

The Sabbath School

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

February 10th.] B. C. 896. [2 Chron. xiv. 22.

JEHOSHAPHAT HELPED OF GOD.

GOLDEN TEXT:—"Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper."—Verse 20.

HOME READINGS.—M. 2 Chron. 20: 1-13. T. Ps. 83: 1-18. W. 2 Chron. 20: 14-25. Th. Ps. 136: 1-26. F. 2 Kings 3: 4-27. S. 2 Chron. 20: 26-37. S. 2 Chron. 21: 1-20.

It is always important to read the context, and compare parallel passages: especially and obviously so as regards this lesson. In last chapter we left Jehoshaphat well employed, reforming his kingdom. While thus engaged, he hears of a sudden and unprovoked invasion of Moabites and Ammonites in strong force—from beyond the sea: i. e. the Dead Sea. A powerful confederacy, distinctly referred to in Ps. 83: 6-8. The tide of popularity, always fickle, turned against him. Previous to this, the neighbouring nations had feared Jehoshaphat, Ch. 27: 10, but, since his affinity with the house of Ahab, they lost whatever respect they had for him; now Jehoshaphat is in fear of them, v. 3: and not without reason—he had been told that there *was wrath upon him from before the Lord*, Ch. 19: 2. But the name of the Lord is a strong tower, Prov. 18: 10. The *fear of the Lord*, while it enables us to trust in God, does not make us fold our hands, Heb. 11: 7. With him came out all Judah "to ask help of the Lord" bringing with them their wives and children, by way of strengthening their appeal: for did not God spare Nineveh for the sake of the *little ones*? Jonah 4: 11. *Jehoshaphat's prayer* is a model one—short and pointed, v. 6-12. His familiar allusion to Abraham, v. 7, is referred to in James 2: 23. It concludes with an acknowledgement of entire dependence upon God. JARAZIKL, another unknown prophet, unexpectedly appears on the scene. While the king was yet speaking God heard, and lo, the answer already! See Isaiah 65: 24, and Daniel 9: 20. He was a Levite, of the sons of ASAPH. In Ch. 29: 30, Asaph is called a seer or prophet. He was a psalmist as well, for twelve of the Psalms bears his name, Ps. 1, and all from the 73 to 83, inclusive: a skilled musician, too: the choir-leader of Israel in his day. His musical talent descended to his sons, 1 Chron. 25: 1, and was perpetuated through many generations, Neh. 1: 44. *Jehoshaphat's message* similar to that of Moses at the Red Sea, Exo. 14: 13. "Stand still and see the salvation of God"—a greater exercise of faith than if he had said "advance and smite." Jehoshaphat so understood it, and, admonished his people to believe God and his prophets. They rejoiced together in the promise as well as though it had already been performed and went forth singing the 136th psalm.

LEARN that faith inspires a man with true courage. The heart that trusts in the Lord is kept in perfect peace. Praise was an important part of Jewish worship and should have a prominent place in the services of the sanctuary now. All should join in it, heartily, Ps. 67: 6. It is fit employment for angels, Ps. 148—and is acceptable to God, Heb. 13: 15-16. Those who are endowed with musical talents should consecrate them to the Lord's service. The conclusion of the Lord's prayer teaches us "in our prayers to praise God."

February 17th.] B. C. 856. [2 Chron. xxiv: 4-13.

JOASH REPAIRING THE TEMPLE.

GOLDEN TEXT:—"Joash was minded to repair the house of the Lord."—Verse 4.

HOME READINGS.—M. 2 Chron. 22: 1-12. T. 2 Chron. 23: 1-11. W. 2 Chron. 23: 12-21. Th. Ps. 76: 1-12. F. 2 Chron. 24: 1-14. S. Ps. 84: 1-12. S. 2 Chron. 24: 15-27.

A period of 36 years intervened between the victory recorded in Ch. 20: 22-25, and the death of Jehoshaphat at the age of 64. His eldest son JEHORAM, joint ruler with his father for two years, succeeds him and reigns, not well nor wisely, eight years, Ch. 21: 6. He hated his brethren, probably for the same reason that Cain hated Abel, and for that reason slew them all with the sword. But woe unto him that foundeth a kingdom in blood! Hab. 2: 12. Though warned by a letter from Elijah and threatened with the very punishment that actually overtook him, he did his best to undo all the good his father had done, by re-establishing idolatry and other abominable heathen practices. He forfeited the respect of his people, *departed without being desired*, Ch. 21: 20; died a miserable death, and was buried in an unhonoured grave. AHAZIAH succeeded him, his one qualification for the throne was that of primogeniture. The history of his brief reign, of one year, is summed up in two clauses, Ch. 22: 3-4. So much for unholy alliances. Read carefully from Ch. 20: 26 to Ch. 23: 21.

JOASH.—Little Joash, whom a pious aunt prevented from being murdered along with his brethren, Ch. 22: 11—who had been hid for six years in the house of God—was crowned at 7 years of age, and duly proclaimed—"God save the king," Ch. 23: 11. Naturally well-disposed, so long as he had the excellent high-priest for his prime minister, he did that which was right, v. 2. One of his first public acts was to restore the temple which had fallen into disrepair. It had been plundered by Egyptians and Arabs, and his wicked mother Athaliah had taken its foundation stones to build her idolatrous temple of Baal. Mark her end, Ch. 23: 15. Joash's youthful enthusiasm exceeded that of old Jehoida, v. 6. And how methodically he went about it! The *set* annual contributions were to be duly collected and overseers appointed, Exo. 30: 13 and Lev. 2: 1-5. This proving insufficient, Joash orders a chest to be made—the original pattern of the modern missionary box—and proclamation made that the people bring their contributions: which they did, cheerfully, and gathered money "in abundance," compare 2 Kings Ch. 12. The funds were kept separate—for repairs, and ordinary expenses, suggesting the propriety of special collections for special purposes, and disallowing the not uncommon plea that, because money is required to build or repair churches, adequate provision cannot be made for the support of ordinances. This should be done and the other not left undone. Joash shewed his people how to do both.

"The money that every man was set at," seems to suggest that under the Christian dispensation a profession of religion should be followed, as a matter of course, by a voluntary dedication of a fixed proportion of our means for Christian purposes—an idea that cannot be too soon impressed upon the minds of children.