a man of Israel and a Midianitish woman, and was rewarded by an assurance that the priesthood should be perpetuated in his family. After this event had taken place, Moses and Eleazar were commanded to number the congregation, which being done, it was found that there were in the camp six hundred and one thousand, seven hundred and thirty souls, from twenty years old and upward, who were able to go forth to war, and among whom the land of Canaan was to be divided. Of the Levites there were numbered twenty three thousand males from a month old and upward, who were not counted with the rest, because they were to have no inheritance among the children of Israel. Among those that were numbered there was not a man who was included in the first enumeration which was made by Moses and Aaron, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua. The remainder had found their graves in the wilderness according to the word of the Lord.

The time was now approaching when the Israelites were to go over Jordan and take possession of the land which God had declared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob should be given to their posterity. Those who came out of Egypt were all dead but Moses, Joshua and Caleb, and a decree had passed that the former of these should not accompany his brethren into the place of their destined settlement. But it pleased the Lord, after giving him some directions in relation to the portion of daughters where there should be no son to inherit, in consequence of a case which occurred in the family of Zelophehad, to promise him a prospect of the coun-

try with an assurance that he should soon be gathered to his people. Moses then requested that some one might be appointed, as his successor, to take the command of the tribes, and he was ordered to consecrate Joshua to that office, which he did accordingly. Some farther statutes and directions were afterwards communicated to Moses for the government of the nation, in regard to their offerings at the celebration of their festivals and feasts, and, also, as it respected the observance of vows in certain cases.

The Midianites, who had seduced the children of Israel to licentiousness and idolatry, were, on this account, exceedingly obnoxious to the divine displeasure, and the Lord had determined that they should be destroyed. To effect their overthrow, Moses caused a thousand people to be selected from every tribe and sent them forth, with Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, to the battle. The most signal success attended the Israelites in their contest, for they soon defeated the enemy; slew all their males; took all their women and children captive; burnt their cities and their castles, and carried away their flocks and herds with all their treasure. In this war, Balaam, the soothsayer, was slain. When the army returned, Moses was dissatisfied with the lenity that had been shewn in saving all the women and children, a part of whom he ordered to be slain. The spoil was then duly apportioned among the victors, the congregation and the priests.

The two tribes of Reuben and Gad, being in possession of great numbers of cattle, requested of Moses that their inheritance might be given to them on the east side of Jordan where they

then were, as the place was remarkably well suited to the support of flocks and herds. Their request was granted on condition that they would go over Jordan with their brethren to assist them in subduing the native inhabitants, and not return to their possessions until all the tribes had become quietly settled in the land. To this they agreed, and there was allotted to them, together with the half tribe of Manasseh an inheritance on the east side of Jordan, consisting of the country of Sihon, king of the Amorites and Og, king of Bashan, the land, and all the cities thereof, which they rebuilt.

The children of Israel had now made forty two journies since their departure from Egypt, all of which Moses recorded by command of the Lord. After the arrangement had been made with the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, and a solemn injunction had been given to the congregation utterly to destroy the Canaanites on the other side Jordan, with their images and their groves, the bounds of the country which they were to inhabit were described, and suitable men were appointed to make the division of the land. It was, also, ordered that forty eight cities should be given to the Levites, as their dwelling places, with suburbs for their cattle, of which cities six were to be refuges for the man slayer. Some additional regulations were then made in regard to the inheritance of daughters, by which they were required to marry within their own tribes, in order that their possessions might not be alienated, and in the year of the jubilee be placed in the hands of some other than the family of their fathers.

REMARKS.

1. There is nothing more remarkable in the book of Numbers than the instances which are mentioned of the ingratitude and rebellion of the children of Israel, notwithstanding the immediate presence of God and the repeated punishments which were inflicted upon them. We can only account for their wickedness by referring to the deep rooted depravity of the human heart, which leads, in contempt of judgment and of mercy, to every evil work.

2. The Israelites, on being refused a passage through the land of Edom, did not attempt to force their way into the country. This was owing to their unwillingness to fight with those who, like themselves, had descended from Isaac, the child of promise.

3. The healing virtue which was experienced by those who had been bitten by fiery serpents, on looking at the image of brass, was derived from God alone, who thereby presented a type or emblem of the sacrifice which was to be made in after ages upon the cross. The brazen serpent remained among the Jews more than 700 years, until the time of Hezekiah, when it became an object of idolatry, and on this account was ordered to be destroyed.

4. The character of Balaam as a prophet is a subject of some difficulty. The general opinion is, that he was, at first, divinely inspired, but in consequence of his covetous disposition, the Holy Spirit departed from him, and he sought the aid of demons. The Almighty, however, revisited him to counteract the designs of Balak, and he was compelled to declare the future greatness of the Israelites. His language is

sublime in a very high degree, and he points out with great clearness the advent of the Messiah.

5. The imputation of cruelty and injustice has been affixed to the conduct of the Israelites in the destruction of other nations; and from this it has been argued that they could not have been under the direction of the Supreme Being. But it is to be remembered that their government was a real theocracy, and it is no more inconsistent with our ideas of the divine attributes that God should use his immediate subjects as instruments to punish sinners, than that he should employ the elements in the same way, by causing earthquakes and tempests to accomplish their ruin.

LESSON XIX.

The forty years' travels of the Israelites being nearly expired, Moses, considering that the then generation was either sprung up since the law was given at Mount Sinai, or that the people were at that time so young that they could not remember and understand it, thought proper to repeat the whole to them, that they might not be deficient in the performance of their appointed duties. This repetition constitutes the principal part of the book of Deuteronomy, which has its name from the circumstance, and which contains a brief relation of all things that had befallen the Israelites since their departure out of Egypt; the goodness of God; the ingratitude and rebellion of the congregation, and the severe judgements which they had experienced in consequence of their sins.

After a pause in which Moses established

three cities of refuge for the man slayer on the east side of Jordan, he proceeded to give them a summary of the laws which had been delivered him, and reminded them of the solemn manner in which they were communicated as well as of the great obligations which they were under to observe them. He encouraged them to faithfulness by a promise of blessing and threatened them with the heaviest calamities in case of disobedience. He warned them against trusting in their own righteousness and strength, by reminding them of the backslidings of their fathers. He directed them to destroy all the monuments of idolatry in the land whither they were going, and to frequent the place which God should choose to put his name in. He renewed the covenant which God had made with their fathers in Horeb and commanded them to proclaim on the mountains Gerizim and Ebal beyond Jordan blessings on such as observed it and curses on those who broke it, and to erect there an altar on which its terms and conditions might be written. Several other directions he, also, gave them relative to their future conduct in Canaan; and after composing a divine song for the use of the people, he took a solemn farewell of them, bestowing a prophetic blessing on each tribe as Jacob had done previous to his death. He then, in obedience to the word of the Lord, went up from the plains of Moab into mount Nebo, where, from an elevated place called Pisgah, he beheld the whole land of Canaan. After being told that this was the inheritance promised to the posterity of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he died, being one hundred and twenty years old, and the Lord buried him in a

place which was never afterwards discovered. At the time of his death his eye was not dim nor his natural force abated. And there arose not in Israel a prophet like unto him whom the Lord knew face to face.

REMARKS.

1. There can be no doubt that Moses was the author of the first five books in the old testament, with the exception of the last chapter of Deuteronomy which was probably added by Joshua. No other person was so well qualified to prepare a history of the Jewish nation, and, indeed, a great many particulars are related which could not have been communicated by any but himself. The Jews have always attributed the Pentateuch to Moses, and in the new testament there are several allusions to him as the author.

2. Moses was forty years old when he fled from Pharaoh into the land of Midian; he remained there forty years, and he was forty years with the people in the wilderness. Aaron was three years older than Moses and died but a short time before him. The event of Moses' death happened about two thousand five hundred and fifty years after the creation, and one thousand four hundred and fifty before Christ.

3. The traditions of the patriarchs were very easily handed down to the time of Moses, so that there could have been no difficulty in his obtaining a correct knowledge of the earliest events. Methuselah conversed with Adam and with Noah. Shem lived until Jacob's time, and the grandfather of Moses was the son of Levi.

4. Moses was an eminent type, both in his

office and his character, of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

5. The mountains of Abarim were situated between the two rivers Arnon and Jordan, and commanded an extensive prospect of the land of Canaan. Nebo and Pisgah were one and the same mountain, the latter being the name which denoted the highest elevation.

6. It has been thought that the sepulchre of Moses was concealed lest the people, from their natural disposition to idolatry, should make his body an object of worship and adoration.

LESSON XX.

The book of Joshua, which is supposed to have been written by the person whose name it bears, continues the history of the Israelites from the death of Moses for a period of about thirty years. After the event recorded in the last chapter of Deuteronomy had taken place, the Lord appeared unto Joshua and renewed the promise of inheritance which had been made to his predecessor, and assured him, that the most distinguished blessings awaited the people, on condition of their faithful obedience to the divine laws. Having, in a very solemn manner, received his commission, he directed the officers of the host to prepare for a passage over the river Jordan, which was to take place within three days from the time of his speaking to them, and he, also, reminded the children of Reuben and of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, who had received their possessions on the east side of Jordan, of their obligations to go over with their brethren and assist them in the conquest of the country.

The Israelites were now encamped opposite the city of Jericho, and thither Joshua had sent two men, as spies, to ascertain the situation and defence of the place, who, upon their arrival, entered into the house of a certain woman, named Rahab. This circumstance was immediately made known to the king, who sent messengers to Rahab, commanding her to deliver the spies into his hands, but she concealed them in her house, and deceived the messengers who brought the king's order. The latter then departed, after which she sent the strangers away privately, first claiming and receiving from them a promise, that upon taking the city, kindness should be shewed to her and to her father's house. The spies fled to the mountain where they abode three days, until their pursuers had relinquished the chase, when they returned to Joshua and informed him of all that had happened to them.

The next morning, the congregation removed to the banks of Jordan, and the river was passed in a miraculous manner, the waters being separated as in the former instance of crossing the Red sea. The priests who bore the ark stood firm upon dry ground in the midst of the river and all the people went over in safety. As a memorial of this extraordinary circumstance, Joshua, by command of the Lord, caused twelve stones to be taken from the bed of the river and laid up in the form a pillar at Gilgal, on the other side. He also placed twelve stones in the place where the priests stood in the midst of Jordan. Among those that went over into the plains of Jericho were about forty thousand men prepared for war.

After the encampment of the Israelites on the west bank of Jordan, the ordinance of circumcision, which had been neglected during their journeyings in the wilderness, was renewed, and the passover was celebrated with due solemnity. On the following day, the congregation eat of the produce of the land of Canaan; and, from that time, the manna, with which they had before been regularly supplied, ceased. As Joshua was standing by Jericho, there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord, who directed him in what manner to proceed in his attack upon the city. The armed men were to march round the walls with seven priests who were to carry trumpets, and these were to be followed by the ark of the Lord. This procession was to be continued once a day for six successive days, and on the seventh day the place was to be encompassed seven times, and on the seventh time it was directed that the priests should blow their trumpets, which were made of rams' horns, and that a general shout should be given by the army, at which the power of God, miraculously manifested, would cause the walls to fall level with the ground. All this was done, and the event was according to the divine declaration. On the seventh day, the army of Joshua was enabled to march into the city, and the inhabitants thereof, with the exception of Rahab and her relations, were all destroyed, together with their flocks and their herds. The city itself was then burnt with fire, and all that it contained, save the silver and gold and the vessels of brass and of iron, which were reserved for the treasury of the Lord. A heavy curse was afterwards pro-

nounced by Joshua upon the man who should ever attempt to rebuild it or to set up its gates.

Jericho being destroyed, a small detachment was sent up to another city, at the distance of about twelve miles, called Ai; but success did not attend the expedition. This circumstance greatly discouraged the Israelites, and Joshua went to seek counsel and to inquire of the Lord. He was told that in the taking of Jericho a great sin had been committed; for that in violation of the command of God, some one had received of the accursed things of the heathen which had been doomed to destruction, and appropriated them to his own use, in consequence of which the divine displeasure had been provoked, and that no further success could be expected until the abomination was discovered and removed. Lots were then cast for the purpose of ascertaining the person of the offender, who was found to be of the tribe of Judah, Achan by name. He was immediately apprehended, when he made confession of his fault, particularizing the articles which his covetousness had induced him to take, after which, he and his family were stoned to death, and the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger.

Joshua, having received encouragement from the Lord, now proceeded to march against Ai. In the first place, however, he selected thirty thousand men and sent them away with directions to conceal themselves behind the city, which, being done, he, with the remainder of the host, openly approached the walls to battle. The inhabitants, encouraged by their former success, immediately came out against the Israelites who, at the first onset, gave way and re-

treated. But this was only a stratagem to draw the men of Ai to a considerable distance from the city into the plain, and as soon as they had thus succeeded in their designs, the ambush behind the walls, upon a preconcerted signal which was given by Joshua, speedily arose, entered the city and set it on fire. Then the people who had, at first, fled towards the wilderness, turned upon their pursuers, and those from the city came out against them, by which means they were enclosed by the Israelites and completely destroyed. The number of the slain was twelve thousand. The king of Ai was hung upon a gibbet, after which his body was buried under a heap of stones. The cattle and spoil were divided among the soldiers, who effectually reduced the city to a mere pile of rubbish. The battle being ended, Joshua erected an altar on mount Ebal and offered sacrifices and read the law with the blessings and curses as had been commanded by Moses.

LESSON XXI.

After the destruction of the two cities of Jericho and Ai with their inhabitants, the kings of the country round about, who had heard thereof, were greatly alarmed for the safety of their respective dominions, and entered into a confederacy to oppose Joshua and his army. Whilst their measures were preparing, the people who dwelt in several cities in the neighbourhood, the largest of which was called Gibeon, resolved to avoid the danger which threatened them, by craftily making peace with the invaders. To this end they sent ambassadors to Joshua, who represented themselves as persons from a great

distance who had heard of the fame of the Israelites and were desirous, in behalf of their nation, to enter into a covenant of friendship and amity with them. To give the color of truth to their statement, they disguised themselves with old worn out garments and shoes, and carried in their hands dry and mouldy bread with rent bottles of wine, all of which they declared were new when they came from home and had become thus damaged by reason of their long journey. In this manner they deceived the Hebrews, who readily entered into a league with them and sealed it with their oaths. But discovering at length, the fraud, and coming to their cities which were within three days' journey from Gilgal, Joshua and his people were greatly disconcerted and perplexed. They did not, however, put the Gibeonites to the sword, but reduced them to a state of abject servitude, and they continued in the land as bondmen to the tribes of the Lord.

In consequence of the peace which was thus made between the children of Israel and the Gibeonites, some of the neighboring princes were greatly offended with the latter and made war upon them in order to chastise them for what they deemed their cowardice. The Gibeonites immediately sent to Joshua for assistance, who went up with his army and completely destroyed the hosts of the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon. It was during this encounter that God, at the request of his servant Joshua, so altered the course of nature that the sun and moon apparently stood still in the heavens for the space of a whole day.

The Lord miraculously aided his people in the battle, and as many of the enemy were killed by hail stones which fell upon them, as by the sword of their pursuers. The five kings fled and hid themselves in a cave; but, being discovered, they were brought forth by command of Joshua and put to death. After this, the army proceeded through the land, destroying the inhabitants and their cities, according to the directions which God had given them, and with none made they peace except the Gibeonites as has before been related. The whole number of kings which Joshua vanquished on the west side of Jordan, and whose dominions were taken possession of by the Israelites, was thirty one.

The conquests being, at length, extended as far as was thought necessary at the time, Joshua was directed to divide the country among the nine tribes and an half who had as yet received no provision. Hebron was set off to Caleb the son of Jephunneh, at his request, and according to the promise which had been given him by Moses, after which the lots were cast for the portions of the children of Judah and of Ephraim and the half tribe of Manasseh. Joshua then settled himself at a place called Shiloh where the tabernacle was set up, and from which place he sent forth commissioners to survey the land in order that an equal division might be made for the seven remaining tribes. According to their report, a just distribution took place, in which the families of Benjamin; of Simeon who received their inheritance from that of the tribe of Judah; of Zebulon; of Issachar; of Asher; of Napthali and of Dan were made acquainted with the situation and bounds of their

destined possessions. When the division was completed, the children of Israel, by general agreement, gave Joshua an inheritance in Mount Ephraim where he built a city and established his residence. The places of refuge were then appointed for the man slayer, and, agreeably to the divine command, the Levites received their forty eight cities with the suburbs.

While Joshua remained in Shiloh, he gave an honorable dismissal to the two tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh who returned to the inheritance which had been allotted them on the east side of Jordan. Upon their arrival at their appointed dwelling places they erected an altar, not for a distinct religious use, but as a memorial to succeeding generations that, although they were separated by the river from the other tribes, yet they were still their brethren and worshippers of the same God. This transaction, however, gave great offence to the people who were on the east side of Jordan, and they prepared to go over in arms that they might punish the supposed apostates. But it was thought best, before proceeding to extremities, to send messengers in order to ascertain the truth of the charges which had been brought against their brethren, and to expostulate with them for their imagined idolatry. A satisfactory explanation of their conduct was given by the two tribes and an half to the messengers, who returned to Shiloh, and by their account so pacified the people that they at once relinquished their hostile intentions.

From this period, no remarkable event occurred until the death of Joshua which happened about twenty years afterwards. Finding his

dissolution near at hand, he summoned an assembly of the people and reminded them of the great things which God had done for them, at the same time pointing out their duties and their dangers, and receiving from them a solemn promise, that they would faithfully serve the Lord who had protected and blessed them. Soon after, he died at the age of one hundred and ten years, and was buried. The bones of Joseph which had been brought out of Egypt, were, at this time, solemnly interred in Shechem, and about the same period died Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the high priest.

REMARKS.

1. The country in which the children of Israel settled was originally called, the land of Canaan, and is now known by the name of Palestine, so termed from the Philistines, who inhabited that part of it which lay upon the sea coast. It is bounded on the north by Mount Libanus or Lebanon, which separates it from that part of Syria which was anciently called Phenicia; on the east, by Mount Hermon which divides it from Arabia Deserta; on the south, by Arabia Petrea, and on the west, by the Mediterranean sea. It is one hundred and eighty five miles in length, and eighty in breadth, and is situated between 31 and 33 degrees of north latitude. The principal river is the Jordan, which has its source at the foot of Mount Lebanon, and after pursuing a southeasterly course discharges itself, at length, into the dead sea or lake of Sodom.

2. The two mountains Ebal and Gerizim, on which Joshua caused the law, with the blessings

and curses to be read, according to the command given to Moses, are separated by a valley of only about 200 paces wide in which is situated the town of Shechem. The blessings were declared from Gerizim which was remarkable for its fruitfulness, and the curses from Ebal, which was distinguished for its desolation and barrenness. On the former of these mountains the Samaritans afterwards built a temple and worshipped the God of the Jews.

3. Although Joshua was the successor of Moses, yet he was not equally distinguished. With the latter the Lord spake face to face, but with the former by Urim and Thummim.

4. In the affair of the Gibeonites the children of Israel undoubtedly committed a sin in not asking counsel of the Lord before they entered into a treaty of peace and friendship with them.

5. It is remarkable that in the division of the land by lot, the several tribes received portions, which, in regard to soil and situation, were exactly conformable to the predictions of Jacob and Moses.

6. The descendants of Jacob were distinguished by three general names. They were called Hebrews from Eber, one of the ancestors of Abraham, Israelites from Israel, and Jews from Judah. The latter of these names was, however, more particularly appropriated to the two tribes which remained to the house of David, until after the Assyrian captivity, since which it has been indiscriminately applied to the whole nation.

7. Joshua, like Moses, was a type of the Messiah. He was the leader of the armies of Israel

and conducted them in safety to their promised inheritance.

8. It is the general opinion that this book was written by Joshua himself, although the last five verses must have been added by one of his successors.

LESSON XXII.

The book of Judges which follows that of Joshua continues the history of the Israelites after their settlement in the land of Canaan for the period of about three hundred and ninety years. The first chapter contains an account of some transactions which, it is supposed, preceded the death of Joshua, particularly the agreement entered into between the tribes of Judah and Simeon to assist each other in their contests with the Canaanites; the destruction of Adonibezek, and the valour displayed by Othniel, the kinsman of Caleb, to whom the latter gave his daughter Achsah to wife. This circumstance is mentioned in the fifteenth chapter of Joshua. When the people were established in their respective inheritances, and the country, at large, was brought under their control they did not, as they had been commanded, utterly exterminate the nations of the land nor destroy their altars, but subjected the remnant of the inhabitants to bondage and tribute. In this they offended God, and prepared for their posterity many grievous calamities, for those who were left proved thorns in their side, and the idol gods became a snare unto them.

After the death of Joshua, and under the influence of his solemn exhortation, the Israelites of the then existing generation proved faithful

to their vows of obedience in keeping the ordinances of their law, and served the Lord with constancy and zeal. But their descendants manifested a different character, forsaking the commandments of God and giving themselves up to the idolatry of the heathen. Then the hand of the Lord was against them and they were delivered into the power of their enemies. In the first place, the king of Mesopotamia was suffered to prevail against them and they remained in subjection to him eight years. From this bondage they were, at length, emancipated by Othniel, who, being divinely inspired, became the judge of Israel, and under his government the land had rest for forty years. After his death, however, the people returned to their former evil habits, and became the prey of Eglon, king of Moab, whom they served eighteen years. From him they were delivered by Ehud, who slew Eglon with his own hand, and under whose administration peace and freedom were restored to the land, which continued undisturbed for eighty years. Next to him was raised up Shamgar who killed six hundred Philistines with an ox goad.

The repeated interpositions of providence in favour of the Israelites did not lead them to obedience, and they were again overcome by their enemies. Jabin, the king of Canaan, reduced them to bondage, and treated them with great rigour and cruelty. But the Lord had not forgotten to be gracious, and he raised them up deliverers in the persons of Deborah and Barak. The army of Sisera the captain of Jabin's host, was defeated, and he himself fled away on foot to the tent of Jael the Kenite, who, when

he was asleep, thrust a nail into his temples so that he died. Barak and Deborah composed a sublime hymn of praise which they sung in commemoration of the victory. The land was again restored to its former quietness; but at the expiration of forty years the Midianites came upon it with their oppressions and vexations and the people were involved in very great calamity. To give them relief, the angel of the Lord appeared unto a person whose name was Gideon, of a poor family of the tribe of Manasseh, and commissioned him to undertake and accomplish the deliverance of his countrymen. He commenced his exploits by casting down an altar which his father had set up, after which he gathered together an army and prepared to give battle to the Midianites who had been reinforced by the Amalekites and others.

To be assured of the success of his enterprises Gideon requested the Lord to give him a sign which was, that the dew might fall upon a fleece of wool which he should lay upon the floor while the earth around was dry. His request being granted, he desired that on the next night the miracle might be reversed, the fleece continuing dry while the dew lay upon the ground. This being also complied with, he arranged his men on the following day in order for battle. But being told by the Lord that his host was too numerous, he gave liberty to all who were fearful or unwilling to engage in the combat to return to their homes. Of this permission, twenty two thousand availed themselves, and there remained with Gideon only ten thousand. It was determined, however, by the Lord that the victory should not be won by the sword or the spear,

in order that the Israelites might have no occasion for boasting and vain glory. He, therefore, declared it to be his will that the army should still be diminished, and Gideon was directed to lead his soldiers to the water, and from the different manner of their drinking to make a selection for the intended engagement. In the issue only three hundred men remained with Gideon all the rest being sent away to their tents. With this small force he proceeded against the enemy, and having been encouraged by a dream which was related to him, he divided his men into three companies and put a trumpet in the hand of each man, with empty pitchers and lamps within the pitchers. In this manner they began their march in the night, and when they arrived at the Midianitish camp, they all, at once, blew their trumpets, and brake their pitchers, and shouted—*the sword of the Lord and Gideon!* which so confused and terrified their enemies that they fled in great disorder and became an easy prey to their pursuers. Two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeb, were taken in their flight and put to death.

LESSON XXIII.

Gideon, in his pursuit of the enemy, was reproached by the Ephraimites for not calling them in to his assistance; but he quickly pacified them, and passed on to a place called Succoth, where he requested the inhabitants to supply his people with refreshment, which was uncharitably and wickedly refused. This want of hospitality excited his resentment, and he declared that, if he was successful in his expedi-

tion, he would inflict upon the men of Succoth the punishment which their crime deserved. Having experienced a similar treatment at Penuel, he, also, departed from the place with a like assurance. With his small band of followers, fatigued and distressed as they were, he continued the march, and, at length, overtaking the Midianites, he discomfited the whole host, and carried away captive their two kings, Zeba and Zalmunna. On his return, he executed the threatened vengeance upon the cities which had withheld the relief that he supplicated, and afterwards put to death the captive princes.

Gideon, having thus restored peace and liberty to his country, the Israelites came to him from all parts, and promised to secure the government to him and his family. He, however, nobly rejected their offers, and told them that the Lord should be their ruler, and that to him alone their obedience was due. For forty years after this the land continued in quietness, at the expiration of which period Gideon died and was buried in the sepulchre of his father. The only act of imprudence with which he seems chargeable was the formation of an ephod from the ornaments of the subdued Midianites, which gave occasion for the apostacy of the people, and became a snare for the ruin of his own family.

Upon the death of Gideon, the Israelites returned to their evil habits and provoked the Lord to anger by their idolatry. They forgot the benefits that had been conferred upon them by their former commander, and advanced as their ruler one of his sons, named Abimelech, who was distinguished only for his wickedness, and who had no claims to the office to which he

was promoted. He immediately caused his seventy brethren to be apprehended, when he cruelly put them all to death, with the exception of Jotham, the youngest, who found means to escape, and fled to the top of Mount Gerizim, which overlooked the city of Shechem. There he expostulated with the people upon their injustice to the house of his father, and delivered to them a parable which he closed with the denunciation of a curse both upon Abimelech and his supporters. At the end of three years, the evil which he had imprecated began to be experienced; the Shechemites engaged in a severe contest with their ruler, and, at last, both parties were punished according to their deserts and became the instruments of each other's destruction. The men of Shechem were joined by a prince of the country named Gaal, who for a time gave them protection, but, at length, through the artifice of Zebul, the ruler of the place, he was drawn into open battle with Abimelech and defeated with his followers. The city was then ravaged; its walls were levelled with the ground, and the inhabitants put to the sword. Those of the people who were not involved in this slaughter, to the number of about a thousand, had shut themselves up in a tower, but afterwards sought refuge in the house of one of their idols. Abimelech was soon informed of their retreat, upon which he set fire to the building, and all that were in it perished in the flames. He then marched with his company against Thebez, which he took without difficulty. The inhabitants retreated to a strong castle within the city, whither their enemy followed them with the design of forcing the tower or of set-

ting it on fire. But his intentions were frustrated by a woman, who threw from the battlements a large piece of a mill stone which fell upon his head and mortally wounded him. He then, to avoid the disgrace of having it said that his death had been caused by a woman, requested his armour bearer to dispatch him with his sword. This was accordingly done, and when the soldiers saw that their leader was dead, they dispersed, every man retiring to his own habitation. Thus the injustice of the Shechemites in advancing Abimelech to be their ruler, and the cruelty of the latter in murdering his brethren, received their merited chastisement.

Abimelech being dead, there arose to defend Israel a man of the tribe of Issachar whose name was Tolah, and he filled the office of a judge twenty three years. To him succeeded Jair, a Gileadite, whose administration continued twenty two years. During the time of these two judges the affairs of the nation appear to have been prosperous, but after the death of the latter, a great degeneracy in manners and religion took place, which paved the way for new and severe afflictions. The Philistines and the Ammonites invaded the country and held it in subjection eighteen years. The people cried bitterly unto the Lord, acknowledging their iniquities and imploring mercy and forgiveness. But they were rebuked for their ingratitude, and bade to call upon the idols they had chosen, for deliverance from their calamities. They, then, earnestly commenced the work of reformation, and put away their idols and served their Maker, and his eye was again turned upon them with pity. There was, at this time in the

land of Tob, where he had fled from the oppressions and hatred of his brethren, a man of Gilead, whose name was Jephthah, and to him messengers were sent entreating him to return to his country and take command of the army against the Ammonites. After reminding them of the manner in which he had been banished from his home, and receiving from them a promise that, in case of success, they would remain in subjection to his authority, he agreed to accompany them, and was made captain over the host. Previous to the commencement of hostilities, he remonstrated, but in vain, with the Ammonites upon the rashness and injustice of their continuing to oppress and harass Israel; and, also made a solemn vow to the Lord, that, if he was favoured with victory, he would offer in sacrifice the first object that should meet him from the doors of his house, upon his return. He was successful in his engagement with the enemy; but little did he think of the calamity which was about to fall upon his own head. When he approached his habitation, he beheld his only daughter, the tenderest object of his love, coming forth to meet him, with music and dancing, to honour his exploits. At this unwelcome sight he was plunged into the deepest affliction, but he could not retract the vow that he had sworn. He, therefore, made his child acquainted with the same, who received the fatal intelligence with meekness and piety, and calmly submitted to the sacrifice.

In consequence of the victory of Jephthah over the Ammonites, the children of Ephraim, who had not been invited to partake of the success and glory of the contest, were greatly of-

fended, in consequence of which a civil war immediately ensued. The Ephraimites, however, were defeated, and there fell of them in the action and at the passages of Jordan, where those who fled were detected by their manner of pronouncing the word *Shibboleth*, forty two thousand men. This affair being settled, Jephthah continued to judge Israel six years, at the expiration of which he died and was buried. His days were, probably, shortened by the distress occasioned by the melancholy catastrophe in relation to his daughter.

LESSON XXIV.

The successors of Jephthah were Ibzan, who judged Israel seven years; Elon, who continued in office ten years, and Abdon, whose administration was eight years. Upon the death of the latter, the people relapsed into their old impieties, in consequence of which, God permitted them to be invaded and oppressed, forty years, by the Philistines, from whom they were, at length, relieved by a most extraordinary person.

In the tribe of Dan was a man whose name was Manoah, and who dwelt in a place called Zorah. On a certain day, the angel of the Lord appeared unto the wife of Manoah, and declared to her that she should become the mother of a son who would be a Nazarite unto God, and an avenger of the wrongs done to his countrymen by the Philistines. She immediately related the circumstance to her husband, who thereupon besought the Lord that the messenger which had been sent to them might be commissioned to renew his visit. He, accordingly, appeared again to the woman when she

was alone in the field ; but no conversation ensued until Manoah had received from his wife information of the fact, and repaired to the place where he stood. The angel then repeated the directions which had been previously given, after which he confirmed his authority by ascending in the flame of the sacrifice which Manoah offered upon the altar.

In process of time the child was born, and his name was called Samson, and the spirit of the Lord was upon him. Being come to years of maturity, he saw among the Philistines a woman upon whom he placed his affections, and requested his parents to obtain her for his wife. They remonstrated with him upon the subject, but he persisted in his request, and, at length, they consented to accompany him to Timnath the residence of the damsel. On their way thither, while Samson was pursuing his course, probably, at a distance from his parents, a young lion rose up against him, and such was his miraculous strength that he laid hold of him and rent him as he would a kid. On their arrival at Timnath, the parents of Samson consulted with the father and mother of the young woman, and gained their consent to the marriage ; and, a day being fixed for its celebration, they returned with their son to their own home. At the time appointed for the nuptials, they again went down to Timnath, and on their way, Samson, remembering his encounter with the lion, turned aside to look at the carcase, in which, to his great surprise, he found a swarm of bees and a quantity of honey. His journey being ended, he prepared for the marriage, and, according to the custom of the country, made a feast which lasted

seven days, and which was attended by thirty young men of the Philistines. To his guests Samson put forth a riddle, founded upon the discovery which he had made in the carcase of the lion, in the following words—"Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." He told them that if they would expound the meaning of this riddle during the continuance of the feast he would give them thirty sheets and thirty changes of raiment. This they were unable to do of themselves; but they prevailed with the wife of Samson to draw the secret from him and declare it to them, threatening, in case of her refusal, that they would burn her and her father's house with fire. The stratagem succeeded, and towards the close of the seventh day, one of them, in the name of the rest, said to Samson, "What is sweeter than honey and what is stronger than a lion?" These questions satisfied him that his wife had discovered the secret to the Philistines, and he was greatly incensed at the transaction. Determined, however, to fulfil his engagement, he went down to Ashkelon and slew thirty of the Philistines and gave their clothes to those who had expounded the riddle. In the heat of his passion he then left his wife, and went back to his father's house at Zorah; but on visiting her again after the lapse of some days, he was informed, to his astonishment, that she was married to one of the young men who had attended the feast, it being supposed by her parents that Samson had no intention of returning to Timnath. Her father, however, made him an offer of a younger daughter, which he did not seem inclined to accept; and, believing that the Philis-

tines had occasioned him the loss of his wife, he resolved to execute upon them, without distinction, an ample revenge. For this purpose, he caught three hundred foxes, and having tied them together, he fastened a fire brand between every two, and in this manner turned them into the fields and vineyards of his enemies. The conflagration immediately became general, and the corn, the vines and the olives were wholly destroyed. The Philistines, ascertaining that it was Samson who had done them this injury, and supposing that he had been incensed to it by the family of his wife, they came up and took her with her father and burnt them both alive. Samson then went out against them, and smote them with a great slaughter, after which he took up his abode on the top of a high rock. There he was taken by the men of Judah; bound with new cords, and delivered into the hands of the Philistines who brought him to Lehi. At this place the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and, in the greatness of his strength, he burst the cords with which he was bound, and with the jaw bone of an ass which he accidentally found, slew, at once, a thousand men.

LESSON XXV.

The confidence which Samson derived from his extraordinary strength, and the achievements which he had performed, induced him to go openly to Gaza, one of the chief cities of the Philistines, where he took up his abode with a woman of the place. The inhabitants hearing of his arrival, prepared to make him their prisoner, but he arose at midnight and carried away the gates of the city, with the posts and bars,

and deposited them upon the top of a hill before Hebron. Some time after this occurrence, he formed an intimacy with a woman named Delilah, who, at the instigation of her countrymen, prevailed upon him to acquaint her with the source of his great strength, which he informed her, after many entreaties and expostulations, depended upon the hair of his head which had never been shaved. This, therefore, she caused to be cut off during his sleep, and then delivered him into the hands of his enemies. They immediately bound him, and having put out his eyes, caused him to grind in the prison house. On a certain festival, when a great sacrifice was to be offered to Dagon their god, Samson was ordered to be brought forth where the people were assembled to rejoice, in order to make them sport. Being placed in the centre of the house which was full of people, besides more than three thousand who sat upon the roof, he entreated the person who held him by the hand to direct him to the pillars which supported the building, that he might rest himself by leaning upon them. This request being complied with, he immediately offered a fervent prayer to the Lord, and then bowing himself with all his might, removed the pillars from their place, so that the whole edifice fell, and all that it contained, within and above, together with Samson, were crushed to death. His body was afterwards taken away by his brethren and buried in the sepulchre of his father. At the time of his death, he had judged Israel twenty years.

During the time in which the judges ruled Israel, several circumstances occurred which are

recorded by the sacred historian, as evidences of the apostacy and corruption of manners which prevailed. In Mount Ephraim lived a man by the name of Micah, who had stolen from his mother a large sum of money which she had dedicated to the purpose of making a graven and a molten image. He, however, at length, restored the whole sum, amounting to eleven hundred shekels of silver, a part of which was immediately applied to the use for which it was originally intended. The idols being made, they were placed in the house of Micah with other images which he possessed, and he consecrated one of his sons to be his priest. But it happened, in a short time, that a Levite passed along that way, and rested on his journey at the house of Micah. The latter, retaining some scruples of conscience in regard to his proceeding, and being not altogether ignorant of the institutions of the Lord, bargained with the Levite to remain in his service and officiate in the priesthood before his gods.

The Levite who had been thus employed by Micah, was soon discovered by some of the tribe of Dan, who were engaged in searching out lands where they might make a settlement, and being, subsequently, induced to accompany them in their expedition, he carried away the images of Micah which were afterwards set up in a place that was originally called Laish, but which, being desolated and rebuilt, received the name of Dan. Here he continued to exercise his office, and in the idolatrous worship which he established the Danites continued under the priesthood of his descendants, for three hundred years.

A further transaction, in which the wickedness of the times was illustrated, took place in Gibeah, which was then inhabited by the tribe of Benjamin. A certain Levite whose companion had deserted him, pursued her to the house of her father, and having effected a reconciliation, commenced his journey, with her, for his own home. On their way they arrived at the city of Jebus, which was afterwards called Jerusalem, where the servant of the man was inclined to tarry. But his master was unwilling to rest among strangers, and, therefore, proceeded on to Gibeah, where they arrived about sun set. Here he was invited into the house of an old man who belonged to Mount Ephraim, and by whom he was treated with the greatest kindness and hospitality. In the course of the evening, some of the men of the city, who were sons of Belial, surrounded the house, and proceeding to great violence, were finally guilty of the murder of the woman. Her body was afterwards divided by her husband into twelve pieces which were sent to the different tribes of Israel, in order to rouse their resentment against the perpetrators of the wrong done to the Levite. The result was, that the whole country made war against the tribe of Benjamin which, with the exception of six hundred men who fled into the wilderness, was entirely destroyed.

