

should be inserted before Oded. This latter is in accordance with the three most ancient translations of the Hebrew text, the Septuagint, Syriac and Vulgate, and is most probably the true reading. Took courage and put away, &c. Animated by the reasonable and pious address of Azariah, Asa became a more zealous reformer than ever, employing all his royal authority and influence to extirpate every vestige of idolatry from the land.—*Samson*. Abominable idols. The adjective indicates Jehovah's detestation of idolatry. Compare 1 Kings xv., 12 and 1 Kings xiv., 23, 24. Out of all the land. Previous reforms had extended only to Jerusalem and the other chief cities of Judah (chap. xiv., 3-5) this reformation embraced every nook and corner of the kingdom. Taken from Mount Ephraim. "He may have acquired cities of Ephraim, the conquest of which is not recorded, (ch. xvii., 2); but it has been commonly supposed that the reference is to cities which his father Abijah had taken, in that quarter (chap. xiii. 19).—*Samson*. Renewed the Altar. "Dedicated it afresh, or perhaps enlarged it, that more sacrifices might be offered on it than ever before; for it can not be supposed that his father had no victims offered on it till the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa, who had previously been zealous in restoring Divine worship."—*Adam Clarke*. Before the porch—at the entrance of the temple.

V. 9. Strangers . . . out of Ephraim and Manasseh. The separation of the kingdoms had made their Israelite brethren "strangers" or "foreigners," to Judah.

And out of Simeon. "It is probable that the bulk of the Simeonites had from the first attached themselves to the more southern kingdom, within the limits of which lay their inheritance (Josh. xiv., 1). But it appears from this passage and from chap. xvi., 6, that some of them dwelt beyond the limits of Judah and within those of Israel. Compare Gen. xlix., 7, where it is prophesied that they will be scattered." Some of the Simeonites had transferred their allegiance to Asa.—*Sp. Com.* Led him out of Israel in abundance. All whose hearts yearned for the pure worship of Jehovah, found their way back to the temple at Jerusalem, and to the authority of the house of David, which had the promise of the Divine blessing.

V. 10. In the third month. Corresponding with our June. The time was the occasion of the feast of Pentecost.

V. 11. They offered . . . of the spoil taken from Zerah, see chap. xiv., 5. "When we read of men offering so much of their temporal possessions as is here recorded, we may be sure that their hearts were not fettered by a sinful love of temporal things, but that they were filled with the love of God. . . . We see, however, from what follows, that their offering of these sacrifices was not enough."—*Barth*.

2. THE COVENANT.—V. 11-14.

V. 12. Entered into a covenant. "Some solemn renewals of the original covenant which God made with their fathers in the wilderness (Exod. xxiv., 3-8) occur from time to time in the history of the Jews, following upon intervals of apostasy. The renewal in the reign of Asa is the first on record. The next falls 300 years later, in the reign of Josiah (2 Kings, xliii., 3; 2 Chron., xxxv., 31). There is a third in the time of Nehemiah (Neh. x., 28-39). On such occasions, the people bound themselves by a solemn oath to observe all the directions of the Law, and called down God's curse upon them if they forsook it."—*Sp. Com.*

To seek the Lord, &c. The covenant consisted of two parts; this was the first; the second is contained in the next verse.

V. 13. Whosoever would not seek, &c. This was the second part of the compact. Should

be put to death. It was an express commandment of the Law. See Exod. xlii., 20; Deut. xlii., 9, 15; xvii., 2-7.

V. 14. Sware unto the Lord. That the covenant might be properly binding. With a loud voice and with shouting. Joyous decision, firm resolution, perfect uprightness.—*Barth*.

3. THE HAPPY RESULTS.—V. 15.

V. 15. Rejoiced. They were not sorry for taking this solemn and important step. Was found of them—See Jer. xxxv., 15. Gave them rest—Probably lasted two years.

PRACTICAL LESSONS.

1. God aids His ways with us to our ways with Him. This truth is taught in the 2nd verse of the chapter most clearly.

2. There is no worthy returning to God without the putting away of sin. Verse 13.

3. All seeking of God must be with the whole heart, and being so, becomes an exceeding joy. Verse 15.—*S. S. Union Notes*.

Jan. 27.—Jehoshaphat's Prosperity.—2 Chron. xvii. 1-10.—B.C. 914.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"And they taught in Judah, and had the book of the Law of the Lord with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people."—2 Chron. xiv. 9.

INTRODUCTORY.

The lives of the best men are marked by imperfections, and good King Asa was no exception to the general rule.

