

The Sabbath School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

April 14th.] B. C. 624. [2 Chron. xxxiv 14-22

THE SCRIPTURES FOUND AND SEARCHED.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Search ye the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”—John 5: 39.

HOME READINGS.—M. 2 Tim. 3: 1-17. T. 2 Chron. 34: 14-22. W. 2 Chron. 34: 23-33. Th. John 5: 36-47. F. 2 Chron. 35: 1-19. S. 2 Chron. 35: 20-27. S. Lam. 1: 1-22.

Compare with 2 Kings, ch. 22. The interest of the lesson centres in the discovery of an old and valuable copy of the Pentateuch among the debris in the Temple, v. 14. “Given by Moses.” Either the original as it came from the hand of Moses himself, 800 years before, or a copy which had been kept exclusively for the Temple service, beside the Ark, in the most holy place, Deut. 31: 26. Possibly it might have been secreted by some pious hand to save it from desecration, and in the lapse of a century its existence was forgotten. In either case its coming to light was a matter of rejoicing. The Bible was scarce in those days, and this may have been the first well authenticated copy Hilkiah had ever seen. It was not a thing to be merely looked at as a curiosity; immediately Shaphan began to read it, v. 18. Josiah is now, in turn, affected, not by the antiquity of the book so much as by its contents. To him it was emphatically “the word of God.” When he heard the words of the law he rent his clothes, v. 19, and wept, 2 K. 22: 19. The word of God is quick and powerful, Heb. 4: 12. In its light he now saw the sins of his people to be greater than he ever before imagined. It is thought that the portion read may have been Deut. 28, and following chapters, in which terrible curses are foretold against all who violate the law. “Go and enquire of the Lord for me and for them that are left in Israel and Judah.” His heart’s desire for Israel was like Paul’s, Rom. x. 1. JEREMIAH and HULDAH both prophesied during the reign of Josiah. Why go to Huldah? The prophets may not have been within call, and the case was urgent. Huldah dwelt in Jerusalem, v. 22. Her place was among the ladies of the court, whom perhaps she instructed as a sort of Zenana teacher. She was well known and respected. She is not the only prophetess honorably mentioned in Scripture. Miriam, Ex. 15: 20; Deborah, Judges 4: 5, and Anna, Luke 2: 36. Her answer remarkable. “Tell ye the man that sent you,” &c., v. 24. Wrath and destruction upon this place and people, v. 25. But Josiah, because of his repentance, faith, and zeal, shall be spared the pain of seeing these calamities, v. 28. In chap. 35 see how steadfast he remained: how enthusiastically his people renewed the solemn league and covenant, and served the Lord all his days: how he rashly took the field against Neco, king of Egypt, was mortally wounded, and brought home to die, how Jeremiah “lamented” for him, and how the name of “good king Josiah” became a household word in all Israel.

LEARN. To value and reverence the word of God, remembering that ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction, 2 Tim. 3: 16. It ought to be read daily, and as much of it committed to memory as possible. We should take the Bible as our guide in all things. “A lamp to our feet, and a light to our path,” Ps. 119: 105, and make it the basis of all teaching.

April 21st.]

B. C. 590.

[Jer. 33: 1-9.

JEREMIAH IN PRISON.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not,” verse 3.

HOME READINGS.—M. 2 Kings 23: 31-37. T. Jer. 26: 1-24. W. 2 Kings 24: 1-17. Th. Jer. 27: 1-22. F. Jer. 28: 1-17. S. Jer. 29: 1-32. S. Jer. 33: 1-17.

The state of affairs in Judah is fast hastening to a crisis, and, humanly speaking, there is no longer any possibility of averting its impending doom—repeatedly and expressly predicted. The last chapter of 2 Chron. fills up the gap in history between last lesson and this. The following kings succeeded Josiah—his son Jehoahaz, who after three months was dethroned by Necho, and carried away in chains to Egypt; (2) his brother Jehoiakim. This wicked and godless king reigned 11 years, is supposed to have met a violent death, and certainly had an ignominious burial, ch. 27, 18-19; (3) his son Jehoiachin, 8 years old, nominally succeeded him for 3 months, when he was carried off a prisoner to Babylon. (4) Last of all, Zedekiah, the 3rd son of Josiah, 1 Chron. 3: 15. In the reign of Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar appears on the stage of history. His father, *Nebopolassar*, having destroyed Nineveh, this notorious king of Babylon, planned an attack on Jerusalem, which he took in the 3rd year of Jehoiakim, at which time a number of the best families, including Daniel and the three “Hebrew children,” were carried off and Judah was reduced to a state of vassalage. Jeremiah, as we learn from Ch. 1, was a native of *Anathoth*, about four miles north from Jerusalem. He came of a priestly family and was called to the prophetic office in the 13th year of Josiah (v. 23) while yet a youth. Persecuted by his townsmen, whose immoralities he had exposed, Ch. 11: 21, he quitted his native place and took up his residence in Jerusalem about 645, shortly after Josiah’s death. From this time, and for about 20 years, the gentle and naturally timid Jeremiah presents a most remarkable example of faithfulness in the discharge of ministerial duty—fearlessly proclaiming the word of God—warning the rulers of impending calamities, and counselling the people for peace’s sake to submit to their foreign masters. He stood alone, one man against a nation! Yet, wonderfully sustained by God! Ch. 1: 18-19. Towards the end of Zedekiah’s reign he was imprisoned in a loathsome dungeon, ch. 37: 16; though afterwards treated more leniently; in the court of the Prison, ch. 37: 21.

Verse 1. *In the Prison*: Bolts and bars cannot shut out God’s gracious visits. On the contrary, as afflictions abound, so consolations the more, 2 Cor. 1: 5. The word of God is not bound, 2 Tim. 2: 9. Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity, when things seemed to have come to the worst with himself, he received a glimpse of the glorious future God had in store for His Church. The evils he had formerly predicted were not to be averted. Jerusalem must be destroyed, and for seventy years the inhabitants of Judah must pine in Babylonian captivity, but these calamities should as certainly be succeeded by a restoration to God’s favor, v. 7. Notice in v. 8 the promise of pardon is repeated, that the Jews may consider the exceeding grace of God in not only pardoning but also cleansing them from all their sins. And this (v. 9) shall be a subject of rejoicing not only to the Jews themselves, but the Gentiles, also, hearing of it, shall be led to fear God, Ps. 130: 4.

LEARN that God’s presence changes a prison into a palace: that the divine revelation of peace and truth brings health and cure to all who by faith receive it: that God’s promises are our encouragement to prayer: that he is faithful who has promised: that our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth, v. 2 and Ps. 124: 8, and that he will be enquired of by his people, Ezekiel, 36: 37.