When the Israelites began to reflect upon the severity with which they had punished their brethren, they repented of their proceedings and mourned for the event particularly, as they had all entered into a solemn engagement not to suffer any marriages between their daughters and the Benjamites who remained. To remedy this

evil, they went up against Jabesh Gilead, from which they had received no supplies in the late contest, and put to death all the inhabitants, excepting four hundred young women whom they reserved as wives for the Benjamites. The deficiency was supplied by the forcible seizure of the damsels of Shiloh, who were assembled for the celebration of a festival, and in this way the tribe was restored to its original standing.

REMARKS.

1. After the death of Joshua, the Israelites were for a long time without any king or sovereign. Every tribe, being governed by its elders, chose its own commanders for war, who, by degrees, subdued the rest of the inhabitants of the country, either by destroying or making them tributaries. The neighbouring kings of the Canaanites opposed and sometimes subdued the Israelites, but God, from time to time, raised them up deliverers, who for their services were appointed judges or supreme magistrates over the whole land.

2. Ezra is supposed by some to have been the author of this book; but the more probable opinion is, that it was composed by Samuel, who was the last of the Judges, and thus brought the history down to his own time.

3. In the choice of Abimelech as the successor of Gideon, there was neither the call of God nor the consent of the people. He received his appointment from the men of Shechem, without the knowledge of Judah or the other tribes, although it appears that they submitted to his authority.

4. The extraordinary vow which was made

by Jephthah, and the circumstances attending it, have been a subject of controversy among the learned. Many reasons have been urged to shew that his daughter was not literally sacrificed, but devoted to the service of God ; and this opinion is not only the most consistent with the feelings of humanity, but probably the most agreeable to the truth.

5. The events which are recorded in the last five chapters of Judges are supposed to have taken place between the death of Joshua and the appointment of the first Judge. That the course of the history might not be interrupted, they were reserved to be related apart by themselves.

6. It is said that the strength of Samson lay in his hair. This, however, is to be considered only as the sign upon which it was made dependent. It was miraculously bestowed upon him by that Almighty Being, who raised him up for the purpose of delivering his country from the power of its enemies.

7. The building which Samson threw down was formed in the shape of an amphitheatre, and solely adapted to the purposes of festivity on particular occasions. The ends of the beams were united in a circle in the middle, where they were supported by two pillars in such a manner that if these were removed, the whole must, of necessity, fall.

8. The character of Samson is not free from blemishes and stains, yet he is mentioned by the apostle among those who accomplished their achievements by the mighty power of faith.

9. The Philistines are supposed to have been a people originally from the island of Crete in

the Mediterranean sea. They came into the land of Canaan before the time of Abraham, and dwelt along the sea coast. Their country lay to the west of the inheritance of Judah and Benjamin, having Ephraim on the north. Their state was divided into five little kingdoms or principalities, the capital cities of which were Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath and Ekron. Their chief god was Dagon whom they worshipped under the figure of a man issuing from the mouth of a fish. They were independent until the time of David, who subdued them.

LESSON XXVI.

The book of Ruth, which derives its name from an individual whose history it contains, gives a relation of certain incidents which took place during the administration of the Judges, either in the time of Deborah and Barak, or in that of Gideon. It is believed to have been written by Samuel as a kind of supplement to the preceding book. We are first informed that the land was afflicted with a severe famine which induced many of the inhabitants to remove from it, and among those who quitted their homes was a certain man of the tribe of Judah, named Elimelech, who, with his wife Naomi and his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, went to sojourn in the country of the Moabites. After the death of their father, the sons took to them wives of the women of Moab, of which the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth, with whom they lived about ten years, and then died. The famine, by this time, being over in Israel, the widowed mother resolved to return to the land of Judah, and her

daughters in law, accompanied her on the way. But when they had proceeded a little distance she represented to them the sacrifices which they were about to make in leaving their friends and their country for the uncertain protection of strangers, and thus prevailed upon Orpah to return; but Ruth continued steadfast in her purpose, and was determined not to forsake the society or avoid the fate of her mother. "Whither thou goest," said she, "I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." Naomi then left her to her choice, and they went on their journey together until they came to Bethlehem where they established their abode.

Here Ruth, in order to provide for their daily support, went out into the fields to glean, and it so happened that she entered upon the grounds of a relation of her husband, whose name was Boaz, a man of wealth and distinction in the place. He treated her with great kindness, on account of the affection which she had shewn to her mother in law, and her piety in seeking the protection of the God of Israel, and, after redeeming the inheritance which descended from Elimelech, took her to be his wife. In process of time she became the mother of a son who was called Obed, and from whom descended Jesse the father of David.

The first book of Samuel, which succeeds that of Ruth, continues the history of the Israelites under the government of Eli and Samuel. After the death of Samson, the former of these

who was in the office of high priest, became, also, judge over the people. On a certain day, while he was employed in the services of the tabernacle, at Shiloh, he was struck with the appearance of a woman, who, from her singular behaviour, was thought by him to be intoxicated, but who, in reality, was fervently engaged in silent prayer to the Lord. This was Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, an Ephrathite, who had come thither to offer her supplications for the blessing of children, of which she had hitherto, been deprived. Her petitions were answered, and having, afterwards, given birth to a son, she called his name Samuel, and dedicated him to the Lord, according to the vow which she had made. The child, as he advanced in age, was placed under the care of Eli, and assisted him in his ministrations. The sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas, although of the number of the priests, were abandoned and profligate men, disregarding the commandments of the Lord and despising the counsel of their father, whose indulgence to them was, however, highly displeasing in the sight of God, and became to Eli the occasion of great calamities. A revelation was made to Samuel, while he was yet a child, in which the divine anger was declared against Eli and his house. He informed Eli of the nature of the heavenly message, and the event soon proved its truth to the unhappy parent.

The Israelites were, at this time, at war with the Philistines, and having suffered one defeat, they determined to go out again to battle, and to carry with them the ark of God to insure them success. This was placed under the im-

mediate care of Hophni and Phineas, and, when it came into the camp, the Philistines saw it and were greatly alarmed. But commencing the contest with distinguished courage and resolution, they were again favoured with victory over the Israelites, whose army the Lord had forsaken. A great slaughter ensued; the ark was taken by the uncircumcised, and the two sons of Eli were numbered among the slain. The news of these disasters soon reached Shiloh, where Eli was sitting by the way side watching, with trembling apprehension, every movement that might indicate what was passing in the army. And when the event was made known to him, particularly, the fate of the ark, he was so much overcome by the shock, that he fell suddenly to the ground and died. At the time of his death he was ninety eight years old and had judged Israel forty years. The wife of Phineas, also, became a victim to the sad calamity, and died in child birth, after giving to her son a name commemorative of the sorrowful occurrences which had happened.

LESSON XXVII.

The Philistines, after they had defeated the Israelitish army, took the ark of God and carried it to Ashdod, where they placed it in the temple of their idol. On the next day, it was discovered that the image or statue of Dagon had fallen to the ground, whereupon, his worshippers restored it to its place; but when they repeated their visit the succeeding morning, they found that it had not only been prostrated again, but that the head and the hands of it were separated from the body, and lay upon the

threshold. This calamity they attributed to the displeasure of that Being whose ark they had captured and whose power was superior to that of their own god; and that a greater evil might not come upon them, they directed the ark to be carried away to Gath. When it arrived in this place, the inhabitants thereof were visited with a sore disease, in consequence of which they sent the ark to Ekron. Here, also, the anger of the Lord was manifested, and a deadly destruction prevailed throughout the city. At length, the lords of the Philistines being assembled to consult upon the occasion, it was determined to send the ark back to the Israelites; and, at the expiration of seven months, it was placed in a new cart, made for the purpose, to which were attached two milch kine that had not been taken from their calves. From the course of the kine, it would be seen what was the will of the Lord; and whether the afflictions which had been experienced were extraordinary visitations from him, or in the natural order of events. The animals, of their own accord, immediately took the road to Bethshemeth, a city belonging to the Levites, and when they arrived in this place they made a full stop. The people of the city, when they saw the ark which had been given up for lost, were greatly rejoiced, and, taking the wood of the cart for a fire, and the kine for a sacrifice, they presented a burnt offering to the Lord. The lords of the Philistines who had followed the ark in order to witness the result, then returned to their own homes, after which, many of the men of Bethshemeth were slain by the Lord for an unwarrantable curiosity which they manifested upon

the occasion. By reason of this distressing dispensation, the ark was caused to be removed to Kirjath-jearim, where it was placed in the house of Abinadab, under the care of his son Eleazar.

Samuel, having taken upon himself the chief government of the nation, exhorted the people to abandon their idolatries and give themselves up to the service of the true God, as the only way in which they could expect a continuance of the divine favour, and a deliverance from the oppressions of their enemies. To this counsel they hearkened, and the benefits of their reformation were soon experienced in a distinguished victory which they were enabled to gain over the Philistines, and by which the latter were so much weakened as to come no more, for a great length of time, into the coasts of Israel.

In the course of years, Samuel became old and infirm; and it being difficult for him to discharge the duties of his office alone, he delegated a part of his authority to his sons; but they, instead of walking in the steps of their father, took bribes of the people, and perverted judgement and justice. Dissatisfaction was thus produced among the Israelites, and the elders of the tribes, assembling themselves together before Samuel, represented to him the evils to which they were subject, and requested him to change the form of their government, that they might have a king like the nations around them. Samuel was highly displeased at this proceeding; nevertheless, he sought direction of the Lord, who told him to comply with their wishes, but at the same time to state fully to them the magnitude of the evil which would

thereby be brought upon them. He, accordingly, informed them, that, although their desires might be gratified, yet their condition would not be ameliorated; that slavery, a subjection to the meanest offices, oppressive taxes and constant wars would be the unavoidable consequences resulting from the establishment of a monarchy. They were not, however, disposed to listen to the dictates of wisdom, but rashly persisted in their determination to have a king; and their wishes were accomplished, by the divine permission and direction, in the following manner.

There was, in the tribe of Benjamin, a man, by the name of Kish, who had a son, called Saul, distinguished for his comeliness and his stature. On a certain day, Saul was sent by his father in pursuit of some asses which had strayed away; but after a long and fruitless search he resolved to return home without them. By the persuasion of his servant, he, however, so far changed his purpose as to go to the city of Ramah, near to which place they then were, and to make some inquiry respecting the object of his journey of Samuel, who had that day come thither to attend a festival and to bless the sacrifice. In the mean time, the Lord had spoken to the prophet and prepared him for the event; and, when Saul came into his presence, he assured him that the asses had been found, and proceeded to intimate to him that he was the person destined to become the king of Israel. Samuel then conducted Saul to the sacrifice, and after the feast was over, during which the latter was treated with peculiar tokens of attention and respect, he invited him to the house where he

lodged. Here he, probably, made known to him, in a private interview, all the circumstances relative to his appointment, and on the next day, he accompanied him out of the city. When they had passed on to a suitable distance, Samuel directed his companion to send the servant forward that he might not witness what was about to take place. This being done, the prophet poured a viol of oil upon the head of Saul, and declared to him his designation thereby as the captain or king of the Lord's inheritance. He then informed him of some things which would happen to him during his journey, all of which came to pass exactly as they had been foretold.

LESSON XXVIII.

Soon after the transaction which took place between Samuel and Saul, the former assembled the people together at Mizpah and directed them to proceed to the election of a sovereign. This was done by lot, which fell upon the tribe of Benjamin, the family of Matri, and the Son of Kish. Saul, who anticipated the result, had, in the mean time, concealed himself, but, being sought and discovered, he was brought forward to public view, and from his personal appearance, and, perhaps, his high reputation, the choice gave great satisfaction to the multitude. With the exception of a few ill disposed men, who, probably, envied him his distinction, he was immediately acknowledged and honoured as the sovereign of Israel, and, as such, received the joyful salutations of the people.

An opportunity soon occurred in which the value of the new king, and his regard for the

welfare of his subjects were signally displayed. The Ammonites had come up with hostile intentions, and encamped against a place called Jabesh Gilead, the inhabitants of which were exceedingly desirous of agreeing upon terms of peace with the enemy. But the only condition which the Ammonites proposed to them was, that they should submit to have their right eyes thrust out as a reproach upon the whole nation. To this, the elders of Jabesh replied, that they would consent if, in the course of seven days, they could obtain no assistance from their brethren. A truce for this period being granted, they sent messengers, in great haste, to Saul, acquainting him with their sad and perilous condition. He, without delay, summoned the Israelites, from all their coasts, to come forth to the relief of their besieged countrymen, and, having collected an immense army, he immediately marched against the enemy. The consequence was, that the Ammonites were entirely defeated, and the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead relieved from their apprehensions and their danger. After this circumstance, Saul was formally invested with the regal authority at Gilgal, and Samuel resigned his office as Judge, with a solemn address to the assembly, in which he vindicated his administration and exhorted the people to fidelity and obedience. At the same time, he reproved the Israelites for their folly and wickedness in asking a king, and warned them of the danger of persisting in an evil course. An extraordinary and a severe storm of thunder and rain was sent by the Lord, at a season in which such an event had never before been witnessed, which was in answer to the

prayer of the prophet, and a confirmation of the truths which he had declared.

When Saul had been upon the throne two years, the Philistines renewed their war with Israel, and an army, under the command of the king and Jonathan his son, went out against them. In this expedition Saul gave great offence to the Lord by offering, with his own hands a sacrifice, and it was made known to him that for this fault, the government should not be continued in his family.

In the contests which followed, a remarkable exploit was performed by Jonathan and his armour bearer, who went, secretly, to the garrison of the Philistines, and, aided by the interposition of providence, put the whole host to flight. The enemy was then pursued by the main army and discomfited, with a very great slaughter. At the close of the day, Saul inquired of the Lord whether he should continue his march against the Philistines; but, receiving no answer, he concluded that some heinous transgression had been committed by the people. On examination and trial by lot, it was found that Jonathan, by eating a little honey, had violated a command of his father, who in the morning had denounced a curse against the man that should taste of any kind of food before night. It was, therefore, determined by the king that his son should be put to death, but he was rescued by the people whose affection he had won by his valour and his goodness.

Among the wars which were carried on by Saul against the enemies of Israel, one was undertaken, by command of the Lord, with the Amalekites, who were entirely overthrown and

destroyed, with the exception of Agag, their king, who was saved alive contrary to the will and direction of God. Some of the best of the cattle were, also, taken and preserved by the soldiers for their own use. For these acts of disobedience, Samuel was again commissioned to announce the divine displeasure to Saul, and to assure him that the kingdom should be taken from him and given to another. Saul was deeply affected by the declarations of the prophet; acknowledged his transgression and humbly entreated forgiveness. Samuel, however, turned to go away, when the king, in order to detain him, laid hold of his mantle and rent it, which circumstance was construed by the former as an omen that denoted the loss of the government. Afterwards, the prophet caused Agag to be brought before him, when, with his own hand, he cut him in pieces. He then returned to Ramah, and came no more into the presence of Saul during his life.

The Lord having determined that the kingdom should be taken from its possessor, Samuel was directed to go down to the house of Jesse, the Bethlehemite, and anoint one of his sons as a successor to Saul. The prophet complied with the divine command, and the several children of Jesse were made to pass before him. David the youngest, who had been called in from tending the sheep, was selected for the office. Not long after, the youthful shepherd was summoned to the court of his sovereign, to exercise his skill upon the harp for the relief of Saul, who was subjected to the influence of an evil spirit. His music was attended with the happiest effects, and he gained

at once the confidence and affection of the king.

LESSON XXIX.

While the war continued between the Israelites and the Philistines, it happened, at a certain time, as the two armies lay encamped at a little distance from each other, that a man of gigantic stature, Goliath by name, came out from the Philistines and challenged the host of Saul to decide the contest by single combat between himself and any person that might be disposed to undertake the encounter. David who was then in the camp, on a message to his brethren, offered his services to go out and meet the Philistine; and, on representing his exploits as a shepherd, in the defeat of a lion and a bear who had fallen upon the flock which he kept, he was permitted by Saul to hazard the engagement. He did not, however, as was expected, make use of the sword or the spear, but took with him only a sling and a scrip, in the latter of which he put five smooth stones that he had selected from a brook; and when he drew near to the Philistine, who mocked at his youth and derided his imaginary rashness, he threw at him with great force and adroitness, one of the stones, which, sunk deep in his forehead, and instantly put an end to his life. He, then, went and stood upon the body of Goliath, and, with the sword of the fallen giant, cut off his head. The Philistines, when they saw what had happened to their champion, fled in great disorder, and were pursued and overthrown by the Israelites. David, afterwards, carried the head of the Philistine

to Jerusalem, where he made himself known to the king.

In consequence of the praises which David received from the women, who came out, with music and dancing, to welcome the return of the victors, and who ascribed to Saul the glory of having slain his thousands, but to David that of having slain his ten thousands, the envy of the monarch was greatly excited. Jonathan, on the contrary, was so much affected with the valour and amiable deportment of the shepherd youth, that he immediately entered into a covenant of the closest friendship with him. From this time the hatred of Saul to David increased, and he sought to kill him with a javelin while he was playing before him on the harp. But failing in this attempt, he, afterwards, endeavoured to accomplish his death by sending him out against the Philistines; but the providence of God rendered the artifice unavailing; for David succeeded in his enterprise and obtained Michal, the daughter of Saul for his wife.

Saul, finding his intentions to be frustrated, in the measures which he had hitherto taken, directed his son and his servants to kill David. But Jonathan, instead of complying, remonstrated with his father upon the ingratitude and wickedness of the resentment which he indulged, and so far prevailed as to draw from him an oath that David should not be slain. When this was made known to the latter by his friend, he returned to the court and was in the presence of the king as before; but the evil spirit soon banished from Saul the remembrance of his vow, and, in the renewal of his hatred, prompted him to aim a further blow at the life of his imagina-

ry rival. This, also, was avoided, and David immediately fled to his house, whither he was followed by the servants of Saul, who were deceived by Michal with an account that her husband was sick; and when they were again sent, with orders to take him in his bed, they found only an image which she had prepared and placed there for his safety. David, having, in the mean time, escaped, repaired to the prophet Samuel at Ramah, and went down with him to Naioth where they dwelt for a time. To this place Saul repeatedly sent messengers, who, instead of accomplishing their purposes, yielded to the influences of the Spirit of God which came upon them, and engaged in the sacred employment of the prophets. The king himself then departed in pursuit of the object of his hatred, but when he arrived at Naioth he was affected in like manner with his messengers and prophesied before Samuel, wherefore, it became a proverb in Israel, "Is Saul, also, among the prophets?"

Thus, by the miraculous interposition of heaven, David was preserved from the hands of his enemy, and, taking advantage of the inspiration which had diverted the mind of the king from the object of his pursuit, he fled from Naioth and returned to his friend Jonathan. After this, he was again enabled to avoid the persecutions of Saul, through the interference of Jonathan, who, by a preconcerted signal, warned him of his danger. Previous to this, the anger of the monarch was excited to a very high degree against his son, on account of the intercession which he had made in behalf of his friend, and he attempted to kill him with the

javelin which he had in his hand. David, on receiving information of the continuance of Saul's hatred and the danger to which he was thereby exposed, went to a place called Nob, where he was hospitably entertained by Ahimelech, the priest, who relieved his necessities with the hallowed bread of the sanctuary, and furnished him with the sword of Goliath for his defence. He, then, continued his flight, and, at length, arrived at Gath, in the land of the Philistines; but being known by the people as the person who had distinguished himself in the former war, in order to escape their fury and revenge, he feigned himself mad before the king. The next day, as is most probable, he left Gath and took up his residence in a cave called Adullam, near a town of the same name belonging to the tribe of Judah.

The friends and relations of David, hearing of the place of his concealment, immediately resorted thither, together with many persons who were either dissatisfied with the administration of Saul, or embarrassed in their circumstances. He thus found himself at the head of about four hundred men. This junction was highly acceptable to him; and, having made provision for his aged parents, by placing them under the protection of the king of Moab, he remained, with his company, for a considerable time, in the cave. At length, he was advised by the prophet Gad to return to the land of Judah, which he accordingly did, and took up his residence in the forest of Hareth.

LESSON XXX.

When Saul was informed of the situation of David, and the number of his adherents, he was greatly alarmed; and, having convened an assembly of his friends, principally belonging to his own tribe, at Gibeah, he addressed them upon the subject which gave him so much concern, and, in order to confirm their allegiance to him and his family, set forth the little advantage which any might hope to derive from a revolt to the son of Jesse. At this time, a certain Edomite, named Doeg, who was with Ahimelech at Nob, when David received the shew bread and the sword of Goliath, gave Saul a particular account of the transaction. Messengers were immediately sent to bring Ahimelech and all his father's family before the king. When they arrived, Saul upbraided the priest for his treachery in granting supplies to an enemy, and although the latter vindicated his conduct, yet the enraged monarch ordered him with all that belonged to him, to be put to death. This cruel command was soon carried into execution by Doeg, the Edomite, who slew with his own hands, eighty five persons that wore a linen ephod. After this, he went, with a party of soldiers, to Nob, the city of the priests, and destroyed its inhabitants, with their flocks and their herds. From this general slaughter, only one person escaped, Abiather, the son of Ahimelech, who fled to David and was taken under his protection.

While David abode in the forest of Hareth, the Philistines made considerable depredations in various parts of the country, and, at length, took possession of a place called Keilah, belong-

ing to the tribe of Judah. Intelligence of this being brought to David, he consulted the divine oracle, and, agreeably to the direction which he received, marched with men to the succour of the inhabitants of Keilah. There he fought with the Philistines and overthrew them with a great slaughter. The news of this action soon reached Saul, who supposed that David would fortify himself in the city which he had delivered, and, therefore, sent an army to invest it. David, having inquired of God, was told that the men of Keilah would prove perfidious, if he remained in the city, and deliver him into the hand of Saul, upon which, he departed from the place, with his company, which had increased to about six hundred, and retired into the wilderness of Ziph, which lay upon the confines of Edom. Here, he received a visit from his friend Jonathan, who comforted and strengthened him in his exile, and renewed the covenant which he had formerly made with him. In the mean time, the inhabitants of Ziph sent word to Saul that David was in their country, and that, if he would come down with a sufficient force, they would deliver him into his hands. This offer was highly gratifying to the king and he immediately went, with an army, in pursuit of David, and, at length, came very close upon him. His intention was to surround the company of the latter in order to prevent their escape; but before he could carry his plan into execution, he received information that the Philistines had taken advantage of his absence and were ravaging the land, wherefore, he was obliged to give up the indulgence of his private resentment for

the public good, and turn his arms against a more general and dangerous enemy.

David and his men removed from Ziph and took up their abode in the strong holds of the wilderness of Engedi. Here he was, afterwards sought by Saul, with an army of three thousand soldiers, but the magnanimity which he discovered in sparing the life of the king when he was in his power, taking only the skirt of his garment when he might have shed his blood, so affected the mind of the latter, that he acknowledged his fault in harbouring such deadly enmity, and pursuing with such unabated malice, an innocent person. He, also, expressed his conviction that David would be king; and, having received from him an oath that he would not, upon his advancement to the throne, utterly destroy the family of his predecessor, he returned to his home.

About this time the prophet Samuel died and was buried in Ramah, being universally lamented by the Israelites. During the days of mourning which were observed for him, David removed from Engedi and retired farther into the wilderness of Paran. While he was in this place, he was inhospitably treated by a wealthy but wicked man, whose name was Nabal, and whose servants had received from David and his people many favours. Abigail, the wife of Nabal, was, in character and disposition, the reverse of her husband; and she endeavoured, by an act of kindness, in supplying David with provision for the support of himself and his company, to divert him from the design which he had formed of being avenged upon the ungrateful and profligate churl. Her presents were graciously re-

ceived by David, who, thereupon, relinquished his intended enterprise against Nabal. Abigail returned home, where she found her husband drinking and feasting, and such was his condition, that she gave him no account of what had taken place until the next morning. She then related to him the transactions of the preceding day and the manner in which she had saved his life, and so powerful was the impression made upon the mind of Nabal, that he fell into a fit of stupidity which in about ten days ended in his death.

When David heard of this event, he sent messengers to Abigail to obtain her consent to become his wife, which she readily, but modestly gave, and accompanied the servants of their master, after which the nuptials were celebrated. David, also married, about the same time, another woman, named Ahinoam, of Jezreel; but Michal, the daughter of Saul, was taken from him and given to Phalti, the son of Laish.

LESSON XXXI.

Saul did not long retain a remembrance of the circumstances which had attended his last interview with David; for, being again informed of the place of his retreat, he marched against him with an army of three thousand men, and pitched his tents on the mountain of Hachilah. David received intelligence where the host of Saul lay encamped, and, on the evening of the same day, he visited it with Abishai, one of his men, at which time he found the king and all his guards in a deep sleep. Abishai told David that his enemy was now in his power, and advised him to improve the oppor-

tunity by putting him to death. This counsel he, indignantly, rejected ; but, in order to shew Saul the danger which had threatened him, and the purity of his own intentions, he took possession of his spear and a cruse of water, which stood by him, and departed. These articles he publicly exhibited from the top of an opposite hill, and, at the same time, rebuked Abner, the general of Saul's army, for his inattention to the life and safety of his sovereign. Saul appeared to be deeply affected by this renewed instance of generosity on the part of David, and after accusing himself of cruelty and confessing his guilt, he promised that he would no more seek to do him harm. But the latter was not disposed to rest, with confidence, upon the words of a man who had manifested so much instability of temper, wherefore, after the departure of Saul, he went over to the Philistines and took up his abode with Achish, their king, at Gath, by whom he was treated with great kindness and respect, and who, at his request, made him a present of a city, called Ziklag, to which, with his wives and his soldiers, he soon after removed. For a year and four months, he remained in the country of the Philistines, during which time he made war upon the neighbouring nations, the Geshurites, the Gezrites, and the Amalekites, from whom he took large spoils, of which he made presents to Achish ; but that it might not be known from whence he obtained his booty, he destroyed all the inhabitants of the places which he invaded, and informed the king that his plunder came from the south of Judah. With this statement, Achish was satisfied, and soon after, assembling his ar-

mies to renew the war with Israel, he invited David and his men to join the forces of the Philistines. They proceeded together to a place called Shunem, where the host encamped. Saul, with his troops, lay directly opposite upon the mountains of Gilboa, from which he had a full view of his enemies, and was greatly alarmed at their numbers and strength. His disquietude was vastly increased when, upon inquiring of the Lord in what manner he should act, he received no answer either by dreams, or by Urim and Thummim or by prophets.

Some time previous to his entering upon the present expedition, Saul had banished from the principal cities of his dominions all those who maintained an intercourse with evil spirits and practised witchcraft and divination; but in his perplexity and distress, he now resolved to have recourse to some person of that profession, in order to ascertain, if possible, what would be the issue of the war. At Endor, about three leagues from the place of his encampment, there lived a sorceress, and to her he repaired in disguise, being accompanied by two of his servants. When he came to the habitation of the woman, he requested her to exercise her skill in calling up the spirit of such person as he should name. She, at first, reminded him of the decree of Saul, and refused to proceed in the gratification of his desires; but on being assured, with the solemnity of an oath, that no harm should happen to her, and having been told to bring up Samuel, she commenced her incantations and succeeded in producing the real person or a phantom exhibiting the exact likeness of the prophet. From this spectre the woman understood who it was

that had employed her ; and Saul, after recovering from his first astonishment, and being asked by the apparition why he had disturbed the repose of the dead, made known his unhappy situation and the object of the present transaction. He was then informed, that the Lord had forsaken him on account of his wickedness ; that the kingdom was about to be taken from him and given to David, and that, the next day, both he and his sons would be numbered among the dead. The spirits of Saul were overcome by this communication, and he fainted and fell to the ground. Upon his recovery, he received some refreshment from the woman, after which he returned, with his attendants, to the army.

On the succeeding morning both the Israelites and the Philistines removed from the places where they had encamped, the former pitching in Jezreel and the latter in Aphek. Before the battle commenced, some of the Philistine princes, observed that David and his followers were on their side, went to Achish, the king, and stated to him the probability that these Hebrews, instead of assisting, would fight against him, at the same time advising him to send them away. Achish reluctantly complied with their counsel, and, after commending the character and conduct of David, dismissed him from the army, and he returned with his company, to Ziglag. When they reached this place, he found that, during his absence, it had been invaded by the Amalekites ; that they had pillaged and burnt the city, and carried away his two wives with all the inhabitants. By direction of the Lord, he immediately pursued the Amalekites with four hundred of his men, and being conducted

to their camp by an Egyptian whom he found in a field, he fell upon them while they were feasting and rejoicing, and having smitten them with a great slaughter, he recovered the spoil and the captives, with which he returned to Ziggag. He then divided the property among the people according to their claims, although some of his men objected to the apportionment, because those who remained had not been exposed to equal danger with themselves. After this, he sent presents into various parts of the land of Judah, to those of the elders and people, who, at different times, had given him protection and assistance.

In the mean time, a desperate engagement took place between the Philistines and the Israelites, in which the latter were defeated. Three of the sons of Saul, Jonathan, Abinadab and Melchishua were slain in the battle, and he himself, being severely wounded, put an end to his life by falling upon his own sword. Their bodies were afterwards found by the men of Jabesh Gilead, in favour of whom Saul made his first warlike expedition against the Ammonites, and by them were buried with every mark of honour and respect.

REMARKS.

1. It is not surprising that the capture of the ark should have caused great distress, and its restoration extraordinary rejoicing, among the Israelites. This was deemed the peculiar symbol of God's presence, inasmuch as the divine communication had hitherto been made from the mercy seat which was placed upon the top of it.

2. It appears from the literal reading, that fifty thousand and seventy of the men of Bethshemeth were slain for looking into the ark. But it is the opinion of most commentators, that the fifty thousand refers to the whole number of the people, and that only seventy were killed. This opinion is warranted by the original phraseology, and, also, corroborated by the ancient historian Josephus.

3. The ark remained in Kirjath-jearim about forty six years, until David removed it. The twenty years, therefore, mentioned in the seventh chapter, must allude to the time that elapsed after the war, before the Almighty revisited the people with any special tokens of his favour.

4. There is an apparent difficulty in the account of David's being called to stand before Saul. After the victory which he gained over Goliath, he seems not to have been known by the king or his servants, although in the preceding chapter he is stated to have gained the love of Saul and to have become his armour bearer. This difficulty is removed by Bishop Warburton and others, upon the supposition, confirmed by many particulars, that the order of time is not observed in the history, and that the combat with the giant did in reality take place before David was sent for to play upon the harp.

5. The tabernacle remained, for a considerable time, at Shiloh, where it was set up by Joshua. It was probably caused to be removed by Saul to Nob, in the land of Benjamin, where David was hospitably received and entertained by Ahimelech the priest.

6. The prophet Samuel died in the ninety

eightth year of his age, about two years before the death of Saul. The latter reigned forty years in Israel.

7. David, in his exile, appears to have been aided and countenanced by the tribe of Judah. This was owing to the circumstance of his belonging to that tribe, the people of which had probably received an intimation of his appointment to be the successor of Saul, and considered themselves as having a much greater right to give a sovereign to the country, than their brethren of the house of Benjamin.

LESSON XXXII.

David received intelligence of the issue of the battle, and the fate of Saul and his sons, from a person who called himself an Amalekite, and who, in the expectation of receiving a reward for his conduct, falsely declared that he himself had slain Saul, at his particular request; and, as an intended confirmation of his story, he produced the crown and the bracelet of the fallen king, which had accidentally come into his hands. David was, however, so much incensed at the presumption of the stranger, that, taking his own word as evidence against him, he ordered him to be immediately put to death, which was accordingly done. After this, he composed a beautiful and an affecting elegy, in praise of the valour and the virtues of Saul and of Jonathan, which is recorded, at large, in the first chapter of the second book of Samuel. He then inquired of the Lord whether he should return into the land of Israel; and, receiving an answer in the affirmative, he went up to Hebron, one of the cities of Judah, where he was

anointed and proclaimed king. Upon this, he sent messengers to the men of Jabesh Gilead, commending them for their good deed in burying the bodies of Saul and his sons, and promising them, in return, his friendship and protection.

In the mean time, Abner, who had been captain of Saul's host, took Ishbosheth, the son of the late king and placed him upon the throne of his father, in consequence of which, the nation was involved in a civil war that continued for several years. The first battle was fought by the pool of Gibeon, between the forces of Ishbosheth, under Abner, and those of David, under Joab. Previous to the commencement of the action, it was proposed by Abner to try the strength of the opposing parties, by selecting a certain number of soldiers from each army, and permitting them to engage in a contest before their commanders. Twelve Benjamites, accordingly, went out from the camp of Israel, and were met by as many of the servants of David, and such was the skill exhibited, that every man slew his antagonist, and the whole four and twenty lay dead upon the spot. A general battle then ensued, which terminated in favour of David, Abner and his host being totally routed and put to flight. Joab, with his two brothers, Abishai and Asahel followed the fugitives, but the latter, on overtaking Abner, was slain by him with a spear. When the victorious army came to the place where the dead body of Asahel lay, the people, being much shocked at the sight, proceeded no farther, while Joab and Abishai continued their course after Abner. At length, however, they returned,

when it was ascertained that there had fallen in the battle, on the part of Abner, three hundred and sixty men, and on that of Joab, nineteen, exclusive of Asahel. The body of the latter was taken by his brethren and carried to Bethlehem, where it was buried in the sepulchre of his ancestors.

The war between David and Ishbosheth continued for a long time, during which, the strength of the former daily increased, while that of the latter as constantly diminished. At length, Abner, in consequence of a reproof which he received from his master, revolted to the standard of David, at Hebron, and promised to gain for him the allegiance and support of all Israel. But before he could fully carry his plans into effect, he was treacherously slain by Joab, who took this method to revenge the death of his brother Asahel. David was greatly displeased at this transaction, and deeply lamented the unworthy fate of so distinguished a prince. At the same time, he declared that merited punishment would sooner or later overtake the author of the deed. Previous to the death of Abner, David had received, through his influence, and as a condition of the league which he made with him, his first wife Michal, the daughter of Saul, who had been given by her father to Phaltiel, the son of Laish.

When Ishbosheth heard of the death of Abner, he was greatly afflicted, but he did not long survive the person by whose means he had been advanced to the throne. Two of his officers conspired against him, and murdered him in his sleep; and, having cut off his head, they hastened with it to Hebron, where they supposed it

would be received by David as a welcome present and that they should be rewarded with thanks and honours. In this they were sadly disappointed; for he manifested great indignation at their conduct; and, after reminding them of the manner in which he had treated the Amalekite, who brought him the news of Saul's death, ordered them to be slain for their perfidy and rebellion. The sentence was immediately executed, and they were hanged over the pool in Hebron; but the head of Ishbosheth was honourably interred in the sepulchre of Abner.

Upon the death of Ishbosheth, the several tribes who had continued their allegiance to the house of Saul, sent deputies to David, acknowledging his right to the sovereignty, and promising him obedience. He, therefore, at the expiration of six years and a half after the death of his predecessor, became king over Israel, according to the word of the Lord by the prophet Samuel; and, having gathered together an army, marched against Jerusalem which was still possessed by the Jebusites. He succeeded in taking the city out of their hands, after which, he enlarged its borders, and established there his court and royal residence.

About this time, Hiram, king of Tyre, hearing of the success and prosperity of David, sent messengers to congratulate him on his accession to the throne, and accompanied his message with a valuable present to assist him in building a palace. While David was in Jerusalem, he married several wives in addition to those who were with him at Hebron, and from these were born unto him eleven sons and one daugh-

ter, making the whole number of his children eighteen, of which six were born unto him in Hebron. The first disturbance with which David met after his settlement at Jerusalem, was from the Philistines, whom, in repeated battles, he subdued. After the restoration of peace he went down to Kirjath-jearim, with an immense host, to bring up the ark of God, which had remained in the house of Abinadab more than forty years. It was on this occasion that Uzzah, one of the sons of Abinadab, was slain for his presumption in taking hold of the ark to steady it. David was so much alarmed at the circumstance that he did not venture to carry it immediately to Jerusalem, but placed it in the house of Obed-edom, where it remained three months, at the expiration of which, it was brought up to the royal city, and placed in a tent which was made for its reception. The manner in which David expressed his joy at this event gave great offence to his wife Michal, in consequence of which she was punished with perpetual barrenness.

LESSON XXXIII.

When David had obtained rest from all his enemies, and placed the ark in safety at Jerusalem, it came into his mind that he could do nothing more proper in itself, or more acceptable to his Maker, than to build a house for the worship of God, which no one had ever yet done in Israel. He intimated his intentions to the prophet Nathan, who commended his design and directed him to proceed in its accomplishment. But, on the succeeding night, a revelation was made to the prophet, in which he was command-

ed to forbid David from prosecuting his purpose, and at the same time to inform him that in the succeeding reign under the administration of his son, the proposed temple should be erected. The king received this communication of the divine word without complaining, and acknowledged the mercies and the goodness of God to himself and the nation in a devout and fervent prayer.

The peace which the Israelites enjoyed did not long continue ; for David, being denied the privilege of building a house to the Lord, and knowing that this was reserved for one of his posterity, resolved to employ his time in the subjugation of his enemies, that when his son should come to the throne, he might meet with no interruption to the work. He, accordingly, marched in succession against the Philistines, the Moabites, the king of Zobah, on the Euphrates, and the Syrians, gaining victories over them all ; taking possession of their cities, and imposing tribute upon the inhabitants. The Edomites, who were the descendants of Esau, were, also, reduced to a state of bondage and servitude. The king of Hamath, hearing of the successes of David, sent to congratulate him upon the occasion, and made him a considerable present of gold, and silver, and other valuable articles, which, with the spoil that he had taken from the conquered nations, he dedicated to God for the future use of the temple. The government was now administered in justice and regularity, by David and the subordinate officers, Joab, being general of the armies ; Jehoshaphat, keeper of the records ; Zadok and Abimelech, priests ; Seraiah, secretary of state ; Be-

raiah, captain of the guard, and the sons of the king, princes of the empire.

