Mr. Bryan's Bible Talks

ONE OF HISTORY'S GREATEST DISCOVERIES
By WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

BIBLE TEXT—LESSON FOR MAY 21
(II Chronicles xxxiv:14-16, 29-32)

And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the Lord, Hilkiah the priest found a book of the law of the Lord given by Moses.

And Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan.

And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and brought the king word back again, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they do it.

Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem.

And the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the Lord.

And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book.

And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.

This is the age of discovery. Archeologists, inventors, chemists, astronomers are continually bringing forth new wonders for us to contemplate. Within the span of a few years we have been given the automobile, the flying machine, the submarine, the wireless telegraph, the radio telephone, and from ugly and apparently useless substances come forth, under the magic touch of the chemist, wondrous colors to make brilliant the garments of the world and medicines to heal the sick. Discovery is piled upon discovery in such rapidity that oftentimes we are bewildered thereby.

But, wonderful and far-reaching in their effects on life as these discoveries are, you will have to turn to the 34th chapter of Second Chronicles to learn of what is still, and always will remain, one of the greatest discoveries in history.

For twenty-five hundred years ago, in the reign of Josiah, king of Judah, the Bible, that had been lost, was found again—the "book of the law of the Lord given by Moses."

Just how and for how long the Book that has shaped the destiny of the world was lost is not definitely known, but the fact that in the course of the history of the Jewish kingdom it was lost is proof that it was neglected. If it had been in daily use, if the people had shaped their lives according to its precepts, its disappearance would have been at once noted and its recovery soon announced. But the Jews were led by rulers who oscillated from fidelity to God to subservience to heathen gods, and the punishment that follows wrongdoing, carried many captive into foreign lands. And some time during these black years the "book of the law of the Lord given by Moses," the Bible, was lost

AN EXAMPLE OF EARLY PIETY

It was during this dismal time in the history of the Jews that Josiah, who was the son of a wicked father, began his reign in Jerusalem at eight years of age; when he was only 16 he sought after "the God of David." He is one of the many illustrations in the Bible of early piety. We are not informed as to the influences that moulded him, but as he could not have been the pupil of his father the honor falls to his mother, Jedidah, or to some of the priestly class.

Before taking up his work that led to the Bible's recovery, it may be well to observe that a large percentage of those who enter upon a Christian life begin young. There are several reasons for this.

First, the environment of a Christian home creates conditions in which faith germinates. The child, sooner than many suppose, finds its heart taking hold upon faith in God and in Christ.

Faith is a much earlier growth than reason. According to law, the young man is presumed to be immature in his reason until he is 21. No evidence of precocity can overthrow this presumption. The calendar is the only proof that the courts will receive. Until a boy is 21 his deed is not valid and his vote is not received. While maturity in woman is presumed to arrive a little earlier than in man, it, too, is calculated by years; differences that manifest themselves in individuals are not taken into consideration.

With faith it is different. Faith in the parent springs up early in the child and this faith naturally broadens into faith in others until the child, long before it reaches legal maturity, can worship God and give its love to Christ in return for Christ's love.

THE PERIOD OF REBELLION

The second reason is to be found in the fact that every child passes through a period of rebellion, latent or expressed, against parental authority. The prodigal son gives us an exhibition of this rebellion carried to the point of separation from home.

In most cases affection, if not wisdom, restrains the child during the years when youth is passing into maturity. This is especially true if, before this transition period comes, the child has learned to supplement the authority of the parent with the authority of a loving Heavenly Father. Obedience to parents makes obedience to God easier, and obedience to God strengthens the child's respect for its parents.

The peril of the child is increased by the fact that just at the time when the spirit of independence is taking the place of parental authority he begins to study the universe about him.

At this period any theory that relieves the child of a sense of responsibility is more attractive than it is earlier or later, and, therefore, many are led away from faith in God. Some afterward return as intellectual prodigal sons; some wander off into a starless night even though they recognize, as Romanes did, the awful contrast between the "hallowed creed" of their youth and "the lonely mystery of existence" as they find it to be when they abandon belief in God.

Fortunate for the child if its religious faith becomes firmly rooted before it encounters the strong temptations that come as it approaches manhood or womanhood. No one who has come in contact with shipwrecked lives will take the responsibility of advising a child to postpone a confession of its faith when its heart is ready to make a confession.

