

SUNSHINE & SHADOW.



THE PRIESTS CARRYING THE ARK ACROSS JORDAN.

*See Chap. IV.*

# SUNSHINE & SHADOW:

OR

Stories of Children in Bible Scenes,

BY

A. JAMES.

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## Preface.

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**T**HAT the Lord, “ whose eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good,” takes particular notice of the sayings and doings of little children, is abundantly proved by all that is recorded concerning these, in the pages of Holy Writ

The Bible stories that follow tells of times when children’s cries and children’s tears bore witness that young hearts were bowed down with sorrow ; as also, of times when the loud and merry shouts of boys and girls testified that tender hearts were overflowing with joy. .

They tell of children delivered out of great and sore troubles ; of children praising God with joyful lips ; of wonderful sights seen by children ; and, alas ! of sad, sad scenes—of wilful children

suddenly destroyed ; cut off in the midst of their wickedness, overtaken by the wrath of God.

They furnish examples of the love that passeth knowledge ; they testify of Jesus, the good Shepherd,—who proved the greatness of His love for little children, by dying for such upon the shameful cross ; and who thus delivered His “ lambs ” from the bondage of sin and death.

He now delights to receive and to bless every child that comes unto Him. May every youthful reader become one of His lambs.

A. J.

*Newport,*  
*Isle of Wight.*



# Sunshine and Shadow.

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## CHAPTER I.

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### EGYPTIAN SLAVES.



WHO can be too thankful for having been born in a free country? It is indeed sad to be—

“Born a little slave,  
To labour in the sun;”

and the poor children of Israel felt this while they were slaves in Egypt.

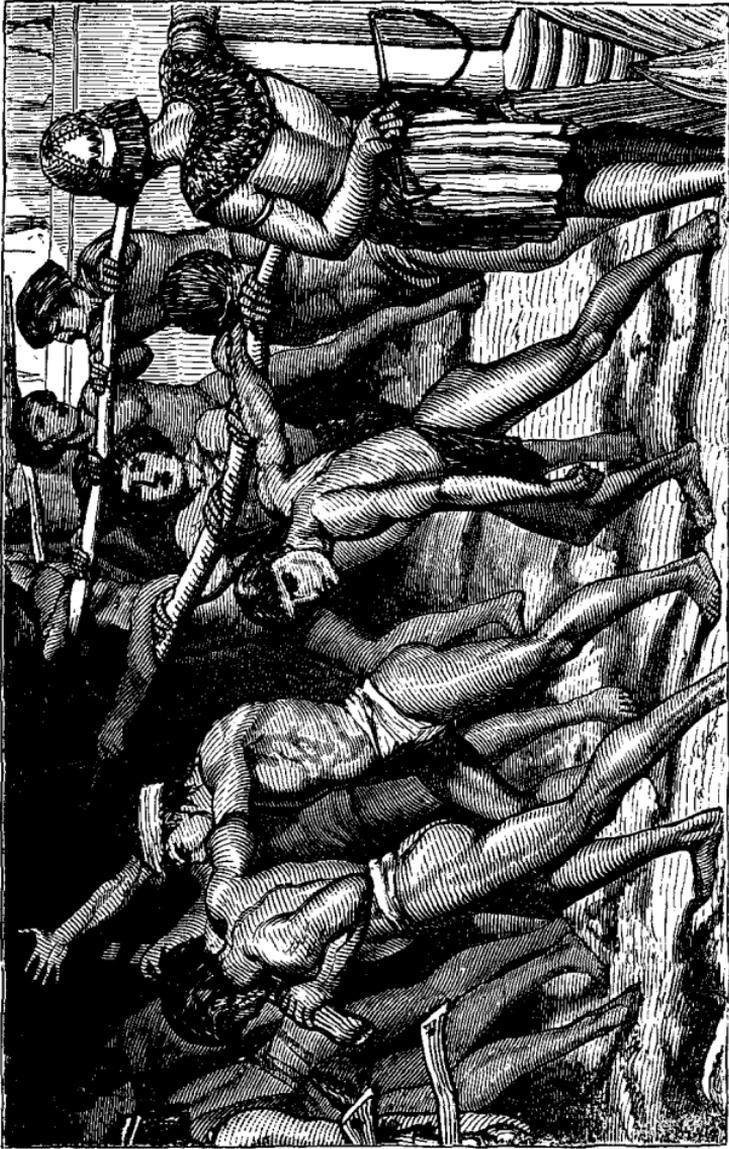
All the while that loving Joseph was the governor over the land of Egypt, they had been treated kindly, and had wanted for nothing (see Gen. 1. 21.)

But after Joseph died, “there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.” And he and his people were very cruel to the Israelites, and they made them their slaves. Some had to work in the fields, some in brick, some in mortar, but they all had to work very, very hard, without receiving any wages in return. (Ex. i. 6-14). And if the poor men of Israel were over-tired, so that they sank down beneath their heavy burdens, there was none to help them, none to pity them. And when, after his long day’s toil the poor tired Israelite came home, how his heart must have been grieved,

as he thought, "In a little while, my dear little sons will have to toil as I do now: they will have to serve the pitiless taskmasters of Egypt; and they, too, will sigh and groan because of the cruel bondage."

And fond mothers must have dreaded the terrible day, when the cruel Egyptians would come and take their high-spirited boys, and make "their lives bitter with hard bondage." And when the dreadful day did come, if the terrified children clung to their helpless weeping mothers, what did the cruel taskmasters care? Fathers may sigh, mothers might weep, and their little ones might cry aloud; yet they all had to feel the bitterness of bondage: and they had no earthly helper.

And in their distress the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the God of their fathers. And God heard their groaning, and the angel of the Lord appeared in a burning bush to Moses; and the Lord sent Moses, with Aaron his brother, to "bring forth" Israel out of Egypt. (see Ex. iii., iv.) "And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel;" and they told them all that the Lord had said, and that He was about to deliver them out of the hands of the cruel Egyptians. And the people believed the good news, and "they bowed their heads and worshipped."



EGYPTIAN SLAVES.

And Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and they asked him in the name of the Lord God of Israel, to let Israel go. "And Pharaoh said, who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." Then they told him that they wished to go and sacrifice to their God, but this only made Pharaoh more angry. And he made the poor Israelites work harder than ever, and some of them were beaten, so that they were in a worse plight than before.

Then Moses, in sorrow of heart, told the Lord all that had happened. And the Lord gave Moses cheering words to speak to the people; "but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage." And because Pharaoh would not obey the voice of the Lord to let Israel go, the Lord smote Egypt with *ten* grievous plagues, one after another.

I cannot here refer to all of these plagues: my little readers will find a full account of them all in the seventh and following chapters of Exodus.

But just before Egypt was smitten with the *eighth* plague, the plague of locusts (see Ex. x. 1., 20), Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, and asked, "Who are they that shall go?" And Moses boldly replied, "We will go with our

young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go ; for we must hold a feast unto the Lord." Then Pharaoh said that the men might go, but that their little ones must be left behind. Could the men of Israel go, and leave their dearest little ones to the mercy of the cruel taskmasters? Must they be left behind to weep and toil, until they pined away and died? No. The men of Israel longed for freedom, but they could not go unless their little ones went too. And it may be that that same evening, many fond parents prayed earnestly unto the Lord, and entreated Him to hasten the happy day, when themselves, their children, and their cattle, should all go together.

At last, the Lord *made* Pharaoh let Israel go, little ones, and all. By an awful stroke, one midnight, the Lord broke the stubborn will of Pharaoh, for He slew all the firstborn of Egypt, both man and beast. It was upon the same night that Israel kept the solemn feast of the Passover, that the Lord did this. If we had entered an Israelite's house that same evening, we might have seen him take a lamb, and kill it. It had no blemish, and it had been selected from the flock four days before. Then he took the blood of the lamb, and sprinkled it with hyssop upon the posts of his door. Do you not think that all the children watched

their father sprinkle the blood? Then the door was shut; and none went out until after midnight. ~

They roasted the flesh before the fire, and made ready to eat this solemn feast. They all put on their clothing, ready to start upon a journey. With unleavened bread, and bitter herbs, in haste, they ate of it; with shoes on their feet, and with a staff in their hand. And when they had eaten of the lamb, that which remained was burnt with fire. All this the Lord had commanded them to do.

It was now very late, but not a single boy or girl was sent to bed that night. All awaited the coming of the solemn midnight hour.

Then perhaps little children asked earnestly, "Father, will God see the *blood* in the dark?" "Are you *sure*, father, that 'the destroyer' will pass over our house?" "Oh! father, will the life of our dear eldest brother be indeed quite safe?" What could their father reply? "My sons, my daughters, *we* need not be afraid, our God will see the blood I sprinkled upon the posts of our doors—the destroyer will not enter our house." ~

No Israelite despised the blood of their lamb that night: and shall any one of us despise the Blood which the Lamb of God shed for us upon Calvary? The midnight hour drew near; what a time it was for parents to tell their

children about the Lord God of Israel. He was so good, so holy, so kind, and He loved them so well.

The midnight came. And the Lord in His wrath smote all the firstborn of Egypt, "there was not a house where there was not one dead."

The Egyptians had been warned (Ex. xi. 4-8), but they had not heeded the warning; and in every house there was *death*, and weeping, and wailing; for *every firstborn of Egypt lay dead*.

But the Israelites had done as the Lord commanded them. They had sprinkled the blood—had eaten of the lamb: and in their houses there was *life*, and joy, and thanksgiving; for every firstborn of Israel was still alive and well. What a wonderful thing it is to believe in God

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## CHAPTER II.

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### THE MARCH OUT OF EGYPT.

**T**HE slaughter of all their firstborn struck the Egyptians with anguish and terror. And that very night Moses and Aaron were sent for, and were *entreated* there and then to lead Israel out of Egypt.

Yet the Lord remembered that for many years the lot of the poor Israelites had been work, work, work, and that without one penny of wages, and it was His will that Israel should not go out empty. So the Israelites were told to beg of the Egyptians jewels of silver, jewels of gold, and raiment. And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they gave them whatever they asked for: and thus Israel "spoiled the Egyptians."



THE MARCH OUT OF EGYPT.



