

SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON IV.

Jan. 27. } JEHOSEPHAT'S PROSPERITY. { 2 Chron. xvii
1878. } 1-10.

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."—Verse 9.

HOME STUDIES.

M. 2 Chron. xvi. 1-14...Asa's reign concluded.
T. 2 Chron. xvii. 1-10...Jehoshaphat's prosperity.
W. 2 Chron. xvii. 11-19...His tributaries and men of war.
Th. Ps. xxxiii. 1-22...The Lord a Help and Shield.
F. Ps. lxxxix. 15-29...The Lord a Defence.
S. Ps. xix. 1-14...The law of the Lord is perfect.
S. Ps. cxix. 97-112...His word sweeter than honey.

HELPS TO STUDY.

Asa continued to reign for forty-one years. His general disposition was to serve God, and his heart continued "perfect all his days," in steadily opposing idolatry to the end. But in some other respects his prosperity led him into pride and sin. His faith failed him when Baasha made his attack; and, instead of overcoming both Baasha of Israel and Benhadad of the Syrians, he hired Benhadad to fight against Baasha. And, when Hanani the prophet reproved him, he thrust the prophet into prison. He also oppressed others of his people; and when sick of the gout he sent for idolatrous physicians instead of seeking the Lord. He died B.C. 914, and was buried in the royal rock sepulchres near Jerusalem; and immense quantities of spices were burned at his funeral. "Such burnings of incense were always made at the burial of the kings of Judah (Jer. xxxiv. 5)." After his death his son Jehoshaphat ascended the throne of Judah.

Our lesson shows us

I. THE KING STRENGTHENED: verses 1-6.

Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he began to reign. He appears in character and ability more like David than any other of the kings of Judah, and his rule lifted in power and prominence only excelled in the days of Solomon.

He strengthened himself against Israel, ruled now by Ahab, of the powerful house of Omri, who ascended the throne four years before. He does not seek new conquests, but holds on firmly to what he has, placing garrisons both in the fenced cities of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim, which his brother had conquered. He thus placed his kingdom in a thorough state of defence. But he did not trust in strong cities or weapons of war. The secret of his success, and the source of his strength is placed before us: The Lord was with him. Because he sought God's paths, he found God's presence. He walked in the first ways of David his father, the ways of David before he sinned so grievously. "He took the best part of the noblest man he knew for a model." But we have a better, a faultless model who alone can be always followed, the man Christ Jesus. Even in the best of mere men, not every act and trait are worthy models. He is wise who knows how far to follow, and when to avoid human examples. He is blessed who follows closely the great Exemplar.

Jehoshaphat renounced the idol-worship, the Baalim (Note 1), whose corrupt worship the Tyrian Jezebel had brought into the northern kingdom. He sought to Jehovah, and walked in His commandments, and that too notwithstanding the evil example and influences of Israel. He was a true leader of his people.

Therefore the Lord established the kingdom in his hand. National prosperity and stability are for him alone. Jehoshaphat was honoured by the loyalty, service, and affection of his servants. People always respect rulers who try to do right. Even in politics, there is neither true honour nor aiding success without uprightness.

His heart was lifted up, not in proud self-confidence, as is said of Uzziah (chap. xxvi. 16), of Hezekiah (xxxii. 25), of Tyre (Ezek. xxviii. 2), and of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. v. 20); but in the ways of the Lord.

The idea is that of exultation, which if felt on account of our own greatness or success is both wrong and dangerous, but which ought to be felt on account of God's love to us and the happiness of his service. We quite understand a heart "swelling with enthusiasm," "bounding high with hope or with pleasure;" is not that the same thing? Here is a man forgiven, made a child of God and a joint-heir with Christ, permitted to engage in God's service for a little while on earth before being taken forever into his presence in heaven. Ought not such a one to have the same sort of elation that we feel in (say) attaining the summit of a mountain, only infinitely greater? Is not that having the heart "lifted up in the ways of the Lord?" And is it not the one way to be a successful worker?

How may we get this happy experience? St. James tells us (iv. 10), "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."

Jehoshaphat was thus encouraged to go on in his good work of rooting out evil and of supplanting it with good. He took away the high places that had been left by Asa, and cut down the Asherim that had escaped his vigilance, or had been dedicated since his father began the task of exterminating them. His experience is no unusual one. It comes to every one who works faithfully for the Lord. His heart is sure to be lifted up in the ways of the Lord. There is such a reward for working for him that one becomes enthusiastic in his service. It is only to those who half work, or who do not work at all, that the labor seems hard and distasteful. "Behold my servants shall sing for joy of heart." Compare Isaiah xl. 31; xlv. 24.