Peace and quietness being thus restored, David took measures to ascertain whether there were any individuals who had a particular claim upon his patronage and protection; and, remembering his obligations to Jonathan, the son of Saul, inquired whether any of the family of the former king was yet living to whom he might shew kindness for the sake of the friend of his youth. He was told by Ziba, a servant of the house of Saul, that Jonathan had left a son, whose name was Mephibosheth, and that he was lame in his feet. This lameness was occasioned in his infancy, by the falling of his nurse, as she fled with him in her arms upon receiving news of the fatal termination of the battle at Gilboa. David immediately caused Mephibosheth to be brought before him, when he informed him, that he should, in future, live under his immediate care at Jerusalem, and be provided for as one of his own sons, and that the lands and possessions of his father should be restored to him. The management of this estate was committed to Ziba, who had fifteen sons and twenty servants.

The next war in which David engaged, was with the Ammonites and their confederates the Syrians, in consequence of an insult which had been offered by the former to some of his servants who were sent to them upon a friendly embassy. The Israelites were successful, and such was the result, that the Syrians entirely forsook their employers, and all the kings who had been subject to them made peace with David. The army then returned to Jerusalem;

but in the beginning of the next spring hostilities were renewed, and Joab was sent with a powerful force against the Ammonites. This commander gained many victories over the enemy, and, at length, laid siege to Rabbah, the capital of their country. At this time, David remained in Jerusalem, and being overtaken by temptation, committed an offence against God, most heinous in its nature and productive of the worst consequences. This was nothing less than adultery with a woman whom he had accidentally seen from the top of his palace. She was the wife of Uriah, a brave and distinguished officer, who was then absent in the service of David at the siege of Rabbah. After the commission of the crime, the king sent for Uriah home; but it was in vain that he endeavoured to prevail upon him to go down to his house. He, therefore, returned him to the army, and sent by him a letter to Joab, in which he directed the latter to place Uriah in such a situation that he must inevitably be slain. This cruel command was obeyed, and thus David, to cover his first transgression, added to it the crime of murder. After the usual time of mourning was past, he took the woman, whose name was Bathsheba, home to himself, and she became his wife and bare him a son.

The conduct of David, in the whole of this transaction, was highly displeasing to God, who commissioned the prophet Nathan to go and represent to him the guilt of his conduct in its true light. Nathan, accordingly, presented himself before the king, and in a parable set forth the wickedness of a certain rich man, who, for the entertainment of a stranger, had robbed his

poor neighbour of an only lamb which grew up with him and his children, in the house, and was as dear to him as a daughter, when, at the same time, his own pastures abounded with flocks and herds. David was highly incensed at this pretended act of oppression, and immediately declared that the author of it should be put to death. The prophet, then, applied the story to his own case, emphatically declaring, "*Thou art the man!*" and predicting, as a punishment for the offence, severe and lasting evils upon the king and his house. Upon this, David was struck with horror and remorse, as he reflected upon the magnitude of his crime, and having acknowledged his sin, he was comforted with the assurance of final forgiveness. The child, however, which was born to him, was not suffered to live, and the afflicted parent received the judgement with penitence and resignation. Afterwards Bathsheba gave birth to another son who was called Solomon, and upon whom the divine favour was greatly bestowed.

LESSON XXXIV.

While the circumstances which have been related were taking place at Jerusalem, Joab, with his troops, was prosecuting the siege of the chief city of the Ammonites. He was, at length, reduced to such straits, notwithstanding some partial successes, as to be under the necessity of sending to Jerusalem for aid, which he immediately received from David, who marched in person, with a strong reinforcement, to his succour. The place was then taken; the crown of the Ammonitish king which was of immense value, was placed upon the head of David, and all the

inhabitants were reduced to a state of degrading bondage. The army with a rich spoil, returned in triumph to Jerusalem.

David, soon after this conquest, began to experience the heaviest calamities in the concerns of his own family. His only daughter, Tamar, became the victim of the unlawful and incestuous passion of her brother Amnon, in consequence of which, the latter was slain by Absalom another of the king's sons, in whose house the unfortunate damsel had taken up her solitary abode. To escape the punishment to which this act had exposed him, Absalom fled to Talmai, the king of Geshur, who was his grandfather, and with whom he remained three years. David, in the mean time, was comforted for the loss of Amnon, and from his strong paternal affection, was exceedingly desirous of the restoration of Absalom. This was effected by the policy of Joab, who caused a certain woman to disguise herself, and, by a feigned tale of distress in regard to her own children, to induce David to pronounce a judgement which might be applied to the benefit of Absalom. The stratagem having succeeded, the king immediately gave orders to have his son brought to Jerusalem, where he remained two years without appearing in the presence of his father. At the expiration of this time he was introduced to him by Joab and reinstated in his favour and confidence.

Absalom, being naturally of a crafty and an aspiring disposition, and destitute of all moral and religious principle, immediately pursued measures to secure the favour and good will of the people, and to alienate their respect and allegiance from his father. By the graces of his

person and the smoothness of his address, he succeeded in flattering them into a belief that their rights would be much safer in his hands than in those of David. To carry on his treasonable designs he, then, under pretence of fulfilling a pious vow which he had made during his exile, entreated permission of the king to make a journey to Hebron, which being granted, he departed to that place accompanied by two hundred of his friends, who were not, however, thoroughly acquainted with his purposes. He had previously sent spies through the country to give notice of his intentions, that the people might be prepared, upon hearing the sound of the trumpet, to revolt to his standard.

When Absalom arrived at Hebron, he sent for Ahitophel, the chief counsellor of David, who had aided and encouraged the conspiracy, and who immediately repaired to him from Giloh. The presence of this man greatly strengthened the hands of the traitor, and the Israelites came over to his interests in vast numbers. As soon as David became acquainted with these circumstances, he was deeply alarmed for the safety both of his kingdom and his person; and calling together his principal officers, he declared to them his determination to leave the city, in order to avoid the sword of his rebellious son. This being approved by the assembly, a solemn procession was soon performed, and the king, followed by his family, his servants, and many of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, abandoned his palace and directed his steps to the wilderness. As he passed the brook Kidron, and ascended Mount Olivet, he wept bitterly, probably at the recollection of his own offence against God

which had brought such direful calamities upon his head, as well as at the apprehension of the evils in which the country was about to be involved; and the people who were with him, in like manner, responded to his lamentations. For particular reasons, he sent back some of his attendants, among whom were Zadok, the priest, and his two sons, who had brought with them the ark of the covenant of God; and after he had reached the height of the mountain, he, also, directed Hushai, the Archite, to return, and under professions of friendship for the cause of Absalom, to counteract the counsels of Ahitophel.

As David proceeded on his course, two circumstances occurred which must have greatly added to his affliction, although his piety forbade him to complain. He was met by Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, who brought him a generous supply of provisions; but, at the same time, informed him that his master, who had been treated by David with the utmost kindness, rejoiced in the conspiracy of Absalom as preparatory to his own advancement to the throne. The king then revoked the grant which he had formerly made to the son of Jonathan, saying to Ziba, "Behold all that pertained to Mephibosheth is thine." After this, one Shimei, a Benjamite, came out and mocked at the distress of David, casting stones at him and cursing him, as he went, with the most opprobrious language. Some of the people advised that Shimei should be slain; but David referred his conduct to the providence of God, which thus exposed him to one affliction after another, and

ordered, that no notice should be taken of his insults and abuse.

In the mean time, Absalom and his party took possession of the city. Here he was counselled by Ahitophel to practice the most abominable wickedness, in order to bring disgrace upon his father; but the crafty and malicious politician soon found his career terminated through the means of Hushai, who, agreeably to the directions of David, had declared himself on the side of Absalom, while he was, in reality, devoted to the interest and welfare of the king.

LESSON XXXV.

On taking the advice of his counsellors in regard to the pursuit of David and his company, Absalom was disposed to adopt the course recommended by Hushai rather than to follow the plans of Ahitophel. This gave great offence to the latter, who, thereupon, went immediately to his house, and having arranged his domestic concerns, put an end to his life. Preparations were then made to go out against David, of which he received notice from his friend Hushai, and, improving his opportunity, passed over Jordan and came to Mahanaim, where he received an acceptable supply of provisions from the Ammonites and others. At this place he numbered his people, and, putting them under the command of three persons, Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, made ready for a battle with the forces of his son, who were, by this time, encamped in Gilead, near the royal army. At the same time, he entreated his generals to be merciful to Absalom, for his sake. The issue of the contest was in favour of David, the rebels

being defeated with the loss of twenty thousand men. Absalom made his escape into a wood where, as he rode upon his mule, his hair caught in the boughs of a tree and he was left suspended between heaven and earth. In this situation he was found by Joab, who immediately thrust three darts into his body, after which, he was cut to pieces by ten young men who were the armour-bearers of their general. His body was then thrown into a pit and a heap of stones laid upon it. Information being brought to David of the fate of his son, he was sincerely affected, and mourned very grievously for him many days. At length, upon the remonstrance of Joab, who set forth the impropriety and dangerous tendency of his conduct, he changed his appearance and presented himself in public, after which he was conducted, by his subjects, back to his capital. On his return thither, he received the homage of Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, and of Shimei, who had cursed him, the former of whom declared that his servant had slandered him, and the latter made a most humble acknowledgement of his fault. David readily admitted the excuse of the one, and generously forgave the offence of the other. The only disturbance that took place on the occasion of the king's return to Jerusalem, was a dispute between the men of Judah, and the other tribes, which terminated in a new insurrection. This was headed by one Sheba, a Benjamite, who was followed by a great number of the Israelites. Amasa, who was appointed captain general in the stead of Joab, and who had been the commander of Absalom's forces, was directed to assemble the men of Judah in order to suppress

the rebellion ; but, as he delayed the business, Abishai, the brother of Joab, was directed to take the king's guards and pursue Sheba with what strength he could obtain. He immediately marched with his men out of Jerusalem, being attended by Joab ; and when they came to Gibeon, they were joined by Amasa and the tribe of Judah. Upon this meeting, Joab approached Amasa with great apparent friendship, and, inquiring after his health, plunged a sword into his body and left him weltering in his blood. He, then, put himself at the head of the army and pursued after Sheba who had taken refuge in a fortified city. This Joab besieged ; but, upon the expostulation of a woman who appeared upon the walls, he stated that he had no evil design against the inhabitants, but that his only wish was to secure the rebel Sheba. The woman promised him the head of the person whom he sought ; and, after consulting with the principal people of the place, she induced them to seize the traitor, which being done, they cut off his head and it was thrown over the walls to Joab, who, thereupon raised the siege and returned with his army to the king at Jerusalem.

Soon after this event, the land was afflicted with a severe famine which continued three successive years. On inquiring of the Lord, David was informed that this calamity was sent as a judgement on account of the sin of Saul in laying the Gibeonites, and thus violating the obligation which Joshua had originally imposed upon the nation. To propitiate the divine favour, by making some atonement for the transgression of Saul, David, after a consultation with

the Gibeonites, delivered into their hands seven of the posterity of his predecessor, and they were immediately put to death. Their bodies were afterwards taken and decently interred in the sepulchre of Kish, together with the bones of Saul and Jonathan, which David caused to be removed from Jabesh Gilead, where they had at first been buried.

The famine being over, the Israelites were again involved in a war with their old enemies the Philistines, and in several battles defeated them. In one of these David was prevented by his men from being present, and upon the termination of the war, he composed a hymn of praise in commemoration of the manifold blessings which he had received, closing with a prediction of the prosperity and stability of his house. While David was engaged in his various enterprises he was assisted by many officers of distinguished valour, who performed the most extraordinary exploits. The names of thirty-seven of these men are recorded by the sacred historian, with a brief sketch of their achievements.

In the latter part of David's life, he gave great offence to God by numbering the people in consequence of which he was offered, by the prophet Gad, his choice of three evils, war, famine and the pestilence. He selected the latter, and, in three days, seventy thousand of the people died. The angel of the Lord who was commissioned to effect this destruction, stood by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite and, on stretching out his hand over Jerusalem he was directed to proceed no farther. The plague then ceased; and David, having put

chased the floor of Araunah, erected there an altar, and offered sacrifices unto God.

REMARKS.

1. Of the two books of Samuel, it is supposed that Samuel himself compiled the first, to the end of the twenty fourth chapter. The remainder was probably written by the prophets, Nathan and Gad, who were cotemporary with David. The two books comprehend a period of about one hundred and forty years from the birth of Samuel.

2. David, after the death of his predecessor, was acknowledged as king only by the house of Judah, over which he reigned, in Hebron, six years and seven months. The rest of the tribes continued their allegiance to the family of Saul, until the death of Ishbosheth.

3. Jerusalem, the city which David established as the royal residence, lay on the frontiers of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin. By Joshua it was given to the latter, yet it appears that it continued in the possession of the Jebusites until the accession of David to the throne. It was built on hills and encompassed with mountains. David considerably enlarged its borders by extending it to the north upon Mount Zion, which he afterwards called, "the city of David." The ancient name of Jerusalem was Jebus, called, also, Salem or Solyma. The original Jebus was situated upon a hill to the south, between which and Mount Zion lay the valley of Millo. This was filled up by David and his successor, and thus the two parts of the city were joined. Mount Olivet is about five furlongs to the east of Jerusalem, at the foot of

which runs the brook Kidron, or Cedron, in the valley of Jehosaphet.

4. Hebron, where David established his residence after the death of Saul, was situated on an eminence about twenty miles to the south of Jerusalem. It was allotted to Judah, but became, by divine appointment, the inheritance of Caleb. It was, also, a dwelling of the priests and a city of refuge.

5. Joab was the nephew of David, being the son of his sister Zeruiah. He was distinguished for his cruel and revengeful disposition, and appears to have exercised great influence over the mind of the king. He was, however, removed from his employments after the death of Absalom, probably in consequence of that event, and Amasa was appointed general in his place. This transaction gave him great offence, and he took the first opportunity to stain his hands in the blood of his rival.

6. In ancient times threshing floors were extensive pieces of ground in the open field, where the grain was trodden out by oxen. Such was the possession that David purchased of Araunah, the Jebusite, situated on Mount Moriah, and on the very place where he erected an altar to the Lord, the temple of Solomon was afterwards built.

LESSON XXXVI.

As David declined in years, one of his sons, named Adonijah, resolved on an attempt to advance himself to the throne. He succeeded in enlisting in his favour a considerable number of the people, among whom were Joab, the former commander of the army, and Abiathar the priest

He, then, provided himself with a royal equipage and retinue, and offered the accustomed sacrifices as preparatory to the acknowledgment and proclamation of his title. The whole of this transaction was made known to the king by Bathsheba, his wife, and Nathan, the prophet; upon which, he immediately took measures to secure the succession to his son Solomon, to whom, both by divine appointment and his own promise, it of right belonged. The latter was caused to accompany the servants of his father to Gihon, where he was duly anointed and proclaimed. The sound of the rejoicing which took place upon this occasion reached Adonijah and his companions while they were feasting; and being told by Jonathan, the son of Abiathar, what it meant, they were greatly alarmed and dispersed in confusion. Adonijah sought refuge in the sanctuary, at the horns of the altar, from whence he was taken and carried up to Solomon, who received his homage and dismissed him from his presence, with an assurance that no harm should befall him, if, in future, he conducted himself worthily. This affair being thus peaceably settled, David called his son Solomon to his bed side, and gave him his dying counsel and advice. With great solemnity, he charged him, as he valued his own happiness and the prosperity of his people, to obey, with the utmost strictness, the commandments of God, at the same time giving him a commission to inflict merited punishment upon Joab and Shimei, whom he, probably, considered as enemies of the government and disturbers of the public peace. His address being closed, David gave up the ghost, and was buried in the city

which he had built, having reigned over Judah and Israel forty years.

Soon after the death of David, Adonijah petitioned Solomon, through the favour of Bathsheba, to confer upon him a certain distinguished privilege. The king not only refused to grant his request, but, also, construed it into an act of indignity and rebellion which deserved death. Benaiah, the son of Jehoida, was, therefore, commanded to execute the vengeance of his sovereign, and in pursuance of the order, he fell upon Adonijah and slew him. About the same time, Abiathar the priest was degraded from his office and banished from Jerusalem. Joab, hearing of these events, and supposing that his turn would be next, fled to the tabernacle of the Lord and laid hold upon the horns of the altar. Here he was found by Benaiah, who, not being able to remove him, killed him upon the spot, according to the directions which he had received from the king. Only one of the domestic enemies of David now remained. This was Shimei, the Benjamite, who had cursed and abused him at the time of his departure from Jerusalem, and whom Solomon had forbidden, under pain of death, to go out of the city upon any occasion. For some time, Shimei observed the royal injunction; but, at length, it happened that two of his servants ran away from him, and he pursued them to Gath. Upon his return, it was told Solomon what he had done, and orders were immediately given for his death, which were executed, without delay, by the same person that had slain Adonijah and Joab. Benaiah was, at this time, captain of the host, and Zadok, the high priest.

Solomon, being thus securely placed upon the throne, and no prospect of disturbance appearing from any quarter, entered into an alliance with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, by marrying his daughter, after which, he went up to Gibeon, which was the great high place of Israel, to offer sacrifices unto the Lord. Here, he was favoured with a divine communication in a vision or dream by night, and directed to ask for the bestowment of any blessing that he wished. With great humility, he acknowledged his weakness and imperfection; and, instead of supplicating for riches or long life, or any benefit of a mere temporal nature, he besought the Lord to give him wisdom and understanding to enable him to govern well the people over whom he was placed. This request was highly commended by the Almighty, who promised him, not only the fulfilment of his desire in an extraordinary degree, but, also, distinguished wealth and honours, to which should be added, on condition of his faithfulness and obedience, length of days.

After the return of Solomon to Jerusalem, an opportunity soon occurred for him to manifest his superior wisdom and discernment. Two women came to the royal palace, the one of which stated, that the other had stolen away her infant while she slept, and claimed it as her own, in the place of one that had died, which she laid in the arms of the mother who had been robbed. The woman, who was accused, asserted that no such exchange had been made, but that she herself was truly the mother of the living infant. To decide so difficult a controversy with justice, Solomon caused a sword to be brought, and, placing it in the hands of an offi-

er, directed him to divide the child into two equal parts and to give one to each of the women. The real mother instantly protested against this mode of procedure, resigning, at once, her claim, in order to save the life of her son, while her neighbour was desirous that the proposed division might take place. This tenderness of maternal affection on the part of one, and indifference on that of the other, instantly enabled the king to determine to whom the child belonged, and it was then delivered in safety to its real parent. When the judgement of the king, in this case, became generally known in Israel, it gained for him increased reverence and admiration. The uncommon wisdom with which the Lord had blessed him was soon attended with the happiest consequences throughout his dominions; all his subjects enjoyed peace and prosperity, and the neighbouring nations became either his tributaries or his allies. The style of his living was answerable to his greatness, and the reputation of his knowledge was so universally extended, that people came from all parts of the world to see and to hear him. Besides his peculiar duties as a sovereign, he manifested great regard for the morality and happiness of his subjects, and wrote for their use and improvement, three thousand proverbs, and one thousand and five songs, together with a variety of treatises upon trees, plants and animals.

LESSON XXXVII.

The peace and prosperity of Solomon's reign were well adapted to the prosecution of that work which David had designed, but which was to be accomplished by his successor. The king, there-

fore, took advantage of the time, and made preparations for building the house of the Lord. In the first place, he sent messengers to Hiram, king of Tyre, who had been the friend of his father, informing him of his intentions, and requesting from him a supply of cedar and fir. This was readily and cheerfully bestowed, and the two kings entered into a covenant of perpetual peace and friendship. Solomon then levied thirty thousand workmen and arranged them in three companies of ten thousand each, giving to Adoniram, one of his officers, the oversight and command of the whole. These labourers were to be employed with the servants of Hiram, in Mount Lebanon; but only one company was sent out at a time, which remained for a month, and then returned home and was succeeded by another. In carrying on the work, there were, also, seventy thousand whose duty it was to bear burdens, and eighty thousand who were employed as hewers of stone in the mountains. The number of overseers amounted to thirty three thousand. This magnificent undertaking was commenced in the fourth year of Solomon's reign, four hundred and forty years from the time of the settlement of the Israelites in the land of Canaan; and the building was completed, in all its parts, in seven years, during which, the sound of axe, hammer, or any tool of iron was not heard upon it, the timber being all made ready in the forest, and the stones in the quarries.

Solomon, also, built for himself two very superb and costly palaces, together with a house of equal beauty and splendour, for the queen. In completing the temple, a distinguished arti-

zan from Tyre, by the name of Hiram, had been employed, who cast two pillars of brass, each eighteen cubits in height, upon which were raised chapiters, adorned with lily work, net work and pomegranates. These pillars were placed at the entrance of the porch, one upon the right hand and the other upon the left. Hiram, also, made all vessels and instruments which were to be used in the services of the sanctuary; and thus the building became ready for the devotions and offerings of the people. Solomon, then, caused the ark to be removed to the place which he had prepared for it in the temple, upon which the glory of the Lord filled the house, and the king proceeded to the dedication in a solemn and fervent prayer, in which he implored the divine favour upon the work of his hands and the services to which it was appropriated. He concluded, with a blessing which he pronounced upon the congregation; and, after offering a vast number of sacrifices and keeping a feast to the Lord seven days, he dismissed the people, who returned to their habitations, rejoicing in the goodness of God, and praising the merits of their king.

Not long after the dedication of the temple, the Lord appeared a second time to Solomon, and told him that he heard and accepted his prayer and supplication, and that his favour should forever rest upon the house which had been built. He declared, moreover, that the continuance of the government in the family of David would be dependent upon the constancy and fidelity with which the divine laws were observed. At the expiration of twenty years, probably, from the time of Solomon's coronation,

a present was made by him to Hiram, king of Tyre, of certain cities, in return for his assistance in building the temple, with which the latter was not well pleased, wherefore, that part of the country was called Cabul, a name denoting dissatisfaction. Solomon, then, applied himself to the building, repairing, and fortifying of various towns within his dominions, engaging, also, extensively, in commerce, and sending his ships to Ophir for gold.

Among the persons who came from distant parts to witness the glory and to be edified with the wisdom of Solomon, was the queen of Sheba, who resolved to make trial of his understanding by proposing for his solution many difficult questions upon various subjects. The answers of the king not only gave satisfaction to her mind, but filled her with astonishment and admiration; and, having made him a valuable present of gold and spices, she returned to her own country, with the most exalted opinion of his knowledge and power. With the fame of Solomon, his riches, also, increased; for his vessels brought him an abundance of gold, insomuch that it was applied to the most common uses, silver being held in no estimation. In short, the richest gifts poured in upon him from every country, and to obtain his friendship and to see his face was the prevailing ambition of the princes and philosophers of the age.

But such is the imperfection of the human character, that even Solomon, surrounded as he was with every blessing and exalted to the highest summit of earthly glory, forsook, at last, the Lord, his benefactor, and went after the gods of the heathen. The close of his life was disgraced

by idolatry, to which he was turned by the temptations and artifices of his wives. Thus he provoked the anger of the Almighty, who declared to him, that, as a punishment for his wickedness, the government should, in part, be taken from his family. In addition to this, enemies were raised up against him, and the remainder of his days, was clouded with care and sorrow. Among his foes, was one by the name of Jeroboam, who was the son of Nebat, a servant of Solomon. This man had received from the prophet Ahijah an intimation that he was destined to the throne, in consequence of which, he attempted to alienate the affections of the people from their sovereign. When the king became acquainted with what had taken place, he concerted a plan to destroy Jeroboam, but the latter prevented its execution by fleeing into Egypt, where he remained until the death of Solomon, which happened soon after. He died in the fifty eighth year of his age, having reigned forty years, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father, in the city of David.

LESSON XXXVIII.

After the death of Solomon, the people assembled at Shechem to make his son, Rehoboam, king. They had, previously, sent to Egypt for Jeroboam, who had returned and was present with them upon the occasion. Before proceeding to the acknowledgement and anointing of the son of Solomon, they determined to ascertain whether he was disposed to release them from the burdens under which they had suffered in the former reign; and, to this end, they sent to him a deputation, with Jeroboam at the head

of it, to obtain from him a promise that, on his advancement to the throne, he would redress their grievances. Rehoboam immediately summoned a council of old experienced men, to whom he communicated the message he had received, and requested their opinion in regard to the answer which he ought to give. They advised him, without hesitation, to comply with the wishes of the people; but, instead of regarding their direction, he referred the subject to the determination of some of his young and thoughtless companions. By these he was told to pay no respect to the complaints, or feelings of the people, but to state to their messengers, that, so far from lessening their evils which they represented, he would greatly increase them. This advice which was agreeable to his own sentiments, he imprudently followed, in consequence of which, ten tribes immediately revolted from the house of David and made Jeroboam their king. The nation thus became divided into two parts, of which the one was designated by the name of Israel, and the other by that of Judah. The tribe of Judah retained the adherence of the Benjamites, but there were comparatively so few of the latter, that both families were included under one general appellation.

Rehoboam, upon this unexpected defection, sent Adoram, who was over the tribute, to collect from the Israelites their accustomed taxes, but the enraged multitude stoned him to death. He, then, hastened with all speed, up to Jerusalem, where he assembled a large force of the men of Judah and Benjamin, and prepared to give battle to Jeroboam, that he might thus bring

back the rebel tribes to their allegiance. His intentions were, however, frustrated, for the word of the Lord came to him by the prophet Shemaiah, forbidding him to take up arms, and declaring that the event which had occurred was according to the divine will. From this time there is but little recorded of the reign of Rehoboam. His subjects became exceedingly vicious and depraved, and abandoned themselves to idolatry and all manner of wickedness, in consequence of which the king of Egypt was sent against them, who took the city of Jerusalem and robbed the temple and the palace of their treasures, and carried away the shields of gold which Solomon had made, in the place of which the king substituted others of brass. Rehoboam was forty one years old when he began to reign, and he continued on the throne seventeen years, at the expiration of which, he died, and was buried with his fathers. He was succeeded by his son Abijam.

The revolted Israelites, under Jeroboam, did not exceed their brethren of Judah in virtue and piety. The king, in order to prevent the people from going up to Jerusalem to sacrifice, which he supposed they would be inclined to do from their former habits, and their reverence for the temple and the ark, made two golden calves, the one of which he placed in Dan and the other in Bethel, the northern and southern extremities of his dominions. He, also, established festivals to be observed on the same days with those of Jerusalem, and advanced to the priesthood the lowest of the people, who were not of the house of Levi. In these ways he

made Israel to sin and provoked the severe displeasure of the Lord.

On a certain day, as Jeroboam stood by the idol which he had erected at Bethel, impiously executing the office of a priest, by burning incense, a prophet of God came thither from Judah and denounced a heavy woe upon the altar, and those who should sacrifice upon it, which he declared should be accomplished in the reign of a future prince by the name of Josiah; and to confirm the truth of his prediction, he further said, that the altar should at that time be rent, and the ashes upon it poured out. This speech so incensed Jeroboam, that, stretching out his hand, he ordered his attendants to seize the prophet; but his hand immediately withered away, and the altar became rent so that the ashes fell upon the ground. The king was thus convinced of the inspiration of the prophet, and entreated him to pray for the restoration of his hand, which he readily did, and it returned to its former state. Jeroboam then urged the stranger to go home with him and receive some refreshment; but the latter refused the invitation, upon the ground, that the Lord had commanded him neither to eat nor to drink. He then departed from the place, and was followed by an old prophet who had been informed by his sons, of the transactions at the altar, and who persuaded him by a false statement, to return. While they were seated at the table, the word of the Lord came unto the old prophet, and he addressed the man of God who was from Judah, declaring, in substance, that in consequence of his disobedience to the command of heaven, he should not be buried in the sepulchre of his fa-

thers. This sentence was soon put in execution, for immediately after leaving the city, he was attacked by a lion and slain. The prophet of Bethel, when he heard of this calamity, went out and took the body which had been neither torn nor disfigured, and, returning with it, caused it to be buried in his own tomb, at the same time expressing his confidence that the predictions concerning the altar would all be fulfilled, and giving it in charge to his sons that, when he died, they should lay him by the side of the man of God.

LESSON XXXIX.

The extraordinary events which have been related had no effect in producing the reformation of Jeroboam, but he continued in the practice of the grossest idolatry and wickedness. At length, one of his sons was visited with a severe sickness, and he sent his wife, in disguise, to the prophet Ahijah, who had foretold his advancement, to inquire what would be the issue of the disease. Ahijah received information from the Lord of the coming of the woman, and was directed what to say to her upon her approach. Accordingly, as she entered the door, he reproved her for feigning herself to be another, and then proceeded to express the displeasure of God towards her husband for his manifold iniquities, and to assure her that not only the child who was sick, but that his whole family should be entirely cut off and destroyed. She, then, departed from the prophet, and on her arrival at the threshold of her own house, her son died. This event was followed by the death of Jeroboam after a corrupt reign of twenty two years.

Abijam, who succeeded his father Rehoboam, reigned over Judah, in Jerusalem, three years, doing that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. At the expiration of this period, he died, and Asa, his son, reigned in his stead. He was a wise and religious prince, and reformed the nation from many of the corruptions which his ancestors had countenanced.

In the second year of Asa; Nadab succeeded his father Jeroboam, in Israel, and turned not aside from the abominations of his predecessor. But his course was soon terminated by one of his officers named Baasha, who conspired against him and slew him at the siege of Gibbethon, a city of the Philistines, in the second year of his reign. Baasha was then acknowledged as sovereign, after which he caused every individual of the family of Jeroboam to be put to death. Between him and Asa, king of Judah, there was continual war, in the prosecution of which, the latter derived considerable advantage from Benhadad, king of Syria, who was induced, by means of a large present, to make a league with him. The conduct of Baasha corresponded with that of the kings before him, and the prophet Jehu was sent to threaten him with the vengeance of Almighty God. His reign commenced in the third year of Asa, and continued twenty four years, when he died and was succeeded by his son Eiah. The latter had not been on the throne two years before he was killed by his servant Zimri, who took possession of the kingdom. The reign of Zimri was, however, of short duration, for the army which was at that time encamped at Gibbethon, refused to acknowledge his authority, and made Omri, their general,

king. They then marched to the royal city, which they took ; and the usurper, to avoid falling into their hands, set fire to the palace, and was consumed with the building, having reigned only seven days. The advancement of Omri, was not, however, pleasing to all the people, for a considerable number declared themselves in favour of one Tibni, the son of Ginath, but the party of Omri prevailed, and Tibni lost his life in the contest. Omri was made king in the thirty first year of Asa, and reigned twelve years, walking in all the ways of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. He removed the royal residence from Tirzah to a new city which he built and called Samaria, from the name of Shemer, the former owner of the hill on which it stood. Here he died and was buried, and his son Ahab, who, for a time had shared his authority, succeeded him. The death of Asa took place in Jerusalem about two years before that of Omri, and Jehosaphat his son, reigned in his stead.

The kings of Israel, in its revolted state had, thus far, been Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, and Omri, and those of Judah, during the same period, Rehoboam, Abijam and Asa, and among them all, the last is recorded as the only good man. The two thrones were now filled by Ahab on the part of Israel and Jehosaphat, on that of Judah, the former being distinguished above all that had gone before him, for his idolatry and general wickedness. In his days an attempt was made by one Hiel to build Jericho, but according to the prediction of Joshua, at the time of its overthrow, he laid the foundation

thereof in his first born and set up the gates in his youngest son.

A celebrated prophet, by the name of Elijah, was raised up in Israel in the reign of Ahab, and from him the king received many severe reproofs. He predicted a great drought in the land which came to pass according to his word, during which he was nourished by ravens at the brook Cherith, and by a widow woman of Zarephath, whose barrel of meal and cruse of oil were miraculously replenished until rain fell upon the earth. The son of this woman was taken sick and died, but upon the prayer and intercession of Elijah, God was pleased to restore him to life. At length, the prophet was directed to show himself to Ahab, who, with his people, was greatly distressed for want of water, there having fallen neither rain nor dew for the space of three years, and a grievous famine prevailing in Samaria.

About this time, the king and Obadiah, the governor of his house, who had shewn favour and kindness to the prophets of the Lord during a persecution which had been carried on against them by Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, who was a worshipper of Baal and a supporter of his priests, undertook to visit, by different routes, various parts of the country, for the purpose of ascertaining whether there were yet any brooks or fountains of water, that had not been entirely dried up, that, if it were possible, the horses and mules might be preserved from perishing. Upon this occasion, Obadiah was met by Elijah, who directed him to go and inform the king of his coming. A meeting, therefore, soon took place, when the enraged monarch charged the

prophet with being the cause of all the calamity that had been experienced. Elijah, in reply, told him, that he had not occasioned, although he had predicted it, but that it was brought upon the nation on account of the wickedness of their ruler and his family.

LESSON XL.

Elijah, having reprov'd Ahab for his idolatry, directed him to summon the priests and prophets of Baal, to the number of eight hundred and fifty, to meet him at Mount Carmel, where he would, in the face of all the people, prove the folly and vanity of their pretensions in relation to their imaginary god. The king immediately sent forth messengers into all Israel, and the proposed assembly was soon collected. Elijah then gave orders that two sacrifices should be prepared, one for the worshipers of Baal and one for himself, and that the Being who answered by fire should be acknowledged and received as the only true object of praise and adoration. The priests of Baal, having made ready their altar and oblation, called aloud upon their god, and cut themselves with knives and lancets in order to propitiate his favour, but all their exercises proved fruitless and vain, for there was no voice nor any that regarded. Elijah, then, repaired the altar of the Lord which had been broken down, and having put the wood in order, and laid the victims, which had been slain, thereon, that there might be no suspicion or possibility of deception, he caused a great quantity of water to be poured upon the whole. After this, he addressed himself in a fervent prayer to the Almighty, and the fire

came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and dried up all the water. This miraculous display of divine power so astonished the people that they immediately fell upon their faces and acknowledged the power and supremacy of the God of Elijah. The prophet, then, caused all the priests of Baal to be led to the foot of the mountain, and there put to death, upon which he went up to the top of Carmel, where he prayed for rain, and the Lord graciously answered his petitions.

Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, when she heard what Elijah had done to her favourite priests, vowed revenge, and immediately sent a messenger to inform him that he should answer for his conduct with his life. The prophet, therefore, to avoid the effects of the queen's fury, fled to Beersheba, in the southern parts of Judah, where he left his servant, and then sought refuge for himself in the wilderness. Here, he was miraculously supplied with provision, in the strength of which he continued his flight forty days and forty nights, until he came to Horeb, the mount of God. In this place, he received a vision, calculated to comfort him in his affliction; and in which he was directed to return into his own country by the way of Damascus. He was, also, commanded to anoint, on his route, Hazael to be king of Syria; Jehu to be king of Israel, and Elisha to be his own successor in the prophetic office. The latter he soon found at work in the field, and, as he passed by, he cast his mantle upon him. Elisha immediately left the plough, and, following Elijah, became his servant. About this time, Benhadad, the king of Syria, had raised a large army, and being join-

ed by thirty petty sovereigns from beyond the Euphrates, made war upon Israel, and besieged the city of Samaria. Ahab, who was in no condition to oppose so powerful an enemy, at first submitted himself to his mercy: but the Syrian increasing in the insolence of his demands, the former, by advice of his friends and the encouragement of a prophet, took up arms in defence of his country, and in two successive battles proved so victorious that he reduced Benhadad to the necessity of making peace upon his own terms. His lenity, however, in sparing the life of his adversary, when he had him in his power, was displeasing to the Lord, from whom he received the following message:—"Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction; therefore, thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people."

Soon after the return of Ahab to Samaria, he became guilty of a crime of the most heinous nature. Adjoining the royal gardens in Jezreel, was a vineyard belonging to a citizen of the place, whose name was Naboth. This vineyard Ahab was exceedingly desirous of purchasing, but the owner refused to part with it upon any terms, as it was part of an estate which had descended to him from his ancestors. The king, thereupon, manifested great displeasure and grief, and rejected all kinds of sustenance, which being perceived by Jezebel, she speedily contrived a way to obtain for her husband the object of his desire. In order to accomplish her plans, she wrote letters, in the name of Ahab, to the principal men of Jezreel, commanding them to proclaim a fast; to bring Na-

both before the judges, and to suborn two false witnesses to accuse him of treason and blasphemy, that he might be carried out of the city and stoned to death. These directions were punctually obeyed; the unfortunate Naboth fell a sacrifice to the covetousness of the king and the diabolical machinations of a wicked and an artful woman, and Ahab took possession of the vineyard. A heavy judgement was soon denounced against him for this offence, and it was declared to him that his whole family should be extirpated. But upon his repentance and humiliation, it pleased the Lord to delay the full execution of the sentence until the days of his son and successor.