“And the children of Israel went out with an high hand.” There were about 600,000 men, with their wives, and their little ones, and we are told that they had “very much cattle.” All of those together would, it is thought, if they marched 1,000 abreast, form a procession nearly four miles long. How did they know which way to go? “The Lord went before them”—He led them by a wonderful cloud—it was a pillar of *cloud* by *day*, and it was a pillar of *fire* by *night*. Oh how happy they must have felt as they started! For they were leaving the house of bondage, and going to the land which the Lord gave unto their fathers; a land so full of good things, that it was said to *flow* with milk and honey. Even “*Egypt* was glad when they departed.”

If we had been there, we might perhaps have seen some of the oldest boys helping to drive their father's cattle, and some of the little ones taking hold of each other's hands, and some little ones carried by their fathers (Deut. i. 31).

They started from Rameses, and their first resting place was Succoth; then they went on to Etham, in the edge of the wilderness, and encamped there. Starting from Etham, they *turned*, and they next encamped at Pi-hahiroth.

I think if we were on a journey, we should all like to pitch *our* tents at such a place as Pi-hahiroth. The beautiful rippling sea

sparkled before them, and on either side were grand lofty mountains. And I dare say the little children gazed with delight upon the dancing waves, while their fathers were busy pitching their tents. And they were all, no doubt, expecting to have a very pleasant night's rest, when they lifted up their eyes, and saw the whole army of Egypt marching after them in furious haste.

For the Egyptians had altered their minds since Israel had started. Their *servants* were gone—their *gold and silver* were gone: they must bring them all back again. So Pharaoh had gathered his army and he was now pursuing them, determined to overtake them, to bring them back, and to divide the spoil.

And when the Israelites saw Pharaoh and his army coming, they were full of fear. Whither could they flee? Before them rolled the sea, but they had no boats, and there was no bridge. On their right hand there were mountains, and on their left hand there were mountains. What could they do?

The Lord was still with them, He that had done such great things for them in Egypt; and He was now ready to deliver them from the angry Egyptians, who were coming nearer and nearer every minute.

Alas! at that trying moment, Israel "forgot God their Saviour;" and they began to blame

Moses for having brought them out of Egypt to die. Yet Moses, at that very moment, displayed all the calm confidence of a man of God. He boldly lifted up his voice, and he cheerfully said to the trembling Israelites, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (Ex. xiv. 13, 14).

On came the terrible foe, but before they reached Israel, the Lord by the mouth of Moses bade Israel, "Go forward!" Soon every tent was struck, and the whole camp was marching towards the sea.

From the language of Scripture, it appears that just about at this time, *night* came on. And the angel of God, and that wonderful cloud which I have before spoken of, now went *behind* Israel, to prevent the Egyptians from coming near them. All that night, towards Israel, that cloud was radiant with light, to show them the way; but before the Egyptians, at the same time, it was black with darkness. The Israelites could no longer *see* the horsemen of Egypt, with their bright swords, and their glittering spears; yet perhaps they still could *hear* behind them "The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of

the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots." For though they were in *darkness* the Egyptians still continued to march after Israel.

"And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided." How the little children must have looked and wondered. Now they all saw the way of escape. The Lord, "full of compassion," opened a path for them right through the sea. And all the men, the women, and the children, marched into the midst of the sea upon dry ground.

And the cloud, bright with the glory of the Lord, followed behind Israel. And behind the cloud in darkness, the army of Egypt marched in furious, impatient haste; and they, too, marched into the sea. But so well did the cloud shield Israel, that all Pharaoh's haste was in vain; he could not come near Israel.

On, on, on, marched Israel; *having faith* in the Lord their God (Heb. xi. 29); and the path of *obedience* proved to be the path of their *salvation*.

And on, on, on, marched Pharaoh, in *rebellion* against the Lord; and his *wilful* path proved to be the path of his *destruction*.

On marched Israel, with a wall of sparkling waters on their right hand, and on their left.

And behind the cloud came Pharaoh; through

waters black with darkness, he marched in *sin* to *death*.

On marched Israel; every step brought them nearer the shore.

On followed Pharaoh; but he sank to rise no more.

And before the dawn of day all the Israelites, with their cattle, had safely crossed the sea, and they were resting in peace upon the opposite shore.

But what of Pharaoh and his army? Now that the Israelites were safe, it no longer needed that the cloud should be *darkness* to the Egyptians. "In the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians *through the pillar of fire*." By the light of the pillar of fire the Egyptians now saw that the mighty God of Israel was there, and that He was about to deal with them in His wrath. And God "took off their chariot wheels." Now the Egyptians were in great fear, and they said, "Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians."

It was *too late*. The Lord told Moses to stretch forth his hand once more over the sea. God blew with His wind, "the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters."

Thus, by the waters of the Red Sea, the Lord *saved Israel*; and by the same waters He *destroyed the Egyptians*. "And Israel *saw*

that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord, and His servant Moses."

The hearts of the children of Israel now overflowed with joy, and they sang a lively song of praise to the Lord, unto whom they rightly ascribed all the glory of their salvation (Ex. xv.). The women, also, blended their voices in singing a most beautiful chorus (Ex. xv. 20, 21).

And if you, my dear reader, will but come to Jesus, He will *save you*; you, too, shall own God's great salvation; and you shall be one of those who presently will sing "A *new song*" in heaven itself (see Rev. v. 9-10)

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## CHAPTER III.

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### CHILDREN IN THE WILDERNESS.

**A**T the time Israel marched out of Egypt, that nation was, in the Lord's sight as a little child that knows not how to walk. (Hosea xi. 1-4). I do not mean that they could not walk upon their feet; for, we read, "there was not one feeble person among their tribes:" but, that Israel, as a nation, had not yet learned to walk by *faith*, and *in the fear of the Lord*.

The Lord dealt very tenderly with His beloved people, yet, for forty long years, Israel wandered up and down in the wilderness, because they had not sooner learned to walk in the fear of the Lord.

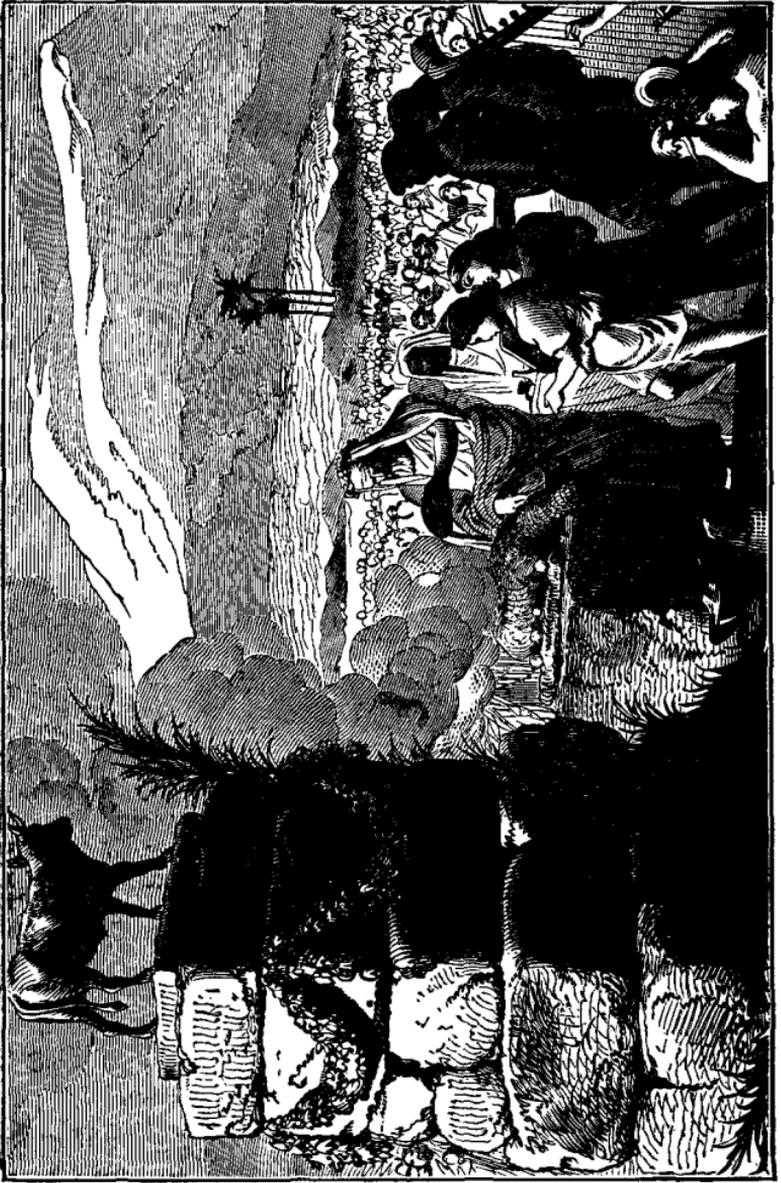
As the "little ones" of Israel, marched with their fathers and mothers through the wilderness, they saw many wonderful sights. In

the daytime, God "led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire." When they thirsted, the Lord brought forth streams out of the rock, so that the waters ran down like rivers. . When they were hungry, the Lord "rained down manna upon them to eat:" yea, He fed them with "the corn of heaven." Every day they had plenty to eat, but none to waste. "He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea" (Ps. lxxviii.). And their clothes and their shoes waxed not old upon them, during their forty years' journey. (Deut. xxix. 5).

At Sinai, the people heard "the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire." And there the Lord gave unto Israel His holy law.

For forty days was Moses in the Mount with God receiving many instructions for the children of Israel. He was so long absent that the people thought the Lord had forgotten them, and they could not tell what had become of Moses. So they made a golden calf, and said that was their God, which had brought them out of Egypt, and they all fell down and worshipped it. What a sad sight was this for the little ones to see.

And Moses made a tabernacle, of the freewill offerings of the people; for the Lord had said,



WORSHIPPING THE GOLDEN CALF.



“Let them make Me a sanctuary ; that I may dwell among them.” When this Tabernacle was set up, the Israelites pitched their tents in proper order on each side of it. And the pillar of cloud rested upon the Tabernacle, day and night.

