

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS.

FOURTH QUARTER: THREE MONTHS' STUDIES IN THE KINGS AND PROPHETS.

B. C. 838.]

LESSON V. DEATH OF ELISHA.

[Nov. 1'

2 Kings 13. 14-25. [Commit to memory verses 20, 21.]



14 Now E-li'sha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died. And Jo'shab the king of Is-ra-el came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father! the chariot of Is-ra-el, and the horsemen thereof.

15 And E-li'sha said unto him, Take bow and arrows; and he took unto him bow and arrows.

16 And he said to the king of Is-ra-el, Put thine hand upon the bow. And he put his hand upon it; and E-li'sha put his hands upon the king's hands.

17 And he said, Open the window eastward, and he opened it. Then E-li'sha said, Shoot. And he shot. And he said, The arrow of the Lord's deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syr'i-a: for thou shalt smite the Syr'i-ans in A'phek, till thou have consumed them.

18 And he said, Take the arrows. And he took them. And he said unto the king of Is-ra-el, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed.

19 And the man of God was wroth with him, and

said, Thou shouldst have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syr'i-a till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syr'i-a but thrice.

20 And E-li'sha died, and they buried him. And the bands of the Mo'ab-ites invaded the land at the coming in of the year.

21 And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulcher of E-li'sha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of E-li'sha, he revived, and stood upon his feet.

22 But Haz'a-el king of Syr'i-a oppressed Is-ra-el all the days of Je-ho'sh-haz.

23 And the Lord was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with A'bra-ham, I'saac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet.

24 So Haz'a-el king of Syr'i-a died; and Ben-hadad his son reigned in his stead.

25 And Je-ho'shab the son of Je-ho'sh-haz took again out of the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Haz'a-el the cities, which he had taken out of the hand of Je-ho'sh-haz his father by war. Three times did Jo'shab beat him, and recovered the cities of Is-ra-el.

General Statement.

The revolution in Israel wrought by Jehu did not at first result in prosperity. Jehu saw his kingdom stripped of its eastern provinces by the Syrians under Hazael, and his son Jehoshaphaz sank into the condition of a mere vassal to Damascus. But the tide turned at last, under the able rule of Joash, Jehu's grandson, and Israel began to arise from the dust. We can believe that in the events of that age, the breaking of the Syrian yoke and the advancement of Israel, the aged prophet Elisha was closely associated, and that he wrought hand in hand with the king, as we look on the scene that took place in his chamber of death. The young king came in, and stood by the couch of the venerable Joash king, and bending over him, he uttered the same man of God. Bending over him, he uttered the same cry which Elisha himself had lifted up years before as he saw his master Elijah ascending the skies, "My father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." The king saw that in the prophet was the true strength and defense of the land. But Elisha's

last thoughts were not for himself. He bade the king open the window toward the land conquered by the Syrians. Then, placing his withered hand upon the king's hand, he bade him shoot the arrow which should betoken the coming deliverance. Then he commanded him to strike the arrows upon the ground. With hesitating faith the monarch smote only three times, and so lost his opportunity of utterly destroying his ancient adversary, but after the prophet's death he thrice defeated the Syrians, who were no longer aided by the great Hazael, but by a weaker son, Ben-hadad, and won from their grasp all the lands which had been lost. The prophet Elisha, though dead, was still mighty; for the truths he taught and the plans he inaugurated continued to influence the people. No man's very bones sent forth power; for when a dead man was laid beside the corpse, and touched them, life seemed to shoot through the corpse, and it stood up living in the sepulcher.

Explanatory and Practical Notes.

Verse 14. Now Elisha. He was probably not less than ninety years of age, and had been in retirement, so far as we know, for many years. Was fallen sick. Sickness and death come to the best of men as well as the worst, to the prophets of Israel as well as the kings.

(1) *The reward of service for God is not an immunity from nature's laws.* **Joash the king of Israel.** Called also Jehoshaphaz; son of Jehoshaphaz, and grandson of Jehu. **Wept over his face.** He revered him for his great works, for the reforms which he had wrought, and especially for his part in placing his grandfather Jehu upon the throne. "These few drops of warm water, shed upon the face of a prophet, shall not lose their reward."—*Bishop Hall.* **The chariot of Israel.** The same words uttered by Elisha at the ascension of his master, Elijah, are now spoken over Elisha himself by the king of Israel. Perhaps they were the customary expression of sorrow over a great man's death, meaning that he had been the defense and strength of the land. (2) *The best protectors and promoters of a nation are its men of God.* (3) *The wisest of God's servants is recognized when they are removed.*

15. Take bow and arrows. The dying saint has no thought of self and no fear for the future. His preparation for death has been made long before. All his anxieties are for the ship of state, the bark of God's cause, now tossing on tempestuous seas. No men in history exhibit a more devoted patriotism than the line of prophets, from Moses to Malachi. (4) *Good men in every age are the best citizens.*

16. Put thy hand upon the bow. Literally, "let thine hand ride upon the bow;" that is, hold it in position for shooting an arrow. **His hands upon the king's hands.** The king's hand gave strength; the prophet's

as the representative of God, imparted power. Vain forces need to be energized by divine influence to win victory. (5) *So a nation's material forces need power from God's cause need power from on high to make them successful.*

17. Open the window eastward. Toward the scene of the recent Syrian conquests in the land of Gilead and Bashan, 2 Kings 10. 32, 33. **And he shot.** The ancients declared war by shooting an arrow publicly into an enemy's country. By this act Elisha would show that the war for the rescue of the eastern provinces was by divine direction. **The arrow of the Lord's deliverance.** Rev. Ver. "The Lord's arrow of victory, even the arrow of victory over Syria." A promise of success by the Lord's power in the war against the Syrian oppressors. (6) *God has more to do with national affairs than some men think.* Napoleon said, "Providence favors the strongest battalions;" but he found his own magnificent army destroyed by a snow-storm, not by his Russian enemies. In A'phek there were several places of this name in Palestine; but this one was situated in the Bashan country, on the border between Syria and Palestine, not far from the Sea of Galilee; now called FIE.

18. Take the arrows. More arrows, additional to those already in his hand. **Smite upon the ground.** Some think that the arrows were to be shot into the ground outside the window, one by one; others, that they were struck into the earthen floor of the house by the king's hand. It is a number of them measured the tokened a victory in God's promise. The widow's faith in monarch's faith (2 Kings 4). 5) led her to obtain large results; the king's hesitation, doubt, perhaps unbelief,