While the transactions which have been mentioned were taking place in Israel, the house of Judah remained peaceable and prosperous under the administration of the good Jehosaphat. This king, at length, entered into an unfortunate alliance with Ahab, who requested his assistance in recovering Ramoth Gilead, a town belonging to the tribe of Gad, from the hands of the Syrians who unjustly detained it, in violation of the covenant between Benhadad and the king of Israel. Jehosaphat readily complied with the desires of Ahab; but previous to the commencement of the expedition, he intimated a wish that the prophet Micaiah might be consulted in regard to its success. His predictions were unfavourable, and contrary to those of the prophets of Israel, who had assured the king of victory, at which Ahab was greatly enraged and ordered Micaiah to be imprisoned; but in the end, his words proved true, for Ahab, who had disguised himself in the battle, was slain by an

arrow, which a certain man shot at a venture, and thus ended a corrupt reign of twenty two years. His son Ahaziah succeeded him, and was, in like manner with his father, distinguished only for his wickedness. Jehosaphat returned to Jerusalem from the battle at Ramoth Gil-ead, where he died in about eight years after the death of Ahab, having reigned twenty five years, and Jehoram, his son, was advanced to the throne in his stead.

REMARKS.

1. It would seem, at first view, that the charge which David, just before his death, gave to his son Solomon, respecting Joab and Shimei, and particularly the latter, was altogether inconsistent with that merciful and forgiving disposition which he possessed, and in direct violation of the solemn promises which he had unconditionally made. In order to avoid the difficulty which the subject presents, some learned men have supposed that the passage in our translation does not harmonize with the original, but that it now appears in the positive form of a command to slay, whereas it should be in the negative. But if we consider it in the light of a caution and a prediction, which the order of the words will justify, there is no need of resorting to any farther conjecture. David knew that both Shimei and Joab were, in heart, disaffected towards his family; and, that Solomon might not be led to confide in any of their professions, he warned him to be on his guard from the remembrance of their former conduct, and at the same time foretold their destiny.

2. Before the temple was erected, the taber-

nacle, which had been built in the wilderness, was the general place of worship and sacrifice for the Israelites ; but in addition to this, they were in the habit of offering their devotions in different parts of the country, on eminences, which had been sanctified by the presence of patriarchs and prophets, or the appearance of God. These eminences were called high places, and the principal among them was Gibeon, to which, also, the tabernacle was removed. They were not unlawful in themselves, so long as Jehovah was the only object of worship, and previous to the building of the temple : But after this event, they were absolutely forbidden ; and as they became perverted to the idolatries of the heathen, it was deemed by the Lord a most commendable act, in any of the princes, to destroy them.

3. The temple of Solomon was commenced in the year of the creation two thousand nine hundred and ninety two, and finished in seven years. It stood on Mount Moriah, with the entrance towards the east, and the most holy and retired part toward the west. The services to which it was appropriated did not consist of public prayers and reading the law ; but of sacrifices, burning incense and intercession on the part of the priests. The people offered their petitions, privately, in the outer porches.

4. There have been many and various conjectures in regard to the situation of Ophir, from whence Solomon brought his gold. Some have supposed that it was an inland country, near the source of the Euphrates and Tigris. Others have placed it in the west of Africa on the sea coast ; and others again have discovered proofs of its

location in the East Indies. It is difficult to ascertain which of these opinions is conformable to the truth, but the probability is in favour of Africa.

5. The queen of Sheba who visited Solomon to hear his wisdom and to see his wealth, is thought to have come from the farthest part of Arabia. By some her government is fixed in Ethiopia, and it may be, that she reigned over both countries.

6. Samaria, which was built and made the seat of government by Omri, king of Israel, was situated on a fruitful hill, about a day's journey, according to Josephus, from Jerusalem. It was laid out with great splendour, and strongly fortified, and among its curiosities was a palace of ivory, erected by Ahab.

7. Baal, who is also called Bel, was a god of the Canaanites and Phenicians, and is considered as the most ancient of their deities. He appears to have been a great favorite with the family of Ahab, whose wife Jezebel supported and protected, as far as she was able, his priests; and, indeed, the Israelites, generally, were greatly addicted to his worship. Human victims were offered to him in sacrifice.

8. Carmel, where Elijah confounded and destroyed the prophets of Baal, is a mountain near the Mediterranean sea, at the foot of which, on the north, runs the brook Kishon.

LESSON XLI.

After the death of Ahab, the Moabites rebelled against Israel, to whom they had hitherto been subject; and Ahaziah, probably while preparing for an expedition against them, was taken

ill in consequence of a fall from the lattice in his chamber. Being a worshipper of idols, like his father Ahab, he sent messengers to inquire at the oracle of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether he should recover from his sickness. These messengers were met on their way by the prophet Elijah, who, according to the instructions which he had received from heaven, directed them to return to the king with a reproof for his idolatry and a declaration that he should surely die. Upon this, Ahaziah sent, in succession, two armed forces to seize the prophet and bring him to Samaria, but Elijah, in attestation of his office, called down fire from heaven upon them, and they were consumed, with their captains. The king then dispatched a third company in pursuit of Elijah, who, by command of the Lord, accompanied them to the royal palace, where he repeated his former prediction of the death of the king. This was soon verified; for the illness of Ahaziah increasing, he, at length, gave up the ghost, after a short reign of two years, and was succeeded by his brother Jehoram in the second year of Jehoram, the son of Jehosaphat, king of Judah.

The prophet Elijah, who had long been a faithful servant of the true God, and a terror to the evil doers of the corrupt age in which he lived, was now approaching the close of his ministry. He was not, however, destined to see death, it being the will of the most high to translate him immediately from earth to heaven. Previous to his departure, he visited the sons of the prophets in various parts of the country, and was accompanied in his journeyings by Elisha, who, notwithstanding the remonstrances of

his master, persisted in his determination not to be separated from him. When they came to the river Jordan, Elijah smote the waters with his mantle and they parted asunder, so that he and Elisha went over on dry ground. After they had proceeded a little distance on the other side, Elijah directed his companion to ask what benefit he should confer upon him before he was taken away. The latter requested that he might be blessed with a double share of his spirit, which was promised him in case he should witness his departure. As they went on conversing together, there suddenly appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and, in a whirlwind, Elijah ascended to heaven. Elisha beheld him as he rose in the air, and cried, "My father, my father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." He then took up the mantle of Elijah which had fallen to the ground, and returning to the river Jordan, struck it upon the waters, which immediately divided, and he passed over in safety. The miracle which was performed was seen by fifty of the prophets who had followed Elijah to the river side, where they had remained until Elisha came back, and they were thereby convinced that the latter had received the spirit of his master, and acknowledged, at once, his inspiration and authority. Elisha went on to Jericho, where at the request of the inhabitants, he healed the waters of an unpleasant taste, and the ground of its barrenness. From Jericho, he proceeded to Bethel, and on his way thither a company of children came out and mocked him, crying, "Go up, thou bald head—go up thou bald head." Elisha, at the reception of this insult, turned back and cursed

the children in the name of his God, and there immediately rushed out from a neighbouring wood two she bears, who fell upon and destroyed forty two of them. Elisha, then, pursued his journey to Mount Carmel, and from thence to Samaria, where he established his residence for a time.

It happened, soon after the events which have been related, that the two kings of Israel and Judah, with the assistance of the king of Edom, which they had obtained in passing through his country, went out to battle against the Moabites who had rebelled, and refused to pay the accustomed tribute which had been imposed upon them from the time of David. Elisha accompanied the army, and, in the wilderness through which it passed, relieved, by a miracle, the distress occasioned by a want of water. A complete victory, was finally gained over the Moabites, whose king fled and took refuge in his capital city. Thither the combined hosts pursued him, and laid siege to the place; but on his sacrificing his eldest son upon the walls, in view of the whole army, the Israelites were so struck with horror and indignation, that they abandoned their object and returned to their own land.

LESSON XLII.

Elisha, having returned from the land of Moab, was called upon by a certain woman whose husband was dead, to relieve her from the oppressions of her creditor. He complied with her request, by increasing the oil of a single vessel to a quantity sufficient to enable her to discharge all her debts. From this time, it was his custom, as he journeyed through the country,

to stop for refreshment at the house of a man in Shunem, whose wife treated him with the greatest respect and hospitality, and caused a chamber and a bed to be prepared for his reception whenever he should pass that way. During one of his visits, he predicted to the Shunamite the birth of a child, which took place according to his word. In the course of a few years, it happened, that this child, being in the field with his father, complained of a severe pain in his head, in consequence of which, a servant was directed to carry him home, where he languished until noon and then expired in the arms of his mother. The afflicted parent, having carried the body into the chamber which was reserved for Elisha, and laid it upon his bed, immediately departed for the residence of the prophet, in order to make known to him her calamity. He heard her complaints, and directed his servant to proceed without delay to her house and lay his staff upon the face of the child, soon after which, he himself accompanied the woman on her return. In answer to his prayers, the Lord was pleased to restore the life of the child, and Elisha delivered him to his mother. He then left the house of the Shunamite and went to Gilgal, where he continued the display of his miraculous gifts, first, by removing the infection of certain provision which had been accidentally poisoned, and afterwards, in multiplying a quantity of food that had been presented to him to a sufficiency for all the men of the place.

The extraordinary powers of Elisha were not exercised for the benefit of his own people alone, but extended their influence to the welfare of strangers and heathen. Naaman, the captain

of the host of the king of Syria, a man distinguished for his valour and his birth, had, for a long time, been afflicted with the leprosy. This person, while suffering under the severity of a painful and loathsome disease, heard by the means of a certain maid servant who had been taken captive from the Israelites, of the fame of the prophet; and, being exceedingly desirous to ascertain whether he could do any thing for his relief, he obtained from his sovereign a letter of introduction to the king at Samaria, in which his name and complaint were made known, together with his desire of being healed. This letter he delivered in person to Jehoram, who, supposing it to be an artifice on the part of the Syrian monarch to draw him into a quarrel, was at first, greatly disconcerted; but when Elisha was informed of the circumstances, he immediately requested that the stranger might be sent to his house. Naaman, accordingly, with his servants and his equipage, appeared before the door of the prophet, who simply directed him, by a messenger, to go and wash himself seven times in the river Jordan. The proud Syrian received this prescription with anger and disdain, and refused a compliance. But upon the entreaties of his servants, he was, at last, prevailed upon to make trial of the experiment, which, succeeded far beyond his expectations, for, upon washing himself in Jordan, according to the direction which had been given him, "his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child and he was clean." He then returned to the house of Elisha, where he expressed his gratitude by acknowledging the power of the God of Israel, and urging the

prophet to accept a present at his hands. Elisha could not be induced to receive any of his gifts; and Naaman declared his resolution to offer, in future, no sacrifices but to the Lord Jehovah, at the same time asking the favour of two mules' burden of earth, upon which he might build an altar in his own land. This being granted, he commenced his journey for Syria; but had not proceeded far before he was overtaken by Gehari, the servant of Elisha, who falsely told him that he had been sent by his master to desire of him a talent of silver and two changes of raiment for some guests who had called at his house. Naaman, pleased with an opportunity of manifesting his gratitude, readily bestowed more than was asked, and Gehari returned with the presents, which he concealed for his own use. But Elisha knew all that had taken place, and when his servant came into his presence, he demanded of him where he had been, Gehari replied, that he had not been absent, upon which the prophet stated particularly what had happened, and, having reproved the man for his covetousness, declared that the leprosy of Naaman should cleave to him and his seed forever. "And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow."

A further miracle wrought by Elisha was for the recovery of an axe which had fallen into the water, at a place where the sons of the prophets were felling timber in order to enlarge their habitation. When the loss was made known to Elisha, he threw a stick into the river, and the iron immediately rose to the surface; from whence it was taken and restored to the person by whom it had been dropped. After these

things, a war was declared by the king of Syria against Israel. Benhadad raised a considerable army, with a design of besieging Samaria, and made preparation for the attack, but his plans, before he had time to carry them into execution, were all made known to his enemy. From this circumstance, the Syrian was led to suppose that some person belonging to his own army was in the interest of the king of Israel, and betrayed his counsels. But his suspicions were removed by one of his servants, who told him that Elisha, the prophet, gave information of his designs, and reported the words which he uttered in his most secret retirements. He, then, determined to secure the person of the man of God, and to this end sent a detachment to Dothan, the place where he resided. The servant of Elisha was greatly alarmed at the apparent strength of the host which came out against his master, but the Lord opened his eyes and he beheld the whole mountain filled with horses of fire and chariots of fire, arrayed in defence of the servant of the Most High. The men who encompassed the place were, upon the prayer of Elisha, smitten with blindness; and the prophet, under pretence of putting them in the way of securing the object of their pursuit, led them into the midst of Samaria, where their sight was restored, and they found themselves, to their inexpressible amazement and terror, in the midst of their enemies. The king of Israel would willingly have put them to death; but Elisha forbade such a proceeding. They were, therefore, kindly treated, and sent back, in safety, to their master.

LESSON XLIII.

On a renewal of the war by the Syrians, the city of Samaria was besieged, in consequence of which a severe famine took place within the walls, and such was the scarcity of provisions, that two women entered into a mutual agreement to kill and eat their own children. One of them, accordingly, caused her son to be slain, and when he was devoured, she claimed from her neighbour the fulfilment of a like obligation, which was refused. The parent who had been deprived of her child then made her complaint to the king, stating to him what had been done, in order to induce him to compel the other woman to perform her promise. The king was greatly affected and enraged at the circumstance, and vowed revenge upon Elisha, as if he had been the author of the calamity which had befallen the people. Upon this, the prophet predicted that in twenty four hours the inhabitants of the city should be plentifully supplied with food. A certain lord who waited upon the king manifested a great want of faith in the accomplishment of this prediction, and declared that the thing was utterly impossible. It happened, however, that four lepers, who sat without the gate of the city, in a suffering condition, resolved to repair to the camp of the Syrians and throw themselves upon the mercy of the enemy, rather than to die with hunger where they then were. But they found on their arrival, that the army had fled, leaving in their tents a great abundance of provision, of silver, of gold, and of raiment. The Lord had made them to hear in the night the sound of a multitude of chariots and of horses, with the shouts

of a great host, which so much terrified them that they escaped with the utmost precipitation. The lepers returned to Samaria and informed the king of their discovery, who, having ascertained by messengers the truth of the story, went out with his people and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. But the unbelieving lord was trodden to death, by the crowd, at the gate of the city.

During a long and severe famine, which prevailed throughout the land of Israel, the Shunamite whose son had been restored to life, went, by the direction of Elisha, into the country of the Philistines, where she abode. On her return, after the calamity had ceased, she found that her possessions were in the hands of strangers, whereupon, she had recourse to the king for the purpose of obtaining justice. He was, at the time of her entrance, conversing with the servant of Elisha, and receiving from him an account of the various miracles which had been performed by his master. As soon as the woman came in, Gehazi told the king that she was the very person of whom he had been speaking, and that it was her child that had been raised from the dead. It was then ordered, that her estate, with all the profits thereof, during her absence, should be restored to her.

In the mean time, Elisha went down to Damascus, where he was informed of the sickness of Benhadad, king of Syria, who sent Hazael, one of his servants, to inquire of the prophet what would be the event of the disease. Elisha declared to the messenger, that his master would surely die, although he intimated that the disorder would not of itself, necessarily prove

fatal. He then gazed for a long time upon the countenance of Hazael, and, at length, burst into tears. Being asked the reason of this strange conduct, he attributed it to a foresight of the evil which Hazael would bring upon the children of Israel. The mind of the latter revolted at the thought of such cruelty as the prophet had foretold; but when he returned to his master, he took a thick cloth and dipped it in water, and spread it on his face so that he died. And Hazael reigned in his stead.

About this time, Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat died, having reigned over Judah, eight years. In his reign the Edomites revolted, and made themselves a king, after having been subject to Judah one hundred and fifty years, from the time of David. The character of Jehoram was that of a wicked prince, for he was connected with the family of Ahab, having married his daughter, Athaliah. He was succeeded by his son Ahaziah, whose reign commenced in the twelfth year of Jehoram, king of Israel. These two sovereigns entered into an alliance against Hazael, king of Syria, and the latter was wounded in battle. During his confinement at Jezreel, the king of Judah, who was his nephew, visited him, when the following circumstances took place, which put an end to the government of the family of Ahab.

The army being at Ramoth Gilead, Elisha directed one of the minor prophets to go thither and anoint Jehu, upon whom the command of the host had devolved, to be king of Israel. This commission was soon executed; and Jehu, having been acknowledged and proclaimed by the officers who were present, immediately took a

chariot and hastened up to Jezreel, accompanied by a party of his friends. The kings of Israel and Judah, when they heard of his approach, hastened out to meet him, and it so happened that the two companies came together at the vineyard which Ahab had unjustly taken from Naboth. Here Jehoram, the king of Israel, inquired of Jehu whether he came peaceably, and was answered with such a reproof of the wickedness of his father's family, and, particularly, of his mother Jezebel, that he immediately perceived his danger and attempted to flee. But Jehu drew his bow with his full strength and the arrow pierced the heart of Jehoram, and he expired in his chariot, having reigned twelve years over Israel. His body was afterwards thrown into the adjoining vineyard.

Ahaziah, the king of Judah, supposing that his connexion with Jehoram and the family of Ahab would subject him, also, to the fury of Jehu, hastened away in his chariot, but he was soon overtaken and slain. This event took place in less than a year from the time of his accession to the throne. Jehu then entered the city, and when he came to the royal palace, Jezebel, having painted her face and ornamented her head, looked out at an upper window, and reminded him of the fate of Zimri who slew his master. He paid no attention, however, to her looks or her words, but discovering that some of the servants in the house were on his side, he ordered them to throw her down. This command was instantly obeyed, and her blood was sprinkled on the wall and on the horses. He, afterwards, told some of his men to go and bury the body, but they found nothing but the skull and the feet and the

palms of the hands. Thus the predictions of Elijah, the man of God, were verified, and such was the end of this wicked woman. In a portion of that vineyard that her husband coveted and which she obtained by the murder of a righteous man, her flesh was devoured by dogs.

LESSON XLIV.

While Jehu remained at Jezreel, he wrote to the elders at Samaria, where were seventy of the sons of Ahab, directing them to select one of the best of these, and to place him on the throne. The elders, however, suspected this to be an artifice to sound their inclinations, and therefore, returned for answer, that they would take no measures in regard to the succession which might interfere with his claims, but that they would render him all the assistance in their power. He, then, gave them orders to put the sons of Ahab to death, with which they readily complied, and sent him the heads of the whole seventy. Jehu proceeded in the work of extermination and destroyed all the relations and friends and priests of the house of Ahab, who were in Jezreel, after which he departed for Samaria. On his way thither, he met with a large company of the brethren of Ahaziah, the late king of Judah, all of whom he caused to be slain. When he arrived at the capital of Israel, he slew all that remained to Ahab in that city. He, then, under pretence of offering a sacrifice to Baal, collected together all the priests and worshippers of that idol, and eighty men of determined valour, whom he had appointed for the purpose, fell upon them and smote them with the edge of the sword, so that not one es-

escaped. He, also, broke down the images and the statue, and desolated the house of Baal. But, notwithstanding this extraordinary zeal on the part of Jehu, he suffered the golden calves which had been placed in Dan and Bethel to remain, and both practised himself, and countenanced in his subjects, the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. In this, he provoked the displeasure of the Almighty; but, for his fidelity in extirpating the family of Ahab and destroying the servants of Baal, he received an assurance that his children to the fourth generation should sit upon the throne. He reigned in Samaria twenty eight years, at the expiration of which he died, and was succeeded by his son Jehoahaz.

When Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab, and widow of Jehoram, king of Judah, heard of the death of her son Ahaziah, she determined to put an end to the succession in the family of David, by destroying all his descendants who could offer any claim to the throne. But while she was carrying her cruel purposes into effect, Joash, one of the sons of Ahaziah, was stolen away by his aunt, who concealed him in her own house for six years, during which time the government was in the hands of Athaliah. When Joash was seven years old, Jehoida, the high priest, resolved upon an attempt to restore him to the throne of his ancestors. The event proved successful, and Athaliah was slain in the contest. Joash commenced his administration, under Jehoida, the high priest, in the seventh year of Jehu, king of Israel, and until the death of his instructor, he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. In his reign, regulations were adopted to defray the expense of repairing the

house of the Lord. These consisted in causing a chest, with a hole in the lid of it, to be made and placed by the altar, and directing the people, when they came into the temple, to deposit therein their contributions. The money, at suitable seasons, was taken out by the priests and applied to the purposes for which it was intended. Joash, in the latter part of his reign, was involved in a war with Hazael, king of Syria, and, to induce him to make peace, he presented him with the vessels and treasures which had been dedicated by his ancestors to the service of God. This, with his other offences, subjected him to the divine indignation, and he was, after having been on the throne forty years, slain by two of his servants who conspired against him, and Amaziah, his son, reigned in his stead.

Jehoahaz, king of Israel, began to reign in the twenty third year of Joash, and continued seventeen years. He was a wicked ruler, and the Lord delivered him into the hands of the king of Syria, by whom he was greatly oppressed. His death took place soon after that of the king of Judah, and Jehoash, his son reigned in his stead. The latter sat upon the throne sixteen years, at the expiration of which he died, and was succeeded by his son Jeroboam. A short time previous to this, the death of the prophet Elisha took place, and he was buried in a sepulchre. Soon after, the body of another man was laid in the same place, and upon touching the bones of the prophet, it revived and arose.

Amaziah was made king of Judah in the second year of Jehoash, king of Israel, and reigned twenty nine years, doing that which was

right in the sight of the Lord. One of his first acts was to avenge the death of his father, whose murderers he caused to be slain. He was afterwards imprudently involved in a war with the king of Israel, in which the latter was successful, and took Amaziah captive, and brake down the walls of the royal city, and plundered the house of God of its treasures. At length, Amaziah was slain in a conspiracy, and his son Azariah succeeded him, being, at the time, but sixteen years old.

Jeroboam, the son of Jehoash, the king of Israel, began to reign in the fifteenth year of Amaziah, and he reigned forty two years in Samaria. His character was similar to that of his predecessors, but for the sake of his people, the Lord gave him victory over his enemies. He died in Samaria and was buried with his fathers, and his son Zachariah reigned in his stead.

The reign of Azariah, king of Judah, who was, also, called, Uzziah, commenced in the twenty seventh year of Jeroboam, and continued fifty two years in Jerusalem. In general, his conduct was upright before the Lord; but as he did not destroy the high places where sacrifice was offered to idols, he was severely afflicted with the leprosy, as a punishment, and the government was placed in the hands of his son Jotham, who succeeded him.

Zachariah, the son of Jeroboam, was advanced to the throne of Israel, in the thirty eighth year of Azariah, king of Judah, and, after a short reign of six months, was slain by Shallum, who succeeded him in the sovereignty, and thus terminated the succession in the family of Jehu. Shallum maintained the power which he had

usurped only one month, at the end of which he was put to death by Menahem, who took possession of his throne and reigned ten years. The latter died in the fiftieth year of Azariah, king of Judah, having previously become tributary to the Assyrians, and Pekahiah, his son, reigned in his stead. Pekahiah was slain within two years from his advancement to the throne, by Pekah, one of his captains, who succeeded him, and reigned over Israel twenty years.

LESSON XLV.

Jotham, the son of Azariah, commenced his reign about the same time with Pekah, and governed the house of Judah sixteen years after the death of his father. In the days of Pekah, the Assyrians made war upon Israel and carried away captive great numbers of the people. At length, he was slain, in a conspiracy, by Hoshea, the son of Elah, who reigned in his stead. Jotham was succeeded by his son Ahaz, whose reign commenced in the seventeenth year of Pekah, and continued sixteen years. He did that which was evil in the sight of God, offering sacrifices unto idols, and purchasing the favour of the Assyrians with the treasures of the house of the Lord. His death, at length, took place in Jerusalem, and he was succeeded by his son Hezekiah.

Hoshea, the son of Elah, began to reign over Israel in the twelfth year of Ahaz, king of Judah, and became subject to the king of Assyria. He neglected, however, to pay his tribute, in consequence of which, he was taken by the conqueror, and bound in prison. The inhabitants

of the land were carried away into foreign countries and dispersed. Such was the end of the ten tribes that revolted from Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, and the government was never again restored to Israel. The king of Assyria repopled the country with his heathen subjects, who, having received instruction from a native priest, combined their idolatries with the observances of the Mosaic law. This was the origin of the Samaritans, who, afterwards, built a temple upon Mount Gerizim, and were always at variance with the house of Judah.

Six years before the desolation of Israel, Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz, began to reign in Jerusalem; and, instead of walking in the steps of his father, he was distinguished for his piety and uprightness above all that had preceded him. In consequence of his virtues he was blessed and prospered, and smote the Philistines, and threw off the yoke of the king of Assyria, to which his predecessor had subjected the nation. At the expiration of fourteen years, however, in order to prevent the invasion of Sennacherib, the Assyrian monarch, and the effects of a battle, he agreed to pay him tribute, and made him considerable presents from the treasures of the temple. But the Assyrians, instead of withdrawing their forces, laid siege to Jerusalem, and summoned the inhabitants to surrender. Hezekiah was greatly afflicted at this circumstance and implored deliverance, of the Lord. Soon after, he received a message from the prophet Isaiah, directing him not to be discouraged, for that divine assistance was at hand. In the mean time the troops of the king of Assyria had attacked an army of the Ethiopians, and, having

gained a complete victory, were preparing to execute the orders of their sovereign in the overthrow of Jerusalem. But the angel of the Lord came down into their host, in the watches of the night, and smote no less than one hundred and eighty five thousand men. This so terrified Sennacherib, that he immediately hastened back to Nineveh, where he was slain by two of his sons while he was engaged in the worship of his idols.

While Hezekiah was exposed to the attacks of the Assyrians, he was taken sick, and the prophet Isaiah was sent to him with a message from the Lord, directing him to prepare for immediate death. But, upon his fervent entreaties, it pleased God to restore him to health, and to give him the promise that his life should be continued fifteen years longer, confirming the same by a sign, in which the shadow returned ten degrees upon the sun dial of Ahaz.

Hezekiah, soon after his recovery, received a visit from certain messengers of the king of Babylon, to whom he shewed all the treasures of his palace and dominions. He was, then, informed by the prophet Isaiah, that the day was at hand when every thing that he possessed should be taken and carried away to Babylon. At the expiration of the fifteen years which were added to the life of Hezekiah, he died, having reigned over Judah twenty nine years, and was succeeded by his son Manasseh, who proved an exceedingly corrupt and idolatrous prince. His abominations and his cruelties were such that the Lord threatened the entire desolation of his kingdom. He was only twelve years old when he began his reign, and continued upon the

throne fifty five years, at the expiration of which he died, and was succeeded by his son Amon. The latter reigned but two years, imitating the vices and serving the idols of his father. He was slain by his servants, and Josiah, his son, reigned in his stead.

Josiah was eight years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty one years, doing that which was right and well pleasing in the sight of the Lord. In the eighteenth year of his reign, he directed the money which had been contributed in the chest that was provided by Jehoida, under the administration of Joash, to be applied to the repairs of the house of the Lord. At this time, a copy of the book of the law was found by Hilkiah, the high priest, in the temple, and delivered to Shaphan, the scribe, who brought and read it to the king. Josiah was much alarmed when he found how far the nation had departed from the commandments of God, and he caused the priests and prophets of the Lord to make intercession for him, and for his people. The decree of Jehovah had, however, gone forth, and there was no way of averting its execution. Yet, in consequence of the piety and zeal of Josiah, he was assured that the evil which had been denounced should not take place until after his death. He then caused the words of the law to be read in the ears of all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, both small and great; after which, he proceeded to the work of a thorough reformation, destroying, both in Judah and in Israel, every thing that appertained to idolatry, the houses, the images, the groves, the altars and the priests of Baal, and exterminating all the transgressors from the land.

When he had thus done every thing in his power to restore the worship of the true God, he assembled the people at Jerusalem for the purpose of keeping the passover: In the observance of this festival, an exact conformity to the law was manifested, and there had been no such solemnity in the celebration of the passover since the days of Samuel the prophet.

LESSON XLVI.

Soon after the celebration of the passover, Josiah engaged in a battle with the army of Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt, which was marched through the land, without his consent, to the attack of a city belonging to the Babylonians, on the banks of the Euphrates. In this contest, he lost his life, being slain by the archers at Megiddo, from whence he was carried up to Jerusalem and buried in his own sepulchre. He was succeeded by Jehoahaz, his son, whom the people made king; but Pharaoh Necho caused Eliakim, another son of Josiah, whose name he changed to Jehoiakim, to be placed upon the throne, after which he carried Jehoahaz away into Egypt where he died, having reigned in Jerusalem only three months. The government was administered by Jehoiakim eleven years, a part of which time he paid tribute to Pharaoh, which he raised by a tax upon the people. He died in Jerusalem, and was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin, called, also, Jeconias and Coniah. Previous to this, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had subdued the Egyptians and invaded the land of Judah. Jehoiakim submitted to his authority for three years, and then rebelled. In a short time after the death of the latter,

Nebuchadnezzar returned with his forces to Jerusalem, and, having made himself master of the city, he plundered the temple of its treasures, and carried Jehoiachin to Babylon, where he confined him in prison. He then placed Mattaniah, the uncle of Jehoiachin, on the throne, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

Zedekiah, at first, engaged to remain in subjection to the king of Babylon, but after the departure of the latter with his army, he revolted. In the ninth year of his reign, however, he received another visit from Nebuchadnezzar, who after a siege of two years, again took possession of Jerusalem. He, then, ordered the city to be set on fire; and the splendid and magnificent temple, which Solomon had built, with the royal palace and all the houses, were consumed. The walls of the place were levelled to the ground, and Zedekiah, after witnessing the death of his sons, and having his eyes put out, was bound in fetters and carried away captive to Babylon, where he died in prison. The inhabitants of Judea were, also, caused to accompany their king into the land of their conquerors, where they remained seventy years, until the overthrow of the Babylonish monarchy by the Persians. Upon the decease of Nebuchadnezzar, his son and successor, Evil merodach, released Jehoiachin the former king of Judah from prison, after he had been confined thirty seven years, and treated him with great kindness during the remainder of his life.

The two books of Chronicles may be considered as a kind of supplement to the preceding histories. They contain a great variety of genealogical tables, beginning with Adam, with a

circumstantial account of the twelve tribes, which must have been highly valued by the Jews after their return from captivity. The descendants of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David, in whose line it was predicted that the Saviour of the world should be born, are marked with great accuracy and precision. The historical part of the Chronicles commences with the tenth chapter of the first book, in which the death of Saul and his sons is related, and is continued in regular order through the reign of David and his successors to the time of the Babylonish captivity. Some things are recorded which do not appear in either of the books of Kings, among which are the particular arrangements of David in regard to the building of the temple; his regulations respecting the priests and Levites; his appointment of musicians for the public services of religion; the psalm which he composed upon the occasion of bringing the ark to Jerusalem; the offerings of his princes for the house of God; the instructions of Jehosaphat to his judges; his fast, his prayer, and his victories; the nature of the disease which caused the death of Jehoram, the king of Judah; the offence of Uzziah, or Azariah, in invading the priest's office, for which he was struck with the leprosy; the captivity and repentance of Manasseh, and the great lamentations which were made at the death of Josiah, king of Judah. It is sufficient here thus to allude to these particulars, as they cannot fail of being discovered by the pious and attentive reader.

REMARKS.

1. The two books of Kings, with those of Chronicles, were, probably, compiled by Ezra from the records which were regularly kept, both in Jerusalem and Samaria, of all public transactions. They comprehend a period of four hundred and twenty six years, from the death of David to the overthrow of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.

2. The sons of the prophets, several times mentioned in the books of the kings, were persons who composed certain schools which were established at an early period in the Jewish history, where, under the direction of suitable instructors, they lived a retired life, spending their time in study, meditation, and reading the law of God. They were occasionally favoured with divine revelations, and the people resorted to them for advice and consolation. These schools continued until the Babylonish captivity, after which they were succeeded by synagogues.

3. Syria, the kings of which were often at war with the Israelites, was a country which lay to the north of Judea, though originally including it, extending westerly to the Mediterranean sea. It was divided into three parts, Syria, properly so called, extending to Mount Libanus on the south; Coele Syria, including Damascus and its territories, and Syria of Palestine, the latter comprehending Phenicia and a part of the country of the Philistines. Phenicia lay along the sea coast, and its principal city was Tyre, the residence of Hiram, the friend of Solomon.

4. Jezreel was a celebrated city, at some distance from Samaria, within the inheritance of Issachar. Here Ahab had a palace, adjoining

which was a vineyard belonging to Naboth. This he wickedly obtained, and in a part of it which lay next to the palace court, Jezebel was eaten by the dogs.

5. It is said that, by order of Jehu, seventy of the sons of Ahab were put to death. We are not, however to suppose that they were his immediate children, but his descendants generally.

6. It is a question with the learned, what became of the ten tribes who were carried away captive by the Assyrians. Various conjectures have been formed respecting their descendants, but the probability is, that many of those who were removed were subsequently destroyed, and that the remainder, who continued in their own country, were afterwards incorporated with the house of Judah. The great council of the Jewish nation, was composed of some from all the tribes, and it appears, that in the time of the apostles, the descendants of the original families were in Palestine and the adjacent countries.

7. It appears, from the thirty third chapter of the second book of Chronicles, that Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, who was distinguished for his wickedness, was taken captive and carried to Babylon, where he became convinced of the enormity of his crimes, and manifested the deepest contrition and repentance. He was then restored to his kingdom, and in the latter part of his reign engaged zealously in the service of the God of his father.

8. The Assyrians were the descendants of Ashur, the son of Shem, and inhabited the country east of the Euphrates, extending beyond the Tigris. Their empire is thought to have been the most ancient in the east, being

ounded by Nimrod, who built Nineveh, which was situated upon the west side of the river Tigris, and became one of the most celebrated cities in the world. The Assyrian empire is called the first that was universal, and almost the whole of Asia was subject to its kings for the long period of thirteen hundred years. But upon the death of Sardanapalus, who burned himself in his palace, the kingdom was dissolved and there arose two monarchies in its stead, one founded by Arbaces, who is known in scripture by the name of Tiglath Pileser, and the other by Nabonassar or Baladan. The government of the former included Media and that of the latter, Chaldea. These provinces were at length united under Esarhaddon, the son of Sennacherib, who continued upon the throne thirteen years. It was in his reign that the kingdom of Israel was destroyed, and the ten tribes dispersed. Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, destroyed Nineveh, the former capital, and from his time Babylon became the sole metropolis of the Assyrian empire. This famous city was built upon the Euphrates which ran through the centre of it. It was distinguished for its walls, which were three hundred and fifty feet in height, eighty seven feet in thickness and extended sixty miles around the city. The splendor of the place was, also, heightened by the magnificent temple of Belus, the royal palace, and the hanging gardens. But notwithstanding its beauty and its glory, it was at length taken in the reign of Belshazzar, by Cyrus, the general of the Persian army, who turned the current of the river, and thus gave his soldiers a free entrance to the midst of the city. In the conquest of

Babylon, ended the Chaldean empire which had continued two hundred and nine years from the reign of Nabonassar or Baladan, who founded it. This event took place just fifty years after the destruction of Jerusalem. The king of Persia with whom Cyrus was joined in government and whose nephew he was, is called in Scripture Darius the Mede, and in profane history Cyaxares. But upon the death of the latter, which happened in two years after the taking of Babylon, Cyrus took upon him the whole government of the empire, and thus commenced the second universal dominion under the Persians.

9. The two great rivers, Euphrates and Tigris, have their source in Armenia and run in southerly direction into the Persian gulf.

10 It has been supposed by some, that the destruction of the Assyrian army under Sennacherib was caused by one of those pestilential winds which frequently traverse eastern countries, and prove instantly fatal both to man and to beast. There is one, in particular, called *Samiel*, which always carries death in its progress; and, from the figurative language of the Scriptures, this might well be termed an angel of the Lord, for the elements are his ministers and storms and whirlwinds accomplish his will.

11. There is, in the history of the kings of Israel and Judah, some difficulty in reconciling the accounts of the commencement and length of their respective reigns. But it is owing to the circumstance, that some of the kings began to reign before the death of their predecessor and in conjunction with them. The mode of computation was, also, different from that which now prevails; for if a person was advanced to

the throne in the last month of the year, and died during the first month of the succeeding year, he was said to have reigned two years.

12. The destruction of Jerusalem took place about five hundred and sixty years before Christ; four hundred and sixty eight years from the commencement of the reign of David; three hundred and eighty eight years after the revolt of the ten tribes under Jeroboam, and one hundred and thirty four years from the captivity of Israel.

13. The following are the names of the respective kings of Judah and Israel.

Judah.

Israel.

| | | | |
|----------------|----------|---------------|----------|
| 1. Rehoboam | 17 years | 1. Jeroboam | 22 years |
| 2. Abijam | 3 | 2. Nadab | 2 |
| 3. Asa | 41 | 3. Baasha | 24 |
| 4. Jehosaphat | 25 | 4. Elah | 2 |
| 5. Jehoram | 8 | 5. Zimri | 7 days |
| 6. Ahaziah | 1 | 6. Omri | 12 years |
| 7. Joash | 40 | 7. Ahab | 22 |
| 8. Amaziah | 29 | 8. Ahaziah | 2 |
| 9. Azariah | 52 | 9. Jehoram | 12 |
| 10. Jotham | 16 | 10. Jehu | 28 |
| 11. Ahaz | 16 | 11. Jehoahaz | 17 |
| 12. Hezekiah | 29 | 12. Jehoash | 16 |
| 13. Manasseh | 55 | 13. Jeroboam | 41 |
| 14. Amon | 2 | 14. Zachariah | 6 mo. |
| 15. Josiah | 31 | 15. Shallum | 1 do. |
| 16. Jehoahaz | 3 mo. | 16. Menahem | 10 years |
| 17. Jehoiakim | 11 years | 17. Pekahiah | 2 |
| 18. Jehoiachin | 3 mo. | 18. Pekah | 20 |
| 19. Zedekiah | 11 years | 19. Hoshea | 9 |

The kings of Israel were generally distinguished for their wickedness, but among those of Judah were some excellent men.