The warning message sent by God through Azariah the prophet, referred to in the introductory remarks on the last lesson seems to have been only temporary in its effect, for we find Asa in his last years forgetting to some extent the Source of his former strength and prosperity, and leaning upon the arm of flesh, rather than the all-sufficient arm of Jehovah. The teacher will notice this defect of Asa very clearly in two events occurring after the renewal of the Covenant: 1. Baasha, king of Israel, jealous and alarmed on account of the large accession of his subjects to Asa, prepared to make war on Judah.—2 Chron. xvi. 1. (compare Jeremiah xli. 9.) Asa, forgetful of his previous experience with Zerah the Ethiopian, "sought the aid of Benhadad, king of Syria, sending him a large bribe to break his alliance with Baasha and attack him. This policy succeeded (2 Chron. xvi. 1-6), but was condemned by the prophet Hanani, who told the King that he had thus pre-empted himself from putting down the newly founded and dangerous kingdom of Damascus, and that henceforth Judah would be troubled by wars with the Syrians."—*Blunt*. Utterly losing his temper at the words of reproval in the prophetic message, Asa was wroth with the seer and put him in a prison-house; for he was in a rage with him because of this thing. And Asa oppressed some of the people the same time.—2 Chron. xvi. 10.

2. The other instance of imperfection on the part of this good king occurred in the 39th year of his reign (2 Chron. xvi. 12). He became "diseased in his feet," probably with gout, "until his disease was exceeding great," and from which he died within two years. And the sacred historian says that "in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians." Well always to use the means, in humble dependence on the Great Physician, in whose hand are the lives and health of all; but Asa sought not the Lord, of whom David his father sang—"My health shall I commit to the Lord, who redeemeth my life from all danger, who will strengthen my loving-kindness mercies."—Ps. ciii. 3, 4.

"But the holiness of Asa, notwithstanding, as the want of faith which is thus twice mentioned, is shown by the declaration, (2 Chron. xvi. 17.) 'the heart of Asa was perfect all his days.'"

He was buried in a royal sepulchre with more than usual honours, amidst the deep lamentations of his people; and was succeeded on the throne by JEHOASHAPAT his son, whose PROSPERITY is the subject of our present study.

In our lesson this prosperity shows itself:—(1) In his wisdom, v. 1 (2) in his goodness, v. 3-4; (3) in his usefulness, v. 6-9; (4) in his favour with God, v. 3-5; (5) in the affection of his people, v. 5; (6) in the reverence of his foes.

EXPLANATORY.

V. 1. Jehoshaphat his son reigned. He was thirty-two years old when he ascended the throne, and he reigned twenty-five years, from 916 to 891, B.C. (See chap. xx. 31.) Strengthened himself against Israel. Ahab, an acerbic, warlike prince was at that time king of Israel, and the vigour of his beginning falling in with the decay of Ahab's conclusion, it is probable the kingdom of Israel had of late got ground of the kingdom of Judah, and began to grow formidable to it; so that the first thing Jehoshaphat had to do, was to make his part good on that side, and to check the growing greatness of the king of Israel, which he did so effectually, and without bloodshed, that Ahab soon courted his alliance."—*Matthew Henry*.

V. 2. Which Asa his father had taken. See note on 2 Chron. xv. 8, in last lesson. The cities were taken by Abijah, Asa's father, but were held and fortified by Asa.

V. 3. The Lord was with Jehoshaphat. "With him to help and prosper, not against him to thwart and repress. With him, because Jehoshaphat was devoting himself to His service."—*S. S. Union Notes*. The first rays of his father David. "The Septuagint and several of the Hebrew MSS. omit 'David,' which has probably crept in from the margin; for David's first ways are nowhere else contrasted with his last. The real meaning of the writer is, that Jehoshaphat followed the example set by his father Asa in his early years. It is wrong to translate, as is done in the margin of some Bibles, 'of his father and of David.'—*Sp. Com.* Sought not unto Baalim. The worship of Baal at this time, under Aahab and Jezebel, had overspread the whole of the neighbouring kingdom. Jehoshaphat was not soled into it. Baalim is the plural of Baal, and includes the different varieties of Baal worship."—*Blunt*.

V. 4. The doings of Israel. Babel worship had become the State religion of apostate Israel, with a great temple at Samaria, the capital. 1 Kings xiv. 30-33.

V. 5. Brought—Hebrew gave—Presents,—"that is, 'free will offerings,' in addition to their regular taxes."

V. 6. His heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord. Contrast this heart lifting with that referred to in Deut. xvi. 14; 2 Chron. xvi. 16; Psalm cxviii. 1; Prov. xvii. 12 &c. Oh, that all our hearts were lifted up like Jehoshaphat's in the ways of the Lord!—*Took away the high places.*—These had been removed before in the early part of Asa's reign, but like foul weeds had again made their appearance.

V. 7. Sent to his princes. . . . to teach. "Some translate, 'He sent his princes to teach'; but the peculiar construction, which does not occur elsewhere, seems to be used in order to mark that the princes were not sent as teachers themselves, but only had the duty committed to them of seeing that the people were taught. The actual teachers were the Levites and Levites of the next verse."—*Sp. Com.*

V. 8. Levites. . . . priests. It was the