II. THE PEOPLE TAUGHT: verses 7-10.

Jehoshaphat proved himself a wise, energetic, successful sovereign. As we have just seen, he put his kingdom in a

state of thorough defence. He also organized the administration of justice. See chap. xix. And above all, he instituted a system of religious teaching for the people. He could remove the idols, and by unsparing vigilance keep them away, but by no such police effort could he obtain more than a temporary victory. Removing them from the high places did not remove them from the hearts of the people. And if they were not eradicated from them, it was only a question of time when they would appear upon the high places. To obliterate them from the hearts of his people, he took the very wisest course that could have been taken. He saw to it that they were thoroughly instructed about God. He formed a band of itinerant instructors whose business it was to see that the people knew concerning Him whom it was their duty to serve. Ignorance is the very greatest of foes to Christianity. Men do not believe in God because they know so little about him. It is one of the necessities for coming into a knowledge of Him, that "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened," etc. If men but really knew God, and his Son, Jesus Christ, how soon would they lay down their arms against Him!

Jehoshaphat's board of instructors consisted of five princes, nine Levites, and two priests.

He sent out the noblest in the realm to teach his people. High-social position may be of very great influence in reformation. The noblest are not too noble to be teachers of God's truths. Ministers and laymen, princes and priests laboured together in this great work. The book of the law of the Lord was the subject of their instructions.

Instruction in the Bible is the necessary condition of prosperity to a nation.

When an African Prince sent to Queen Victoria to learn the secret of England's greatness, she sent him a Bible with the message, "This is the secret of England's greatness."

In the lands of a free Bible are found the most intelligent, the most moral, and the freest people. Switzerland, Scotland, England, Holland, America, received their liberties from God's word. France, largely destitute of the Bible for so many long years, has had fifteen different governments, all directly or indirectly of a revolutionary origin, in eighty-three years. Prussia at her side, though beneath a government harsh and with features of severity, has known how to avoid the desperate remedy of constant and bloody revolutions. She has advanced her liberties by calmer methods, and has maintained herself stable, prosperous, and strong. Mexico cast out the Bible, and Mexico has had fifty-six revolutions since 1821.

It was no wonder then that Judah was prosperous both at home and abroad. The reason why foreign nations made no war against Jehoshaphat is remarkable. It was the fear of the Lord, not merely the fear of the king's army or fortresses which restrained them. (Note 2.)

The world even will know those who are in earnest in God's service, while it despises the half-hearted and the double-minded.

EXPLANATORY NOTES.

1. Baalim.—The plural of Baal. There was but one supposed deity of that name. The plural is used either with reference to his numerous images, or with reference to the different places at which, or names under which, he was worshipped: as Baal-Berith, or Covenant-Baal (Judg. viii. 33); Baal-Zebub, or Baal the keeper-off of flies (2 Kings i. 2); or the plural may have reference to the manifold powers and influences supposed to be united in Baal. For a similar reason, the word "God," referring to the true God is, in the Hebrew, almost always in the plural.

2. Some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and a large amount of silver. The word used, verse 11, seems to mean, not tribute-silver, but *burdens* of silver. Arabian tribes also brought him sheep and he-goats in large numbers, here specified. The statements given here of the size of his standing army stagger belief, and compel us to assume the error of some copyist. Here are five divisions of the army—three from Judah, and two from Benjamin—who waited on the king, besides his garrisons in the fortified cities of Judah. Noticeably, the total is precisely double the army of King Asa as in 2 Chron. xiv. 8. It is estimated that such an army implies a maximum population of 1,480 to the square mile,—fully three times as dense as in any known country of our age.

ORGANIC CHARACTERISTIC OF THE BIBLE.

A very striking characteristic of the Bible is its organic character. All its parts constitute a complete organism. This implies more than a unity arising from the harmony of its teachings. It is a unity resulting from the unfolding of a primordial germ. Such a unity is the rose, such is the oak, such is the human body. The whole universe, when its several parts are viewed as reciprocally means and ends, is an organism. It is the evolution of a creative idea dwelling in the mind of God, manifesting itself in endless diversity, yet one and changeless. Every thing is so fitted to every other thing that a change in the one would involve a change in the other. A storm of wind would imply a change in the state of the atmosphere, and that a change in the degree of temperature, and that some other antecedent change, affecting, it might be, the fertility or barrenness of countries and the duration of human life. This organism of the general system of nature is concealed from the careless and unscientific observer. He may, in some of its individual parts, as a flower or a tree, be able to perceive an organism, and understand the effect of destroying any one of its parts; but the relation of this individual organism to a greater does not enter his mind. The case is similar with the careless reader of the Bible. He may understand the unity of a single book, and the effect of transposing or changing its parts; but he does not understand its organic connexion with the whole system of revealed truth. It is different with the careful and devout student of Scripture. He observes a plan of progressive development, into which every part of the sacred volume fits with the utmost exactness. To him the Bible is an organism; it is not a collection of books without any connexion except that of juxtaposition.