HILKIAH FINDS THE BOOK

At the age of 20 Josiah began to purge his country of every form of idolatry that had become rife throughout its borders during the brief reign of his wicked father and the long reign of his grandfather; at 26 he began to repair Solomon's temple, that had been allowed to fall into decay while the idolatrous held their revels and orgies and human sacrifices. It was at this time that Hilkiah, the high priest, unearthed the lost word of God, what is supposed to have been the Pentateuch.

When the book was brought to the king there was great rejoicing. He gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem and then he brought to the house of the Lord all the inhabitants, the priests and the people. Standing in his place, he read to them "all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the Lord;" and he "made a covenant before the Lord to walk after the Lord and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all his heart, and with all his soul" to perform the words of the covenant that were written in the book.

He not only made a promise for himself, but he brought his people into the covenant with him, and they "did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers."

Several of those who write upon the lessons that the Bible teaches have found in this account of the loss and recovery of the Bible a suggestion as to the numerous ways in which the Word of God is lost now, for it goes without saying that an individual, as well as a nation, may lose the Bible, and lose it today as well as in the past.

The reason is not the same in all cases; anything that is substituted for the Bible will serve to banish it from the thought. If one obeys the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me;" he will be anxious to keep in touch with God's word and will want to know God's will that he may obey it. If he worships any of the many false goods, he will feel little interest in the Word of God. In fact, he will deliberately avoid it because its language will accuse him.

THE FALSE GODS OF TODAY

It is hardly necessary to say that there are as many false gods today as there were in the days of the Hebrew kings, or that the temptation to worship these gods is as strong today as then.

We have the god of gold, worshipped by those who put money above everything else; the god of fashion, worshipped by those who long for distinction in the social world; the god of fame, before which those prostrate themselves who set their heart upon the distinctions that can be won in any department of activity.

We have the god of ease, which those worship who think only of food and bodily comfort—who eat and eat and eat, and sleep and sleep and sleep, and then rise up to eat and eat and eat again.

We have the god of intellect, worshipped by those who, putting the brain above the heart, and reason above faith, proudly follow the wanderings of the mind instead of humbly trusting the Word of God.

We have the travel god, worshipped by those who develop the wanderlust and associate with rare and unusual things until the little tasks that make up everyday life pall upon them.

We have the god of chance, worshipped by those who are bent on getting something for nothing; the god of passion, worshipped by those who subordinate the mind and the soul to the appetites of the body; the rum god, in whose worship Americans used to spend more than an enducation and religion combined; and, last and most deceptive of all, the great god self, of which all the other false gods are but masks.

THE GREAT GOD SELF

It is self that obscures the Creator—self that is puffed up with its own importance and seeks to make the world subservient to it; self that could not live an hour if it had to give its attention to its own vital organs. One would die of exhaustion if he had to swing the pendulum of the heart or pump the bellows of the lungs or direct the digestive organs in their unceasing work.

But the Heavenly Father has provided that man can live without conscious effort in order that man may devote his thought to God's work and to the welfare of his fellows. And yet, many give to their Maker no thought at all and are indifferent to His revealed word.

Josiah 2,500 years ago recognized the value of God's word and led the people in the making of a covenant for the worship of Jehovah. He entered into these covenants with "all his heart and with all his soul." If Josiah and his people so highly prized the Pentateuch, what should be our estimate of the Bible as we have it—the Old Testament enlarged and a New Testament added?

WHAT THE BIBLE GIVES US

I venture to say that the Bible has done more to determine the civilization of today than all other books combined.

It gives the conception of God entertained by the civilized world; it gives us an infallible guide—a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.

It gives us the only authentic account of Christ, whose life on earth began with a virgin birth and ended in a resurrection—the greatest fact of history and the growing figure of all time.

The world never needed the Bible more than now; it needs a personal God, near enough to hear prayer and willing to answer; it needs an inspired Word of God; it needs the full-statured Christ of whom the Bible tells.

STANDING UP FOR GOD
By WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

BIBLE TEXT—LESSON FOR MAY 28
(Jeremiah xxvi:8-16)

Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die.

Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and