In all these things the Lord showed that He had set His love upon Israel : yea, in love He bare them all through the wilderness, “as a man doth bear his son ” (Deut. i. 31). And yet, “How oft did they provoke Him in the wilderness, and grieve Him in the desert.” . . . “But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not : yea, many a time turned He His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath ” (Ps. lxxviii.). And the children saw many *sad scenes* in the wilderness, as well as wonderful sights.

In connection with two *sad scenes*, recorded in the Book of Numbers, we read something about “little ones.”

The *first* of these followed the return of the spies (Num. xiii., xiv.).

When Israel first reached the borders of Canaan, Moses bade the people, “Go up,” and take possession of the land. Now the Israelites had heard what the *Lord* had said about the “good land ;” but they wanted to hear also *man’s* report of it. So they asked that spies might be sent before them, to search

out the land, and to bring them back *their* report of the same (Deut. i. 19, 22.) And twelve men were selected, one of each tribe, and these went up through the land to spy it out. Forty days afterwards, they returned: bringing with them some of the fruits of the land. From Eshcol, they brought "a branch with one cluster of grapes" so very large, that two of them carried it between them upon a staff. How the little ones must have longed for a taste of those beautiful grapes.

The spies owned that all was true that the Lord had said about Canaan, they said, "Surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it." Yet *ten* of them went on to tell their brethren that there were dreadfully great giants living in the land, and that the cities were walled, and very great. These tidings filled the Israelites with fear and alarm. So these ten spies brought back an *evil* report of the land. The other two spies, whose names were Joshua and Caleb, were godly men. They were not at all afraid of the giants, because they had faith in God. And Caleb said, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." Thus these two spies brought back a *good* report of the land.

Alas! the people believed the evil report of the ten, and they would not listen to the good

report of the two godly spies. And all the people wept that night. Tears of sorrow flowed freely. (Theirs was not "godly sorrow," but the "sorrow of the world," which "worketh death." 2 Cor. vii. 10.) And they murmured, saying, "Wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey?"

Now the Lord knew all about these giants before He brought Israel out of Egypt. He had delivered them from the cruel taskmasters of Egypt—would he not fight for them, and enable them to overcome all the giants of Canaan? Surely the lives of their children was precious in the sight of the weeping Israelites, but the Lord loved those same dear "little ones" much more than did their parents.

Alas, the Israelites had forgotten God, their Saviour: even He that had led them, and fed them, from Egypt until now. And unbelief soon led them into open rebellion. And despising the "pleasant land" they spake of choosing a captain to lead them back into Egypt. At this, Moses and Aaron fell upon their faces before the Lord; while Joshua and Caleb, at the risk of their own lives, entreated their brethren to trust in the Lord, and not be afraid. It was all in vain.

Then the glory of the Lord appeared before all the children of Israel. He had seen—had

heard all. And Israel deserved nothing short of instant destruction : yet the Lord graciously answered the fervent prayer of Moses, so that He turned away the fierceness of His anger. But if their lives were spared, Israel must reap the bitter fruits of their sin. They must now *turn back*, and wander about in the wilderness until forty years were complete. And all (save Joshua and Caleb) that were men when they came out of Egypt, must die in the wilderness.

And the Lord said that He would give the land to those very little ones, of whom their fathers had said that they should be a prey to the giants.

Sin prevented the *men* of Israel from entering Canaan. Shall sin prevent any reader from entering heaven? Only the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, can cleanse us from all sin.

The *second* sad scene was that of the rebellion in the wilderness, led on by Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Numb. xvi. These three wicked men tried to stir up all the people against Moses and Aaron. They were soon joined by no less than 250 princes of the assembly, "men of renown." And having grown bold in evil deeds, these men not only spake against Aaron, who was chosen of God to be high priest of Israel; but they went on to set at nought the authority of Moses; who was also

chosen of God to be the leader of His beloved people. And in doing this, these sinful men rebelled against the Lord God of Israel.

Moses boldly rebuked Korah, and all his company; yet he meekly waited for the Lord to show whom he had chosen. And for this sin, the anger of the Lord waxed hot against Israel, so that he spake of consuming them in a moment. Then Moses and Aaron fell upon their faces before the Lord, and very earnestly did they entreat Him not to pour out His wrath upon *all* the people.

Now the command came from the Lord, that all the people should depart from Korah and his wicked companions. Not one moment must be lost! All Israel must quickly separate themselves from these rebels, or else die with them! And the people promptly obeyed this command.

But the "sons" and the "little children" of Dathan and Abiram, if they heard the word of the Lord, were not obedient. We read that they stood in the door of their tents, with their parents, and the earth opened under them, and all of them went down together, alive, into the pit.

Oh! what an awful sight it must have been! To see men, women, and little children, all sinking into a living grave, beneath the wrath of God! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

“*Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not.*” (Numbers xxvi. 11). How was this? No doubt the sons of Korah *heard* the Lord’s command, and *obeyed* it without delay, by leaving their own father alone in his wickedness. For Korah was destroyed, but the *sons* of Korah lived to praise the Lord. (Several of the Psalms have this heading, “A Psalm for the sons of Korah.”)

We may all learn very solemn lessons as we read of Israel’s journey through the wilderness. Those that “did cleave unto the Lord,” lived to enter the Promised Land (Deut. iv. 4). while the evil doers, *young and old*, died in the wilderness.

“Now, therefore, hearken until Me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep My ways” (Prov. viii. 32).

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## CHAPTER IV.

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### CHILDREN AT THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN.

“**W**HEN ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it’ (Josh. iii. 3). This notice was given to the whole host of Israel, as they rested upon the east bank of the river Jordan.

Forty years had passed since the day that the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt. And those that were little children when Israel marched through the Red Sea, were now grown up men and women, having little ones of their own. And as the fathers in Israel had “seen all the great acts of the Lord which He did:”—those wonderful things that the Lord had done for Israel in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness; they could each one often

tell their own little ones all these wonderful stories (Deut xi. 2-21).

“And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves; for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you.” All the people, young and old, might well be delighted to hear such thrilling words. For the Lord’s time was now come for Israel to cross the Jordan, to take possession of the land of Canaan, as He had before promised to their fathers. And after they had heard these welcome news, every father in Israel could promise his dear little ones, that, to-morrow, they all should see the great power of the mighty God of Israel. The eventful morning came. The little ones were up and dressed, the tents were all taken down, and everything was soon packed up ready for the journey. And at the proper time, the Levites came near, and took up the Ark of God upon their shoulders, and began to march towards the swift waters of Jordan. And all Israel (except those of the tribes of Manasseh, Reuben, and Gad, who remained behind at their own desire), followed those that bare the ark, marching at a distance of about half a mile behind it. Why did the Lord command that there should be so wide a space between Israel and the ark? The people were about to tread a path that they had never before trodden, and the Ark of God was to lead the way, and



THE PRIESTS CARRYING THE ARK ACROSS JORDAN.



there must be no confusion. The Lord would have them cross the Jordan as calmly, and as peacefully, as they had hitherto marched through the wilderness. He would shield them from all danger.

Was not every eye fixed upon the Ark, as it was borne nearer and nearer to the edge of Jordan? As yet the swollen waters of that river were rushing on as furiously as ever, and the river was both wide and deep, for it had overflowed all its banks. And they that bare the ark came unto Jordan," and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water," then "the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap." The waters were now divided! The Lord had opened a path for Israel right through the river. On marched they that bare the ark; down, down, down, until they reached the centre of the river bed; then they stood still upon dry ground in the very midst of Jordan. And the people followed; men, women, and children, with all that they had. None need tremble, nor feel in the least afraid, for the ark, the sure proof of the presence of God, would remain in the midst of Jordan until all the people had clean passed over.

When all had safely crossed, by command of the Lord, twelve picked men took twelve stones out of the river, from the place where

the ark had rested. And Joshua set up twelve other stones in the same place in the river. Last of all, the ark was borne up out of Jordan, whose mighty waters then dashed onwards as swiftly as ever. The word "Jordan," means, "fast flowing." The stones that were taken out of Jordan were pitched in Gilgal; for the Lord would have little children in time to come ask what these stones meant. Then their fathers were to tell their children the sweet story of the crossing of Jordan.

My readers live in a day when parents can tell their children a much more blessed story than this. Even the story of Jesus, and His love—how and for what purpose He died on Calvary's cross.

At Gilgal, Israel kept the feast of the Pass-over. And as they now had the fruit of the land of Canaan to eat, the Lord ceased to give them manna.

But what were the Canaanites doing all this time? And those giants, of whom Israel had once been so much afraid? By the greatness of the Lord's power they were all as "still as a stone;" fear and dread had fallen upon them; none dared to molest the people of God (Ex. xv. 16). Ah! the Lord did wondrous things for His beloved people at the conquest of Canaan. Joshua saw the "Captain of the host of the Lord," near Jericho (Josh. v.

13-15). By the power of the Lord the walls of the city of Jericho fell down flat before Israel, so that they took *that* city. (Josh. vi.). The sin of Achan, the thief, was found out, and Achan was stoned to death, before the Lord would give Israel the victory over the little city of Ai (Josh. vii.). The Gibeonites craftily made a league with Israel, being sore afraid of their lives, because of the word of the Lord (Josh. ix.). But when five of the kings of Canaan sought to overwhelm the poor Gibeonites, because they had made peace with the people of God, then the Lord not only delivered the Gibeonites, but the sun and moon stood still, for about a whole day, while Israel avenged themselves upon their enemies (Josh. x.). No enemy could stand against Israel. "And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance; so they did eat, and were filled" (Neh. ix. 25). And the land of Canaan was divided amongst the twelve tribes of Israel.

But, ere I conclude this paper, I wish to speak of one thing that Israel did during the conquest of Canaan, while as yet all the cities of Canaan, save Jericho and Ai, stood in their strength (Josh. viii.).

