

DAVID KING OVER JUDAH AND ISRAEL

Entered Jerusalem After the Judges Had Failed to Conquer and Saul Had Passed It By

CITY OF WONDERFUL HISTORY

S. S. Lesson For May 23 Is "David King Over Judah and Israel," II Sam., 2: 1-7 5: 1-5

(By William T. Ellis)

A great name emerges in the present study. It is not the name of David the outlaw, whom we now find coming to the throne for which his many vicissitudes had prepared him, but the name of that ancient city which is in our own day figuring increasingly in the news dispatches.

Perhaps it has never occurred to the reader that there ever was a time when Jerusalem definitely ascended to its primary among historic cities. We vaguely think of it as being like its earlier king, the mysterious Melchizedek, a timeless name. Certainly Jerusalem, which is our spelling of the old name borne by the city before ever the Israelites entered Canaan, was a mighty fortress centuries before written history began to deal with it.

With the possible exception of Constantinople, there are no other cities on earth which has anything like the romantic and historic and religious associations of the city of David, which is still a sacred shrine for the three great monotheistic faiths—Judaism, Christianity and Mohammedanism. Joshua and his hosts had been unable to wrest the city from the Jebusites. The Judges had never conquered it, and Saul had passed it by. Perched on a great rock, surrounded on three sides by ravines, the city was so impregnable that the Jebusites boasted that the blind and lame could defend it. Certainly the Philistines and the Amalekites and the Israelites had all dashed against it in vain.

Invaded Through the Water Courses

One day, a few years ago, when visiting Jerusalem I was walking through the ravines that still surround it, and I saw that the British excavators, whose carefully guarded diggings were the talk of the countryside, had excavated clear down, through the overlay of the crowded centuries, to a deep aqueduct cut in the solid rock. This many archaeological friends told me, was a Jebusite creation, and it probably was visible in the time of David. We only know that when David at length came to his kingship over the united nation, and had to choose a neutral capital which, could not be credited either to Judah or Israel, he conquered Jerusalem, making entrance through the subterranean water courses. No man knows fully the number and nature of these mysterious conduits and caverns which, in perfect network, underlie the sacred rock. When once they are explored there will probably be revelations to astound the world.

All the boasts of the Jebusites were set at naught when David and his host conquered the city, which to this day is associated with his name. At the present time the possession of Jerusalem is a factor in international diplomacy. More persons are interested in this world capital than are interested in Washington, or London, or Berlin, or Paris, or Petrograd or Peking. It is a capital of human hearts. Its greatest primacy is due to the awful fact that it was in Jerusalem that David's Greater Son erected His universal throne, which was a cross.

The Ways and Wiles of an Outlaw

Before ever he won Jerusalem, however, David had undergone a dark and discouraged period in his life. Driven out from the Israelites by the insatiable jealousy of Saul, he had at last taken refuge in the city of Gath, where he became a vassal of King Achish. The driving out of David from the nation that needed him so sorely recalls an equal blunder in our own time on the part of the Christian Church. There is no denying that tens of thousands of strong men, especially among the laity, have been crowded out of the church by a diversity of causes. There is no value in laying the fault at the door of any man or men, or any particular ecclesiastical system. The immediate truth is that the church ought to move to secure the return to her membership and to her service, for their own sakes, and for hers, of these strong men who have become leaders in the world; but who no longer turn to the church for fellowship, inspiration and comfort. The movement in Ireland for the return of her emigrants is wise and timely, but it is neither so opportune nor so necessary as an "adred" "Back-to-the-Church" movement.

Like David, many who have been forced out of the church because it did not give them a field for the exercise of their abilities. More persons are to be theirs from God, have slumped in their morals, even as did David while among the Philistines. He deceived Achish by pretending to war against him, while he was actually making forays only against the Amalekites. He lived in a tissue of falsehood and misrepresentation, and these days must have been unhappier for David even than those when he was a hunted wanderer like the wild goats upon the mountains.

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The Suicide of a King

In the great battle of Gilboa between the Israelites and the Philistines, Saul and his army were routed. God be merciful to the man who so ineffectually leads the hosts of righteousness that they are defeated. Saul had been so engrossed in his personal ambitions and jealousies that the cause, which was the one warrant for his life, had suffered. His plight was worse than David's. We find him at length consulting the witch of Endor. Whichever way he turned he heard only words of doom.

Loyal and Royal

How a man behaves toward an enemy, gives a good measure of that man's character. We see the stuff that David was made of when we note his magnanimous conduct toward his dead foe, Saul. He wrote the Amalekite who had robbed the body of royal insignia and had hastened to him with them, hoping thereby to secure a reward.

Among Catholics . . . 37

Among Jews . . . 40 Among the religionless, especially among Socialists . . . 605

TO REDUCE DANGEROUS VARICOSE VEINS

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