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Comments on the Lesson
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 24th
"HISTORY IN THE OLD
TESTAMENT"

by Rev. John Smith
In this week's lesson we are to consider the message of history as we find it in the Old Testament. In reading Biblical history it ought to be remembered that the writers were religious men who were not concerned with history for history's sake. They were interested in presenting the story of the past with all its religious significance in order that the people might benefit from the failures and successes of experience and so be better equipped to meet the religious and moral problems of their time. Viewing the centuries of their history the historians saw it to be closely related to their religious faith and allegiance. History for them could not be clearly understood apart from God, whom they considered to be active in history dealing with the lives, characters and deeds of men and nations as they corresponded or failed to correspond to His Divine Purpose. Our key verse in a few words sums up the philosophy of history held by the Old Testament historians "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" - Psalm 33:12.

The Biblical Basis:
1-Kings 4:21-29; 11:6, 9-11
The passages of Scripture chosen as a basis for this study in Old Testament history are taken from the story of Solomon, whose reign is looked upon as the golden age of the Israelite monarchy. David, his father had built a great kingdom by victories in many wars. It was left for Solomon to rule over it wisely and well and to keep the peace. A commentator has put it this way "David by his successful wars, compelled them to subjection, and Solomon by his admirable wisdom, made it easy and reasonable."

In 1 Kings 4:21-29 we learn, of Solomon's: 1. Great Kingdom. 2. Splendid Court. 3. Endowment of Wisdom. Solomon not only ruled over the territories of the Israelites but also held power over the neighbouring kingdoms, the princes of which served him, added to his wealth and paid him homage. Strange as it may seem this relationship is recorded as being happy and Solomon ruled over a kingdom of plenty, peace and satisfaction; at least in the early part of his reign. As might be expected of a monarch who held such power and received such gifts in service and homage the royal court which he kept was one of great splendour and pomp and lacked nothing from the materialistic viewpoint. Solomon had vast incomes and lived at vast expense. It has been said of Solomon that he had knowledge, wisdom and understanding - "a quickness of thought, strength of memory, and clearness of judgment." These qualities we usually sum up in the one word wisdom. Herein lay the secret of Solomon's success and the reason for his great renown. It was an endowment of God and he used it fully in his functions as a mighty ruler and in his advice to his fellow men.

In the 1 Kings 11:6, 9-11, we have the sad account of the great monarch's downfall, who in spite of the fact that he had been blessed by God with great wisdom, grew cool and indifferent toward Him and failed to fulfil his religious duties. He tolerated and supported the worship of strange deities and so set the example of religious and moral laxity which began to corrupt his kingdom. Nehemiah 13:26 puts it concisely: "There was no king like him who was beloved of God" - nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin." The wisdom with which Solomon so wisely guided others evidently was not applied to himself in the later years of his life; and the kingdom of great extent, glory and pomp was destined to crumble.

The Application:
We are often too busy in the routine of making a living to think about God. We would do well to realize that our God is righteous, that He is active in the world, and that He makes demands upon us as individuals and nations.

There are few indeed of the King Solomon calibre, but we are all creatures of God and as such have our lives to live. The endowments and responsibilities with which God has blessed us vary, but this is certain, however, simple they may be, He expects us to make use of them. The story of Solomon's success and failure can be helpful to us in guiding us on to faithful service and warning us away from the sin of ingratitude and willful disobedience.

What we are as individuals determines the character of our nation. It behooves us not to be too self-satisfied but to remember the injunction "let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." A righteous people will make a righteous nation and a righteous nation will receive the benediction of our God.

Helpful Quotations:
"It is very desirable that those that have gifts of any kind should have large hearts to use them for the good of others."
"It is easier to see a mischief, and show it to others, than to shun it ourselves."
"Those who have dominion over men are apt to forget God's dominion over them."
"Sin brings ruin upon families, and lays men's honor in the dust."
"No nation, no group of nations, which lives only for the material and ignores the spiritual values can endure."
"Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people."