I would first explain that the mountains

Ebal and Gerizim, are only a small distance apart, and that between them lies the valley of Shechem. At the time of which I speak, six of the tribes of Israel, stood, with their wives and little ones, upon Mount Gerizim, to *bless*, while the other six tribes stood, in like manner, upon Mount Ebal, to *curse*. Then Joshua read aloud all the words of the law; the blessings and the cursings. And as the dreadful curses written in Deut. xxvii. were read, all the people had to answer Amen, after each curse. This was a solemn day for Israel. On either side of them, stood the cities of Canaan, thronged with busy people. Why were these Canaanites doomed to destruction? The law of the Lord gave the reason. These people had sinned against God (Deut. xviii. 9-12). And by that same law Israel was taught that if they did but obey God's holy, just, and good law, the Lord would bless them in every way, and make them a blessing to other nations. But, if they would not be obedient, and they turned aside from following the Lord, He would curse them, and would drive them out from the very land which they were about to possess, Deut. xxviii., and all the little ones saw this wonderful sight, and heard all these solemn words.

The Ark was, to Israel, the sacred symbol of God's presence. Wherever the Ark of God

was, there, the *God* of Israel made His presence known. And the Ark of God remained between all Israel, while the law was read to Israel—that ark being a witness to Israel that *God* was in their midst. And the Lord would ever deal with Israel, to  *bless* or to  *curse* them, according to their ways. The Canaanites must die, for they had sinned; let Israel take warning, lest a curse should rest upon them, and not a blessing. And did Israel obey the law of the Lord? From Judges ii. 7, we gather that the  *men* who heard the law read, obeyed its commands.

But what about the “ little ones ” that stood with their parents to hear the reading of the law? Alas! alas! these heard the blessings, and heard the cursings, but it appears from Judges ii. 10-15, that they did not take heed. When these very children grew up to be men and women, they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, and they did very wickedly. So the anger of the Lord waxed hot against them, and they were justly punished for their many sins (Judges iii. 5-9).

Oh, that these “ little ones ” had given their hearts unto the Lord, upon the day that they heard the reading of His holy law. Then He would, indeed, have showered down rich blessings upon them. But they sinned against God, and a curse rested upon them, and not a blessing.

Dear reader, the Lord Jesus is now waiting to bless you. Come unto Him! He will bless you, eternally. Do not be careless! Do not put off coming unto Him, lest an awful eternal curse be pronounced upon you, instead of a blessing (Matt. xxv. 41).

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## CHAPTER V.

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### GOING UP TO KEEP THE FEAST.

**T**HE children of Israel, after they settled in the land of Canaan, many times turned aside from following the Lord, because of which His wrath fell upon them. Yet those were bright days, happy times, when the great body of the nation feared the Lord, and the Lord blessed them in every way.

The closing days of David's reign were bright days, and full of joy to Israel (1 Chron. xxix.), and during the early years of the reign of Solomon, the bright days continued. In those days the nation of Israel kept the feasts of the Lord with great joy and gladness (2 Chron. vii. 8-10). Three times in each year, at the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of weeks, and the feast of Tabernacles, the law required that every male in Israel should appear before

God at Jerusalem. Oh, those were joyous times! when the godly Israelites of old, went up with their households, to keep the feast.

Now the Lord had said, "None shall appear before Me empty;" so the men of Israel took the firstlings of their herds and of their flocks, and the tithe of their corn, of their wine, and of their oil. They could all take lots of nice things with them, some to offer unto the Lord, some to eat upon the way, and some for themselves and for the widow, the fatherless, and the stranger, to eat before the Lord. And the Lord said, "Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which He hath given thee." And if the "little ones" had no lambs, and no nice things of their own to give, they could offer to the Lord *one* thing that He values more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices; and that was, *their hearts*. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." With gladness and joy of heart, men, women, and children, set out from their homes to go up to Jerusalem to keep the solemn feast. All might go. And no one need be afraid lest thieves should come and rob while they were gone, for the Lord had promised that no man should desire their land while they kept the feast (Ex. xxxiv. 24). Some of the people had to journey for several days

before they reached Jerusalem, while others that lived nearer, need only be a few hours upon the road. Those that were long upon the journey, could rest during the heat of the day, and refresh themselves with luscious grapes, and figs, and dates. And when each evening came, they pitched their tents a day's march nearer Jerusalem. And it was the Lord's will, that, as they were walking by the way, and as they sat down, and as they rose up, fathers should teach their children the law of the Lord (Deut. vi. 7).

At feast times, the roads that led up to Jerusalem were thronged with thousands of men, women, and children, all going to that city to worship God. If some of the children began to feel tired before the end of their journey, all were, no doubt, full of joy, when, having reached the top of some hill, they first caught sight of Jerusalem. Jerusalem! "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God." Within Jerusalem, glittering in the radiance of the brilliant sunlight, stood the temple built by Solomon, of gold, of silver, and of costly stones. As the Israelites gazed upon that "holy and beautiful house," and upon the beloved city, their joy is well expressed in the words, "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined." . . . "Beautiful for situation. the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion.

on the sides of the north the city of the great king. God is known in her palaces for a refuge." With his eyes fixed upon Zion, a godly Israelite could lift up his heart to the Lord, and say, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." This was the secret of their joy. In those days, the Lord was *known* and *honoured* in Jerusalem; and these were going in sincerity of heart, to appear before God, and to worship in His temple.

Years afterwards, when the Lord Jesus was upon earth, He wept for sorrow, as He beheld Jerusalem. Oh, why did He thus weep? Because, in *His* day God was no longer known and honoured in that city. The Son of God had walked its streets, and had spoken in His temple, yet they knew not the time of their visitation. And He wept over the city which He loved—He would have gathered its children together—He would have shielded them from all danger; but *they knew Him not*. And they crucified Him who would have saved them; and presently the enemy came; and the city was destroyed.

To return to our story. The roads near Jerusalem are thronged with people.

Who are they coming up from the *south*?

The tribes of Judah and Simeon.

Who are they that come from the *east* ?

The tribes of Reuben and Gad.

Who are they that come from the *west* ?

The thousands of the tribe of Dan.

And who are they coming up from the *north* ?

The tribes of Asher, Naphtali, Zebulun, and Issachar. And the little tribe of Benjamin, the "thousands of Manasseh," and the "ten thousands of Ephraim," are going up with their brethren.

Fifteen Psalms have this heading, "A song of degrees" (Ps. cxx. cxxxiv). It is thought that the Israelites sang these Psalms as they went up to Jerusalem, to keep the feasts of the Lord. If we could have seen "the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord," we should, no doubt, have heard some of them begin to sing—

"I was glad when they said unto me,  
Let us go to the house of the Lord."

Every ear thrills at the sound of the well-known song, and with one accord, many thousands of voices blend in singing the sweet Psalm of praise—

"Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem."

The word of God says—

Both young men and maidens ;  
Old men and children :  
Let them praise the name of the Lord."

And since the Lord was pleased to desire that "children" should sing His praise, surely

the children of those days gladly blended their youthful voices. with the rest of the people. And some children, perhaps, learnt by heart, days before, those Psalms which they were to sing as they marched towards Jerusalem. Some Psalms have a very beautiful chorus. Every verse of Psalm cxxxvi. concludes with—

“For His mercy endureth for ever.”

And those “babes and sucklings,” that were too young to learn by heart a whole Psalm, could easily join in the chorus.

In after years, when the Lord Jesus rode in royal dignity into Jerusalem, the multitudes sang, “Hosanna to the son of David;” instead of the usual “Songs of degrees.” “And when He was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?” Yet none could prevent the people from praising the Lord Jesus, at that moment, for God had said, “Verily, He shall be praised;” and if the people had held their peace, the very stones would have cried out.

To return once more to the days of Solomon. When the tribes of the Lord reached Jerusalem, they entered by the gates into the city. They have gone from “strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.” Their journey is over. Now they prepare to keep the solemn feast.

“The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous.” What a happy place Jerusalem was, at feast times! There brother met brother, there sister met sister, and friends met friends. Then they could salute one another, then they could bless one another in the name of the Lord. And a godly Israelite could then say to his brethren, “Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul.”

“Happy is that people, whose God is the Lord.”

In another chapter, if the Lord will, we may speak of the *feast-day* at Jerusalem.

To conclude, have you set out upon a still more blessed journey? Are you indeed marching on towards that city “which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God?” We can enter that holy, heavenly city by one Way only. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; all are welcome to come unto God by Him.

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## CHAPTER VI.

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### A FEAST DAY IN JERUSALEM.

“Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem ; Praise thy God, O Zion.”



THE feast of the Passover was the first of the three great yearly feasts. It was at once succeeded by the seven days' feast of Unleavened Bread.

Several days before the feast of the Passover, the tribes of the Lord went up to Jerusalem, so that the little children had plenty of time to walk about Zion, and go round about her: to count her towers, to mark her bulwarks, and to peep at her palaces. But when the evening which would commence the fourteenth day of their first month, drew near, the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel, brought their lambs and kids into the temple to be slain (Lev. xvii. 1-6).



A FEAST DAY IN JERUSALEM.



King Josiah, at one feast of the Passover, gave, for Passover offerings, 30,000 lambs and kids; and at the same time his princes also gave many more ( 2 Chron. xxxv.).

No Israelite could eat the Passover supper outside of Jerusalem (Deut. xvi. 5-7). As those, that had come from a long distance to keep the feast had no houses of their own in Jerusalem, the people who lived in that city, very kindly allowed their brethren at this feast a free use of their "guest chambers" (Luke xxii. 11, 12)., And when the proper hour was come, the many households of Israel (Luke ii. 41, 42) sat down to eat the Passover supper.

It was a solemn gathering. It is said that a cup was first of all filled with wine, then a blessing was asked on the feast, and on the cup. Then came the "bitter herbs," the "unleavened bread," and the roasted *lamb*. Before the lamb was eaten, a son asked the meaning of the feast, which his father then explained before all. Then Psalms cxiii. and cxiv. were sung. Now the lamb was carved, and eaten. And after more wine had been partaken of by the household, Psalms cxv. to cxviii. were sung.

With the rising of the sun came the *morning* of the feast day. I dare say all the children wanted to get up very early upon the feast day morning. As the "third hour," the morning

hour of prayer, drew near, the children of Zion could hear the sweet sound of silver trumpets, when all the people, young and old, prepared to enter the house of God. Psalm xcvi, aptly expresses the thoughts of many hearts at such a moment :—

“ O come, let us sing unto the Lord :  
Let us make a joyful noise  
To the rock of our salvation.