LESSON XLVII.

The captivity of the Jews continued for the period of seventy years, at the expiration of which, Cyrus, the Persian, who had subdued the Babylonians and taken possession of their country, issued a decree, giving liberty to all who were disposed, to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city and temple. At the same time, he brought forth the treasures which had been taken from the house of the Lord, by Nebuchadnezzar, and delivered them into the hands of the children of Judah. Upon this, a great number of the captives, under the command of Zerubbabel, departed for their native land. When they arrived at Jerusalem, they set up the altar of the Lord, and offered sacrifices thereon; and, in the second year after their return, they laid the foundation of the temple, which caused great rejoicing on the part of some, while others, who had seen the first house in its glory, wept. Immediately upon the commencement of the work, the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin, who dwelt in the cities of Samaria, being the descendants of those foreigners to whom the king of Assyria had given the country of which he dispossessed the ten tribes, came forward, and, declaring their reverence for the God of Israel, desired the privilege of being admitted to assist the Jews in their undertaking. Their request was, however, refused, and in consequence of this, they adopted every measure, by secret artifice and open opposition, to put a stop to the building. They wrote to the kings of Persia, who governed in Babylon, stating, that the Jews were a turbulent and rebellious people, and that if they were permitted to prosecute their la-

bours, it would be greatly to the disadvantage of the royal revenue. To these complaints, Artaxerxes listened, and finding from his records that the history of the Israelitish nation confirmed, in some measure, the representation which the Samaritans had made of their character, he gave orders that the work of the temple should cease, and, accordingly, nothing more was done upon it until the second year of the reign of his successor, Darius. At this time, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the Jews to renew their labours, but their enemies again endeavoured to frustrate their designs, and to this end, they sent letters to the Persian monarch. Darius, however, having discovered the decree of Cyrus, authorized the Jews to proceed with their work. He, also, wrote to their adversaries, not only forbidding them to interfere in its prevention, but requiring them to assist, with money and provision, in order to hasten its accomplishment. The hands of the people were thereby strengthened; and, animated by the words of their prophets, they applied themselves with extraordinary zeal to their work, and in the sixth year of Darius the temple was completed and dedicated with great joy and thanksgiving. The priests and Levites were then arranged in their proper courses, according to their respective offices, and every thing was placed in order for the due celebration of the worship of God, agreeably to the institutions of Moses. After this, the passover was kept with great solemnity and devotion.

In the seventh year of Artaxerxes, the successor of Darius, a certain distinguished priest, by the name of Ezra, asked permission of the king

to return to Jerusalem with as many of his countrymen as were willing to accompany him. This request was readily granted, and he was, also, commissioned to take with him whatever he should think necessary for his journey and the service of the temple. Having made due preparations, and expressed his gratitude to God for inclining the heart of the king so much in his favour, he left Babylon, with a company of one thousand four hundred and ninety six Jews, of all orders and stations. After a journey of four months, in the course of which a fast was observed by the river Ahava, Ezra and his companions arrived at Jerusalem, where he delivered the treasures which he had brought to the priests, and gave the king's commission to the proper officers, who, in obedience to the same, supplied what things were necessary for the use of the house of God.

Soon after the arrival of Ezra, a complaint was made to him, that many of the people of Israel, together with the priests and Levites had transgressed the divine law by intermarriages with the idolatrous inhabitants of the land. This information greatly afflicted Ezra, who manifested his sorrow by rending his garments, falling upon his knees, and pouring out his soul in humble confession and earnest supplication. The people were deeply affected at this transaction, and shewed, by their tears, the sense which they entertained of their transgressions. They, then, consented to put away their strange wives, and submitted to all the directions of Ezra, who, from the death of Zerubbabel until the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, administered the government, in both civil and ecclesiastical affairs.

REMARKS.

1. Ezra, the author of the book which bears his name, was of the sacerdotal family and a direct descendant from Aaron. In a part of his work, he used the Chaldaic language, with which the people were, probably, as familiar as with their own Hebrew tongue.

2. From the dedication of the temple to the departure of Ezra from Babylon, there was an interval of about fifty eight years, during which nothing is related of the Jews except that they formed forbidden alliances with the Gentiles.

3. Ezra is supposed to have collected and arranged the scriptures down to his own time. He corrected the errors which had crept into the sacred writings; he added, by divine inspiration, what appeared necessary for illustrating, connecting or completing them, and he changed the old names of places which had become obsolete.

4. Isaiah prophesied of Cyrus, and his commission to the Jews to rebuild the city and temple, two hundred years before his birth.

5. Cyrus was succeeded on the throne of Persia by Cambyses, who is called in Ezra, Ahasuerus. Cambyses was followed by Smerdis, an usurper, who is called Artaxerxes, and by whom the Jews were interrupted in their work. To him succeeded Darius Hystaspes who renewed the decree of Cyrus. Darius was followed by his son Xerxes, and the latter by Artaxerxes Longimanus, who in the book of Esther is called Ahasuerus, and in the seventh year of whose reign Ezra went up to Jerusalem.

6. The second temple was in some important particulars, inferior to the first, and it was prob-

ably owing to the deficiency that the old people wept when the foundation was laid. The great glory of the temple of Solomon, consisting in the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat; the Shechinah or divine presence; the Urim and Thummim; the holy fire upon the altar, and the spirit of prophecy, were wanting in the latter house.

LESSON XLVIII.

In the twentieth year of king Artaxerxes, or as he is, also, called Ahasuerus, the government of the Jews passed from the hands of Ezra into those of Nehemiah. This man was a captive at Shushan, and from his office which was that of cup bearer to the king, he had frequent opportunities of doing acts of benevolence to his distressed countrymen. It happened one day, that Nehemiah, seeing some people of Judah who had been at Jerusalem, inquired of them concerning the situation of his brethren at that place. He was told that they were in a deplorable state, for the walls of the city were broken down, and its gates burnt, so that the inhabitants were exposed to the incursions of their enemies and the contempt of their neighbors. This intelligence greatly afflicted Nehemiah, and he fasted and prayed, and discovered by the sadness of his countenance, the sorrow of his heart. The king, who observed that his appearance was changed, supposed that some private calamity had happened to him, and, accordingly, asked him what was the cause of his trouble. He replied, that it arose from the information which he had received in regard to Jerusalem, and requested leave to go up to the city of his fathers

and repair its desolations. This was immediately granted, and having received a full commission to do whatever he desired, with directions to the governors of the provinces to render him all necessary aid, and an order upon the keeper of the king's forest to furnish him with a sufficient supply of timber, he proceeded to Jerusalem. In the evening of the third day after his arrival, he went out with a few of his attendants, to take a view of the walls, which he found in the state that had been represented to him at Shushan. The next morning he summoned an assembly of the rulers of the people, and reminding them of the exposed condition of the city, produced his commission from the king, at which they were greatly rejoiced, and with one voice cried out, "Let us rise up and build." For the better and more speedy execution of the work, he divided the men into several companies, and appointed to each its due portion of the labour, reserving to himself the direction and oversight of the whole. The adversaries of Judah, who were Sanballat and Tobiah, with the Ammonites, the Philistines and the Arabians, determined to frustrate the purposes of Nehemiah, and to this end, came up in great numbers to oppose, by force, the rebuilding of the walls. But the Jews had notice of their intentions, and taking due measures to defend themselves from their assaults persevered in their labours without harm.

At this time, a difficulty occurred among the people by reason of the advantage which some had taken of the necessities of their countrymen, by lending to them upon usury and thus gaining possession of their lands, their houses and

their vineyards. This might have been followed by the most fatal consequences had not Nehemiah, with great prudence and firmness, interposed his authority. On being made acquainted with what had taken place, he summoned those who had been charged with oppression to appear before him, and, after setting forth the heinousness of their offence, besought them to relinquish their usurious practices and to restore to their brethren the possessions of which they had been deprived. This they promised to do, and thus peace and quietness were restored. The example as well as the precept of Nehemiah was well calculated to make them ashamed of their conduct, and to induce them to fidelity in the discharge of their obligations; for, so far from being guilty of any oppression, he voluntarily relinquished his claims to the revenue appropriated to the office of governor, and maintained himself and his household, together with a great number of his countrymen at his own charge.

The enemies of Jerusalem, after this, resorted to many artifices to put a stop to the work of the Jews, but they failed in all their attempts, and the walls of the city were rebuilt, and the gates set up. Nehemiah then caused an enumeration of the people to be made according to their genealogies, and the whole congregation was found to consist of forty two thousand three hundred and sixty persons, besides seven thousand three hundred and thirty seven servants and two hundred and forty five singers.

The Jews being thus far attended with prosperity, in the work of rebuilding their city, a large assembly was collected, and, in the pres-

ence of all the people, Ezra read in the book of the law from morning until noon, and the Levites, his assistants, explained and enforced the words which were delivered. The congregation was then dismissed, with a direction to return to their homes and rejoice in the goodness of God. After this, the people celebrated the feast of tabernacles seven days; and on each day from the first to the last, Ezra read to them from the book of the law of God.

On the twenty fourth day of the same month, a solemn fast was appointed in Jerusalem, and the children of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. One fourth part of the day, they attended to the reading of the law, and another fourth part thereof they devoted to the worship of the Lord their God in prayer and praise. On this occasion, certain of the Levites conducted the services, at the close of which they made a covenant with the Lord, that they would obey his commandments and observe all the institutions which he had appointed. This covenant was written, and the princes, the priests and the Levites affixed to it their seals.

Nehemiah, having accomplished the object of his mission, returned to the king at Shushan, where he soon heard that the people had broken their covenant and relapsed into their old corruptions. He, then, with the consent of his sovereign, proceeded a second time to Jerusalem, in order to reform the abuses which had taken place during his absence, and which consisted in a perversion of the use of some parts of the temple; in withholding the portions of the Levites; in a violation of the Sabbath, both by

Jews and the foreigners who resorted to Jerusalem with goods and merchandize, and in intermarriages with the heathen. In putting a stop to all these transgressions, the exertions of Nehemiah were successful, and he purified the temple from the pollution of strangers, and appointed the priests and the Levites their station and their support.

REMARKS.

1. It is evident from the style of this book the first person being constantly used, that Nehemiah himself was the author of it. He was born in Babylon during the captivity, and it has been supposed that he was descended from the royal family of Judah.

2. Cyrus and the rest of the Persian kings after the conquest of the Medes, settled their royal seat at Shushan, which they made the capital of the kingdom. This city was built on the banks of the river Ulai, and was a place of great renown.

3. There were four commandments or decrees issued by the kings of Persia in favour of the Jews. The first was granted by Cyrus in the commencement of his reign; the second, by Darius about the fourth year of his reign; the third, by Artaxerxes to Ezra, in the seventh year of his reign, and the fourth, by the same Artaxerxes to Nehemiah, in the twentieth year of his reign.

4. The Medes who are often mentioned in connexion with the Persians inhabited a country called Media, lying to the north of Persia, and extending to the Caspian sea. After the dissolution of the Assyrian empire, the Medes

maintained for a time a separate government ; but it was united with that of the Persians by Cyrus.

LESSON XLIX.

During the reign of Ahasuerus or Artaxerxes, whose dominions extended from India to Ethiopia through an hundred and twenty seven provinces, this monarch, in honour, probably, of some extraordinary event, appointed a solemn rejoicing which continued six months, at the expiration of which, he made a feast in his own palace for all the princes and governors of every rank who were subject to him. The queen, also, prepared an entertainment for the women of distinction who were then at Shushan. The feast of the king continued seven days, on the last of which, he sent his chamberlains with an order to conduct Vashti, his wife, into his presence, that he might shew the nobles and the people her beauty. This was so inconsistent with the customs of the Persians, and, also, so derogatory to the dignity of the queen, that she ventured to disobey the royal command. When the messengers returned, and reported the refusal of Vashti, to accompany them, Ahasuerus was greatly enraged, and, taking counsel of his wise men, he resolved, agreeably to their advice, to banish her from his throne and to marry some other woman in her stead.

This determination was soon carried into effect, and from among the maidens who were assembled at the palace, the king selected for his bride Hadassah, who was, also, called Esther, niece of one of the captive Jews, whose name was Mordecai, and by whom she had been edu-

cated. Upon her head the royal diadem was placed, and Ahasuerus celebrated the nuptials by making a splendid feast to his princes and servants, and by conferring many favours upon the people throughout his vast empire. Previous to this, Mordecai had given Esther a strict charge not to make known her country or kindred, which she faithfully observed. It happened, soon after her advancement to the throne of Persia, that two of the court chamberlains entered into a conspiracy to take the life of their master, which came to the knowledge of Mordecai, who made it known to the queen, and by her it was communicated to the king. The traitors were immediately apprehended, and, on examination, being found guilty, were both put to death. A record of the whole transaction was then made, but Mordecai received no reward for his fidelity in discovering the plot.

Among the favourites of Ahasuerus was one by the name of Haman, who was distinguished and honoured above all the princes of the realm and so great was his influence that the servants of the royal palace, whenever they came into his presence, bowed and did him reverence. Mordecai, however, who sat at the gate, manifested towards him no mark of peculiar respect but suffered him to pass and repass without notice. This contemptuous conduct from a Jew enraged and mortified the proud courtier, and he at once determined to adopt measures which should end in the extermination of all the Israelites who were then in the Persian dominions. He, accordingly, stated to the king, that there were scattered abroad among his subjects, a people whom it would be greatly for his interest

to destroy, at the same time requesting that a decree might be issued for a general massacre of these objects of his resentment, and offering to pay a large sum of money towards carrying it into effect.

Ahasuerus, without much reflection, and confiding entirely in the counsels of Haman, readily complied with his desire, and letters were immediately written in the name of the king to the governors of the several provinces, ordering them, on a certain day which was named, to cause all the Jews, that might be found within their respective territories; to be indiscriminately slain. The promulgation of this decree was attended with the utmost distress on the part of those for whose destruction it was intended, and Mordecai and the rest of his countrymen clothed themselves with sackcloth and fasted and wept. The mourning which thus prevailed among the Jews was made known to Esther by some of her servants, and she, being unacquainted with the cause of it, sent Hatach, one of the king's chamberlains, to Mordecai, in order to obtain from him information upon the subject. The latter related to the messenger all that had been done by Haman, and gave him a copy of the decree which had been issued, charging him, also, to entreat the queen to use all her influence with the king for the safety and deliverance of her people. Hatach, then, returned to Esther and told her what had passed, after which he directed him to go again to Mordecai, and state the impossibility of her doing any thing to counteract the execution of the king's decree, or that no person was allowed to enter his presence without being specially summoned.

In reply, Mordecai sent word to the queen, that if the Jews were to be destroyed, she herself, being one of them, must expect, with all her relations, to share the fate of the rest. He moreover, suggested to her the probability that God had raised her to the throne for the very purpose of accomplishing the deliverance of his people. Esther, then, gave orders that a solemn fast should be held by the Jews in Shushan in her behalf, and declared her resolution to address the king, although at the hazard of her life. On the third day, she ventured into the presence of Ahasuerus, who graciously received her and offered to grant her request, even to the one half of his kingdom. But at this time she thought proper only to invite him and Haman to a banquet that she had prepared, and which the king and his favourite, accordingly, attended. When the entertainment was nearly over, the former again asked Esther what was her request, repeating his promise that she should be gratified in it, even to an equal division of the empire. She was not yet prepared to disclose the secret, and, therefore, only expressed her desire, that he, in company with Haman, would honour her with a similar visit on the next day.

The distinction which was thus conferred on Haman greatly increased his pride; but, finding on his return from the palace that Mordecai was still at the gate, and treated him with his accustomed indifference and disrespect, he was filled with indignation and wrath, and when he arrived at his house and had told his wife and his friends of the glory of his riches and the multitude of his children and the favours of his sovereign, he concluded his speech by express-

ing his mortification in the following words—
 “Yet all this availeth me nothing so long as I
 see Mordecai, the Jew, sitting at the king’s gate.”

LESSON - L.

The wife and friends of Haman, when they understood how severely his feelings were wounded by the affront which he had received from a solitary Jew, advised him to cause a gallows to be made, and the next morning to obtain permission from the king to hang Mordecai thereon. This proposition was pleasing to Haman and he immediately gave orders that the gallows should be erected.

The night succeeding this transaction, king Ahasuerus was much disturbed, and unable to sleep. To compose his mind, he directed the annals of his reign to be brought and read to him, and in these he found it written, that Mordecai, the Jew, had saved his life from the conspiracy of two of his chamberlains. He, then, inquired what reward Mordecai had received for the discovery of the treason, and having ascertained that nothing had been done for him, he asked who waited without. His servants replied, that Haman stood in the court, who had come thus early to hasten the death of his enemy. The king ordered him to be admitted, and immediately upon his entrance, asked him what, in his opinion, ought to be done to the man whom his sovereign delighted to honour. Haman, vainly supposing that no one but himself could be meant, answered, that the royal favour and distinction in regard to such a person should be publicly manifested by causing him to be clothed with the apparel and placed upon the

horse of the king, and in this manner to be conducted through the streets of the city by one of the first princes of the empire, who should proclaim before him, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour." As soon as Haman had given this advice, he was ordered, very much, no doubt, to his surprise and mortification, to go and do, in every particular as he had said, to Mordecai the Jew, who sat at the king's gate. With this command he was obliged to comply, and having performed what he himself had prescribed, he returned with disappointment and sorrow to his own house. While he was relating this disagreeable affair to his family, who expressed thereupon some uneasy apprehensions, a messenger came to summon him to the banquet of the queen, to which he had the day before been invited. When the king and Haman were seated at the entertainment, the former again asked Esther what was her request, and repeated the promise which he had before made. She, then, told him fully what had been done in relation to her people, and who was the author of the deed, and supplicated the mercy of the king upon herself and her countrymen. The king, in anger, retired into the garden, but soon returned, and finding that Haman had fallen upon the bed where Esther was, he expressed, in the strongest manner, his displeasure. Upon this, Haman was instantly taken, and at the suggestion of the chamberlain who had seen the gallows standing in the court of his palace, he was ordered to be hanged thereon, which sentence was speedily carried into execution.

After the death of Haman, Mordecai was ad-

vanced to great honour and distinction before the king, and he was directed to write, in the name of the sovereign, to all the rulers of the provinces and to the Jews, giving permission to the latter to stand together for their lives, and to defend themselves against any assaults that might be made upon them by virtue of the decree which had been passed at the instance of Haman. In the contest which took place on the thirteenth day of the month Adar, which was the time that had been set for the massacre of the Jews, there were slain by the latter seventy five thousand of their enemies in the different provinces of Persia; and on that and the succeeding day eight hundred more were killed in Shushan. In addition to these, they hanged the ten sons of Haman upon the gallows, and all his possessions were given to Mordecai. A great festival was then instituted, which was ever after observed by the Jews in commemoration of their deliverance from the machinations of Haman. This was called Purim, or the feast of lots, and is, to the present time, kept on the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the twelfth month in the Hebrew calendar. Mordecai continued in great credit with the king and queen, and so directed public affairs, that his brethren who were in Persia, lived happy and prosperous during the whole course of his administration.

REMARKS.

1. There is much uncertainty in regard to the author of the book of Esther. It has been ascribed to Ezra, to Mordecai, to Joachim, and to the joint labours of the great synagogue, and

it is impossible to decide which of these opinions is the most probable.

2. It has not been fully agreed by learned men that the Ahasuerus who married Esther was the same person from whom Ezra and Nehemiah received their commissions. Yet the proof that such was the fact seems sufficiently satisfactory.

3. The events related in this book are generally placed about four hundred and fifty years before Christ.

4. The order which had been given for the destruction of the Jews was not annulled by a subsequent decree, as the laws of the Medes and Persians were irrevocable. All that could be done was to give them permission to defend themselves and to slay their enemies.

5. The regular course of Jewish history is not continued in the old testament beyond the book of Esther. From the time of Cyrus, the Jews remained in their own country, subject to the Persians, for about two hundred years, until the reign of Darius Codomannus, who was conquered by Alexander the great. The Persian Empire then gave way to the Grecian; but upon the death of Alexander, his dominions were divided among his captains, and Egypt, Syria, and other provinces became independent governments. The affairs of the Jews were managed by their high priests, and grand council which consisted of seventy two members. This was called the Sanhedrim, and its session was in Jerusalem. There were, besides, Sanhedrims of twenty three persons in every city. Judea was frequently subdued and oppressed by the Egyptian and Syrian kings, until the Romans gained

the ascendancy over the world, when it was placed under their protection and became a tributary province. From that time its rulers took the title of kings. About thirteen years before the birth of Jesus Christ, the temple was entirely rebuilt by Herod the great, who thereby intended to reconcile to himself the affections of the Jews, and, also, to erect a monument of lasting honour to his name. This work was finished in nine years and an half, and dedicated with great rejoicings. From the time of its commencement to the first passover of Christ's personal ministry, had been forty six years, and, during the whole of that time, additions and improvements were continued, so that it was justly said by the Jews,—“Forty and six years hath this temple been in building.” About seventy years after the birth of Christ, the Jews rebelled against their Roman masters, in consequence of which an army was marched against their city, and it was wholly overthrown and destroyed. The inhabitants, who survived the slaughter, were dispersed and scattered abroad through the nations of the earth. Then the sceptre entirely departed from Judah, and the unhappy descendants of Jacob have ever since remained without a temple, without a priest, and without a sacrifice.

LESSON LI.

In the arrangement of the scriptures of the old testament, the book of Esther is followed by that of Job, which receives its name from the person whose history and afflictions it relates. The residence of Job was in the land of Uz, in Arabia, where he was renowned for his wisdom

and piety, and highly favoured of the Lord. He had seven sons and three daughters, and abounded in flocks and herds. With this prosperity, he had, also, the additional happiness of seeing his children live in the strictest bonds of mutual affection, and from the example and precept of their father, it is probable that they faithfully observed the duties of religion. Satan, however, the grand adversary of God and man, was permitted to try the patience and to prove the integrity of Job, by afflicting him with the heaviest calamities. He had said, that his seeming virtues were the offspring of selfishness and that if he could be deprived of his means of enjoyment, he would manifest an entirely different character. Upon this, a commission was given him to dispose as he pleased of all the property of Job, but upon the express condition that he should not touch his person. Satan pleased with this unexpected authority, immediately withdrew from the presence of the Almighty, into which he had intruded himself and entered, without delay, upon the execution of his malignant designs. He stirred up robbers who carried off the oxen and the camels of Job and slew the servants who were with them; he occasioned a storm in which the lightning consumed the sheep and their keepers, and, finally he raised a whirlwind that overthrew the house in which the children of Job were all assembled to celebrate their annual festival, and they perished in the ruins. Messengers, in quick succession, carried the intelligence of these dreadful events to the good man, who, instead of complaining or attributing his calamities to an unkind providence, exclaimed with humble an

ious resignation, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!"

The devil was thus foiled in his attempts to make the integrity of Job; and, upon being questioned by the Almighty, he declared that if the commission under which he acted had been enlarged as to have given him power over the body as well as the possessions of his victim, the result would have been far different. He was, then, allowed to attack the person of Job, with direction, however, to spare his life. Assured of success, he, accordingly, repaid a second time to the object of his revenge, whom he smote with sore boils or ulcers from head to foot, and who, in order to obtain a little relief from his pain, was compelled to sit down in the ashes and to scrape himself with a potsherd. The wife of Job, at this time, manifested her impatience, and called upon him to bid defiance to the Almighty, and, with resolution, to put an end to his life. Her words had no other effect than to produce from her husband a severe reprimand, and an acknowledgement of the goodness of God, from whom he had reason to expect judgments as well as mercies.

Job, not long after this new calamity, was visited by three of his friends, who lived at no great distance from him. These were Eliphaz, the Temanite, Bildad, the Shuhite, and Zophar, the Naamathite. For seven days and seven nights, they sat by him on the ground, expressing their sympathy in his sorrows by their sighs and their tears without offering to speak a word. At length, the silence which had prevailed, was interrupted by Job, who broke forth in passion-

ate complaints against the day of his birth, with fervent wishes that he might be delivered from a life of such extreme sorrow and wretchedness. After this, a long controversy was carried on by him and his friends, in which the latter attributed his sufferings to his wickedness and endeavoured to prevail upon him to make a free acknowledgement of the offences which had provoked the Almighty to punish him with such extraordinary severity. But he vindicated himself from their accusations, and declared that he had performed every duty incumbent upon him with the utmost constancy and fidelity.

The subject was, at last, taken up, and discussed by a fourth person, named Elihu, who reproved both Job and his friends for the manner in which they had conducted the argument. He blamed the former for boasting of his innocence and purity, and the latter for charging him with crimes of which he had never been suspected. At the conclusion of Elihu's discourse, God himself was pleased to interpose as a Judge; and in an address, unequalled for its sublimity, he so convinced Job of his weakness and ignorance, that he humbled himself in the dust before his Maker, and acknowledged his vileness. The friends of Job were, then, informed that they had been mistaken in their conjectures and unjust in their observations, and that, to propitiate the divine favour, they must go and offer certain sacrifices to the Lord. They accordingly, returned to their respective homes, where they did as they had been commanded, and Job was restored to all his former prosperity. He had again seven sons and three daughters, with an overflowing abundance of flocks and herds

and money, and his life was continued one hundred and forty years from the time of his adversity.

REMARKS.

1. The author of this book is unknown, nor have we any account of the time in which the illustrious individual, whose history it records, lived. It is generally supposed to have been written previous to the departure of the Israelites from Egypt. This opinion is strengthened by the circumstance that there is no allusion to that event or to subsequent transactions, in any part of the book, while reference is made to several preceding occurrences.

2. It is thought by some that the book of Job does not contain a history of real facts, but that it was written by Moses to comfort the Israelites in their bondage, and to assure them of the divine favour and protection.

3. The sufferings of Job continued, as is supposed, about twelve months, and the whole term of his life was two hundred and ten years.

LESSON LII.

The Psalms of David are so called because he was the author of the greater part, if not of all of them. By the ancient Jews they were divided into five books, the first, ending with the fortieth psalm; the second, with the seventy first; the third, with the eighty eighth; the fourth, with the one hundred and fifth, and the fifth, with the one hundred and fiftieth. The first four books conclude with the words, Amen, Amen: and the last with Hallelujah. It is supposed that the whole were collected and placed in the

order in which they now stand by Ezra, soon after the return from the Babylonish captivity.

In the language of Bishop Horne, "the Psalms are an epitome of the Bible, adapted to all the purposes of devotion. They treat, occasionally, of the creation of the world, the dispensations of providence and the economy of grace; the transactions of the patriarchs; the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt; their journeyings through the wilderness and subsequent settlement in Canaan; their law, priesthood and ritual; the exploits of their great men wrought through faith; their sins and captivities; their repentances and restorations; the sufferings and victories of David; the peaceful and happy reign of Solomon; the advent of Messiah with its effects and consequences; his incarnation, birth, life, passion, death, resurrection, ascension, kingdom and priesthood; the effusion of the Spirit; the rejection of the Jews; the establishment, increase and perpetuity of the christian church; the end of the world; the general judgement; the condemnation of the wicked, and the final triumph of the righteous with their Lord and King.

"They are adorned with the figures and set off with the graces of poetry; and poetry itself is designed yet farther to be recommended by the charms of music, thus consecrated to the service of God, that so delight may prepare the way for improvement, and pleasure become the handmaid of wisdom, while every turbulent passion is calmed by sacred melody and the evil spirit is still dispossessed by the harp of the son of Jesse. That which we read as matter of speculation in the other Scripture

s reduced to practice when we recite it in the psalms; in those, repentance and faith are described, but in these, they are acted; by a perusal of the former, we learn how others served God, but, by using the latter, we serve him ourselves." It may be farther observed, that the psalms are adapted to all the circumstances and conditions of human life, and, as there is no sin which they do not reprove and condemn, so there is no suffering for which they do not present an adequate consolation and remedy.

There are several psalms which are quoted in the new testament, and applied by our Lord and his apostles to matters evangelical. From this circumstance we obtain something of a key to their spiritual meaning, and are enabled to use them with reference to our christian edification under the gospel dispensation.

In the eighth psalm, the preeminence of man over the rest of creation is apparently set forth, but in the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews we are informed that the subject relates to the supremacy of the Son of God. The resurrection of Jesus was preached by St. Peter from the sixteenth psalm, and three thousand souls were converted by his discourse. It is said in the second book of Samuel, that David composed the eighteenth psalm in commemoration of his deliverance out of the hands of his enemies, and out of the hands of Saul, but St. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, adduces it as a proof that the Gentiles should glorify God for his mercy through the Saviour. The proofs of a Supreme Being, derived from the heavens and their operations, in the nineteenth psalm, are referred by the same apostle to the universal ex-

tension of the gospel. The twenty second psalm, Christ appropriated to himself in the midst of his sufferings on the cross. What David says in his own name in the fortieth psalm, St. Paul applies to the advent of the Redeemer, who came to abolish legal sacrifices, and to do away sin by the offering of himself once for all. The tender and pathetic complaint uttered by David, upon the occasion of Ahitophel's revolt to Absalom, in the forty first psalm, received its fulfilment in the treachery of Judas, the apostate disciple. A verse of the forty fourth psalm is cited in the epistle to the Romans to prove that Christians must necessarily be exposed to great sufferings on account of their blessed Master. The forty fifth psalm, as we learn from the second chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, celebrates the spiritual union of the church with its divine head. The sixty eighth psalm, which seems to speak only of Israelitish victories; the translation of the ark to Zion, and the services of the tabernacle, is referred by the apostle to the resurrection and ascension of Christ; to the gifts of the Spirit, and to the establishment and enlargement of the church. The sixty ninth, seventy eighth and ninety first psalms are all quoted in the gospels as containing predictions which were fulfilled in the person of the Messiah. The ninety fifth psalm is explained at large in the epistle to the Hebrews as relative to the trials of christians and their final rest. The one hundred and tenth, one hundred and seventeenth, and one hundred and eighteenth psalms are, also, cited with reference to the exaltation and kingdom of Christ, and the subjection of the Gentiles to his authority.

The psalms are rendered in the highest degree valuable from the instructions which they contain, calculated to direct and confirm us in the paths of holiness; from the patterns and forms of religious homage and adoration which they present for our use; from the confessions and supplications which they teach us to make under a sense of our transgressions and our danger, and from the sublime thanksgivings in which we are guided to suitable ascriptions of praise and glory to the author of all our benefits.

“If,” said the learned and pious Salmasius, in his last moments, “I had another year to live, I would spend it in studying the psalms of David.” And the time thus employed would, no doubt, amply have repaid him for the application; for it is impossible that any one should, from right motives, accustom himself to the use and contemplation of these divine hymns, without having his views enlarged; his understanding enlightened; his affections purified, and in this manner becoming more and more prepared for an admission into that blessed place where every heart as well as voice is continually tuned to the praises of God and the Lamb.

REMARKS.

1. It has been a subject of controversy whether David is not the author of some of the psalms to which his name is not prefixed. Those which are attributed to Asaph, in particular, it is thought might have been only set to music by that individual, while the words were written by the son of Jesse.
2. The word *Selah*, which occurs seventy

times in the course of the psalms, denotes, as is supposed, some musical pause or rest.

3. Some of the psalms appear to contain imprecations upon the enemies of the writer, altogether at variance with the spirit and the precepts of the gospel. But they are rather to be considered as predictions of the overthrow of those who oppose the kingdom of the Redeemer and may be used by his disciples with an application to their spiritual adversaries.

LESSON LIII.

The book of Proverbs contains a great number of excellent sentences which were composed by Solomon, the son of David, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and which have been preserved for the instruction of Christians as well as Jews, in all the concerns and relations of life. They treat of the divine wisdom, the fear of God and the felicity of man. They set forth, in a brief and detached, but impressive manner, our duties to our Maker, our neighbour and ourselves; and if the lessons they convey were uniformly observed, righteousness and peace would bless the habitations of mortals.

The book of Proverbs may be considered as regularly divided into five parts, the first of which consists of nine chapters in the form of a preface, containing general exhortations and warnings from a teacher to his pupil. The second part extends from the commencement of the tenth to the seventeenth verse of the twenty second chapter, and comprehends a great variety of maxims and precepts, given in short, unconnected sentences, and adapted to the instruction of youth. In the third part, which is

continued to the end of the twenty fourth chapter, the pupil is addressed in the second person, as being present, and the precepts are delivered in a less sententious and more connected style. The fourth part reaches from the twenty fifth to the twenty ninth chapter inclusive, and consists of proverbs which were written by Solomon, and copied out or selected from a greater number by certain persons during the reign of Hezekiah, king of Judah. The last two chapters compose the fifth part, the former of which contains the words of Agur, and the latter those of King Lemuel. Whether Solomon intended to describe himself or some other persons under these names, is a point which must be left in uncertainty.

There are, in the book of Proverbs, many beautiful descriptions and personifications; the diction is highly polished, and there is a concise and energetic turn of expression which is peculiar to this species of writing.

In addition to the Proverbs, Solomon composed another book which is called Ecclesiastes, or the Preacher, setting forth the vanity and insufficiency of all human pursuits, expectations and enjoyments, and recommending, in the strongest terms, the practice of virtue and piety as all that can be substantially and permanently profitable to man.

Besides Ecclesiastes, Solomon was, also, the author of a beautiful and divine poem, which, by way of excellence, is called the Canticles or Song of Songs. It was written, as is generally supposed, on the occasion of his marriage with the daughter of Pharaoh, and is conducted in the form of a dialogue between the bridegroom and

his spouse, with occasional speeches and congratulations from their respective attendants and others. The Song of Solomon has always been received by Christians as an inspired allegory, setting forth the union and mutual affection of Christ and his church.

The prophet Isaiah was of the tribe of Judah, and it is supposed that he was descended from the royal family. He was the earliest of the four great prophets, and entered upon his office in the last year of the reign of Uzziah, about seven hundred and fifty eight years before the birth of Jesus Christ. In the first twelve chapters of his book he treats of several subjects in relation to the Jews, whom he boldly censures and reproves for their ingratitude and rebellion. From the thirteenth to the twenty ninth chapter inclusive, his prophecies regard the enemies of the Jewish nation and the ten tribes that had revolted from the house of David, upon whom he threatens the severest judgments. With his denunciations, however, are interspersed many comfortable promises of pardon and mercy to those who should repent, with assurances that they should participate in the blessings of that heavenly kingdom which was to be established by the promised Messiah. From the twenty ninth chapter to the thirty sixth, he predicts the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of its inhabitants by the Babylonians, with frequent observations concerning the transactions which would take place upon the promulgation of the gospel. In the four succeeding chapters he records a part of the history of Hezekiah, king of Judah, his sickness and recovery, and the destruction of the Assyrian ar

my under Sennacherib. The remainder of the book describes the advent and office, the sufferings and exaltation of the Redeemer; the deliverance of the church prefigured by the restoration of the Jews, and the call of the Gentiles.

The prophecies of Isaiah have such particular reference to events connected with the gospel, that he has usually been called, the evangelical prophet. In the ninth chapter of his predictions, the incarnation, birth and offices of the divine Emmanuel are pointed out with remarkable clearness; and the fifty third chapter contains so exact an account of the transactions which attended the crucifixion, that it seems rather a history than a prophecy. In short, the whole book is highly serviceable to the church of God in all ages, for conviction of sin, direction in duty, and consolation in trouble, and its inspired author may justly be considered among the greatest of the prophets, whether we contemplate the extent and variety of his predictions; the sublimity of the truths which he reveals; the majesty and elegance of his style; the loftiness of his metaphors, or the liveliness of his descriptions.

According to ancient tradition, Isaiah prophesied sixty years, and was at last put to death in the reign of Manasseh, who ordered him to be sawn asunder, in the hundredth year of his age. St. Jerom, one of the early fathers of the christian church, says, that his writings may be considered an abridgement of the holy scriptures, a collection of the most uncommon knowledge of which the human mind is capable, embracing natural philosophy, morality and divinity.

LESSON LIV.

Jeremiah was of the sacerdotal family, and a native of Anathoth, a village about three miles from Jerusalem. He was called to the prophetic office in the reign of Josiah, king of Judah, and continued to exercise it more than forty years. He was permitted to remain in Judea when his countrymen were carried away captive to Babylon, but he afterwards retired to Egypt, where, as it is said by some, he was stoned to death, about five hundred and eighty-six years before Christ. During the greater part of his life, he suffered neglect, indignity and persecution from the Jewish nation.

The prophecies of Jeremiah relate to the captivity of the Jews; the fate of Zedekiah; the destruction of Babylon; the downfall of the Egyptians, the Philistines, the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Edomites, the Syrians, and others; the incarnation and atonement of Christ; the spiritual nature of his religion, and the general conversion and final restoration of God's ancient people. With these predictions are mingled many pathetic lamentations over the wickedness and obstinacy of the Jews, and the prophet occasionally indulges in the most bitter and feeling complaints of the treatment which he received from the people whom he warned and reproved. Some parts of the book of Jeremiah are historical, particularly, the twenty eighth and thirty second chapters; the chapters from the thirty sixth to the forty third inclusive, and the fifty second, which is the last chapter in the book.