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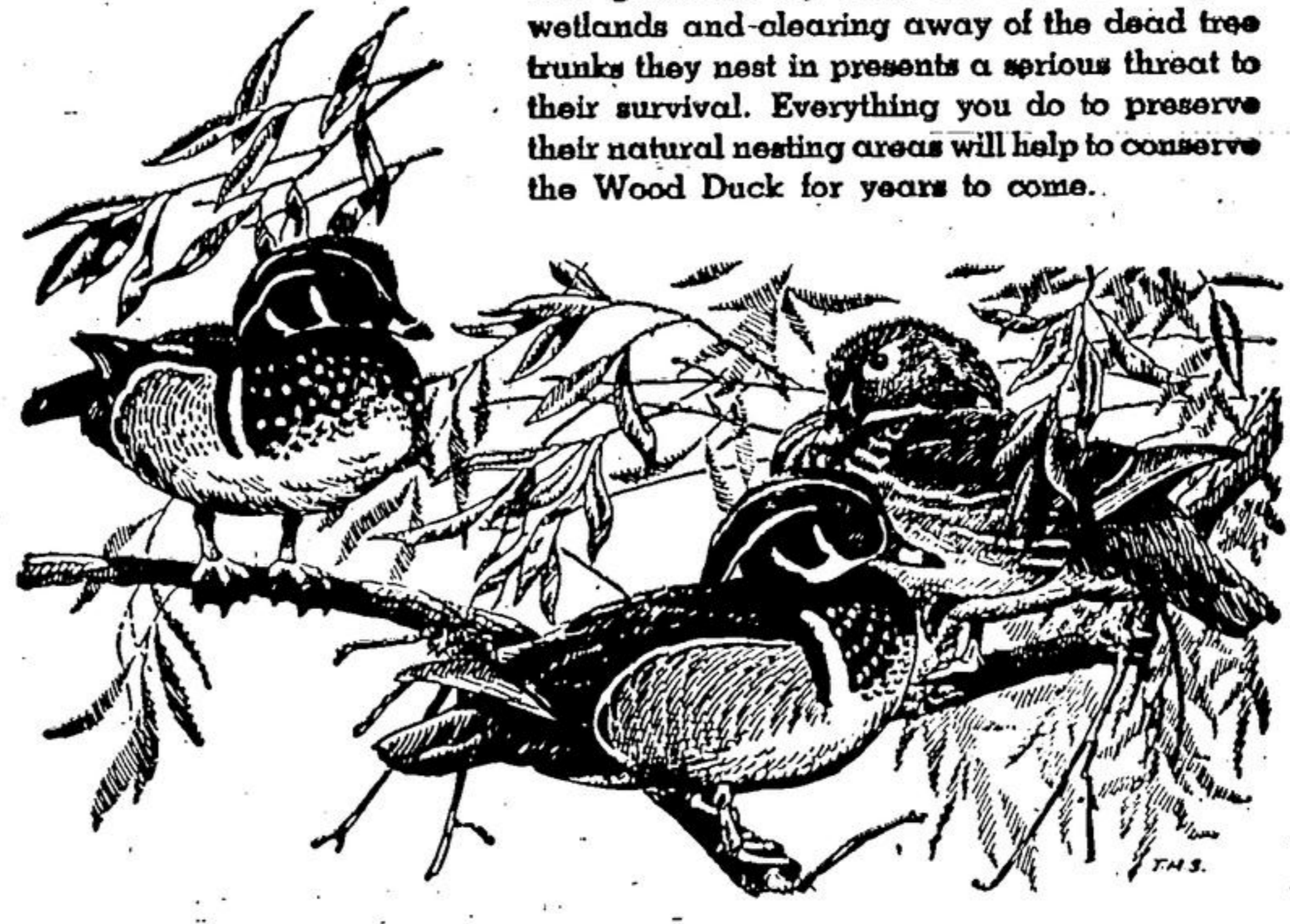
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