“ O come, let us worship and bow down :  
Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker,  
For He is our God ;  
And we are the people of His pasture,  
And the sheep of His hand.”

Psalm xcvi. contains a very sweet song of invitation to the people to come into the temple—

“ Give unto the Lord, O ye kindred of the people,  
Give unto the Lord glory and strength,  
Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name ;  
Bring an offering, and come into His courts,  
O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness ;” &c.

Then many thousands of voices could reply in the words of Psalm cxxxii.—

“ We will go into His tabernacles :  
We will worship at His footstool.”

The beautiful gates of the temple were soon thronged by thousands of men, women, and children, and with these came the king, the princes, and the rulers (2 Chron. xxix. 20). And they did not come empty (Deut. xvi. 16). Some brought oxen, sheep, or lambs ; some brought wine, fine flour, or oil. A very poor

man could bring two doves, or two young pigeons. If a poor widow in Israel had nothing else to give, she could offer her two mites to the Lord, who graciously accepted her offering. (Mark xii. 42-44).

The offerers brought their offerings to the altar of burnt offering (Matt. v. 23, 24), and when they had solemnly put each one his hand upon the head of the victim (Lev. i. 4), the priests received the animals at their hands, to slay them; and, with the help of the Levites, to prepare these offerings for sacrifice (1 Chron. xxiii. 27-32).

These animals were slain because the people who brought them were *sinner*s. The life of a victim must be taken; its blood must be shed; the offerer must thus own his own sinful state before God, or else the Lord could not accept the offerer, nor yet his offering. Even the high priest had to offer for his own sins (Heb. vii. 27).

While the priests made ready to offer, the thousands of Israel could each one pour out his or her soul before the Lord. Yea, the Lord was pleased to listen to the simple prayer of every little child that sought Him, in that great assembly.

When everything was ready, the Levites, the singers of Israel, "arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood

at the east end of the altar," and with them priests, having trumpets (2 Chron. v. 12). "And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David, King of Israel. And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded; and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished" (2 Chron. xxix. 27, 28).

When they had made an end of offering, even while all the people stood before the Lord in the temple, a man of God might preach righteousness in the great congregation (Ps. xl. 9). At one such time, "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink" (John. vii. 37), And there and then did Jesus offer "living water" unto the assembled thousands of Israel. He offers the same *to-day*, to every beloved reader that will come unto Him, and drink.

After all the solemnities of the temple service had been brought to a close, and the high priest had, in the name of the Lord, blessed the people (Lev. ix. 22); they could go forth; and "eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing was prepared" (Neh. viii. 10-12). Oh, how happy all the little children must have felt upon the feast day, especially those little ones who had given their

young hearts to the Lord. All the upright in heart could shout for joy (Ps. xxxii. 11).

In Psalm lxvii. it is *twice* written :—

“Let the people praise Thee, O God ;  
Let all the people praise thee.”

Perhaps some reader would like to ask, “Did *all* the people in those days really praise the Lord?” In reply, let me first say, that none can by singing “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” make melody in their hearts to the Lord, unless they sing with grace in their hearts to the Lord. A child may have a most beautiful voice, and be able to sing most sweetly, but, if the lips do not express the thoughts of the heart, no song is acceptable to God.

I delight to think of those feast days of old, when *men* like David and Asaph, when *women* like Hannah and Mary, and when *children*, like Samuel and Josiah, with sweet melodious voices, praised the Lord in His holy temple. But, alas! we read of “hypocritical mockers in feasts,” and of those who draw near unto God with their mouths, while their hearts are far from Him, and that, because of their sinful deeds, the Lord *hated* their appointed feasts (Is. i.). And during the Lord’s sojourn on earth, so sad had become the state of Israel that, in the gospel of John, the feasts are never

called "feasts of the Lord," but are simply named, "feasts of the Jews.

\* \* \* \*

What a solemn feast day was that when Christ our passover" was "sacrificed for us." Upon that day, for our sakes, the Lamb of God offered Himself without spot to God. He shed His precious blood, for He knew that—

"Not all the blood of beasts,  
On Jewish altars slain,  
Could give the guilty conscience peace,  
Or wash away its stain."

The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin.

Dear reader, as the Lamb of God—Jesus bore away our sins in His own body on the tree: as the Good Shepherd—He gave His life for the sheep. He loved us, and gave Himself for us. Can you sing:—

"Glory, glory everlasting,  
Be to Him who bare the cross,  
Who redeemed our souls by tasting  
Death, the death deserved by us:  
Spread His glory  
Who redeemed His people thus."

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## CHAPTER VII.

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### MOCKING CHILDREN OF BETHEL.

(2 KINGS II.)

**I**F you will read Gen. xxviii. 10-22, you will find a beautiful account of the beginning and meaning of "Bethel," and 1 Kings xii. will tell you in what way it became a very wicked city.

One day there came from Gilgal to Bethel two men. One of these men, Elijah by name was well known as a bold and a very zealous prophet of the Lord. In the midst of sin and idolatry this prophet had often declared the word of the Lord, and by him the Lord had wrought great signs and wonders in Israel. But Israel was about to lose this great prophet; upon the very day that he came to Bethel, Elijah was taken up by a whirlwind into heaven.

The name of Elijah's companion was Elisha. Elisha was a meek and gentle man, of a very loving disposition (1 Kings xix. 20); and, like Elijah, he was a very devoted man of God.

At this time, even in the wicked city of Bethel, there were to be found young men who were instructed in the word of the Lord: these were called "sons of the prophets." And when Elijah and Elisha came to Bethel, the sons of the prophets came up to them, and they asked Elisha if he knew that the Lord would that day take Elijah away from him. In His own way and manner the Lord had made this known unto these sons of the prophets, even in Bethel.

Elisha also knew this: he simply replied, "Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace." And Elijah said to Elisha, "Tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to Bethel. And he said, as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho."

At Jericho, other sons of the prophets spake to Elisha as those of Bethel had spoken. However, as Elijah and Elisha went on towards the river Jordan, fifty men of the sons of the prophets stood afar off, and watched. And Elijah with his mantle smote the waters of Jordan, and they divided, so that they both went over on dry ground.

They were walking and talking together when, in a moment, they were parted asunder, and Elisha saw a chariot of fire, and horses of fire; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. Then Elisha cried, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." And he rent his clothes. "He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan." And with this mantle the prophet Elisha smote the waters, and they divided, and Elisha went over, and walked towards Jericho.

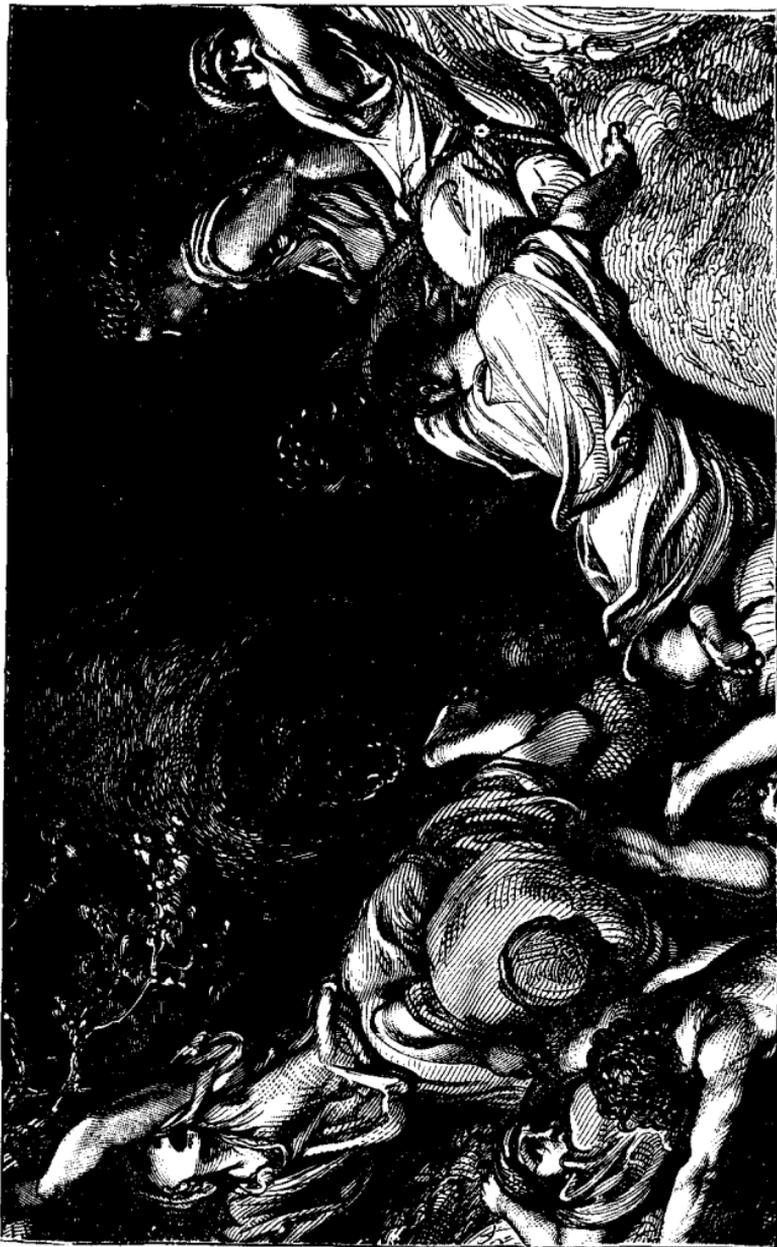
The city of Jericho is noted for the manner in which it was taken by Israel in the days of Joshua, and also for the awful curse which Joshua pronounced concerning it (Joshua vi. 26). When the sons of the prophets at Jericho saw Elisha coming towards them, they said, "The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha." For Elisha himself had prayed that a double portion of Elijah's spirit might rest upon him. So the sons of the prophets came to meet the prophet Elisha, and they bowed themselves to the ground before him. In Jericho, the city of the curse, Elisha was received "in the name of a prophet," and the people of Jericho received "a prophet's reward" (Matt. xi. 41.) When Elisha came to Jericho, he found that the men of that city were in a sad plight; for, as they told Elisha, "The situation

of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth ; but the water is naught, and the ground barren."

