

"THEM THAT HONOR ME I WILL HONOR."

– 2 CHRONICLES 29:18-31. – *DECEMBER 4.* –

HEZEKIAH was reckoned in the Lord's sight as one of the three most acceptable kings who ever sat upon the throne of Judah – David and Josiah being the other two. (2 Kings 18:5.) His case was the more remarkable in that he was the son of King Ahaz, one of the most reprehensible kings that ever occupied that throne – one so disesteemed that he was not even buried in the sepulchers of the kings. King Ahaz had fostered idolatry in its worst forms, and under his reign the kingdom had sunk to a very low condition every way. At the age of twenty-five years Hezekiah, on his father's death, had succeeded to the throne, and his entire reign was one of reformation and indicated a hearty desire to please the Lord.

The secret of the difference between the father and the son is found in the fact that the mother was a godly woman, and no doubt this is one particular reason why her name, Abijah, is mentioned in the Scriptures. The name signifies, "My father is Jehovah," and implies that one or both of her parents were reverent and God-fearing. How she came to be the wife of so ignoble a king we do not surely know, but evidently the irreverence and idolatry of her husband had no contaminating influence upon her mind. This is intimated by the name given to her son Hezekiah, which signifies, "Strength of Jehovah." In this we have another illustration of the Apostle's words, "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband, else [R3462 : page 348] were your children unholy." (I Cor. 7:14.) So far as parentage is concerned the intimation is that the Lord is pleased to recognize the child as the offspring of the believing parent, and thus it comes under divine providence and care, similar to that of its believing parent, up to the age of discretion.

What a lesson we have here respecting the power of a mother for good. True, in this case as a wife she did not succeed in influencing her husband to divine reverence and righteousness, but she evidently did exercise a moulding, controlling influence in the formation of her son's character. The influence of the wife and mother rightly exercised is very highly to be appreciated, but some, failing to properly value their privileges and opportunities in the home, have launched forth in public efforts to the neglect of home duties – a serious mistake.

CLEANSING THE TEMPLE.

The lesson recounts the opening of the Temple and the cleansing of its various parts, which apparently required sixteen days. This probably included the restoration of certain brass plates and borders which we are informed King Ahaz had removed from the altar and tables for use in other places; but sixteen days would be none too long for a proper cleansing of the building anyway. We recall that history says that before the reign of Queen Elizabeth, while Great Britain was under the power of Rome, St. Paul's Cathedral in London was used as a kind of market place, donkeys with burdens passing up and down the aisles (previously and subsequently used for **[R3463 : page 348]** worship), huckstering and servant hiring, etc., being a part of the regular routine. Evidently it is very easy for any people to lose its reverence for God and holy things, and such a loss is not only to be deprecated in a nation, but particularly in the hearts of individuals, for with the loss of reverence goes one of the mental qualities most helpful to a moral and religious life.

The restoration of the Temple to the service of God was celebrated by King Hezekiah and the rulers of the city and the princes of the nation with great zeal, for indeed the whole nation seems in some measure to have come to a realization of its low condition and need of an uplift. Our lesson proceeds to describe a

special sin offering for the sins of the people. The fact that seven bullocks, seven rams, etc., were sacrificed instead of one of each would merely mean that it was to intensify the matter, seven being a symbol of perfection or completeness.

This was not the regular Atonement Day sacrifice, because it was in April instead of in September, but we may be sure that no Atonement Day sacrifice had been offered in the Temple for many years, – so thoroughly had the king and the nation under his guidance rejected the Lord and the gracious arrangements he had made for their forgiveness and fellowship with him. The proper date for sin atonement having passed, it was no doubt proper enough that the sacrifices should be offered in the middle of the year rather than wait for the beginning of the new year; but the atonement effected would not be good for twelve months, but merely for the remainder of the year in which it was offered. The generous spirit of Hezekiah is exhibited in his instruction to the priest that the same atonement should be effected not only for the people of the kingdom of Judah but also for those of the ten tribes which had separated from them.

SPIRITUAL TEMPLE CLEANSING.

Spiritual lessons for the Church may be drawn from this narrative. The antitype would not be the cleansing and care of church buildings, chapels, cathedrals, etc., although it is certainly proper enough that any building used for the Lord's worship should be respected and kept in decency and in order. The antitype of the Jewish Temple is the spiritual Temple of which the Apostle speaking says, "Whose Temple ye are if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." Applying the lesson in an individual manner it would mean that if any of the Lord's people have in any measure fallen into worldliness, sin, the worship of Mammon – idolatry – the neglect of the worship and service of the true God in any measure or degree, there should be first of all a cleansing to the best of our ability, a reformation, and secondly an appeal to God for at-one-

ment with him, for forgiveness of sins. It is not necessary that we should offer bullocks, goats and rams, but it is necessary that in such a reformation, such a preparation for divine forgiveness, we should come before the Lord in the merit of the great sacrifice for sins which he has appointed and which already has been made – "once for all."

Applying the lesson on a larger scale to the Church as a whole, we look back in history and see the time that the Temple of God was completely given over to idolatry, when the "continual sacrifice" was set aside, and masses, fresh sacrifices, "abominations" in God's sight were substituted, and even the form of godliness was almost obsolete and supplanted by heathen festivals and carnivals and image worship, wholly misunderstanding the divinely arranged faith worship. In the Lord's providence a great reformation came in the days of Luther, Melancthon and others, and this cleansing of the Lord's Temple is still in progress, because, alas, all of the debris of Antichrist has not yet been removed. **[R3463 : page 349]**

A PART IN THE SERVICE FOR EACH.

Much of superstition, false doctrines and mummery still remains. With many the "mass" is still revered, but, thank God, with the few the precious blood shed once for all for the remission of sins has come back again into a proper appreciation. Let all of the Royal Priesthood, the consecrated followers of the great High Priest of our profession, be on the alert to do all in their power for the cleansing of the Temple of every defilement of error, and let all of the antitypical Levites, the household of faith, lend willing hands in this same direction, cooperating for the one great end which at last will be secured – not by our efforts, but by him who declared that his influence will be as fuller's soap and as a refiner's fire to purify all of the sons of Levi – to purify all of the true believers, that ultimately they may be acceptable sharers in the heavenly Kingdom and its glorious work of uplifting all the people and shedding forth

the blessings of the great atonement upon all the families of the earth.

The work of reestablishing the true religion recounted in our lesson was not to be accomplished in a doleful manner, but with joy and rejoicing. The priests and Levites proceeded with the various departments of the work, and musical instruments and the psalms of David expressed the joy of those who rejoiced in the new order of things. The king and the people bowed before the Lord, giving the worship of their hearts to the invisible one instead of to idols and the work of their own hands. King Hezekiah, evidently addressing the people, said, "Now have ye consecrated yourselves unto the Lord: come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings into the house of the Lord. And the congregation brought in sacrifices and thank offerings, and as many as were of willing heart brought burnt offerings."

Thus it is with the Lord's truly consecrated people today. Rejoicing to be free from the errors and sins of the past, they rejoice to worship the Lord with thank offerings and praise and true worship. Let this be more and more the attitude of those who have been blessed of the Lord with the opening of the eyes of their understanding and a return to his favor.