The Lamentations of Jeremiah were formerly annexed to his prophecies, but they now form a

separate book. They may be considered as a kind of plaintive elegy, extending through five chapters. In the first, second, and fourth of these, the prophet speaks in his own person and bewails the desolations of Jerusalem, the holy city; in the third chapter he introduces a single Jew, speaking in the name of his countrymen, and describing the punishments inflicted upon him, at the same time expressing his trust and hope in the mercy of God, and in the fifth chapter, the whole nation of the Israelites are represented as pouring forth their complaints and supplications to the Almighty.

It has been supposed by some learned men that the Lamentations of Jeremiah were composed on occasion of the death of king Josiah, which was an introduction to the fatal catastrophe of the Jewish church and nation. But it is more probable that they had immediate reference to the overthrow of Jerusalem and the Babylonish captivity.

Ezekiel prophesied at the same time with Jeremiah, and, like the latter, was descended from a family of the priests. He was carried to Babylon with Jehoiachin, king of Judah, five hundred and ninety eight years before the Christian era, and was placed upon the banks of the river Chebar, in Mesopotamia, where he was favoured with the sublime revelations contained in his book.

The first three chapters of Ezekiel relate the glorious appearance of God to the prophet, and the solemn appointment of the latter to his office, with instructions and encouragements for the discharge of it. From the fourth chapter to the twenty fourth, inclusive, are described under

a variety of visions and similitudes, the calamities impending over Judea, and the total destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem. From the beginning of the twenty fifth to the end of the thirty second chapter, the prophet foretels the conquest and overthrow of many cities and nations, particularly, the Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites and Philistines, together with Tyre and Sidon and Egypt. From the thirty second to the fortieth chapter, he inveighs against the sins of the Jews and the murmuring spirit of the captives; exhorts them to repentance; assures them of forgiveness and comforts them with the promise of approaching deliverance under Cyrus. The last nine chapters contain a remarkable vision of the structure of a new temple and a new polity, with a primary application to the return of the Jews to their native land, but ultimately referring to the glory and prosperity of the universal church of Christ. There is a degree of obscurity in many parts of the book of Ezekiel, which renders it difficult of explanation, but this is to be attributed to the situation of the prophet and the circumstances of the people to whom he was sent.

LESSON LV.

Daniel was descended from the kings of Judah, and was among the captives who were carried to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, being, at this time, about eighteen or twenty years of age. He was placed in the court of the king, and was, afterwards, on account of his extraordinary wisdom, raised to situations of great rank and power, both in the empire of Babylon and in that of Persia which succeeded. Among the compan-

ions of Daniel were three young men of distinguished piety, whose names were changed from Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, to Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego. These persons, with himself, refused to eat of the portion which was daily sent them from the king's table, upon which, at their earnest request, they were furnished by their attendant with a plain and simple food; and such was the nourishment that they received from it, that they were fairer in countenance, and fatter in flesh than those of their brethren who lived upon the provisions of the royal palace.

In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel distinguished himself by the interpretation of a dream which had greatly disturbed the mind of the king, and which he declared to be significant of a succession of mighty empires, ending in the establishment of the universal dominion of the God of heaven.

Some time after this, Nebuchadnezzar caused an image of gold, sixty cubits in height, to be erected on the plains of Babylon, and commanded all his subjects of every degree to worship it. The order of the king was, however, disregarded by Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego, who refused to incur the guilt of idolatry by doing homage to the work of men's hands, in consequence of which they were thrown, by direction of the monarch, into a furnace of fire. But they were miraculously delivered without having received any harm from the flames. This occurrence convinced the king that there was a Being more powerful than himself, to whom alone praise and adoration were due, and he blessed the God of Shadrach and his compan-

ions and promoted them to greater honours than they had ever before enjoyed.

Not long after this event, Nebuchadnezzar was again troubled with a dream which none of his magicians could explain. He, then, sent for Daniel, who gave him the interpretation, and told him that the Lord, for his pride and impiety, was about to drive him from the habitations of men, and reduce him to a level with the beasts of the field. All this, at length, came upon him; for as he was one day surveying his buildings and boasting of his glory, he was suddenly deprived of his reason, in which condition he continued for seven years, associating with brutes and eating grass like the oxen. At the expiration of the appointed time, his understanding and his power were restored to him, and he thankfully acknowledged the justice and the goodness of the Most-High God.

In the reign of Belshazzar, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, a great feast was held in the royal palace, and the vessels which had been taken from the house of the Lord at Jerusalem were brought forth and profanely used on the occasion. During the entertainment, the displeasure of God was remarkably manifested; for while the king and his guests were in the midst of their revelry, the former beheld the figure of a man's hand upon the wall, which in three words wrote the sentence of his condemnation. Alarmed at this amazing prodigy, & unable to read the mysterious characters, Belshazzar immediately sent for his magicians, and commanded them to explain to him the writing. This; however, they were as little qualified to do as himself; but, at length, upon the recommendation of the old

queen, the widow of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel was summoned to appear, who came in and interpreted the whole. The words were *Mene*, *Tekel*, *Peres*, or *Upharsin*, and they were thus explained by the prophet:—" *Mene* ; God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it ; *Tekel* ; thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting ; *Peres* ; thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians." In the same night Belshazzar was slain by the Persians, under the command of Cyrus, who, by turning the river Euphrates, had made themselves masters of the city, and thus ended the Babylonian monarchy. The country, then, became subject to Cyaxares, who is called in Scripture, Darius the Mede. This king, had, from the first, a great esteem for Daniel, but the latter, having refused obedience to one of the royal decrees, which had been passed at the instigation of some of his enemies, was thrown into a den of lions. The Almighty, however, appeared for his protection and defence ; and when the king visited the place the next morning, he found that Daniel had remained unhurt. Upon this, he ordered him to come forth, and his enemies to be immediately cast into the den, where they were instantly devoured by the hungry and ferocious beasts, who had not dared to touch the prophet of the Lord.

The remainder of the book of Daniel contains a series of prophecies which were revealed at different times, and in which the Assyrian, Persian, Grecian and Roman Empires are particularly described, under appropriate characters ; the time of the Messiah's appearance and the duration of his ministry are precisely fixed ; and

the restoration of the Jews and the future triumphs of the gospel are distinctly foretold.

This book abounds with the most exalted sentiments of piety and gratitude; its style is clear, simple and concise, and many of its prophecies are delivered in terms so plain and circumstantial that some unbelievers have asserted, in opposition to the strongest testimony, that they were written after the events had taken place.

REMARKS.

1. Daniel is said by Josephus to be the only prophet who enjoyed a great share of worldly prosperity. His last vision was in the third year of Cyrus, at which time he was ninety four years old. It is not probable that he lived much longer.

2. There is nothing said of the conduct of Daniel in relation to the image which Nebuchadnezzar set up. But there is no reason to suppose that he manifested any greater respect for it than his countrymen did who were cast into the fiery furnace.

3. The four beasts which Daniel saw, are supposed to represent the Assyrian or Babylonish, the Persian, the Grecian and the Roman monarchies. The ten horns of the fourth beast denote the number of kingdoms into which the Roman Empire was, at length, divided. By the he-goat is meant Alexander the great, who put an end to the Persian Empire, which is represented by a ram with two horns, alluding to the governments of Persia and Media which were united by Cyrus. The four horns which came up in the place of the great horn of the he-goat.

signify the division of Alexander's dominions, which took place after his death, among his captains, Ptolemy, Cassander, Lysimachus and Seleucus. The little horn which came forth from one of the four, denotes Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria, who grievously oppressed the Jews and profaned their temple. The reign of antichrist is predicted as coming from the fourth beast, and succeeding the ten kingdoms which should arise from the Roman Empire. This, it is said, would continue for a time and times, and the dividing of time, amounting to three years and an half, or twelve hundred and sixty days, which, in prophetic language, implies the same number of years.

4. The seventy weeks which were to elapse from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem until the death of Messiah, are reckoned from the time of Ezra's commission in the seventh year of Artaxerxes. By seventy weeks, are to be understood four hundred and ninety years, each day, according to prophetic reckoning, being accounted for a year.

LESSON LVI.

Hosea, the son of Beeri, prophesied in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel. He was appointed to his office about eight hundred years before Christ, and continued in the exercise of it sixty years. It is not known of what place he was a native, or at what times his different prophecies were delivered. He reproveth and threatens the Israelites for their idolatry and

wickedness, and earnestly exhorts them to repentance, as the only way of averting the divine wrath and indignation. He foretels their captivity and dispersion, with the desolations of Samaria and Ephraim, and while Judah is commended for her faithfulness, she is entreated to take warning by the calamities of Israel. There are some passages in Hosea which are supposed to allude to events under the gospel dispensation, and to point out the triumphs of the christian church. Although there is some obscurity in the style and but little connexion in the arrangement of these prophecies, yet we have abundant reason to admire the force and energy of their author, and the boldness of the figures and similitudes that he uses.

The age in which the prophet Joel lived is not mentioned in Scripture, and no particulars of his life or death are known. His predictions are principally confined to the kingdom of Judah, which he threatens with heavy judgements on account of the impieties of the people. He exhorts to repentance, fasting and prayer, and promises divine favour to those who are obedient. He foretels the Chaldean invasion under the most striking figures; the destruction of Jerusalem; the conversion and restoration of the Jews; the final overthrow of the enemies of God, and the glorious state of the christian church in the end of the world. The style of Joel is perspicuous and elegant, and his descriptions are remarkably animated and poetical.

Amos was cotemporary with Hosea, and, by profession, a herdsman. He declares the execution of God's judgements upon the Syrians, the Philistines, the inhabitants of Tyre, the

Edomites, the Ammonites and the Moabites. He foretels the calamities and the captivity of the ten tribes; threatens desolation upon Judah; laments over the backslidings and corruptions of the nation; reproveth prevailing vices; predicts a famine of hearing the word of the Lord, and concludes with the promise of a final and glorious restoration in the kingdom of the Redeemer.

The book of Obadiah consists of only one chapter, which is written with great beauty and elegance, and points out the utter destruction of the Edomites, and the future prosperity of the Jews.

Jonah was the son of Amittai, and is supposed by some to be the most ancient of the prophets. The book which bears his name is chiefly narrative, and commences with an account of his being commanded by the Lord to go and preach against Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire. Through fear, he neglected to comply with the divine direction, and set sail for Tarshish. On his voyage thither, a great tempest arose, and he was cast by the mariners into the sea, where he was swallowed by a large fish, which on the third day threw him out upon the dry ground. He, then, received a second commission to go and declare the judgements of God against the inhabitants of Nineveh, with which he complied, and proclaimed in the streets of that immense city, that, unless a general repentance and reformation took place within forty days, it should be entirely destroyed. This alarmed the king and the people, and a fast was appointed, in which all, from the least to the greatest, put on sackcloth and hum-

bled themselves before God. Their repentance was accepted, and the execution of the sentence which had been pronounced, was, accordingly, suspended. The last chapter of the book gives an account of the murmuring of Jonah at this instance of divine mercy, and of the gentle and condescending manner in which it pleased God to reprove the prophet for his unjust complaint. The style of Jonah is simple and clear, and the prayer which he uttered is strongly descriptive of the feelings of a pious mind under the severe trial of faith.

Micah prophesied in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and was cotemporary with Hosea. He was a native of Moresthi, a village in the southern part of Judea; and in his predictions, the vengeance of God against the rebellious Jews is declared. He exhorts them to contrition and reformation; reproveth them for their vices; shews their ill grounded security; declares the overthrow of their enemies, and foretels the coming of Christ, the establishment and glory of his kingdom, and the final extension of mercy to the covenant people of God.

Nahum is supposed to have lived in Galilee sometime between the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. His book consists of prophetic denunciations against Nineveh, which are expressed in the most glowing and sublime language, and are introduced by an animated display of the attributes of God.

Nothing is known with certainty of the tribe or birth place of Habakkuk. The time when he prophesied is generally placed about six hundred years before Christ, and it is believed that,

although he was alive at the destruction of Jerusalem, he remained, nevertheless, in Judea, where he died. He foretels the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans or Babylonians; their deliverance at the appointed time, and the overthrow of their oppressors. This book concludes with a prayer or rather hymn, which is, perhaps, unrivalled for its united sublimity, simplicity and piety.

LESSON LVII.

Zephaniah, the son of Cushi, prophesied in the reign of Josiah, about six hundred and thirty years before Christ. He denounces the judgments of God against his countrymen, and exhorts them to repentance. He predicts the punishment of the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites and Ethiopians, and foretels the destruction of Nineveh. He repeats his denunciations against Jerusalem, and with his threats mixes promises of future favour and prosperity to the Jewish nation, whose recal from their dispersion would glorify God throughout the world. The style of Zephaniah, though inferior to that of some of the other prophets, is, notwithstanding, poetical, animated and impressive.

Haggai, was probably born, during the captivity, at Babylon, and went up to Jerusalem, with Zerubbabel, in consequence of the decree of Cyrus. His prophecies were intended to reprove the people for their negligence and delay in the work of rebuilding the temple. They were, principally, addressed to Zerubbabel, and, being by him communicated to the Jews, they produced the desired effect. There are several allusions in the book of Haggai to the advent of

the Messiah, who is typically represented by Zerubbabel, and whose presence in the latter temple would render it more glorious than the former.

Zechariah was the son of Barachiah, whose father was Iddo, the prophet. He, like Haggai, was probably born during the captivity, and, like him, exhorted the Jews to proceed in the rebuilding of the temple. He promises them the aid and protection of God, and assures them of the speedy increase and prosperity of their city. He emblematically describes the four great empires; foretels the glory of the church, when both Jews and Gentiles should be united under their great high priest and governor, Jesus Christ; calls the nation to rejoice in view of the advent of the Messiah; sets forth his character, office and death, and points out many particulars relative to the extension and influence of the gospel.

Malachi, the last of the prophets, of whose lineage and situation nothing is known, reproves the Jews for their wickedness, and the priests for their negligence. He threatens the disobedient with the judgements of God, and promises great rewards to the penitent and the pious. He predicts the coming and the preaching of John the Baptist, in the spirit of Elias, and as the forerunner of a Saviour who would establish a new and an everlasting covenant. It is probable that this prophecy was delivered during the administration of Nehemiah in Jerusalem, about four hundred years before Christ.

REMARKS.

1. The books of the old testament, of which Malachi is the last in order, have always been received by the Jews as inspired writings, and, as such, held by them in a high degree of estimation and reverence. It is not supposed, that the people, generally, possessed copies of the divine law previous to the Babylonish captivity, or that it was publicly read to them. This, perhaps, was a principal reason of their continual proneness to the idolatries of the heathen. After the return from the captivity, Ezra caused new regulations to be adopted, and synagogues were erected in all parts of the country, in which the service consisted of prayers, reading the scriptures, and preaching. The synagogues were opened three days in the week besides the sabbath; and thus the people became thoroughly instructed in the word of God, and their idolatries were much less frequent than they had before been. But, in addition to the holy writings, the Jews observed a great variety of traditions, which had an unfavourable effect upon their morals. They were taught to believe that these traditions were delivered to Moses in the mount; that they were of equal authority with the written word, and ought to be as sacredly obeyed. The book in which the Jewish traditions were subsequently collected is called the Mishnah. This was made the subject of the studies of all the learned men of the nation, and the chief of them employed themselves in making commentaries upon it. These commentaries, which are called Gemara, with the Mishnah, compose the Talmuds, of which there are two, one made by the Jews in Palestine about

three hundred years after Christ, and known by the name of the Jerusalem Talmud; the other by the Jews of Babylonia in the sixth century, and called the Babylonish Talmud. The latter is much the highest in the esteem of the Jews, the former being but little regarded on account of its obscurity.

The Scriptures of the old testament were originally written in Hebrew, with the exception of a part of Ezra and Daniel, which was composed in the Chaldee. A translation of them was made into the Greek in the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, about two hundred and seventy seven years before Christ. The ancient historians relate that when this monarch had founded the Alexandrian library, he employed seventy two distinguished Israelites for the purpose of rendering their law into the more common language, and that, as a compensation for the work, he not only made valuable presents to those who had performed it, but also gave liberty to more than one hundred thousand Jewish slaves. This translation is called the Septuagint, and was used by our Saviour and his apostles, as appears from their quotations, which are all made from the Greek version and not from the original Hebrew. There are translations or rather paraphrases of the old testament, made directly from the Hebrew into the Chaldee. These are called Targums, the most celebrated of which are those by Jonathan and Onkelos.

3 The books of the old testament were arranged and the canon of scripture was settled by Simon, surnamed the Just, who was high priest about three hundred years before Christ

4. The prophecies of the holy Scriptures furnish a striking and conclusive testimony to their truth and divine origin. The predictions concerning the descendants of Noah and of Ishmael, of Esau and of Jacob, and those which relate to the destruction of Jerusalem, of Nineveh, of Babylon, of Tyre and of Egypt, were, in process of time, wonderfully and minutely fulfilled. Those too which point out the advent and the sufferings of the Messiah were all remarkably accomplished in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and great force is added to the argument which they establish from the circumstance that they are in the hands of the enemies of the gospel.

5. The Apocrypha consists of fourteen books which are not considered by Protestant Christians as inspired writings, nor is it known with certainty by whom or at what periods they were written. With much that is fictitious and absurd, they contain many excellent moral precepts and sublime descriptions, and some valuable historical information relative to the state of the Jews after their return from the Babylonish captivity. They comprehend the first and second books of Esdras, which, in their style, are prophetic; the book of Tobit, which gives a pretended history of the individual whose name it bears, and who was among the captives that the king of Assyria carried away from the land of Israel; an account of a certain woman named Judith, and her exploit in taking the life of the chief captain of the Assyrian army, which event must have happened, if at any time, during the administration of some of the earliest of the judges; a supplement to the book of Esther; an additional variety of precepts and proverbs

which are attributed to Solomon; the wise maxims of Jesus the son of Sirach under the title of Ecclesiasticus, with two prologues; the book of Baruch, containing prayers, confessions and exhortations which were sent by the Jews at Babylon to their brethren in Jerusalem, and, also, an epistle of the prophet Jeremiah to his countrymen; the song of the three Jews who were cast into the furnace by order of Nebuchadnezzar; the histories of Susannah and the overthrow of Bel and the Dragon, in both of which the prophet Daniel is conspicuously introduced; the prayer of Manasseh in his captivity, and the two books of Maccabees, which give a relation of the valour and fame of Judas Maccabeus and his brethren, who successfully resisted the tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria, in his attempts to destroy the Jewish religion, and introduce heathenism in its place, and who actually profaned the temple by removing its consecrated altars and vessels, and setting up therein the statues and altars of idol gods.—Many of the events recorded in the Maccabees are confirmed by other historians, and they must have taken place about one hundred and sixty years before Christ. The two books of the Maccabees; the Wisdom of Solomon, and Ecclesiasticus are, by far, the most valuable parts of the Apocrypha, and cannot be duly read without affording instruction and improvement.

LESSON LVIII.

The new testament comprehends four books, called Gospels, from a Greek word, signifying, the annunciation of good news; a history of the acts of the apostles of Jesus Christ

from the time of the ascension of their master, during a period of about thirty years; twenty one epistles written by different persons to churches and individuals, and the revelations of the Son of God which were made to his beloved disciple John.

The gospel of St. Matthew stands first in the collection, which, after giving a genealogy of the divine author of our religion from Abraham to David; from David to the Babylonish captivity, and from the Babylonish captivity to the time of his advent, through forty two generations, proceeds to relate the events connected with his birth. His mother Mary was espoused to a man named Joseph, who, having discovered that she was with child, was determined to dismiss her privately by giving her a writing of divorce, which, in certain cases, the Jewish law allowed to be done. But while his thoughts were engaged in a contemplation of the subject, the angel of God appeared unto him in a dream and told him not to be afraid to acknowledge his wife, for that she had conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, and was about to become the happy parent of the long promised Messiah. This communication quieted the apprehensions and suspicions of Joseph, who, thereupon, received Mary as his wife. In process of time she brought forth her first born son, in Bethlehem of Judea, while Herod was king over the province, Augustus Cesar being sovereign of the Roman Empire.

It happened immediately after this event, that certain wise men came from the east to Jerusalem, inquiring for the residence of him that had been born king of the Jews, and stating, that

they had seen, in their own land, a star, which proclaimed the nativity of such a person, in consequence of which they were come to worship him. This circumstance greatly alarmed Herod, who immediately called a council of the principal men of the nation and desired them to inform him what place was to be honoured with the birth of the Messiah. He was told that the prophets had declared it to be Bethlehem, upon which he sent for the strangers and directed them to repair to that city, and, when they had discovered the infant, to return and inform him, that he, in like manner, might go and pay homage to the destined ruler of the Jews. This, however, was only a pretence, for it was his determination, instead of worshipping, to destroy the babe that might one day wrest the sceptre from his family. The wise men, then, departed, and were conducted by the miraculous star to the place where the young child was. As soon as they came into his presence, they prostrated themselves in adoration before him, after which they presented him with some of the richest productions of their country, gold, frankincense and myrrh. Having thus accomplished the object of their journey, they intended to return to Herod and acquaint him with what they had seen, but they were diverted from their purpose by a divine communication, and went back to their own land by another way. Within a short time after the departure of these distinguished sages, the angel of the Lord appeared unto Joseph, and, making known to him the cruel designs of Herod, directed him to take the mother and her son and flee into Egypt. He instantly obeyed this command, and, under cover of th

night, pursued his journey with all possible expedition. He, at length, arrived safely in Egypt, where he abode until the death of the tyrant.

Herod, in the mean time, finding that the wise men had deceived him, was greatly enraged, and resolved, at once, to destroy all the children, from two years old and under, that were in Bethlehem and its vicinity, thinking that in this way he should accomplish the destruction of his imaginary rival. But his plans were frustrated in regard to the particular object of his hatred, although in the execution of his murderous decree vast numbers of children were slain, and the air was rent with the lamentations of their distressed and unfortunate mothers. It was not long, however, before the divine vengeance overtook the author of this dreadful calamity. He was afflicted with an uncommon and agonizing disease, which, in a short time, put a period to his life. When Joseph was informed of this event, he returned into the land of Israel, where his apprehensions were excited in regard to the successor of Herod, and being warned of God in a dream, he retired to a village called Nazareth, situated in lower Galilee.

A little before the time when Jesus was to enter upon his public ministry, an extraordinary person appeared in the wilderness of Judea, calling upon the people to repent, and proclaiming the near approach of the Messiah, who had been foretold by the prophets. This was John the Baptist, who distinguished himself by the coarseness of his clothing, the plainness of his food, and the earnestness of his exhortations and reproofs. Great numbers of persons of every

character and description followed him, and among the rest, the reputed son of Joseph came and expressed a desire to receive his baptism. John, at first, endeavoured to dissuade him from his purpose, but the blessed Jesus offered such reasons for its accomplishment, that the former no longer hesitated, but went down with him into the water and baptized him. When this ceremony was completed, the Spirit of God descended in the form of a dove and rested upon him, and a voice was heard, declaring, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

Christ, having thus received a commission to the public exercise of his office, retired into the wilderness, where he continued in fasting and prayer, forty days and forty nights. When these were ended, he was assailed by the tempter, who, by a variety of artifices, endeavoured to prevail upon him to sin against God. His exertions, however, proved fruitless, and he withdrew from the contest, abashed and defeated. The Saviour was then visited by a host of angels who ministered to his necessities.

On hearing of the imprisonment of John, which had taken place by the orders of Herod Antipas, one of the sons of the former king, Jesus departed to Nazareth, and from thence went to Capernaum, a place situated upon the borders of the lake Genesareth. Here he commenced his ministry; and, being followed by great crowds of people from all parts of the country, among whom were Peter, Andrew, James and John, who had been specially called by him from their employments in fishing, he proceeded through Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and healing the sick and the diseased.

LESSON LIX.

When Jesus saw the multitudes who had assembled to hear his doctrine, he went up into a mountain ; and, being attended by his disciples, he delivered to them that most excellent discourse which is called the Sermon on the mount. In this, he pronounced blessings upon a variety of characters and conditions, and enforced, in a solemn and highly impressive manner, the duties of religion and morality. He particularly condemned hypocrisy, uncharitable judgement, oppression, hatred and variance, ostentation in alms giving, and an immoderate anxiety for the things of the present world. He taught the importance of regulating our thoughts and affections, and pointed out the necessity and the benefits of a constant and zealous engagedness in those things which relate to our spiritual and everlasting welfare. The whole discourse was concluded by a striking similitude, in which he compares the hearer and doer of his words to a man that built his house upon a rock, which was thereby secured against the wind and the tempest, and the unfaithful and disobedient to one that established his building on the sand where it was soon overthrown and destroyed.

Upon his descent from the mountain, Jesus proceeded on his way to Capernaum, and was accosted by a leper whom he healed. After his arrival at the city, a certain centurion besought his favour in behalf of a servant, who was afflicted with the palsy, and whom, without visiting, he restored to health by his almighty power. He, then, went into the house of Peter, whose mother in law lay sick of a fever ; and,

as he touched her hand, the fever left her, and she arose and ministered unto them. At night, many were brought to him who were possessed with devils, and he healed them all. In consequence of the increase of the multitude at Capernaum, he gave directions to his disciples to go over to the other side of the lake, with which they complied. He accompanied them in the vessel, and, by his authority, caused a violent storm which arose on their passage to cease.

When they had landed on the opposite shore, which was in the country of the Gergesenes, they were met by two demoniacs coming out of a burying ground, and manifesting their disorder by the most violent and ferocious actions. On seeing Jesus, they cried out, under the influence of the evil spirits which were in them, "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God! Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" He, then, rebuked the devils, and they departed from their victims, and entered into a herd of swine that was near the place, which immediately ran down into the sea and perished. The keepers of the swine hastened into the city and related what had happened, and the inhabitants came out and besought Jesus to withdraw from their coasts. He, accordingly, went into a ship, and, having crossed the lake, entered again into Capernaum. Here, a man sick of a palsy was brought to him, to whom he graciously declared the forgiveness of his sins, and at the same time removed his disease. Departing from Capernaum, he saw a man, named Matthew, a collector of public taxes, sitting at the receipt of custom, who,

at the call of the Saviour, immediately arose and followed him. Not long after this, as Jesus sat at meat in a certain house, many publicans and persons of low reputation came in and placed themselves at the table with him. This circumstance excited the scorn of the Pharisees, and they asked the disciples why their Master associated with such people. Jesus heard their question, and put them to silence by a convincing reply. At the same time some of the followers of John the Baptist interrogated him upon the subject of fasting which was neglected by his disciples, and to them, also, he gave a sufficient and satisfactory answer. While he was engaged in this manner a certain ruler of the synagogue came and besought him to go and heal his daughter who lay at the point of death. The faith which was expressed by this man claimed for him the compassion of Christ, who immediately rose and followed him. On his way to the house of the ruler, he was approached by a woman, who, for twelve years, had been diseased, and who, upon touching the border of his garment, was instantly made whole. When he arrived at the house, he was informed that the person in whose behalf he had come, was dead; but he put the people out of the room, and, taking the damsel by the hand, raised her to life. He, afterwards, gave sight to two blind men who followed him with cries for mercy and relief. He, also, cast a devil out of one who was dumb, and restored speech to the sufferer. Thus he went about doing good, preaching the gospel of the everlasting kingdom, and healing every sickness and disease among the people. His heart was deep-

ly touched with compassion and pity when he beheld the moral and spiritual desolations which prevailed, and he called upon his followers to pray fervently to the Lord that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.

From among his disciples, Jesus had selected twelve, to be near his person, and to receive his first communications. These were honoured with the title of apostles, and their names were, Simon, also, called Peter; Andrew, his brother; James and John, the sons of Zebedee; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew, the publican; James the son of Alpheus; Lebbeus, also called Thaddeus or Judas; Simon, the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who, at last, betrayed him. Having received their appointment, the twelve apostles were commissioned by their divine Master to go forth into the more distant parts of Judea and preach the gospel. To give the greater success to their labours, he invested them with a full power to heal all diseases, to cast out devils and to raise the dead. He gave them instructions relative to their behaviour in the places which they might visit, at the same time, directing them not to enter into the cities of the Gentiles or Samaritans, but to confine their ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He told them that persecution and suffering, instead of temporal advantage, would be their reward; but that they might not be discouraged, he assured them of the special care and protection of God and declared that the heaviest judgement awaited those who should reject or disregard them, while all by whom they were kindly received, should inherit the richest blessing.

When Jesus had ended his instructions to the apostles, a message came to him from John the Baptist, who was then in prison, desiring him to state explicitly whether he was the true Messiah who had been expected by the Jews, or whether they were to look for some other person in that character. To the disciples of John, who had been sent upon this errand, no other answer was given than a direction to inform their Master of the miracles which had been wrought from which he might infer the truth. Upon this, they departed, and Jesus addressed the multitude around him in relation to the character of John, which he highly commended, although he declared the superiority of those who were employed in the ministry which appertained to his kingdom. He concluded with a prediction of judgements upon those who disregarded his instructions, and an invitation to all to engage in his service.

LESSON LX.

While Christ was pursuing the benevolent objects of his mission, it happened, that, on a certain Sabbath day, as he passed through the fields, his disciples, in order to satisfy their hunger, gathered and eat of the grain. This transaction was noticed and censured by some of the Jews, who considered it a violation of the law of God; but Jesus justified his followers from the example of David and the priests in the temple, and, also, reproved the accusers for their uncharitableness and hypocrisy. Soon after this, he subjected himself to the malice of the Pharisees by healing, on the Sabbath day in one of their synagogues, a man with a wither-

ed hand. They were so much offended with his conduct that they came to a resolution to destroy him; but he withdrew from the place and a great multitude followed him. The sick and diseased who attended him he healed of their maladies, and charged them that they should not make him known, thus fulfilling one of the prophecies of Isaiah which described his humility and his tender benevolence. Among those who were brought to him to be relieved, was a blind and dumb man, who was, also, possessed of a devil. The kind Redeemer no sooner beheld this unfortunate being, than he exercised his power for the removal of his sufferings, and having cast out the demon, restored the patient to his sight and his speech. When the Pharisees saw this miracle, in order to justify their unbelief, they declared that it had been performed through the agency of the prince of darkness. Jesus, however, proved to them, by the most conclusive argument, the falsehood and absurdity of such a charge, at the same time declaring to them, that, although the slanderous words which they might speak in relation to himself would not, necessarily, place them beyond the reach of divine mercy, yet, the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, by whom his wonderful works had been wrought, would never be forgiven, neither in this world nor in that which is to come. He, then, vindicated the purity of his character by the excellence of his deeds and censured, with great severity, the wickedness of the Pharisees, reminding them, that for all their false and idle declarations, they would be compelled to answer in the day of judgement. Having concluded his observations upon this

subject, he was requested by some that stood by, to shew them a sign, whereby he might be known and acknowledged as the Messiah. Instead of complying with their desire, he attributed it to their depravity, and told them, that in addition to what he had done in their sight, no farther sign should be given them, except that which might be afterwards perceived in a comparison of his burial and resurrection with the events that once happened to the prophet Jonah, for as the latter was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish so should the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. This declaration he followed with a prediction of the evil which was about to come upon that generation, and which he pointed out under the similitude of the ravages of an unclean spirit.

When our blessed Lord had ended his discourse to the perverse Pharisees, word was brought him that his mother and kindred had arrived and were desirous of speaking with him, whereupon, he turned to his disciples, and, stretching out his hand towards them, declared that those were his dearest relations who heard and practised the word of God. "For whosoever," said he, "shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother."

On the same day, Jesus went and sat by the sea side, where he instructed the people by parables, in the first of which, he compared the gospel, in its nature and reception by the world, to seed sown in the ground, which grows up and produces fruit according to the quality and condition of the soil in which it is deposit-

ed. The second parable pointed out the intermixture of evil and good, represented under the similitude of tares and wheat. In this, Satan is made known as the author of sin, and the difficulty and presumption of undertaking to discriminate between the righteous and the wicked are forcibly illustrated. The third parable which was addressed to the people compares the gospel in its infant state and future extension to a grain of mustard seed, which though exceedingly small in itself, becomes, at length, a tree, in the branches of which the birds of the air come and lodge. These discourses after the departure of the multitude, were followed by explanations to the twelve apostles together with the delivery of several other parables relative to the importance and increase of the kingdom of God. These instructions being ended, Jesus returned into his own country, where the lowliness of his birth and obscurity of his parentage, prevented a cordial reception of his doctrines.

Previous to this time, Herod, the tetrarch had caused John the Baptist to be put to death. Herod had unlawfully married the wife of his brother Philip, and the prophet had reproved him for the deed. Being offended at the boldness with which his crime was censured, he ordered John to be imprisoned, and he continued in confinement for a considerable length of time. The tetrarch would have taken away his life immediately, had he not feared that such a measure would render him odious in the view of his subjects, who accounted John as a person divinely inspired. But, at a feast which was kept in honour of his birth day, the daughter

of Herodias so pleased him with her dancing that he promised, with an oath, to give her whatever she should ask. She, having been instructed by her mother, demanded the head of the Baptist. Upon this, Herod, with some reluctance, sent an officer with a command to behead John in prison. The orders were soon executed, and the head of the prophet was carried to the damsel, who delivered it to her mother. Thus, this eminent man fell a sacrifice to the resentment of an abandoned woman whom he had offended by his reproofs. The disciples of John took his body and buried it, and went and told Jesus what had happened, who, thereupon, retired into a desert place. When Herod had heard of the miracles of Christ, he was greatly alarmed, for his disturbed imagination led him to fear that John had risen from the dead, and that his wonderful works would induce the people to rebel against his authority.

LESSON LXI.

The next miracle which Jesus performed consisted in his feeding five thousand men besides women and children, with five loaves and two small fishes. Having thus supplied the wants of the people, he dismissed them, and directed his disciples to pass over to the other side of the lake, while he himself retired into a mountain for the exercise of private devotion. In the night, a violent storm of wind arose, in the midst of which Jesus walked upon the water to the aid of his friends in the ship, who were greatly alarmed at the danger which threatened them. As he approached the vessel, Simon Peter attempted to meet him upon the waves, but

beginning to sink, he was upheld, and reproved for his want of faith, by his Master. They, then, entered the vessel together, and the tempest ceased, upon which the disciples worshipped their deliverer and acknowledged him to be the Son of God. After landing on the opposite shore in the country of Gennesaret, many diseased persons were brought to him and he healed them all.

Among those who followed the Saviour, to hear his doctrine and behold his miracles, were certain Scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem. These persons, being offended with the disciples on account of their neglect of some of the traditions which were observed by the Jews, brought their complaints to Jesus, who reproved them for their great regard to ceremonies, while they lived in a constant violation of the moral precepts of the divine law. In his discourse, he taught them that the heart rather than the hands deserved their attention and watchfulness, inasmuch as this was the fountain from whence proceeded all wickedness.

From Gennesaret Jesus proceeded to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon where he healed a young woman who was vexed with a devil. He, then, returned to Galilee, and was followed by multitudes into a mountain, where he restored to health and strength, a great number of sick and infirm people. In the same place, he, also, supplied the necessities of all his attendants, amounting to more than four thousand, with seven loaves and a few little fishes, after which he departed into the coasts of Magdala. In the course of his journeyings, he was again accosted by the Pharisees, together with the

Sadducees, and requested to exhibit some remarkable and unequivocal sign in proof of his authority. He replied to them as he had done on a former occasion, that they should receive no sign but that of the prophet Jonah, and then, having left them, he warned his disciples against their corruptions.

When he was in the coasts of Cesarea Philippi, he inquired of his followers in regard to the opinion which was generally entertained of him by the people. On being told that various sentiments and conjectures prevailed, he asked them to make known their thoughts upon the subject. Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." For this ready and explicit declaration of his faith, the apostle received a distinguished blessing from his Lord, and was assured that the cause in which he was engaged would ultimately triumph over all the opposition of men and devils.

Having charged his disciples not to publish abroad the fact of his being the Messiah, Jesus proceeded to inform them that he must go up to Jerusalem, where the chief priests and scribes would lay violent hands on him, and put him to death, but that on the third day he should rise again. Peter, upon this, began to rebuke him, but he was silenced by his Master, who went on to declare the sufferings that must be experienced by all who devoted themselves to his service, and the certainty of their final reward.

Six days after this, Jesus selected three of his apostles, Peter, James and John, and went up with them into a high mountain, where he was transfigured in their presence, and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as

the light. On this occasion, Moses and Elijah appeared to him, and a voice was heard from an overshadowing cloud, saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." Peter, at first, requested that three tabernacles might be made, one for Christ, one for Moses, and one for Elias, but such was the glory of the vision that he and his two companions were soon bereft of their senses and lay motionless on the ground. When they recovered, they found themselves alone with Jesus, who appeared in his usual manner, and directed them not to relate what they had seen, to any one, until after his resurrection from the dead. They, then, returned to the other disciples and the multitude, with whom they found a man who had brought his son, that was possessed with a devil, to be healed. The disciples had laboured to effect a cure in the absence of their master, but without success. This being made known to Jesus, he reproved them for their unbelief, and, having cast out the evil spirit, stated to them the reasons of their failure and magnified the excellency of faith.