Then Elisha went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast in salt, and the Lord healed these waters. So that the coming of Elisha proved to be a very great blessing to the people of Jericho. Ever after this, as they drank of the healed waters, or they reaped bountiful harvests from the land which had before been barren, they had abundant reason to thank God or His goodness in sending His prophet amongst them.

From Jericho Elisha went up unto Bethel As he walked towards Bethel, who can tell how this prophet's heart burned within him, while he thought of the wickedness of that city? Oh, if the people of Bethel had that day received Elisha as a prophet of the Lord, what great things he would have done for them! In his zeal for the Lord, he would gladly have destroyed the golden calf of Bethel; just as Moses destroyed the golden calf in the wilderness. Yea, he would have been glad to purge the city from all its iniquity, and to have taught its people to turn from idols to serve the living and true God. As for the little children of Bethel, it would have pleased Elisha to have gathered them all together, and to have taught them the fear of the Lord.

When Elisha came towards Bethel, its people



MOCKING CHILDREN DESTROYED BY BEARS.



came not to meet him ; and to bow before him, as they of Jericho had done. Sad to say, the people of Bethel had an idol in their midst, and they did not want any prophet of the Lord amongst them (Amos vii. 12, 13). Now I have to tell something truly dreadful ! As Elisha was going up by the way, " there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head, go up, thou bald head." What moved the little children of Bethel to mock Elisha, the prophet of the Lord ?

Alas, alas, these children so young in years, were already slaves to sin (Rom. vi. 16), they had no desire to hear the word of the Lord. The Lord had taken Elijah from Israel straight up to heaven, and Elisha may go up too, for what they cared. So they mocked Elisha. " And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord."

" And there came forth two she-bears out of the wood." If at the sight of these terrible beasts of the forest, the mocking children of Bethel screamed and fled with terror, they screamed and fled in vain. God sees and knows all that we do or say, and He knew that the children of Bethel were mocking His holy prophet. And the two she-bears came forth as the instruments of the Lord's swift vengeance upon these wicked children ; and they tare forty

and two of them. We are not told that one mocker escaped.

The prophet Elisha came to Jericho; its people did him honour; and he left a *blessing* behind him. The happy parents of Jericho had cause to rejoice as they told their little ones of Elisha, and of all that he had done for them. The same prophet went from Jericho unto Bethel; its children mocked him; and the parents of Bethel had cause to weep as they told their children that were left, of the awful *curse* that fell upon those forty-two little ones, while they mocked Elisha.

“How very wicked the children of Bethel were!” My dear readers, are we not all sinners? Yet in love the Lord Jesus Christ is now speaking to many hearts. “See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh.” If any will not listen *this day* to the voice of Jesus, may the record of the awful doom of the mocking children of Bethel, prove a warning to them to receive His words; and not to neglect so great salvation.



## CHAPTER VIII.

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### CHILDREN IN DANGER.

(2 CHRON. xx.)

**A**T the time the dreadful mutiny broke out in India, in 1857, I well remember how I trembled for fear, when my father brought home the alarming news that a few brave English soldiers were shut up in the city of Lucknow, by an army of blacks. Our next door neighbour was a poor mother, whose soldier son was in India at the time, and it went to my young heart to see the distress of this poor woman. The mention of her son's name was sufficient to cause her tears to burst forth. And when the news of the defeat of the enemy reached England, and we were all so glad that the danger was over, the poor mother could not enter into our joy, until she knew that her son had received no hurt.

During the reign of the good king Jehoshaphat, very alarming news spread far and wide in the little kingdom of Judah. None need wonder if the little children trembled for fear, when they heard that three nations:—the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Edomites, had united their armies to fight against Judah. Who could tell how soon the enemy would come near to them, to burn their father's house, to destroy his vineyard and oliveyard, to take away his cattle, his corn, and all that he had? To take from their own home, father, mother, little ones and all, for the purpose of making them slaves in a strange land: just as the Syrians once carried away from her home, the little captive maid that waited upon Naaman's wife (2 Kings v. 2).

Jehoshaphat was a king who served the Lord. In times of peace he had sent good men throughout all the cities of his kingdom, that they might instruct his beloved people in the law of the Lord (2 Chron. xvii. 7-9). And when this time of trouble came, though "Jehoshaphat feared," he knew just what to do. Many a king would have sent word to his people, and said, "Arm yourselves!" "Prepare for the worst!" "Fight valiantly for the sake of your own little ones!" But Jehoshaphat did better than this; he proclaimed a fast in Judah.

But what could the people do? Could they

safely leave their homes at a time when enemies were in the land? By the grace of God they could. Was no one afraid lest the Moabites should come and take possession, while they went up to Jerusalem? "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." If one little child felt afraid, and was free to ask, "Father, shall we indeed at this time leave our home and go up to Jerusalem?" The father could at once answer, "My dear child, be not afraid of the enemy. Our fathers trusted in God: they trusted, and He delivered them. They cried unto God, and were delivered: they trusted in God, and were not confounded. This is to us all a time of great trouble; we will now one and all go up to Jerusalem, to the house of God." "And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the Lord; even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord."

And Jehoshaphat stood in the house of the Lord, and in the presence of all the people he prayed an effectual fervent prayer unto the Lord their God. Casting his burden upon the Lord, he confessed before God, that himself and his people were all in sore trouble, because of their enemies. Adding, "O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes

are upon Thee." Thus Jehoshaphat prayed, "And all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives and their children.

Even while they stood in the temple, he Lord answered the prayer of His people. Upon Jahaziel, one of the sweet singers of Israel, came the Spirit of the Lord; and by the word of the Lord Jahaziel promised Jehoshaphat, and all his people, an easy victory. He said, "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of God with you, O Judah and Jerusalem; fear not, nor be dismayed; to-morrow go out against them; for the Lord will be with you." At these words, Jehoshaphat and all Judah fell before the Lord, and worshipped; while the singers stood up to praise the Lord with a loud voice on high.

I have seen soldiers on the march, have heard them shout, "Hurrah!" keeping time with their band of music; but whoever saw an army march to meet an enemy, as Jehoshaphat and his men marched towards their foes.

As they went forth, early in the morning, Jehoshaphat bade all the people believe in the Lord their God. In front of the army marched singers unto the Lord, to praise the beauty of holiness, and to sing, "Praise the Lord; for His mercy endureth for ever." Before they reached the foe, even while they sang and

praised, the Lord began to destroy the enemy, by causing them to fight one against another.

And when Judah came in sight of their enemies, behold, they had slain one another! And none escaped. And among the dead bodies, Jehoshaphat's army found precious jewels and riches in such abundance, that it took them three days to gather the spoil!

On the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of (Berachah, or) Blessing; for there they blessed the Lord: then the whole army returned, "to go again to Jerusalem with joy; for the Lord had made them to rejoice over their enemies."

When the *women* in Zion saw their *husbands*, and the *children* in Zion saw their *fathers* and *elder brothers*, returning from the war victorious; without one scar or wound, yet laden with spoil; and singing songs of deliverance; then could the daughters of Zion rejoice, and the children of Zion leap for joy. The army "came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the house of the Lord."

A few days before, in their day of trouble, they had cried unto God in His holy temple; but now they gathered together in the same "holy and beautiful house," to own God's great deliverance! This was indeed a day for joy, for praise and thanksgiving. The Lord had done great things for them, and every heart

felt glad. Now they could worship without fear, for their enemies were no more.

After this great victory, all the little children of Judah were free to return with their parents to their own homes in peace: none daring to make them afraid.

Perhaps, dear reader, as you read this you are in fear, and afraid of being overwhelmed by three great enemies—the world, the flesh, and the devil. Do not attempt to overcome these in your own strength; but do as Jehoshaphat and his people did; seek the Lord without delay. The Lord Jesus is able, He is willing to deliver you from all the power of the enemy. He died to save poor fallen man with a great salvation. “That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us . . . That we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear.”





## CHAPTER IX.

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### CHILDREN SAVED BY A QUEEN.

**F**AR, far away from the hills and vales of Judah, in his royal city of Shushan, reigned Ahasuerus ; a great and mighty Persian king. Of the riches of his glorious kingdom, of the honour of his excellent majesty, and of the greatness of his power, we read in the book of Esther. His word was law ; whom he would he exalted ; and whom he would he abased. \*

A former consort of this great king, Vashti the queen, had, on the occasion of a great feast, so offended the king, that he caused the royal crown to be taken from her. Then it pleased the king that fair young virgins should be brought before him, in order that of them

he might select one, to be queen instead of Vashti.

There was no king in the land of Israel at this time. For the sins of that people, the Lord had driven them out from the land, and the Jews were now scattered abroad throughout the many provinces of Ahasuerus's great kingdom. And so it was, that among the fair young virgins, Esther, a lovely Jewish maiden, was brought before the king. Now Esther had neither father nor mother; she was the adopted daughter of her cousin, Mordecai the Jew. And the king selected Esther; for he loved her above all the women: and he set the royal crown upon her head, and he made her queen in the room of Vashti.

After this did Ahasuerus exalt Haman, an Amalekite, above all the rest of his princes. And the king's servants bowed before Haman. But Mordecai, who sat in the king's gate, could not, with a good conscience, do reverence to so wicked a man (Ps. xv. 4). Moreover, Haman was of that nation concerning which the Lord had said that with it His people should never be at peace (Ex. xvii. 16). "And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath." Scorning to lay hands on Mordecai alone, he persuaded the king to make a decree, commanding, that upon a certain given day,

all that were Jews in his vast dominions, both young and old, little children and women, should be destroyed.

Then Mordecai rent his clothes, and cried with a loud and bitter cry. And there was "great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes." How could a fond Jewish mother help weeping and wailing, as she pressed to her bosom her lovely babe, and thought of such a dreadful day coming so soon? As little Jewish children looked one on another, knowing too well what made their parents weep and wail, while they fasted, it was enough to make these also weep bitterly; for the awful day drew nearer and nearer—the day upon which all of them were doomed to die. Yet the cruel Haman did not pity, nor was he at all moved at the distress of the helpless Jews.

