

=UNUSUAL BIBLE STORIES=

Lesson 8

Michal, the Critic

SCRIPTURE: II Samuel 6:12-23; I Chronicles 15:16-16:43

AIM: to teach my pupils the danger of criticizing people who are sincere in their religious service, and to lead them to refrain from harsh and critical words

POINT OF CONTACT: Since the lesson this week deals with the ark of the covenant, ask the pupils to review the recent lesson concerning the ark of the covenant and Dagon. See how much they know. Blank paper might be passed out and the pupils could be asked to write down the number of items they remember about the ark of the covenant. A small prize could be given to the winner.

INTRODUCTION: For a long time the ark of the covenant had been away from Jerusalem. The Philistines had stolen it, and then they had brought it back. Now David is bringing it back to Zion to be placed in a specially prepared tabernacle, tent or pavilion, though he makes the mistake of letting it be brought on a new cart. (It was supposed to be carried by men.) Nevertheless, David means well, and the ark is coming back home. David is very happy; he is so happy that he dances in the streets in such a way to make Michal, his wife, despise him. In her heart she despises him so much that when he returns home, she is bitterly critical. Because of this, God strikes her barren and does not give her the privilege of bearing children.

Let us notice the spiritual truths of the lesson as recorded in II Samuel 6:12-23.

I. THE RETURNING OF THE ARK.

1. It was David's ruling passion. David had such an affection for the ark and such a desire to bring it up to Zion that he prepared a new tent for its reception. He could not be satisfied until the task was done. Dr. Bob Jones, Sr. used to say, "Every great man is motivated by a great idea or a ruling passion." This is true. Each person should have a realization of what his big purpose in life really is, and he should dedicate himself constantly to that purpose. Not only that, but when a person sets his mind to do something, he should do it with all his might. Such was the case with David. He set a great example for each of us.
2. The trip was started properly. Read II Samuel 6:13. You will notice when they had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings. I Chronicles 15:26, in telling the same story, says that the Levites that bare the ark "offered seven bullocks and seven rams." This was a thank offering for the happy beginning and a petition for prosperous continuation of the undertaking. It should be noted that the first steps of a venture are tremendously important and should be very well prepared and positively taken. The beginning is always of vital importance and should certainly fit the task.
3. It was properly carried out. The procession was led by 862 Levites clad in white. Three choirs were playing respectively on cymbals, psalteries and harps, over the first of which were Heman (the grandson of Samuel), Asaph and Ethan. Then followed Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, who trained the singers; and there were two doorkeepers. Last of all came the king with the elders and captains of thousands and the whole body of the people.

As they journeyed, they shouted. See II Samuel 6:15. No doubt they used the well-known shout, "Let God arise!" The Levites sang hymns, and David no doubt carried a harp in his own hand.

The lesson here is simply that God's work ought to be done right. If a person teaches a Sunday school class, it should be done properly. The preparation, the classroom, the teaching, the organization, the visitation, the dress of the teacher and everything should be befitting a job so important as the one of teaching a Sunday school class. Whatever the job is, if it is done for God, it should be done well and properly.

II. THE REJOICING OF DAVID.

1. It was the greatest day of David's life. He had a perfect right to rejoice.
2. David danced before the Lord with all his might. In II Samuel 6:14, the word "danced" means "springing around in half circles." On some occasions, it was the turning around in whole circles resting the heel of the

left foot. There are two things to notice here. First is that David had emotion in his Christianity. This is certainly proper. The second thing is that he did it with all his might. A task should be done just that way.

3. David was girded with a linen ephod. This was a garment worn by common people, even by a child when admitted to service in a priest's family. David took off his royal robes and dressed as a commoner, if you please. David was the king, but he was too happy to use the restraint, formality and dignity usually associated with the throne. When it comes to one's religion, he is neither king nor peasant, and he should express himself to God and to people about his God as everyone else should. It is true, "the ground is level at the foot of the cross!"
4. David sang with the choir, and he wrote and sang a psalm. This psalm may be found in I Chronicles 16:7-36. How happy David was!

III. THE REBUKE OF MICHAL. Read II Samuel 6:16, 19. The happiest day of David's life did not end without a cloud. His wife, Michal, Saul's daughter (verse 16), came forth to meet him with the other women (verse 19). She watched him from the window and "despised him in her heart" (verse 16). Upon his return home, she scolded him and rebuked him.

1. It started in her heart. All gossip, criticism and unnecessary rebuking starts in the heart. If one can keep his heart right, he can keep under control his evil spirit. This is why the Psalmist said, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer," Psalm 19:14.
2. It started because she was not participating herself. Notice in verse 16 she was looking through the window. Why was she not rejoicing in the streets? It is the spectator who always criticizes. That is why it is so important that God's people stay busy for God, actively and positively doing something. When one participates, he knows the trials and problems of the other participants, and he will look with leniency on them.
3. She was critical because of her father. Bear in mind, she was the daughter of Saul. Saul it was who became jealous, covetous and envious of David. The spirit of Saul is found in his daughter. This is not unusual. Not only should we refrain from being critical, from backbiting, from spreading gossip, from giving unnecessary rebuke, etc. for ourselves, but also because it will be seen in the lives of our children. It is tremendously important that we watch ourselves. Sauls make Michals.
4. She openly rebuked him. Notice what she said in II Samuel 6:20. This was a slander, a statement of satire. In other words, she made fun of his spiritual devotion. This is usually the case. People who do not participate criticize those who do as being fanatics, as "going to seed" on religions, etc. Usually it will manifest itself in satire, ridicule, etc.
5. She criticized because she was proud. Notice II Samuel 6:20, "...who uncovered himself...as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!" This does not mean that David was immodestly dressed; it means that he appeared before his subjects clad in an inferior dress. The Levites were to occupy an humble social position. Michal was criticizing David for being "beneath himself." There is nothing worse than pride. God hates pride, and it is pride that causes much of our criticism of each other.
6. She called him an empty-headed fool. Notice the word, "vain" in II Samuel 6:20. The word "vain" is "raca" of Matthew 5:22. It means "empty," "void of virtue," "void of reputation," and "void of worldly means." The Hebrews, when expressing the greatest possible contempt for a man, called him "empty," and no word could be found better conveying the meaning of thorough worthlessness. This was the worst thing that a Hebrew could say about another. Here we have insubordination. Yes, he was her husband, and he was also her king; and we should always treat our superiors and those over us with the dignity the office requires. It is important that young people learn to respect age, authority, position, etc.

CONCLUSION: Our pupils should learn to have the devotion and joy and praise of a David and at the same time avoid the critical nature of a Michal.