While Jesus abode in Galilee, he repeated to his disciples his predictions in relation to his death and resurrection, at which, although they did not fully comprehend what was said to them, they were, nevertheless, greatly distressed. In Capernaum, application was made to Peter by the tax gatherers for the tribute money which was due from his Master. Jesus offered to the apostle a sufficient reason for an exemption from this demand; but, to avoid giving offence, he directed him to go to the sea and cast in a hook, with an assurance, that in the mouth

of the first fish which he should take he would find a piece of money sufficient to satisfy the claims of the collectors. At this time Christ reproved his disciples for the imperfect notions which they entertained of the nature of his kingdom, and the desires which they had expressed for preeminence. He, also, exhorted them, for the sake of eternal life, to divest themselves of all evil passions and propensities; instructed them in what manner to treat their offending brethren; gave them authority in his church, and delivered a parable, illustrating the duty of forbearance and forgiveness, in reply to a question which had been asked by Peter. Having finished these sayings, he departed into Judea, where he instructed the Pharisees upon the subject of divorcement; pronounced a blessing upon little children; convicted a self-righteous man of his deficiencies, by directing him to sell his possessions and give to the poor; declared the difficulty which would attend the salvation of such as trusted in riches; promised the inheritance of everlasting life to those who, for his sake, had forsaken the enjoyments and connexions of the present world, and delivered a parable, comparing the kingdom of heaven to a householder who employed, at different hours in the day, labourers to work in his vineyard, and, at night, bestowed upon them equal rewards, thus condemning the uncharitableness of the Jews, and vindicating the justice and the goodness of God.

LESSON LXII.

As Jesus was on his way from Galilee to Jerusalem, he discoursed to his disciples upon the

events which were about to take place, informing them that his ministry upon earth was approaching its close, and that soon after their arrival in the city, he should be delivered to the Gentiles, who would mock, scourge and crucify him, but that, on the third day, he should rise from the dead. His apostles, however, had so little understanding of these declarations, that two of them, James and John, advanced their claims to the highest places in the government which they supposed he was about to establish. He asked them if they were able to drink of his cup and to be baptized with his baptism, and on their answering in the affirmative, he told them that they should, indeed, participate in his sufferings, but that to sit on his right hand and on his left in his kingdom, was a blessing which could be conferred only by the Father upon those for whom it was prepared. The other apostles were much offended with the two brethren in petitioning for favours which intimated that their merits were superior to those of their companions. From these circumstances, Jesus took occasion to enforce the duty of humility, and to recommend to his disciples mutual kindness and good will, without a desire, on the part of any, of superiority over the rest. It was during this journey, and at a little distance from Jericho, that our blessed Saviour restored sight to two blind men who followed him.

Previous to his entering Jerusalem, Jesus directed some of his disciples to go into a little village near Mount Olivet, and bring to him from thence an ass with her colt, and to say to any one who should inquire of them why they loosed the animals, that the Lord had need of

them. His command, in this particular, being obeyed, the disciples put their clothes upon the ass, and having placed Jesus thereon, they proceeded towards the city. Great multitudes accompanied them upon this occasion, strewing their garments, together with branches from the trees, in the way, and crying, "Hosanna to the son of David! blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! hosanna in the highest!"

When the procession reached the city, the inhabitants were greatly moved at the sight, and on asking who it was that was conducted with such triumph and joy, they were told that it was Jesus, the prophet, of Nazareth of Galilee. The first thing which Jesus did after this public entrance into the capital of Judea, was to go into the temple and cast out the money changers and to overthrow the seats of them that sold doves, saying, "it is written, my house shall be called a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves." When he had thus manifested his zeal for the honour of God, he received the visits of the blind and the lame, whom he healed of their infirmities. From Jerusalem he, occasionally, made short excursions to a place in the neighbourhood, about two miles distant, called Bethany, situated at the foot of the Mount of Olives, on the way to Jericho. It was on his return from one of these, that he cursed a barren fig tree, upon which he had looked for fruit, and which immediately withered away.

At Jerusalem, in the porch of the temple, Jesus taught the people, who resorted to him in great numbers for instruction and relief. Here he silenced the chief priests and elders, who asked him from whence he had received his au-

thority; here he condemned the disobedience of the Jews, in parables; here, in the same manner, he foretold that he himself was about to become the victim of their cruelty and to share the fate of the prophets who had preceded him, and here he declared that the most signal vengeance would be executed upon his murderers, from whom the kingdom of God should be taken and given to a nation that would bring forth the fruits of it, and that, thus, the stone, which the builders rejected, would become the head stone of the corner. The chief priests and Pharisees were so much enraged at these discourses that they sought to lay hands on him, but were restrained from this violence by a fear of the people who revered him as a prophet.

Among the parables which Jesus put forth in the temple was one in which he likened the dispensation of the gospel to a marriage feast which a certain king made for his son, and to which many guests were invited, who refused to come, and slew the servants who brought them the invitation. Upon this the king was wroth and sent forth his armies and destroyed the murderers and burned their city. A message was then conveyed to the poor and the miserable of every description, who sat in the highways, soliciting their attendance at the feast. When these were brought into the presence of the king, a man was found among them without a wedding garment, who, being unable to give a reason for his deficiency, was ordered to be bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness. After the delivery of this parable, an artful plan was contrived by the Pharisees to entangle Jesus in his words in such a manner that they might have

ground for an accusation against him. To this end, they proposed a question to him in regard to the payment of tribute, designing thereby to draw from him an answer which might prove him to be either an enemy to Cæsar, or in favour of the continued degradation of his own countrymen. His reply, however, disappointed their expectations, and they retired from his presence, astonished at his wisdom, and mortified by his proofs. Upon the failure of the Pharisees in their stratagems, the Sadducees, who did not believe in the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the dead, came to him with a question for his decision, in which they stated that a certain woman among them had been, successively, the wife of seven brethren, and that they were desirous of knowing to which of them she would belong in the pretended world to come. They, also, were put to silence by his answer, and the multitude were filled with admiration at his doctrine. After this, he was tempted by a lawyer, who asked him which was the first and great commandment. Jesus replied to him, by declaring that the whole moral law was comprehended in two particulars, love to God and love to man, and that these were equally obligatory and important.

LESSON LXIII.

Jesus, having been assailed with many questions by those who were desirous of destroying him, now, in his turn, interrogated the Pharisees, and requested their opinion of the Messiah, saying, "What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?" They readily replied, "The son of David." He, then, desired them to reconcile their opin-

ion with the declaration of the Psalmist, in which he evidently speaks of the Messiah, and calls him his Lord. This they were unable to do, and from that time no man durst ask him any more questions, with a design to ensnare him.

While Jesus continued in Jerusalem, he addressed his disciples and the multitude upon a variety of subjects. He directed them to observe the precepts of those who sat in Moses' seat, but not to imitate their example: He exhorted them to humility and self abasement. He denounced the heaviest woes against the Scribes and Pharisees for their self righteousness, insincerity and cruelty; and he uttered the most pathetic lamentations over their devoted city. This, he declared to his disciples, as they were admiring the magnificence of the temple, should be entirely destroyed, and of that superb edifice, not one stone should be left upon another. He, then, pointed out the suddenness of the desolation which would come upon Jerusalem, enforcing the importance of a preparation for the event, and extending the views of his hearers, from the predicted overthrow of the city and temple, to the final coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven, and all the solemnities of the last judgement. To impress the subject more deeply upon their minds, and to render his discourse more profitable in the regulation of their lives, he illustrated the transactions of which he had been speaking by parables, likening the kingdom of heaven to ten virgins who were called upon to attend a marriage feast, from which five of them were, at last, excluded, in consequence of not having their lamp

replenished with oil when the bridegroom entered into his house; and, also, to an unequal distribution of talents to several servants, whose reward was proportioned to the respective improvement of what they had received. These parables were followed by a sublime description of the appearance of the Redeemer in his glory; the character and the blessedness of his friends; the ill grounded confidence, the deficiencies and the punishment of his enemies.

While Jesus was upon one of his visits to Bethany, he was invited to eat in the house of Simon, a leper, a man whom he had probably healed. As they were seated at the table, a woman came behind him and poured a quantity of precious ointment upon his head. This was condemned by some of his disciples as an unnecessary waste of what might have been appropriated to the benefit of the poor; but Jesus commended the act and declared it to be preparatory to his burial, at the same time, assuring all who were present that it should be published to the honour of the woman, wherever his gospel should be preached.

The enemies of Christ, having been unable to apprehend him while he was employed in his public teachings, at length assembled at the house of Caiaphas, the high priest, and consulted upon the manner in which his person might be brought into their hands. At this time, or soon after, Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve apostles, went to the chief priests and agreed to deliver him up to them for thirty pieces of silver. Two days from this time, Jesus celebrated the passover with his apostles and instituted a sacrament in commemoration of himself;

with a strict injunction upon his followers to observe it. During this festival, he told his apostles that one of them was about to betray him, and intimated to them which of the number it would be. When the supper was ended he took Peter and James and John, and went with them into a garden called Gethsemane, where he experienced a most bitter agony of soul, and prayed to his Father that the cup of his sorrows might pass from him, expressing, however, an entire resignation to the will of God. In the mean time, his companions had fallen into a deep sleep, but he roused them with notice of the approach of his enemies; and while he yet spake, a large company from the chief priests and elders, with Judas at their head, rushed in upon his retirement. He was then taken, without resistance, and carried to the palace of the high priest, where Peter, who had been the most zealous in his cause and defence, denied him with oaths and curses. Here, too, he was questioned and reviled, mocked, spit upon and buffeted by his enemies; but he bore his sufferings patiently, and was led like a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb so he opened not his mouth. The next morning he was bound by the Jews and sent to Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor. Pilate, having heard the charges which were brought against him, and the evidence in their support, was disposed to release him as an innocent man. But the clamours of an incensed populace prevailed over his better judgement; and, notwithstanding the remonstrances of his wife who had suffered many things in a dream on account of the prisoner, he gave liberty to a murderer, and or

dered that the prince of glory should suffer death upon the cross. Jesus was then stripped and scourged by the soldiers, who put upon him a scarlet robe and a crown of thorns, after which, they led him away and crucified him between two thieves, at a place called Golgotha, on Mount Calvary, at a little distance from the city.

Judas, in the mean time, who had betrayed his master, repented of his crime, and, throwing down the money which he had received from the Jews, and declaring that he had sold innocent blood, went away and hanged himself. The Potter's field was purchased with the thirty pieces of silver, as a burial ground for strangers.

LESSON LXIV.

An inscription was placed by order of the governor, upon the cross of our blessed Saviour, in the following words, written in Greek, Latin and Hebrew;—"This is Jesus the king of the Jews." About the sixth hour of the day, an uncommon darkness pervaded the land and continued until the ninth hour, when the suffering Emmanuel cried out, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Some, who were present, not understanding what he said, supposed that he called for Elias, and one of them filled a sponge with vinegar, and putting it on a reed, presented it to him to drink. Upon this, he cried again with a loud voice and immediately expired. The vail of the temple, which was drawn before the holy of holies, was then rent in twain; an earthquake shook the ground; the rocks were severed; the graves yielded up their dead, and the saints who arose went into the holy city and

appeared unto many. These remarkable occurrences induced the centurion and others who were watching the body of Jesus to exclaim, "Truly, this was the Son of God!" Among those that stood by the cross were several women who had attended the ministry of Jesus.

On the evening of the same day, a certain rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, went to Pilate and begged the body of his Lord. This was ordered to be given him, and he buried it in his own new sepulchre, at the door of which the Jews, by permission of the governor, placed a guard of soldiers, lest the disciples should come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, "He is risen from the dead."

Early on the morning of the third day after the crucifixion, Mary Magdalene, with another woman, came to view the sepulchre. At the entrance, they perceived an angel of the Lord whose countenance was like lightning and his raiment as white as snow, before whom the keepers had fallen to the ground, and lay without sense or motion. When the women approached, he bade them dismiss their fears, for the person whom they sought was not there, but was risen, as he had predicted. He then directed them, after they had looked at the place where the Lord lay, to return immediately to his apostles and friends and inform them of his resurrection. On their way, Jesus himself appeared to them, and received their homage. He commanded them, also, to hasten to his brethren and tell them to go into Galilee where he would meet with them.

In the mean time, the soldiers who had been placed to guard the sepulchre, returned into

the city and related to the chief priests all that had taken place. The latter, after a consultation with the elders upon the subject, bribed with money, the secrecy of the soldiers, directing them to say, that the disciples of Jesus had stolen away his body while they were asleep. This was, accordingly, reported among the Jews and generally believed.

Jesus, afterwards, appeared to his eleven apostles upon a mountain in Galilee, where he commissioned them to go and preach the gospel to all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, giving them, at the same time, a promise that he would be with them even to the end of the world.

REMARKS.

1. Matthew, the son of Alpheus, who is, also, called Levi, was a Galilean by birth, a Jew by religion, and a publican by profession. He wrote his gospel, as is supposed, in the Hebrew or Syriac language, about eight years after the resurrection of his Master. The general opinion both of ancients and moderns is, that he preached and suffered martyrdom in Ethiopia.

2. The christian era, commencing with the birth of the Saviour, is reckoned from the year of the creation four thousand and four.

3. Bethlehem, the place where Jesus Christ was born, is situated on the declivity of a hill, six miles from Jerusalem. Nazareth, where he afterwards abode with his parents, was a small city of Zebulun in Lower Galilee. Capernaum lay on the east borders of the lake Genesareth, or the sea of Galilee. This is a body of water

about twelve miles in length and five in breadth, through which the river Jordan has its course towards the dead sea.

4. Herod the Great, who was king over Judea, was a prince distinguished for his cruelty and wickedness. In addition to the murder of the innocents at Bethlehem, he caused his wife and three of his sons to be put to death. He died miserably, after a reign of about thirty seven years. His son Herod Antipas, inherited only a third part of the province, and was therefore called, the tetrarch.

5. The wise men who visited the infant Saviour were, probably, of the sect of the Persian Magi. Their number, although not stated, is generally fixed at three. Some of the ancients suppose that they were kings. It is more probable that they were only philosophers who had devoted themselves to moral and religious studies, and were, in a degree, illuminated by the Spirit of God.

6. The Pharisees, a sect among the Jews, remarkable for their strict attention to the outward ceremonies and traditions of their religion, and, also, for their selfishness and hypocrisy, received their name from a word signifying division or separation. They were very numerous and in great credit with the people, on account of their learning and apparent sanctity. The Sadducees, another sect of the Jews, were the disciples of one Sadoc. They denied the existence of angels and spirits, and the doctrine of a future resurrection. There was another Jewish sect, called Essenes, who were distinguished for their habits of austerity, self denial and mortification.

7. The publicans were collectors of the public taxes which were paid in tribute to the Roman Government, to which Judea, was subject. Their profession among the Jews, was excessively odious and disreputable, and they were in general, men of abandoned characters.

8. The kingdom of God, in the new testament, most commonly signifies the church of Christ or the gospel dispensation.

9. The persons who were expelled by Christ from the temple were those who sold animals to the people for sacrifices, and, also, enabled the poor to purchase, by loans, in making which they were guilty of great impositions and oppressions, and were thus justly entitled to the name of thieves and robbers.

10. The parable of the marriage feast denotes the rejection of the Saviour by the Jews, and the subsequent destruction of their city and temple; the extension of the covenant of grace to the Gentiles, and the diversity of character in christian professors; the benevolence of God to man, discovered in the system of redemption through Christ, and the final condemnation and punishment of those who wilfully neglect to comply with its terms.

11. Christ commenced his ministry in the thirtieth year of his age, and continued in the exercise of it for about three years.

LESSON LXV.

The gospel of St. Mark contains an abridged relation of most of the principal events which are recorded by Matthew. The genealogy and birth of Christ; the massacre of the infants at Bethlehem, and the sermon on the mount are

not, however, mentioned by this evangelist. He dilates upon several facts which are concisely stated by Matthew, and notices a variety of circumstances that are not found in any other gospel. The most important of these are the cures of a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech and of a blind person who was brought to Jesus at Bethsaida, a particular account of which is given at the close of the seventh and in the middle of the eighth chapters.

The gospel of Mark commences with a history of the ministry of John the Baptist, and ends with the commission which was given by our blessed Saviour to his apostles, and his ascension into heaven. In the order of time, his narration varies considerably from that of Matthew, but which is the most correct in this respect is a matter of some uncertainty.

St. Luke addressed his gospel, which follows that of Mark, to a distinguished christian whom he calls Theophilus. His object was not only to record the life of the Messiah, but to supply some things which had been omitted by the former evangelists. These consist of the birth of John the Baptist, who was the son of Zacharias, a priest who officiated in the temple, and who was informed by an angel that his wife Elizabeth would conceive and bring forth a child, who, in the spirit and power of Elias, should precede and announce the coming of the Redeemer; of the journey of Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem, in order to be taxed, according to a decree of Augustus Cæsar, the Roman Emperor, together with the circumstances under which Christ was born; of the vision of angels who declared to certain shepherds as

they were watching their flocks that for them a Saviour had appeared in the world, and that they would find him wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger; of the circumcision of Jesus which took place when he was eight days old; of the testimony which was borne to his character and office by Simeon and Anna, two aged persons in Jerusalem; of his attending with his parents, the celebration of the passover when he was twelve years of age and disputing with the doctors in the temple; of the appointment of seventy disciples; of the parables of the good Samaritan, the prodigal son, the unjust steward, the rich man and Lazarus, the atheistical judge, and the publican and Pharisee; of the miraculous cure of a woman, who, for eighteen years, had been bowed down by illness, the cleansing of ten lepers, the restoration to life of a widow's son at Nain, the account of Zaccheus who climbed a sycamore tree to behold his Lord as he passed by, the penitence of one of the thieves upon the cross, and the particulars of a journey to Emmaus by two of the disciples on the day of the resurrection.

St. Luke has, also, given a genealogy of Jesus Christ from Adam down to Joseph, and his gospel concludes, like that of Mark, with an account of the ascension of the risen Saviour.

St. John was one of the apostles of our blessed Lord; and received the most distinguished tokens of his love and friendship. He wrote his gospel, according to the earliest accounts, for the purpose of refuting certain heresies which had crept into the church relative to the person of Christ and the creation of the world. There is in it, therefore, more of doctrine and less of

narrative than in any of the others. He chiefly confines himself to those occurrences which had been omitted by the former evangelists, and whenever he relates what they had mentioned, it is with a view to introduce some valuable discourse of the Saviour, or to establish some point connected with the main scope of his gospel. The most important relations that are given by St. John alone are those of the blind man in the ninth, and the resurrection of Lazarus, in the eleventh chapters, together with the account of the unbelief of Thomas and the conversation with Peter near the end of the book. The discourses of Christ to his disciples in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth chapters, and his prayer in the seventeenth chapter, are, also, highly interesting and impressive.

REMARKS.

1. St. Mark is supposed to have been the disciple of the apostle Peter, who sent him into Egypt where he planted a church, with great success, in Alexandria. In this city, he was, at length, barbarously murdered by the idolatrous inhabitants. His remains were, afterwards, conveyed to Venice, where they were religiously honored, and he was adopted as the titular saint and patron of that state. Luke was a native of Antioch in Syria, and by profession a physician. He attended Paul through a part of his travels, and, at last, suffered martyrdom in Greece. John was the brother of James, and peculiarly honored with the love of his Master. To him the dying Saviour committed his mother, and she continued with him until her death which happened about fifteen years after the crucifix-

ion of Christ. By order of Domitian, the Roman Emperor, St. John was banished to the isle of Patmos, in the Mediterranean, where he continued several years; but upon the death of the Emperor he returned to Asia, and established his abode in Ephesus. He lived the longest of any of the apostles, being near an hundred years of age at the time of his death, which took place in the reign of the Emperor Trajan, soon after the commencement of the second century.

2. It appears from all the evangelists, that Christ was crucified on the day preceding the Jewish Sabbath, answering to our Friday, and that he rose on the morning of the first day of the week, which from that circumstance is called the Lord's day. The phrase three days and three nights, could not, therefore, literally denote the time of his lying in the grave, but the custom of the Jews will justify the expression in strict accordance with the fact.

LESSON LXVI.

In the Acts of the Apostles, which were written by St. Luke, we have a particular account of the transactions which occurred in the christian church for a period of about thirty years after the resurrection of its divine founder. At the expiration of forty days from the time of this event, Jesus met his disciples at a place which he had appointed; and, having directed them to remain in Jerusalem until they should receive the Holy Ghost, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. As they stood gazing after him, two men in white raiment appeared unto them, and informed them that the same Jesus whose glorious ascent to-

wards heaven they had just witnessed would, in like manner, come again to the earth. They, then, returned to Jerusalem, where they abode for a time in a retired chamber, and where, at the suggestion of Simon Peter, they made choice, by lot, of Matthias to supply the place which had been vacated by the apostacy and destruction of Judas Iscariot. The whole number of disciples present on this occasion was about one hundred and twenty.

The number of the apostles being made complete by the election of Matthias, the disciples continued to assemble at their accustomed place for the performance of religious duties, and, on the day of Pentecost, when they were all together, they were suddenly and miraculously filled with the Holy Ghost, and by divine inspiration became prepared to extend the knowledge of their faith, by being enabled to speak the languages of different nations. When this event was publicly known, a great degree of wonder and astonishment was excited among the people, some of whom acknowledged their inability to account for the miracle, while others declared it to be the effect of drunkenness. To refute this calumny, and at the same time to open the eyes of the yet deluded and perverse Jews, Peter arose and addressed the multitude in a speech of considerable length, in which he charged them with the murder of the prince of life, whom God had raised from the dead, and assured them, from the Scriptures, that the things which had taken place constituted the fulfilment of many of their ancient prophecies. The discourse of the undaunted apostle reached the hearts and consciences of his hearers; and, in great agita-

tion, they asked what they should do, upon which he exhorted them to repent and be baptized in the name of Christ, as the only way in which they could obtain remission of their sins. About three thousand persons then embraced the truth, and were added to the number of the believers, all of whom continued steadfast in the doctrine and fellowship of the apostles. The influence of their example in the duties of prayer and charity was powerful in producing the conversion of others, and the Lord added to the church, daily, such as should be saved.

During the residence of the apostles at Jerusalem, Peter and John, on a certain day, went up into the temple to engage in their customary devotions. As they entered one of the gates, they saw, lying there, a poor man who had been lame and unable to walk or to stand on his feet from his birth, and who, as the apostles passed, supplicated their charity. Peter directed him to look on them, and then replied, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, of Nazareth, rise up and walk." The man immediately received strength in his limbs, and entered, joyfully, with his benefactors into the temple, leaping and praising God. The people were surprised above measure, on witnessing this new miracle; and having assembled in great numbers around Peter and John, the former addressed them with much pertinency and boldness, pointing out the magnitude of their crime in the rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah; declaring that it was through his name that the lame man had been healed, and calling upon them, as the children of the covenant which had

been made with their ancestors, to repent and be converted. This speech was delivered with such power and energy that many who heard it believed, and the number of the men was increased to about five thousand.

The two apostles, however, by their intrepidity and their success, provoked the resentment of the chief priests and the Sadducees, who caused them to be apprehended and imprisoned. On the next day they were brought before the rulers of the people, who demanded of them by what power they had performed the miracle upon the lame man, or who gave them authority to preach to the multitude. Peter replied to them, with his usual courage and freedom, that it was by the name of that Jesus whom they had crucified, and whom God had raised from the dead, that the person before them had been made whole, and that in this name only salvation was to be obtained. Upon this, the members of the council held a private conference, in which they resolved to command their prisoners to abstain from any farther preaching or conversation in regard to Christ, and to dismiss them. They, then, called for Peter and John, and having threatened them with the severest penalties in case they persisted in their preaching, ordered them to be discharged. The two apostles immediately returned to their friends and related all that had been said to them by the chief priests and elders. The whole assembly thereupon glorified God who, by his holy prophet David, had foretold what was now come to pass, and at the same time supplicated divine aid to enable them, notwithstanding the opposition of the Jews, to propagate the gospel of life and im-

mortality. Their prayers were instantly answered ; for the house in which they were was shaken as with a mighty wind, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake the word of God with great boldness and zeal.

The disciples, in order to prevent any interruption, in their sacred calling, from worldly business, and to strengthen and perpetuate the bonds of union, had disposed of all their temporal possessions and placed the proceeds thereof at the disposal of the apostles, who distributed to every member of the society according to his necessities. But a certain man, named Ananias, and his wife Sapphira, having sold their estate, brought to the apostles only a part of the money, and declared this to be the whole amount that they had received. Peter reprov'd them, with great severity, for their falsehood and fraud, and they were both punished by the Lord with immediate death. This remarkable instance of divine wrath filled all the converts with fear and trembling, and taught them, most impressively, the danger of hypocrisy and dissimulation.

LESSON LXVII.

After the death of Ananias and Sapphira, the gospel was preached with great success, and multitudes both of men and of women were added to the church. But when the high priest and elders of the Jews saw how little regard was manifested for their threatenings and charges, they caused the apostles to be apprehended and cast into prison. During the night, however, the angel of the Lord released them from their confinement, and on the morning of the next

day, they entered the temple and resumed their preaching. In the mean time, the great council of the nation had assembled, and officers were sent to the prison to bring out the offenders, but they returned and gave information of their escape, stating, also, that they had found the doors shut and the keepers upon their guard. This intelligence greatly surprised the high priest and his companions, and they remained in the utmost perplexity until a messenger came and told them that the men whom they had confined were then standing in the temple and teaching the people. In consequence of this, the captain of the guard, with several assistants, went in pursuit of the apostles, upon whom they prevailed, without offering any violence, to accompany them to the council. On their arrival, they were asked how they durst presume to persist in the publication of those doctrines which they had been forbidden even to mention. The reply made by Peter, in behalf of the whole, was similar to his former speeches, and so much offended those to whom it was made, that they determined, at once, to put him and his brethren to death. But the prudence of a certain Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a man of influence and of learning, prevented them from carrying their resolution into effect. He told them that if the doctrines of the apostles were false, they would soon come to nothing of themselves, but that if they proceeded from God, they could not be successfully opposed by man, and that the mere possibility of their truth should be sufficient to restrain them from every act of violence, which, in case such should be the fact, would only render them guilty of fighting against their Maker.

He enforced his observations by adducing several examples of the overthrow and ruin of imposters, and when he had concluded his argument, the council so far changed their first purpose as only to order the apostles to be beaten, and to repeat their charge that they should no longer continue to teach in the name of Jesus. This injunction had but little effect upon the followers of a Master who, in their presence, had ascended triumphantly to heaven. They returned to their friends rejoicing that they were thought worthy to suffer shame and reproach for the sake of their Redeemer, and in no degree abstaining from their exertions to advance his cause and to glorify his name.

When the number of believers had very considerably increased, a complaint was made to the apostles by certain converts who had resided in Greece, that their widows had not received a due proportion of the charitable contributions. Upon this representation, it was thought necessary to institute the order of deacons, consisting of a certain number of zealous and holy men, who, with other duties, might have the special care of the poor in the church. Accordingly, seven persons were nominated and solemnly set apart to this office. Their names were Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas. In consequence of this appointment the apostles were enabled to devote the whole of their time to the exercises of prayer and preaching, without being interrupted by those matters which related more particularly to the secular interests of the society.

Stephen, one of the seven deacons, soon dis-

tinguished himself by the ardor of his faith and the boldness of his exhortations. The fervor of his zeal and the force of his arguments alarmed the worshippers in the synagogues, and they suborned men to accuse him of blasphemy. Upon this charge he was brought before the high council of the nation, where he defended himself with ability, and, in a brief sketch of the history of the Jewish nation, reprov'd the assembly for their uniform and criminal opposition to the truth. His speech only served to increase the rage of his hearers, and he was hastily dragged out of the city and stoned to death. A view of the felicity which awaited him in the paradise of God, caused him to rejoice in his fate, and, in imitation of his divine Lord, his last petitions were for the forgiveness of his murderers.

Among the persons who were active in the martyrdom of Stephen, was a young man by the name of Saul, and to him were given in charge the clothes of the witnesses, who had stripped off their outer garments, in order to throw the first stones at their victim, according to the provisions of their law. The death of Stephen was only the commencement of a general and extensive persecution against the disciples of Christ, in which Saul distinguished himself for his zeal and his bitterness. He entered into every house in pursuit of those who professed their faith in Jesus, and all that he found, whether men or women, were indiscriminately hurried away to prison. The violence to which the believers were thus exposed induced them to seek their safety by flight, and in this way, what was intended to exterminate, contributed to the

progress of the gospel, which was thereby carried into distant provinces and nations.

At this time, Philip, another of the seven deacons, left Jerusalem and went down to Samaria, where he preached Christ to the inhabitants, and wrought many miracles in attestation of the truth of his doctrines. His labours were attended with success, and great numbers of the people, having embraced the faith, received baptism from his hands. There happened to be then in the city, a certain sorcerer, whose name was Simon, and who, by his magical arts, had obtained a great share of popular respect and veneration. He, also, listened to the discourses of Philip and was baptized with the rest.

When the apostles, who still abode at Jerusalem, had heard of the transactions at Samaria, they commissioned two of their number, Peter and John, to go down to that place, and lay their hands on such as had believed, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. They therefore, proceeded thither, and when Simon saw the benefits which they conferred by the laying on of hands, he expressed a desire to purchase, with money, the power which they exercised. Peter sharply reprov'd him for his wickedness, and told him that their divine gifts were not thus to be obtained. He declared, moreover, that his professions were hypocritical and his heart corrupt in the sight of God, and exhorted him to repent of his sins and to pray earnestly for forgiveness.

LESSON LXVIII.

When Peter and John had accomplished the object of their journey, they returned to Jerusalem, and Philip, by direction of an angel, al-

so, departed from Samaria. As the latter was proceeding on his course to the south, his attention was attracted by the chariot of an Ethiopian nobleman, who was an Eunuch, and the treasurer of queen Candace, and who, as a Jewish proselyte, had been up to the holy city to worship, and was returning to his own country. Philip was commanded by the Spirit to go and join himself to this chariot, and on approaching it, he found that the person within was earnestly engaged in the perusal of the Scriptures. He immediately inquired of him whether he understood what he was reading. The Eunuch declared his ignorance, and besought Philip to enter the chariot and instruct him. The latter, without any hesitation, complied with his request, and having discovered that the passage which had occupied his attention was a prophecy of Isaiah that related to the sufferings of the Messiah, he took up the subject from that place and unfolded to his hearer the mysteries of redemption through Jesus Christ.

The Eunuch soon became convinced of the truth of the gospel which his companion made known to him, and, on arriving at a certain water, expressed his desire to be regularly admitted to the privileges of the church, and declared his belief in the Son of God. They, then, descended from the chariot, and Philip baptized his convert in the name of Christ, after which the latter went on his way rejoicing, and Philip pursued his journey, as the Spirit of God directed him, until he came to Cesarea.

In the mean time, Saul was actively employed in the persecution of the church, and such

was his fury, that he resolved to pursue those who had fled from Judea, and bring them bound to Jerusalem. To assist him in the execution of his designs, he applied to the high priest for letters of authority to the rulers of the synagogue at Damascus, that if there were any who testified to the name of Jesus in that place they should be delivered into his hands. Having received his commission, and engaged his attendants, he immediately set out for the Syrian dominions, intent upon his bloody purpose, and fully determined to extirpate from the world the followers of the crucified Galilean. But the providence of God was preparing to counteract the execution of his projects by convincing him of his errors and bringing him to the foot of that cross which he despised.

As he approached the city of Damascus, he was greatly alarmed by the sudden appearance of an uncommon light, shining round about him with a splendor superior to that of the sun; but his astonishment and fear were vastly increased when a voice, proceeding from the brightness, addressed him in these words—“Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” Trembling with apprehension, he exclaimed, “Who art thou, Lord!” and was told, in reply, that the person then speaking to him was that Jesus whom he hated, and whose followers he was so grievously persecuting. Upon this, he asked what he should do, and was directed to proceed to Damascus where his course of duty would be pointed out to him. The first appearance of the vision had struck Saul to the ground, and his attendants had remained, during its continu-

ance, by his side, unable to speak, and wondering at the voice which they heard.

When Saul arose from the earth, his sight was gone, and he was taken by the hand and led to Damascus, where he remained three days in utter darkness, and without eating or drinking. There was, at this time, in that city, a disciple named Ananias, and to him the Lord appeared in a vision and commanded him to go to the house where Saul lodged and lay his hands upon him that he might receive his sight. Ananias, who had heard of the character of the persecutor and knew what his intentions were in coming to Damascus, at first, seemed unwilling to comply with the divine injunction. But his doubts were soon removed, and he hastened to Saul, whom he found in the condition that had been described to him. On entering the house, he immediately addressed him as a brother, and, putting his hands upon him, stated the object of his visit and the authority by which he came. Saul, then, received his sight and was baptized, after which he remained several days with the disciples at Damascus, preaching in the synagogue and proving that Jesus was the Messiah. His conduct, so different from what had been expected, greatly exasperated the Jews against him, and they determined to kill him whenever he should attempt to depart from the city. For this purpose they watched the gates continually; but some of his friends took him, by night, and let him down from the wall in a basket. Thus he escaped from his enemies and returned in safety to Jerusalem.

When he came thither, the disciples manifested strong doubts of the reality of his con-

version, and were afraid to associate with him; but Barnabas, who knew all that had taken place, introduced him to the apostles, and removed their suspicions by a full and particular relation of the circumstances that had attended the journey to Damascus. He was, then, admitted to the confidence and fellowship of the brethren, and continued sometime at Jerusalem, advocating and defending the cause of the gospel. But here, also, designs were formed against his life, which coming to the knowledge of the disciples, they secretly conducted him to Caesarea, from whence he sailed to his native city Tarsus, and remained for several years in Cilicia and Syria, declaring the things which pertained to the kingdom of God with great boldness and success.

The conversion of Saul put a stop to the persecution of the church, and, in every part of the country, it prospered exceedingly. Peter embraced the opportunity which was furnished by the general quietness that prevailed to visit the converts in Judea, Galilee and Samaria. On his journey, he healed a man by the name of Eneas, who had been confined to his bed eight years with the palsy, at a place called Lydda. He, also, restored the pious and charitable Dorcas to life, in Joppa, after which he took up his abode in that place with one Simon, a tanner.

LESSON LXIX.

During the continuance of Peter at Joppa, it was his custom to retire to the house top for the exercise of his private devotions. Here he beheld, on a certain day, a vision, the object of which was to teach him that, in the offers of sal-

vation through Christ, there was no distinction to be made between Jews and Gentiles. While he was meditating upon what he had seen, a message came to him from a centurion at Caesarea, requesting a visit from him. This man, whose name was Cornelius, was a devout person, and his prayers and alms had rendered him a subject of the divine favour. He had been directed by an angel of God to send to Joppa for a person named Peter, who would give him instructions in regard to his duty. These circumstances were all stated to the apostle by the messengers from Cornelius, upon which he invited them into the house, where they remained until the next morning, when he accompanied them to Caesarea, being attended, also, by several disciples who dwelt at Joppa. When he came into the presence of the centurion, he told him that it was deemed unlawful by the Jews to associate with one of another nation, but that God had removed his prejudices in this respect, and he was, therefore, ready to enter upon the business for which he had been sent. Cornelius, then, related to him the communication which he had received from God, upon which Peter addressed the company upon the subject of the gospel dispensation, and his discourse was blessed by a powerful effusion of the Holy Ghost upon all who heard him. The Jewish converts, who were present, were greatly surprised when they found that the grace of God could be imparted to the Gentiles, but they did not complain of this extension of the divine mercy. Peter caused the ordinance of baptism to be administered to those who had then embraced the faith, and he remained with them several days.

On his return to Jerusalem, he was severely reproved by his brethren in that place for what he had done. But when he had made known to them all the circumstances attending the transaction, their minds were satisfied, and they glorified God who had granted the blessing of eternal life to those that were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.

The faith of the gospel had now been extended to a great distance from Jerusalem by means of those who had fled from the persecution which followed the death of Stephen. Churches had been planted in Phenice, in Cyprus and in Antioch, and at the latter place the disciples were first called *Christians*. Thither Barnabas was sent by the apostles, and upon his arrival, he rejoiced at the prosperity of the church, and exhorted its members to continue stedfast in the doctrines which they had received. He then went to Tarsus for Saul, with whom he returned to Antioch, where they continued for a year. During their stay, they were visited by some of their brethren from Jerusalem who had been endowed with the gift of prophecy. Among these was one named Agabus, who predicted a general famine which happened in the reign of Claudius Cæsar. In consequence of the distress which this occasioned throughout the land, a collection was made by the christians at Antioch for the relief of those in Judea, which was sent to the apostles at Jerusalem by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

About this time, Herod Agrippa, who was the grandson of the tyrant who slew the infants at Bethlehem, raised a persecution against the christians, in which James, the brother of John,

was put to death. Peter was, also, imprisoned, but an angel delivered him from his bonds and confinement. The cruelties of Herod were soon terminated by his death. In the midst of his splendor, and while the people were ascribing to him the honour due only to God, he was struck with a disease which in a few days put an end to his existence. Soon after this event, Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch in company with Mark, where they were more particularly set apart by certain prophets, to the work of the ministry. From Antioch they departed to Seleucia, and from thence sailed to Cyprus, an island in the Mediterranean. At Paphos, they were opposed by a certain sorcerer named Elymas, who at the prayer of Saul, who from that time is called Paul, was punished with blindness. From Paphos they proceeded to Antioch in Pisidia, where Paul, on the Sabbath day, addressed the Jews in their own synagogue, proving to them from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. The Gentiles requested him to deliver his discourse again on the next Sabbath, which he did in the presence of nearly all the inhabitants of the place. This enraged such of the Jews as were enemies to the gospel, who not only contradicted what was said, but, also, uttered many blasphemous speeches against Jesus of Nazareth. Paul and Barnabas then directed their instructions to the Gentiles, who gladly received the offers of salvation; but a persecution was excited against the missionaries and they were driven out of the city. They proceeded, therefore, to Iconium, from which they were, also expelled, and fled to Lystra and Derby. In Lystra, Paul cured a man of his

lameness, in consequence of which, the inhabitants considered him and his companion as gods in human form, and prepared to honour them with sacrifices. These they rejected, and reproved the impiety of the people, who were afterwards led to stone Paul, by the persuasions of certain Jews who came thither from Antioch and Iconium. He was taken up for dead, but while the disciples stood round him, he recovered, and in a short time went into the city, from which he returned, with Barnabas, through the towns that they had previously visited, to Antioch where they had been commissioned, and where they related to the brethren all that had happened to them.