Who would now befriend the poor Jews? and plead for them before the king? Thanks be to God! In the very court of King Ahasuerus lived one, who both loved and pitied her people, and whose heart was grieved at their distress. But what could queen Esther do? If she went in unto the king at a time when he had not called her, she might lose her own life! And the queen's heart sank within her as she thought of all this. Nevertheless, encour-

aged by Mordecai, Esther made up her mind to make an attempt to save the lives of her dearly beloved people, even if that attempt should cost her life.

Esther solemnly devoted herself to her severe task. For three days did she and her maidens fast, and all the Jews in Shushan likewise fasted for her. And on the third day, Esther put on her royal apparel, and went in and stood before the king.

“ The beautiful and noble queen,—  
Her people’s lives to save,—  
Now stood before the mighty king :  
For love had made her brave.”

The king saw Esther ; she obtained favour in his sight ; he held out to her the golden sceptre, and said, “ What wilt thou, queen Esther ? and what is thy request ? ” He also assured her that he would grant her request, ask what she might.

Esther was as wise as she was brave. Could she plead for herself and her people while the king sat on his throne, attended by his great ministers of state ? She would rather draw the king aside, where she could face the adversary before him alone. Her *first* request, therefore, was simply an invitation to the king to come with Haman to a banquet which she had prepared for them. In due time, the king and Haman sat down with Esther to the banquet



QUEEN ESTHER BEFORE KING AHASUERUS.



of wine. Esther also invited both to come to another banquet upon the next day; promising then to make known to the king her request.

Esther had behaved very kindly towards Haman; but the favour of the king and the kindness of the queen did not soften Haman's heart one whit. The sight of the consistent Mordecai, as he was going home from the *first* banquet wounded Haman's pride, and he went home and plotted the murder of that God-fearing man.

Next morning, the people of Shushan saw, with surprise, Mordecai the Jew, riding in great pomp through the streets of their city, and the proud Haman shouting before him, "Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour." The hand of God was in all this: the sixth chapter of Esther informs us how the Lord brought all this about. The God of Israel had already begun to deliver His greatly distressed people.

At the *second* banquet of wine, the king again asked, "What is thy petition, queen Esther?" Then did the queen nobly plead for her people, saying, "If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request: for we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish." Esther also charged Haman to his

face, with being the adversary and enemy of her people.

Then was the king filled with wrath. And Haman, the cruel man who had planned to destroy thousands of innocent little children with their parents, now trembled for his own life! Eagerly did he appeal to Esther the queen—but Haman's efforts to save his own life only made the king more angry with him. Haman had shown no pity, and he died without pity; for the king's wrath was not pacified until Haman was hanged upon the very gallows that he himself had made to hang Mordecai thereon.

The queen had wrought nobly and well, and all her efforts had been crowned with success: yet Esther could not rest while anything threatened the safety of her beloved people; and falling down at the feet of the king, she besought him with tears, to reverse the cruel law which Haman had devised, to destroy the Jews. She did not plead in vain. The king graciously gave her and Mordecai permission to write as they pleased, in his name. So the king's scribes were called, and they wrote as Mordecai commanded them, to the Jews, and to the rulers and governors of the many provinces of Ahasuerus' kingdom, a decree, wherein the king granted the Jews to stand for their lives, and to avenge themselves on

their enemies, upon the very day Haman had fixed for their destruction.

Riders on horses, mules, and camels, hastily carried the joyful news from province to province, and from city to city. When they heard these glorious tidings, the once distressed Jews had "light, and gladness, and joy, and honour." Even the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. As for Mordecai, the king exalted him to very great honour and dignity. And when the once dreaded day really came, it proved to be to the Jews a day of great deliverance.

Thus did the Lord, by means of Esther the queen, save His people with a great salvation. And young men and women, old men and little children, had all abundant reason to fervently thank God for His goodness in raising up the good queen Esther, for such a time of need.

Esther the queen *risked* her life to save her people from *natural* death, but the Lord Jesus Christ *gave* His life to save poor sinners from *eternal* death. Esther once pleaded in the presence of an *earthly* king for her people—the Lord Jesus has entered "into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of *God* for us." If the Jews of old loved Esther, because she did so much out of love to them how much the more should we love Jesus, "because He first loved us."



## CHAPTER X.

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### CHILDREN IN TROUBLOUS TIMES.

**A**T the time it pleased the Lord to turn again the captivity of Zion, He stirred up the heart of Cyrus, King of Persia, that he gave all Jews liberty to return at once to the land of their fathers, to build the house of the Lord.

Then the chief of the fathers, and about 42,000 of the people assembled together, and they presently set out to journey homewards to Canaan. They took their cattle with them, and also carried back all the vessels of gold and silver which Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the *first* temple.

Their going forth out of captivity was *not* attended with great signs and wonders such as the Lord wrought when He brought Israel forth out of Egypt. They were but a small remnant

of a once great nation, led on by Zerubbabel, a prince of the house of David, and Jeshua, the high priest: yet the Lord God of Israel was with that little company, as they marched on day after day, until at length they reached their own land. So they dwelt in the cities of Israel.

A short time after their return from captivity, all the people assembled at Jerusalem, and they built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, for as yet they had not begun to build the temple.

In the second year, the foundation of the house of God was laid. While the builders did this, the priests blew with trumpets, the singers sang, and all the congregation shouted with a great shout, praising the Lord. As the children and young people saw and heard all this they shouted for joy: but the old men, who had seen the *first* temple, wept aloud.

What moved these dear old men to weep at a time when their own children and grandchildren were filled with joy? The *first* temple was called by David "a house of rest for the ark." Where was now the Ark, with its blood-sprinkled mercy seat of pure gold, and its cherubims of glory? Where that mysterious light—often called the "glory of the Lord"—which was to Israel a token of the Divine Presence, and which had once filled Solomon's

temple? What had become of the abundance of gold and silver which David and his people gave for the building of the *first* temple? Israel had lost all these. And the old men who had seen the house of God in its *first* glory, wept aloud. Howbeit the Lord spake to comfort these by assuring them that the *latter* glory of the house should exceed all that their eyes had seen. That the "desire of all nations" (the Lord Jesus Christ), would soon come to His temple, and the house should be filled with glory (Hag. ii. 1-9).

An account of the origin of the Samaritans, as also of their mixed worship, is to be found 2 Kings xvii. 24-34. These people came to the Jews, asking to be allowed to help to build the temple. Because the faithful Jews would not allow them so to do, the Samaritans became very angry, and at length they contrived to persuade a Persian king to cause the work to cease.

But the Lord would not suffer these enemies of Israel to have it all their own way. Encouraged by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the Jews once more began to build the temple. When it was finished, all the people kept the dedication of the house of God with great joy. And little children could once more lift up their voices, and sing the praises of God in His holy temple.

About fifty years after this, a venerable priest was one day seen weeping and casting himself down before the house of God. His name was Ezra. He had come up to Jerusalem by special favour of Artaxerxes, a king of Persia, to instruct the people in the law, &c. But when he reached the holy city, he heard with sorrow that the remnant of Israel had already departed from the Lord their God: some had even married strange wives. For this cause the godly Ezra wept.

The people saw him weeping: they knew the cause of his sorrow: and one after another of them came and wept with him, until there was a very great congregation of men, women, and children, all weeping together. And the people repented of heir evil deeds, and separated themselves from their strange wives.

All this time the city of Jerusalem laid waste, for its broken down walls were not as yet rebuilt. For the purpose of re-building the walls of the city beloved of his fathers, Nehemiah came from the Persian court up to Jerusalem.

Directed by Nehemiah, the people now began to re-build their city walls. But they had no sooner begun this work than the enemies of Israel also began to do their very utmost to prevent the Jews from building. Finding that they could not stop the work in any other way, they all conspired together to fight against

Jerusalem. These were indeed "troubulous times." The poor Jews knew not at what moment their enemies would attack them; so that while one builded at the wall, his fellow watched beside him with a weapon in his hand. Yea, the builders were even obliged to wield their tool with one hand, while they held a weapon with the other. Nevertheless the Jews, stimulated by the godly counsel and the noble example of the brave Nehemiah, diligently performed the will of God at the peril of their own lives: praying unto their God, and keeping vigilant watch. And the hand of the Lord was with those devoted builders. The work went on apace, until it was finished.

And the wall of Jerusalem was dedicated with gladness, with thanksgiving, and with singing. Upon that happy day two great companies of the people praised the Lord: and they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced with great joy. "The wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off."

Among the heathen it was said, "The Lord hath done great things for them;" but the remnant of Israel, praising God, sang, "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad."

Dear reader, what great things Jesus did for us on Calvary's cross! Shall we not also praise Him, with joyful lips?



## CHAPTER XI.

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### CHILDREN OF TYRE AND THE APOSTLE PAUL.

Acts xxi. 3-6

**OVER** the waters of the great sea, more than eighteen hundred years ago, sailed a noble ship bound for the city of Tyre. When it had safely reached the desired port, from that ship several passengers stepped ashore.

One of these passengers was a man who had been a most violent persecutor of the followers of Jesus, until the Lord, who had mercy upon him, called him by His grace. Then Paul became as a little child, and being "born again," he was chosen of God to preach that faith which once he sought to destroy. Constrained by the love of Christ, this devoted missionary, who was none less than the apostle Paul, had journeyed from country to country, everywhere fearlessly preaching Christ, and Him crucified.

Through evil report and good report Paul laboured, with untiring energy, enduring many persecutions, to witness to small and great "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

With Paul came a little company of diligent workers in the Lord's vineyard. Luke, the beloved physician, the writer of the Gospel which bears his name, and also of the Acts of the Apostles, was one of these. In all his wanderings Luke was a faithful companion of Paul; it has been thought very probable that Luke is the person spoken of in 2 Cor. viii. 18. 19. Timothy was another ardent worker together with Paul. From a child Timothy had known the Holy Scriptures, and having early given his heart to the Lord, he also willingly devoted all his youthful energies to the work of the Lord, labouring long and hard with Paul as a son works with a father.