ONLY JESUS.

Only Jesus for my Saviour,
He has shed His blood for me;
Long by sin a captive taken,
Jesus' love has set me free,
Only Jesus
Can my great Redeemer be.

On His perfect mediation,
Does my hope of mercy rest;
Glorious in that free salvation,
Ever clinging on His breast.
Only Jesus
Can give weary sinners rest.

Laden with my grief and sadness;
Fearing, doubting, long I sighed,
Till I found a ray of gladness,—
I had sinned, but Christ had died.
"Only Jesus,"
Then my broken spirit sighed.

Building on that Rock of Ages,
Soon were hushed my sad alarms;
Though the storm around me rages,
He alone my spirit calms.
Only Jesus,—
I am safe within His arms.

Saviour of my wounded spirit,
Great Redeemer of my soul,
Come, thy temple to inherit,
Come and make the wounded whole.
Only Jesus,
Can the tempter's power control.

Enter in Thou mighty Leader,
Evermore my Captain be;
My Director, Guide, Feeder,
Let me feel my strength in Thee.
Only Jesus
Can be all in all to me.

CHRIST'S GLORY IS PUT UPON THE SOUL:—"His glory shall be seen upon thee." It has long been discovered that colour is nothing in the object, but is all thrown upon it by the sun, and reflected back again. The beautiful colours with which this lovely world is adorned, all proceed from the sun. His glory is seen upon the earth. It is all the gift of the sun that the grass is of that refreshing green, and the rivers are lines of waving blue; it is all the gift of the sun that the flowers are tinged with their thousand glories—that the petals of the rose have its delicate blush, and the lily, that neither toils nor spins, a brightness that is greater than Solomon's. Now, my dear souls, this is the way in which you may be justified. You are dark, and vile, and worthless in yourselves; but Christ's glory shall be seen on you.—*McCheyne.*

Births, Marriages and Deaths.

NOT EXCEEDING FOUR LINES 25 CENTS.

BORN.

At the manse, Burlington, on the 12th of Jan., the wife of the Rev. S. W. Fisher, of a son.

MARRIED.

At the manse, Vaughan, on the 9th inst., by Rev. P. Nicol, Mr. David Ross, merchant, Leith, to Miss Maggie, daughter of Francis Muir, Esq., of the Township of Sullivan.

At the Sherbrooke House, Sherbrooke, on the 20th Dec., by the Rev. M. Mackenzie, of Inverness, the Rev. John Mackenzie, of Hampden, to Annie, eldest daughter of D. Murray, Esq., of Hampden Township, P.Q.

DIED.

At Peterborough, on Tuesday, 5th inst., Rev. John Maurice Roger, aged 70 years.

At Whitby, on the 30th Dec., Loretto, infant daughter of Mr. W. H. Higgins, editor of the Whitby "Chronicle."

At the residence of his son, Essex Centre, on the 4th Aug., 1877, Thomas Milne, late of Toronto, in the 67th year of his age.—Mr. Milne was born in Aberdeen, Scotland, from whence he emigrated to Canada. For twelve years he taught school in Scarborough, and earned the reputation of a competent and faithful teacher. He was for thirty years a resident of Toronto, a member of Knox Church, and a teacher in the Sabbath school connected therewith. His was a sturdy Presbyterianism. When the "Observer" was started, nearly twenty years ago, Mr. Milne offered his services as canvasser, in which capacity he served the paper and the Church most efficiently; and his efforts on behalf of the "British American Presbyterian" in the early years of its history, will be fresh in the memory of many readers. Deceased was a loving husband, a kind father, and a consistent Christian. His end was peace.

MEETINGS OF PRESBYTERY.

LINDSAY.—At Woodville, on 26th of February.

BARRIE.—At Barrie, 1st Tuesday of February.

STRATFORD.—In Knox Church, Stratford, on 29th January, at 10 a.m.

OTTAWA.—In St. Andrew's Church, Ottawa, on Tuesday, 5th February, at 3 p.m.

PARIS.—Presbytery of Paris meets in River Street Church, Paris, on first Tuesday of February, 1878, at 11 a.m.

LONDON.—Next regular meeting in 1st Presbyterian Church, London, on the last Tuesday in March, 1878, at 2 p.m.

MANITOBA.—In Knox Church, Winnipeg, 2nd Wednesday of March.

TORONTO.—In the usual place, on the 1st Monday of March.