LESSON LXX.

Soon after the return of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, the peace of the church was disturbed by certain converts who came down from Judea and declared that it was necessary for the believing Gentiles to receive circumcision. This doctrine was strongly opposed by Paul and Barnabas, who held many conferences and disputations upon the subject. At length, it was determined to submit the question to the decision of the apostles at Jerusalem. Here, a council was accordingly summoned to deliberate upon the matter, and it was unanimously agreed, after hearing the opinion of Peter, the evidence of Paul and Barnabas, and the judgement of James, to write to the disciples at Antioch, directing them not to trouble the Gentiles by insisting upon the necessity of circumcision, but simply to request them to abstain from some practices which were forbidden by the law of

Moses as improper in themselves and dangerous in their tendency. Letters were, accordingly, prepared, containing these instructions from the council; and two men of distinguished piety, Judas and Silas, were commissioned to carry them, in company with Paul and Barnabas, to Antioch. The result of this business gave the highest satisfaction to the Gentiles who were thus discharged from the burden of the ceremonial law, and confirmed in their christian liberty.

During the abode of Judas and Silas at Antioch, they exercised their gifts of prophesying and confirmed the disciples in their faith. But in a short time Judas returned to the apostles at Jerusalem, and Paul, having had some contention with Barnabas in regard to Mark, selected Silas for his companion, and departed with him upon a visit to those places where he himself had previously propagated the gospel. Having travelled through Syria and Cilicia, they arrived at Lystra, where Paul, upon his former journey, after being revered as a god, was opposed and stoned by the inhabitants. Here they found a young disciple whose name was Timothy, the son of a certain woman who was a Jewess, but whose father was a Greek. This person, for special reasons, Paul caused to be circumcised, and designed him as the companion of his future travels and fellow labourer in the ministry of reconciliation. From Lystra, Paul and Silas departed to Phrygia and Galatia, with an intention of passing into Asia, but they were forbidden by the Holy Ghost to go thither. They, then, proceeded to Mysia, and from thence to Troas, being prohibited by another revelation from visiting Bythinia. At Troas, Paul receiv-

ed a vision, in consequence of which he and his companion embarked in a vessel and sailed to Philippi, one of the chief cities in Macedonia, where they continued for some days. In this place they preached the gospel with great success, and baptized a certain woman named Lydia, together with her family, and were afterwards received into her house with great hospitality.

By reason of a miracle wrought by Paul, in casting an evil spirit out of a damsel who had brought much gain to her masters by divination, he and Silas were apprehended and carried before the magistrates, to whom they were accused of introducing customs prejudicial to the state and unlawful for Roman citizens to adopt. Upon this charge, they were commanded to be beaten and imprisoned. When they had received many blows they were committed to close custody and the jailer was directed to thrust them into an inner dungeon and to make their feet fast in the stocks. But in the midst of their afflictions the peace and serenity of their minds remained to comfort them, and at midnight they sang praises to God. Nor were their devotions in vain. An earthquake shook the foundations of the prison; all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. The jailer was so much alarmed at the event, which he supposed had been improved by the prisoners for their escape, that he seized a sword and would have put an end to his life had it not been for the remonstrance of Paul, who informed him that they were all there. He then hastened into the dungeon, and, falling down before Paul and Silas, inquired, with trembling anxiety, what he should do to be saved. He was

directed to faith in Jesus Christ as his only security, and, after hearing the word of the Lord, he was baptized, with all his house, and rejoiced in the hopes and promises of the gospel. The same hour he removed the two prisoners into his own apartment, and washed their stripes, and supplied them with such things as they needed.

The next morning the jailer received an order from the magistrates to discharge Paul and Silas, which he immediately made known to them, and bade them depart in peace. But they refused to go without being released by those who had committed them in a manner as public as their punishment had been, stating, at the same time, that they were Roman citizens and had been beaten uncondemned. These words were carried by the officers to the magistrates, who were so much terrified at the claim which their prisoners might have upon the protection of Cæsar, that they immediately repaired to the place of their confinement, and submissively entreated them to depart without any further disturbance or delay. They, accordingly, left the prison and returned to the house of Lydia, where they related to the brethren all that had taken place and then bade them adieu.

From Philippi, Paul and his companions travelled to Thessalonica, where the former entered into a synagogue, and for three Sabbath days reasoned with the Jews, proving to them the truth of the gospel from their own Scriptures. But in general, they refused to embrace his doctrines and determined to oppose their progress, although some of them, with a considerable number of Greeks, believed. In consequence of a

tumult which was occasioned by the enemies of the truth, who had assaulted the house of one Jason, and compelled him with some of his brethren to go before the magistrates, Paul and Silas were sent away, by night, to a place called Berea, about fifty miles south of Thessalonica. Here the ministrations of Paul were attended with greater success, by reason of the candor and diligence which was manifested by the people in the study of the holy Scriptures. In Berea, he left Silas and Timothy, while he himself, to avoid the fury of the Jews who had followed him from Thessalonica, departed to Athens. To the polite and learned inhabitants of this celebrated city, whose leading propensities for novelty induced them to hear him, he declared the doctrines of the cross and the vanity of their own idolatrous worship. His discourse was disregarded by some and ridiculed by others. A few, however, believed, among whom were Dionysius, a senator, and Damaris, a woman of distinction.

LESSON LXXI.

From Athens Paul proceeded to Corinth, where he was met by Silas and Timothy whom he had left at Berea. Here he continued a year and six months, and wrought at his occupation as a tent maker, with Aquila and Priscilla, two Jews who had come thither from Italy, and who were instructed by him in the principles of the christian faith. In consequence of the opposition which was manifested to his preaching by the worshippers in the synagogues, he declared his resolution to devote his future labours exclusively to the Gentiles. But in a vision the

Lord appeared to him, and assured him, for his consolation, that no harm should befall him while he remained with the Corinthians, and that many of these would embrace the truths which he declared. A complaint was soon after made against him to Gallio, the deputy of the province, but he refused to interfere in the matter, and drove the accusers from his judgement seat. The chief ruler of the synagogue was then seized and beaten by some of the Greeks, and this transaction was, also, treated by Gallio with the utmost indifference. At length, Paul departed from Corinth and visited Ephesus, Cæsarea and Antioch, after which he went through the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening and confirming the disciples. At Ephesus, he found a certain Jew named Apollos who was distinguished for his eloquence and his knowledge of the Scriptures. But as this man was one of the disciples of John the Baptist, and taught only the doctrines of repentance as preparatory to the coming of the Messiah, he was taken by Priscilla and Aquila and instructed by them in the fulness of the gospel dispensation. Afterwards, he went to Corinth, and with great power directed his labours to the welfare of the church, and publicly convinced many of the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul returned to Ephesus, where he found twelve disciples who had not received the Holy Ghost, having been baptized only with the baptism of John. He then directed them to the faith of Christ, and when they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, he laid his hands upon them, and they immediately experienced the miraculous

influences of the Spirit of God. Paul continued in Ephesus for a considerable length of time, healing the sick, casting out devils and declaring the truths of the gospel. Among his opposers were certain exorcists, the sons of one Sceva, a Jew, who undertook to cast out devils in the name of Jesus. But the evil spirit fell upon them with great violence and they fled from the house naked and wounded. When this transaction was made known, many of those who had accustomed themselves to the study and practice of magic, renounced their art and gave up their books to the value of fifty thousand pieces of silver to be burned.

During the residence of Paul in Ephesus, he was threatened with much danger from another source. The increase of the gospel had greatly lessened the demand for certain shrines which were made in representation of the temple of Diana, by one Demetrius a silver smith. This man called a meeting of all that belonged to his profession, and by setting forth the continued diminution of their business and the dishonour which was brought upon their goddess, by the preaching of Paul, excited them to acts of riot and violence, insomuch that the whole city was filled with confusion. The disturbance was, however, terminated, and the multitude peaceably dispersed by the prudent interference of the town clerk. Soon after this occurrence, Paul left Ephesus and travelled through various parts of the country. At Troas, he restored to life a young man, named Eutychus, who had fallen from the window of an upper chamber to the ground, and was taken up dead. He, then, proceeded on foot to Assos, where he was taken in-

to the vessel which carried his companions, and sailed with them to Miletus. Here, at his request, he was met by the elders of the church at Ephesus, to whom he gave his farewell counsel, exhorting them to diligence and fidelity, and reminding them of the evils to which they would be exposed during his absence. From Miletus Paul and the brethren who were with him sailed over to Syria and landed at Tyre. They, afterwards, proceeded to Ptolemais, and from thence to Cesarea, where they abode for a short time with Philip, the evangelist, who had four daughters that prophesied. Here they were visited by the prophet Agabus from Jerusalem, who declared, by a sign, that Paul should become a prisoner to the Gentiles. The disciples when they heard this prediction, earnestly besought Paul not to go to Jerusalem, but he was resolved to be there on the day of Pentecost, and, accordingly, proceeded on his journey, in company with his friends and brethren. When he arrived at Jerusalem, he was received with great joy by the disciples, to whom he related all the particulars of his ministry among the Gentiles. But it was not long before the Jews rose up against him and would have killed him, had not Claudius Lysias, the commander of the Roman garrison, come with an armed force to his assistance and conducted him to the castle. On their way thither Paul begged permission of the captain to speak to him, upon which the latter, who supposed that he was an Egyptian who had, some time before, excited a great disturbance in Judea, asked him, with some surprise, whether he could speak the Greek language. In reply, Paul stated that he was a Jew of Tarsus, in Ci-

licia, and requested that he might be allowed to vindicate himself before the people. License being given him to enter upon his defence, he addressed the multitude from the stairs of the castle, in the Hebrew tongue, and in his speech related the particulars of his conversion and his subsequent commission to preach to the Gentiles. At this, the Jews were exceedingly enraged against him, but Lysias, the Roman captain, secured his person from their assaults, and afterwards ordered him to be examined by scourging until he should confess the crime which had so much excited against him the malice of the people. This decree was not carried into execution, by reason of a declaration of Paul, that he was a Roman citizen.

The next day, the rulers and the council of the nation were summoned to appear before the chief captain to substantiate their charges, and in their presence Paul asserted his innocence. Ananias, the high priest, ordered him to be smitten on the face, at which Paul replied, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall." Being reproved for this speech, he confessed his ignorance of the office of the person whom he addressed, and thus excused himself.

LESSON LXXII.

When Paul perceived that the assembly was composed partly of Sadducees and partly of Pharisees, he declared himself to be of the sect of the latter, saying, that it was for defending the doctrine of the resurrection that he had been called in question. This produced a great dissension in the council, and it became necessary for the captain to employ force for the preserva-

tion of the prisoner. A conspiracy was afterwards formed by certain of the Jews to destroy Paul secretly, to avoid which, he was sent under a strong guard to Cesarea where Felix, the Roman Governor, resided, who ordered him to be confined in Herod's judgement hall until his accusers made their appearance.

At the expiration of five days his enemies with the high priest at their head, came down from Jerusalem, bringing with them a certain orator, named Tertullus, to assist in the conviction and condemnation of their victim. Tertullus, in a flattering and an insinuating manner, addressed the Governor, and was followed by Paul in defence of himself. When Felix had heard both parties, he refused to give sentence, until he had more fully considered the subject, and had, also, consulted with Lysias, the chief captain, who, as he supposed, was well acquainted with the merits of the case. Paul, therefore, continued in the custody of the Governor, who, with his wife Drusilla, heard him speak of the doctrines of the gospel. As he discoursed of righteousness, temperance and a judgement to come, Felix, who was a man of great profligacy and impiety, trembled, and dismissed the preacher from his presence, saying, that he would attend to his instructions at a more convenient time. At length, Felix was succeeded in his office by Festus, to whom the Jews renewed their complaints against Paul, and who admitted from the latter an appeal to Cæsar. Soon after the appointment of Festus to the government of the province, he received a visit from Agrippa, the tetrarch of Galilee. To this man he made known the case of the prisoner, and gave him

an opportunity to hear his defence. Paul spoke with great boldness and eloquence in the presence of Agrippa, and related to him the circumstances of his miraculous conversion to the christian faith and his apprehension by the Jews. Agrippa was much affected by the discourse, and declared to Festus that the man had done nothing which deserved punishment, adding, that he might have been liberated had he not appealed to Cæsar.

When it was determined that Paul should be sent to Rome, he was put on board a ship with certain other prisoners, all of whom were committed to the charge of one Julius a centurion of Augustus' band. During the voyage, they suffered shipwreck, being cast away, in a storm, on the coast of an island called Melita. Here, Paul astonished the barbarians, who had received the sufferers with great kindness, by shaking a viper from his hand, and receiving no harm. He, also, wrought a miracle in favour of the father of the governor of the place, who was diseased, and healed many others that were sick.

At length, Paul and his companions departed for Italy, where they arrived in safety. He was met at a little distance from Rome by several disciples who accompanied him to the city. Here he called the Jews together, and stated to them the circumstances of his case. They expressed a desire to hear him discourse upon the subject of his religion, and a day being appointed, he received them at his lodgings and explained to them the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law and the prophets, from morning until evening. A partial success attended his

discourse, but many remained in unbelief. This he declared to be in agreement with the predictions of Isaiah, and assured his hearers that the gospel should be carried to the Gentiles, with whom a very different reception awaited it.

After this, he continued at Rome two years, and abode in a hired house, where he preached, without prohibition or hindrance, to all that came to him.

REMARKS.

1. The day of Pentecost, on which the disciples received the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, was fifty days after the resurrection of the Saviour. It was called by the Hebrews the feast of weeks, as it took place seven weeks after the second day of the passover. It was on this day that they offered the first fruits of their wheat harvest, and commemorated the giving of the law from Mount Sinai.

2. The Jews received from other nations two kinds of proselytês, viz. proselytes of the gate and proselytes of justice. The first observed only the rules which were given to Noah, without conforming to any of the ceremonies of the law of Moses; the second received circumcision and adopted the Jewish dispensation in all its parts. It is supposed that the Eunuch who was baptized by Philip was a proselyte of the gate. It is among the ancient traditions of the church, that this man, after his conversion, returned to his native country, and instructed his queen and many of her subjects in the doctrines of christianity. This is said to have been the origin of the Abyssinian church, in which, to the present

day, the story of the Eunuch is related with pious gratitude on every occasion of baptism.

3. The following are some of the principal places mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles:—

Cesarea, was a city in Palestine, built by Herod, the Great. It was situated upon the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, about 600 furlongs from Jerusalem. This was the residence of Cornelius and the place where Paul continued a prisoner two years ;

Joppa was a city upon the Mediterranean, a little to the south of Cesarea ;

Antioch, situated on the river Orontes, about 12 miles from the sea, was the capital of Syria, the residence of the kings who succeeded Alexander, the great, and the place where the disciples were first called Christians ; there were several other places in Syria of the name of Antioch, one of which is called Antioch of Pisidia ;

Paphos and Salamis were cities in the island of Cyprus ;

Pamphilia was a province of Lesser Asia, not far from Cyprus ;

Iconium was the chief city of Lycaonia, a small province of Asia Minor ; Lystra and Derbe were in the same province ;

Phrygia, Galatia, Mysia and Bythinia were all provinces of Asia Minor ;

Troas was a small country situated upon the Hellespont to the west of Mysia ;

Macedonia was an extensive province in Greece, of which Philippi was one of the chief cities ; Thessalonica was the metropolis of Macedonia ; Athens was situated on the Ægean sea ; in that district of Greece called Attica ; Corinth was the capital of Achaia ;

Ephesus, the metropolis and principal mart of the Pro-consular Asia, was situated upon the river Cayster. It was celebrated for a splendid temple, consecrated to the goddess Diana;

Assos was a sea port town, situated in the southwest part of the province of Troas;

Chios, Samos and Coos were islands in the Archipelago;

Ptolemais was a sea port of Syria between Tyre and Cesarea;

Melita, where Paul and his companions suffered shipwreck, was an island in the Mediterranean, about sixty miles from Sicily, and is now called Malta.

4. The apostle Paul continued in Rome, as a prisoner, upwards of two years, when he obtained his liberty, and afterwards travelled into various parts of Italy preaching the gospel with different success. He, also, visited the countries where he had before planted churches, and, at length, suffered martyrdom at Rome, in the reign of the Emperor Nero. Simon Peter was put to death in the same place, and at the same time. Thus terminated the labours of these eminent apostles, after they had reaped a glorious harvest of souls, and triumphantly spread the salvation of the gospel through the then most considerable parts of the world.

LESSON LXXIII.

The Epistle to the Romans was written from Corinth, in the year of our Lord fifty eight, being the fourth year of the Emperor Nero, just before St. Paul set out from thence for Jerusalem with the contributions which had been made in Macedonia and Achaia for the relief of the

disciples in Judea. It is addressed to the church at Rome, which consisted partly of Jewish and partly of heathen converts, whom the apostle had not as yet visited, but whose characters and situation might have been described to him by Priscilla and Aquila. To confirm them in the faith and to guard them against the errors of certain Judaizing christians, seems to have been the chief object of this letter, in which St. Paul takes occasion to enlarge upon the nature of the Mosaic institution; to explain the conditions of the christian covenant, and to shew that the mercy of God through the Redeemer was intended for the benefit of Gentiles as well as Jews. He represents all mankind as standing in equal need of the provisions of the gospel, inasmuch as they were, without any distinction, exposed to the penalties of sin. He declares that no benefit would result to the unbelieving Israelites from the mere circumstance of their being descendants of Abraham, but that the Gentiles would be admitted to all the privileges of the promise; he expresses his ardent desire for the salvation of his countrymen; he alludes to the prophecies of Isaiah and Hosea, as pointing out the rejection of the Jews and the call of the Gentiles; he sets forth the superior excellency of the christian faith, and he earnestly exhorts the Roman converts to abandon every species of wickedness, and to practise, with constancy, the duties of righteousness and true holiness. In the latter part of the Epistle, the writer gives some practical instructions and recommends several particular virtues, and concludes the whole with salutations and a doxology.

The first Epistle to the Corinthians was written from Ephesus in the year fifty six, during the second visit of St. Paul to that city. Corinth was the capital of the province of Achaia, and a place of extensive commerce, in which the apostle had resided for eighteen months and established a church. After his departure certain false teachers endeavoured to alienate the minds of the new converts from their faith and thus produced divisions and irregularities. The immediate occasion of this Epistle was to answer some questions which the Corinthians had proposed; but before the writer enters upon that subject, he takes notice of the dissensions and disorders which prevailed among them, and of which he had received private information. He begins with an affectionate address, and congratulates them upon their having received the Holy Ghost. He, then, exhorts to harmony; condemns the factions which had been excited; vindicates his own character and ministry; shews the inferiority of human learning to the excellency of the gospel; decrees the excommunication of an incestuous person; blames the practice of submitting every cause to the decision of heathen tribunals; condemns sensuality; and vice, and reproves the indulgences to which the Corinthians were addicted. After treating upon these points, he proceeds to answer the questions which had been submitted to him, and gives a variety of directions in relation to the marriage state; considers the lawfulness of eating meats offered to idols; forbids women to officiate in public assemblies and reproves the abuses of the Lord's Supper. He then discourses upon spiritual gifts and the extensive nature of chris-

tian charity ; enumerates the proofs of Christ's resurrection ; deduces from it the certainty of a general resurrection from the dead ; and, in a forcible strain of eloquence, answers some objections which had been urged against that fundamental doctrine of the gospel.

In the last chapter, he gives directions to the Corinthians respecting their contributions ; promises to visit them ; charges them to receive Timothy with kindness and respect, and concludes with friendly admonitions and salutations.

The second Epistle to the Corinthians was written from Macedonia within twelve months from the date of the first. In this, the apostle speaks of his consolations, his sincerity and his zeal ; explains the reasons of his not having visited Corinth ; desires that the incestuous person of whom he had before spoken might be restored, upon his repentance, to communion with the church ; mentions the success which had attended his preaching ; enlarges upon the importance of the ministerial office, the zeal and fidelity with which he had discharged his duty, and the excellency of the gospel doctrines ; cautions the Corinthians against connexions with unbelievers ; expresses his anxiety in their behalf, and his joy at their repentance, and exhorts them to contribute liberally for the relief of the poor. In the latter part of this Epistle, he vindicates his character as an apostle, and enumerates many distresses and persecutions which he had suffered in the cause of christianity. He concludes with general exhortations, and the well known benediction in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

LESSON LXXIV.

St. Paul, probably, wrote his Epistle to the Galatians from Corinth, about the year fifty two. After a salutation in the name of himself and the brethren who were with him, he proceeds to shew, that, although he had, previously, had no communication upon the subject with the elders of the church at Jerusalem, yet that he was subsequently acknowledged by them as an apostle. He then refutes the imputation of inconsistency with which he had been charged in regard to those christians who taught the necessity of circumcision and the various ceremonies of the Mosaic dispensation, after which, he contends, that he had always maintained that the faith of Jesus Christ was alone able to save those who received it, without the works of the law. He, also, expostulates with the Galatians for having suffered themselves to be seduced from the truth by false teachers, and proves that the Jewish ritual was completely abolished by the death of Christ. In the course of his argument, he contrasts the present defection of the Galatians with their former zeal and love to him, and expresses a fear lest his preaching among them had been in vain; he earnestly exhorts them to stand fast in the liberty of the gospel, without being again entangled in the bondage of legal ordinances; he points out the moral and spiritual nature of the religion which he taught, in opposition to outward observances, and he concludes with a variety of directions and precepts, all tending to the advancement of virtue and holiness.

The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians was written during his first imprisonment at Rome,

about the year sixty one. It consists of six chapters, three of which are considered as doctrinal, and three as practical. The apostle, after saluting the saints at Ephesus, expresses his gratitude to God for the blessings of the gospel, and assures the Ephesians that since he had heard of their faith and charity, he had not ceased to return thanks for them, and to pray that their minds might be still farther enlightened. He points out the excellency of the christian dispensation and shews that the privilege of redemption is to be attributed exclusively to divine grace. He declares the mystery or hidden purpose of God to be, that Gentiles as well as Jews should receive the benefits of the new covenant, and that for the conversion of the former he had been commissioned as an apostle. He desires the Ephesians not to be dejected on account of his sufferings; he exhorts them to union, purity of manners, veracity and meekness; enjoins upon them the duty of charity; forbids every species of licentiousness; enforces the obligations of husbands, wives, children, and servants; recommends watchfulness and firmness in the christian warfare, and concludes with a general benediction.

The Epistle to the Philippians was written by St. Paul about the year sixty two, and towards the end of his confinement at Rome. He had received from them by Epaphroditus an assurance of their regard, and the offer of a supply of money, and it was in consequence of this act of kindness that he was induced to address them by letter. The apostle commences his Epistle with salutations in his own name and that of Timothy; declares his thankfulness for the

faith of the Philippians and prays for their continued improvement ; informs them that his imprisonment had promoted the interests of the gospel, and asserts his readiness to die in the cause of his Redeemer ; exhorts them to live agreeably to their profession, and not to be terrified at the opposition and threatenings of their adversaries ; recommends harmony and humility ; expresses his intention of sending Timothy to them, with a hope of being able to visit them himself ; informs them that their messenger, Epaphroditus, had been detained at Rome by a dangerous illness ; cautions them against false teachers ; makes known his satisfaction and thankfulness for their liberality, and concludes in his usual manner.

The Epistle to the Colossians was written by Paul in the year sixty two, and greatly resembles that to the Ephesians. Colosse was a city in Phrygia, where it is supposed that the gospel was first preached by Epaphras. The apostle, in his letter to the christians in this place, describes the dignity of Christ and the universality of the gospel dispensation. He mentions his own appointment as an apostle to the Gentiles ; expresses a tender concern for the Colossians and other christians of Phrygia ; cautions them against pagan philosophy and Judaizing superstition ; exhorts them to place their affections on things above, to avoid licentiousness, and to practise meekness, truth, humility, charity and devotion ; points out the duties of husbands, wives, children, fathers, servants, and masters ; inculcates the duty of prayer and of prudent behaviour towards unbelievers, and concludes with a salutation.

The first Epistle to the Thessalonians is supposed to have been written by Paul, from Corinth, in the year fifty two. It is expressed in terms of high commendation, earnestness, and affection. He assures his brethren in Thessalonica of the interest which they have in his prayers; acknowledges the readiness and sincerity with which they had embraced the gospel, and the high reputation that they had acquired by turning from the worship of idols to the service of the living God; reminds them of the manner in which he had preached to them; comforts them under their persecutions; mentions his repeated disappointments in regard to visiting them; declares the gratification which he had received from Timothy's account of their faithfulness; exhorts to purity, justice, love and peace; dissuades them from excessive grief for their deceased friends and companions; urges the importance of preparation for the last judgment, and concludes with a variety of practical precepts and the usual blessing.

The second Epistle to the Thessalonians was written soon after the first, for the purpose of correcting an error into which they had fallen respecting the near approach of the final judgment. With acknowledgements to God of their mutual faith and love, and representations of the rewards promised to the saints, the apostle predicts some important events which were to take place previous to the solemn transactions of the last day; reminds the Thessalonians of the information which he had before given them upon that subject; exhorts them to steadfastness; prays to God for their consolation and establishment, and desires their prayers for the suc-

cess of his ministry. He, also, expresses his confidence in their sincerity; cautions them against associating with idle and disorderly persons, and recommends diligence and quietness. The conclusion is similar to that of the preceding Epistle.

LESSON LXXV.

Although the date of St. Paul's first Epistle to Timothy is a subject of some dispute and uncertainty, yet it must, probably, have been about the year sixty four. The principal object of the apostle, in writing to his son in the faith, was to give him instructions relative to the government of the church at Ephesus. After saluting him in an affectionate manner and reminding him of the reason for which he was left in that city, St. Paul takes occasion, from the frivolous disputes of certain Judaizing teachers, to assert the practical nature of the gospel and to shew its superiority over the law. He, also, returns thanks to God for his own commission to the apostleship, and recommends to Timothy fidelity in the discharge of his sacred office; he exhorts that prayers should be made for all men, and, especially, for magistrates; he gives directions for the conduct of women, and forbids their teaching in public; he describes the qualifications which should be possessed by those who minister in sacred things, and speaks of the mysterious nature of the system of redemption; he foretels that there will be apostates and false teachers in the latter times; he recommends to Timothy purity of manners and improvement of his spiritual gifts; he directs him in regard to his behaviour towards persons in different situa-

tions of life, and instructs him in several points of christian doctrine; he cautions him against corrupt teachers, gives him several precepts and solemnly charges him to be faithful to his trust.

The second Epistle of Timothy was written during the second confinement of St. Paul at Rome, about the year sixty five, and not long before his death. After the usual salutation, the apostle speaks of his ministry and his sufferings; exhorts Timothy to steadfastness, constancy and diligence; directs him to avoid foolish and unlearned questions and to practise and make known the great duties of the gospel; describes the apostacy and general wickedness of the last days and highly commends the holy Scriptures; repeats his exhortations to diligence; points out his own dangers and hopes, and concludes with sundry private directions and salutations.

St. Paul wrote his Epistle to Titus whom he had left in Crete, not long after his release from his first imprisonment at Rome. Crete was an island in the Mediterranean sea, distinguished for its hundred cities, and the general profligacy and falsehood of its inhabitants. The apostle commences in his usual manner; intimates that he was appointed to his office by the express command of God; reminds Titus of the reason of his being left in Crete; describes the qualifications of pastors; cautions him against persons of corrupt principles, especially Judaizing teachers; shews him what instructions are necessary to be given to people in different situations of life; exhorts him to be exemplary in his conduct; points out the pure and practical nature of the gospel; enumerates some particu-

lar virtues which he was to inculcate ; tells him to avoid foolish questions and frivolous disputes ; directs him in what manner to proceed with heretics, and concludes with salutations.

Philemon was an inhabitant of Colosse, and a person, as is supposed, of some distinction in that city. Onesimus, his slave, had run away from him and taken up his residence at Rome, where he was found by St. Paul, who converted him to Christianity and sent him back to his master, with a letter which is called the Epistle to Philemon. In this the apostle intercedes in the most earnest and affectionate manner for the pardon of Onesimus. He speaks of him in terms calculated to soften the resentment of Philemon, engages to make full compensation for any injury that might have been sustained from him, and exhorts the master to reconciliation and forgiveness by the endearing connexion of christian brotherhood. This Epistle is thought to have been written in the year sixty two.

The Epistle to the Hebrews was sent from Italy, by St. Paul, in the year sixty three, for the purpose of confirming the Jewish Christians in the faith and practice of the gospel, which they might be in danger of deserting through the persuasion or persecution of their unbelieving countrymen. The apostle commences by declaring to them that the same God who, in ages past, had spoken to their nation by the prophets, had now sent his only Son to make a full revelation of the divine will, and to complete the dispensation which had been given to their fathers. He, then, describes, in the most sublime language, the dignity of the person of

Christ, from which he infers the duty of obedience to his commands. In proceeding, he points out the necessity of the incarnation and passion of the Messiah, and shews his superiority to Moses; warns the Hebrews against unbelief and apostacy; describes, in an animated manner, the priesthood of Christ, by which the Levitical ministry and the ceremonies of the law were abolished; proves the inefficacy of former sacrifices and the sufficiency of the atonement which was made upon the cross; explains the nature, merits and effects of faith, and adduces a variety of examples, from Abel down to the Judges and later prophets, in illustration of its power and excellency; gives a variety, of exhortations calculated to encourage the Hebrews to bear with patience and constancy any trials to which their religion might expose them and concludes with his usual benediction.

In this Epistle, the most important and interesting articles of our faith are explained, and the most material objections to the gospel are answered with great force. The arguments are brought from the old testament, and the connexion between former revelations and the gospel of Jesus Christ is pointed out in the most perspicuous and satisfactory manner.

The Epistle of James, the son of Alpheus, which is called general, from the circumstance that it is not addressed to any particular individual or church, was designed to animate the Jewish christians to support with fortitude and patience the afflictions to which their profession of christianity might subject them, and to enforce the genuine doctrines and practice of the gospel in opposition to the errors and vices

which prevailed. The apostle commences by shewing the benefits of trials and sufferings and assures those to whom he wrote that God would listen to their sincere prayers for assistance and support. He reminds them of their being the distinguished objects of God's favour, and exhorts them to practical religion, to a just and impartial regard for the poor, and to an uniform obedience to all the divine commands without any exception. He sets forth the importance of good works in connexion with faith; inculcates the necessity of a strict government of the tongue; cautions against censoriousness, strife, malice, pride, sensual indulgence and rash judgement; denounces threats against the abuse of riches; intimates the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, and concludes with exhortations to patience, devotion, and a solicitous concern for the salvation of others. The Epistle of James was, probably, written in Jerusalem, about the year sixty one.

LESSON LXXVI.

The first Epistle of St. Peter was written from Rome, about the year sixty four, and is addressed to the strangers scattered through Pontus, Galatia, Capadocia, Asia and Bithynia. The apostle, after a salutation in the manner of Paul, returns thanks to God for the blessings of the gospel, which he observes had been distinctly foretold by the prophets. He, then, exhorts his christian brethren to purity and holiness, and represents the passion of Christ as fore ordained from before the foundation of the world, and its benefits as extending to all eternity. He recommends meekness, self government, and obe-

dience to magistrates; enforces the duties of servants, wives and husbands; enjoins harmony, compassion, courtesy, a rational knowledge of the faith of the gospel and a steady adherence to it under trials and temptations; inculcates, from a consideration of the last judgement, sobriety, devotion and universal benevolence; encourages christians to bear afflictions with resignation and cheerfulness; gives directions for the conduct of persons of different ages and conditions; recommends mutual subjection, humility, and vigilance, and adds a general benediction and doxology.

The second Epistle of Peter was written about a year subsequent to the former, and is addressed to the same persons. In this he represents the glorious promises of the gospel dispensation; exhorts his brethren to cultivate those virtues and graces which would make their calling and election sure; expresses his anxiety to remind them of their duty, at a time when he was conscious of his approaching end; declares the divine origin of christianity which was attested by a voice from heaven and by the sure word of prophecy; predicts the rise of heresies and false doctrines, and denounces judgements against those who should desert the truth, while its adherents would be spared like Noah and Lot in former times; describes the character and declares the end of false teachers; represents the certainty and suddenness of the day of judgement; alludes to some of the obscurities of Paul's epistles, and concludes with a solemn exhortation to perseverance in the faith and a continual advancement in the graces of a christian life.

St. John, in his first general Epistle, which is supposed to have been written in the year sixty nine, assures the christian converts, that he had seen and heard every thing which he had delivered to them concerning the Saviour; he points out the efficacy of the blood of Christ in doing away the guilt and the punishment of sin; he condemns those who assert their innocence and purity; he declares the universality of the atonement; he states the knowledge of God to consist in obedience; he cautions disciples against the love of the world and the doctrines of false teachers; he inculcates mutual affection from a consideration of the love of God to mankind; he condemns those who deny the incarnation of Christ, and he pronounces that the whole world lieth in wickedness, and that eternal life is only through the Son of God.

The second Epistle of St. John is directed to a person who is called the elect lady, and was, probably written about the same time as the former. The design of the writer was to caution the person whom he addresses against those false teachers who asserted that Christ was not in reality a man, but such only in appearance; and that his sufferings were not what they seemed to be. This doctrine, with its advocates, he condemns, and, also, inculcates the necessity of obedience to the commands of God, and mutual love and benevolence among christians.

The third Epistle of St. John, which, like the second, consists of only one chapter, is addressed to a man by the name of Gaius, who is commended for his hospitality to christian strangers. The conduct of Diotrephes, who had assumed to himself an undue authority, is condemned

by the apostle ; the good character of Demetrius is acknowledged, and an earnest exhortation is given to Gaius to continue steadfast in the ways of holiness as the only evidence of his being born of God.

St. Jude was one of the twelve apostles, and is, also, called Judas, Lebbeus and Thaddeus. His Epistle is addressed to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Christ Jesus, and called ; that is, to all true christians without distinction. The writer exhorts his brethren to contend earnestly for the faith which was originally delivered to the saints in opposition to the erroneous doctrines of false teachers, whose characters and destiny he makes known. He speaks of the divine judgements which had been inflicted upon apostate angels and ungodly men ; he denounces woe against all persons of impious and profligate lives ; he alludes to the predictions of the apostles concerning scoffers who should appear in the last days, and he exhorts the disciples of Jesus to preserve themselves in the true faith and love of God, and to use their best exertions for the safety and recovery of others. The date of St. Jude's Epistle is placed by commentators about the year seventy.

The last book in the new testament is called the Revelation of St. John, the divine. It was written in the isle of Patmos, to which place the apostle had been banished by the Roman Emperor Domitian, about the year ninety five, and where he was favoured by his ascended Master with the most sublime visions, opening to him the future progress, sufferings and triumphs of the christian church. In the first chapter, St. John asserts the divine authority of the predic-

tions which he is about to deliver ; describes the glorious appearance of the Saviour in the midst of seven golden candlesticks, and declares that he received from him a command to write an exact account of all that he should witness. The second and third chapters contain seven Epistles to the seven churches of Asia, namely, of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea, which relate chiefly to their then respective circumstances and situation. At the fourth chapter the prophetic visions begin, and reach to the end of the book. They contain a prediction, under the most striking figures and similitudes, of all the remarkable revolutions and events which were to take place in the christian church from the time of the apostle to the dissolution of the world. To explain this book perfectly, says Bishop Newton, is not the work of one man or of one age, and, probably, it will never be clearly understood until it is all fulfilled. It is graciously designed that the gradual accomplishment of these predictions should afford, in every succeeding age, additional testimony to the truth and divine origin of our holy religion.

REMARKS.

1. Patmos is a small island in the *Ægean* sea between Icaria and the promontory of Miletus. St. John remained here in exile about two years, after which he returned to Ephesus where he died.

2. The seven churches to which the apostle wrote were situated in Pro-consular Asia. They were originally, and, for a long time, in a flour-

ishing condition, but are now in a state of great spiritual desolation.

3. The books of the new testament were, with, perhaps, the exception of St Matthew's gospel, originally written in the Greek language. The translation of our common Bibles was made in the reign of James, the first, king of England, in the year of our Lord 1610, by forty seven persons appointed for that purpose.

4. That the several books of the new testament were written by the persons whose names they bear, is proved by the earliest christian historians and their universal reception in the churches; and that they contain a true account of events, is evident from the fulfilment of prophecies relative to the destruction of Jerusalem; from the nature of the doctrines and duties that they teach; from the characters and the sufferings of their authors; from the institutions of which they point out the reason and the origin; from the harmony and consistency which pervade the whole, and from the wonderful success which attended the first promulgation of the gospel.