In those days the disciples of Jesus were everywhere spoken against. Yet among them, in many a Gentile city, were to be found men of learning, position, and wealth; and also honourable women: nor did they forget to minister to the necessities of their poorer brethren and sisters in the faith. They generally met together for worship in an "upper room, in the house of one of the disciples. In the same upper room, rich men and wealthy ladies

sat down in happy fellowship, side by side with poor men and women.

Nor must I forget to mention the *children* who met together with their parents, &c., to worship the Lord ; children who loved the Lord with a pure heart fervently. It rejoices my heart to state that children have often been numbered with the faithful in Christ Jesus. Yea, during times of great persecutions, not only did men and woman prove themselves faithful unto death, but even *children* also nobly laid down their own lives, rather than deny their Lord and Master.

When it became known to the disciples at Tyre that Paul and his fellow-labourers in the gospel were in their midst, with what joy did they come together to welcome him and them. I almost fancy that I can see them all, sitting, each one listening with rapt attention, while Paul relates what great things the Lord had already done at Phillipi, at Corinth, at Ephesus, &c., of Lydia, also of the jailer, of Crispus and Justus, yea, of many others who once were beneath the power of darkness, but who had become believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. And when Paul went on to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, how delighted both young and old were to *hear* and to *receive* the word.

For Paul, although he was so gifted a man, was accustomed to teach, and to expound the

word of God in a very simple and loving manner. (1 Thess. ii. 7). When writing to the believers in Galatia, he addressed them as "my little children" (Gal. iv. 19); to the Corinthians he wrote, "I speak as unto my children" (2 Cor. vi. 13). And for all that he had himself long ago put away childish things he did not forget that he once understood as a child, and thought as a child. In one of his Epistles he lovingly addresses children thus, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and thy mother (which is the first commandment with promise); that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph. vi. i-3. Again, in another Epistle, he writes, "Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well pleasing unto the Lord" (Col. iii. 20). In both of these same Epistles, he also requests parents to behave very gently towards their children.

How thankful we all should feel that the Spirit of God moved Paul to write thus to children.

Paul only tarried seven days at Tyre; having already made up his mind to go up to Jerusalem. But the disciples at Tyre *by the Spirit* warned Paul not to set foot in that city. Yet Paul, who had an Israelite's love for the city of his fathers, longed to visit Jerusalem once more; and he determined to proceed upon his journey.



ESCAPE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL.



In many cities Paul had suffered violence ; often and often had he been compelled to flee hastily out of a city, driven forth by the hatred of his enemies. But when Paul was about to leave Tyre a loving company of men, women, and children, escorted him out of that city. For all the disciples at Tyre met together to bid Paul and his companions good-bye. And when they were out of the city, upon the sea-shore they all kneeled down together, and prayed.

Without attempting to describe the last parting moment, I will just say in passing, that when the elders of the Church at Ephesus, parted with Paul at Miletus, "they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him ;" but upon the sea shore of Tyre, not only *men*, but also *women* and *children* were present, to express their last loving farewell to the beloved Apostle.

Paul's company then "tookship," and the disciples of Tyre returned home again.

Could those children of Tyre ever forget Paul after this ? Or grow weary of speaking to one another about Him ? And when Paul was taken prisoner, and was forced to remain month after month in a lonely cell, who can tell how much it comforted him to think of the disciples at Tyre, of the love which even children had shown towards him ?

Every child who believes in Jesus may learn a lesson from the children of Tyre. Those children were not as yet old enough to do *great* things—to preach the gospel as did Paul—but they did what they could. And while they simply expressed their heart's affection for those who were boldly fighting the Lord's battles, they did that which was acceptable unto the Lord.

“ My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed, and in truth . . . . And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment ” (1 John iii 18-23).





## CHAPTER XII.

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### HOW THE GOOD SHEPHERD SAVED HIS LAMBS.

“ We'll sing of the Shepherd that died,  
That died for the sake of the flock ;  
His love to the utmost was tried,  
But firmly endured as a rock.

When blood from a victim must flow  
This Shepherd, by pity, was led  
To stand between us and the foe,  
And willingly died in our stead.’

**T**HE darkness of night rested over the land of Israel. At an hour when many people were peacefully sleeping upon their beds, from the midst of the Garden of Gethsemane there suddenly arose a cry of bitter anguish. It was the voice of One whose soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. So great, indeed, was His agony, that, as He kneeled down and prayed upon that cold winter's night, sweat like great drops of

blood fell to the ground ; as once and again His lips uttered the fervent prayer, " O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me : nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

Was He all alone in that garden? He had earnestly entreated three of His most devoted disciples to watch with Him, but they were now a little way off, and sleeping for very sorrow : howbeit an angel from heaven appeared to Him, and strengthened Him.

Presently a great multitude of people came towards Him, bearing torches and weapons. Like hungry wolves they came, thirsting for the blood of an innocent victim, for the life of the holy spotless Son of God. Fully aware of their wicked purpose, He went forth to meet them, and with an unruffled spirit He received the traitor's kiss. They meant to have suddenly seized upon His person, to have held Him fast, but when He spake they went backward, and fell to the ground. Why did He not at once escape? Listen to His own words, spoken at another time. " I am the good shepherd : the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." His enemies could have had no power at all against Him if He had not willingly laid down His life for the sake of that " little flock" which was so precious in His eyes that He counted not His own life too much to give for their redemption.

But while He allowed His enemies to lead Himself forth as a lamb to the slaughter, He would by no means suffer them to do any harm to one of the least of His sheep. Speaking with authority as the Son of God, He said to those wicked men, "If therefore ye seek Me, *let these go their way.*" Thus, by His own word He protected those who in the hour of His peril, forsook Him, and fled. The Good Shepherd knew beforehand what would be the end of it all. Upon the very day that He took little children up in His arms, even at the very moment when He put His hands upon them, and blessed them, He knew full well that the very youngest of those dear "little children" could never enter into the kingdom of heaven unless He gave His own life for them, and willingly died in their stead. And His loving heart yearned over the "little ones" whom Satan as a roaring lion sought to devour.

If He had shrunk from facing the foe, you and I, dear reader, must have been for ever *lost*. He knew that the eternal destiny of millions of the earth-born race would be decided by a victory which even an angel was powerless to achieve. And the decisive moment found the Good Shepherd fully prepared for the contest.

Satan, the World, and Hell withstood Him. Death prepared to seize upon His person. The Grave opened its mouth in the pathway

before Him. Against Him was arrayed the most violent hatred of man, and the combined forces of the power of darkness. Even this was not all. For our Substitute must endure the wrath of a sin-hating God, the flaming sword of Divine Justice must be sheathed in His own person, before the "little flock" could follow their Shepherd into the paradise of God.

Nevertheless, His eye pitied His beloved sheep, when he saw that they had no helper, and He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. His enemies mocked Him, they crowned Him with thorns, they pierced His hands and His feet, they even nailed Him to the shameful Cross.

"There from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow'd mingled down."

Exulting at the thought that they now had Him in their power, the assembly of the wicked enclosed Him; great and mighty enemies beset Him round.

Then the few trembling sheep that stood by and beheld during the dreadful struggle, were full of heaviness, for it seemed to them that the Good Shepherd would soon be overwhelmed by His enemies. But the Lord Jesus had already spoken concerning those same timid sheep:—"I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck

them out of My hand." The Captain of our Salvation was determined to accomplish our redemption, to save us with a great salvation; and although He was now assailed by Satan, derided by man, and forsaken of God; so that His soul was bowed down with unspeakable anguish, His strength was dried up like a potsherd, His tongue clave to His jaws, and His heart melted like wax within Him: although the heavens became black with darkness above Him, and the earth quaked beneath Him, and the rocks were rent asunder: yet *His arm was not for one moment shortened that it could not save.*

Indeed, even while He was suffering upon the Cross, the Good Shepherd displayed how great is His power to save all that call upon Him. Upon a cross beside Him hung one, whose feet had, during his whole lifetime, "run to evil. This poor sinner had now but a few minutes to live; Satan was just about to hurl him down headlong into eternal perdition, when the dying thief cried out aloud unto the Lord. At once his prayer was heard, and in a moment He that is mighty to save" had rescued him out of the hands of the enemy. Before the sun went down that day, the happy spirit of the repentant thief was with his Saviour in Paradise.

"The heaven declare the glory of God," and the cross reveals His amazing love. Upon the

Cross Jesus the Son of God suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. Upon the cross He fought the fight alone: until His own arm brought salvation. Then, with a shout of triumph, our victorious Redeemer announced that He had conquered and won. And then He bowed His head, and died—thus He gave His life for the sheep. His dead body was taken down from the cross, and laid in the silent tomb.

As sheep which have no shepherd are bereft of hope, and terror-stricken, even so did the "little flock" now weep and lament, because of that which had befallen the good shepherd. Mary Magdalene was one of them: she stood before the sepulchre, and wept there John. xx. 11. But their sorrow was soon turned into joy; for the God of peace "brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." And when He stood once more in their midst, and they knew that He was indeed risen from the dead, they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory. The "poor of the flock" were now able to apprehend the blessed results of the good shepherd's glorious victory. Then understood they that He had vanquished all their enemies, that He had delivered them from the power of Satan, Death, Hell. Nor could any one take from them their joy.

Having now made peace by the Blood of His cross, the good shepherd said one day unto Peter, "Feed my lambs . . . Feed my sheep."

Who are His lambs? Who are His sheep? Every one of them that "hear" the good Shepherd's voice, and follow Him. He knoweth them, He loveth them; He bled for them, He died for them, and He hath redeemed them to God by His blood. The very youngest of believers might well rejoice at the thought that they belong to Jesus, that He spake of them when He said, "My lambs" (John xx. 16).

Dear unsaved reader, if you will but come to Jesus, He will save you — He will call you by name, He will own you as one of His little flock."

The Good Shepherd will very soon come forth again from heaven. He will then take the whole of His beloved flock to be with Himself for ever. Then, with exceeding joy, will He present those for whom He bled and died, before the presence of His glory, and say, "Behold, I and the children which God hath given Me."