

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS.

FIRST QUARTER: STUDIES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH.

B. C. 914. LESSON IV. JEHOSEPHAT'S PROSPERITY; Or, Observing God's Law. 2 Chron. 17. 1-10. Commit to memory verses 3-6. January 27th.

EXPLANATORY.

JEHOSEPHAT. He appears in character and ability more like David than any other of the kings of Judah, and his rule lifted the kingdom to power and prominence, only excelled during the days of Solomon. Reigned. He ascended the throne B. C. 914, four years after Ahab became king of Israel, and reigned twenty-five years. Strengthened himself against Israel. The vigorous house of Omri now ruled the Ten Tribes, and new perils menaced his northern frontier. Like a wise king, he averted danger by preparing for it. Cities of Ephraim. Though he did not try to increase his dominions, yet he held firmly to the conquests of his father. So effectual were his precautions that Ahab made no attempt at war, but sought alliance, and "proved more dangerous as a friend than he could have been as an enemy."—M. Henry.

THE LORD WAS WITH. Those that seek God's paths will find God's presence. The first ways. Perhaps referring to the earlier and better days of David, before his fall; perhaps meaning "the first ways of his father (Asa) and of David," hinting at the decline of Asa's latter years. Even in good men, not every act and trait are worthy models. He is wise who knows how far to follow and when to avoid human examples. Basim. The Phœnician form of idolatry brought by Jezebel into the northern kingdom, and spreading with its corruption throughout both realms. It requires a strength of character and earnestness of principle thus to resist the evil currents of the time. Walked in his commandments. Surrounded by goddess nations, and at the head of a people always prone to idolatry, Jehosephat strongly walked and earnestly led his subjects towards God. [Teacher—urge your scholars to be leaders in good, rather than followers in evil: to stand alone for right, instead of "going with the crowd" to wrong.]

THE LORD ESTABLISHED. Whatever a nation enjoys of strength and stability it receives from the Lord, whose scepter sways above all human counsels. Presents. He was honored by the loyalty, service, and affection of his subjects. People always respect rulers who try to do right. In politics there can be no true, abiding success without uprightness. Lifted up. There is the uplifting of the heart in proud self-confidence, (see 2 Chron. 26, 16,) which ends with ruin; and there is the uplifting of the heart in the ways of the Lord, which brings divine favor. High places and groves. Reforms must be continually repeated. People and rulers need to watch carefully against the insidious advance of sin. Evils should not only be put down, but kept down. So today we have to shut up the grog-shops, and then come the harder task of keeping them shut.

THIRD YEAR. Early in his reign he realized that false religions could not be extirpated unless the people were instructed in the truth. One generation thoroughly taught in the Bible, at home and in the Sabbath-school, will give the world to Christ. Princes. He sent out the noblest in the realm to teach his people. Note the influence of high, social position in extending reform and religion. Levites—priests. Ministers and laymen, princes and priests, labored together in the noble work. It was a great Bible-school, an assembly, held all through the kingdom, to indoctrinate the masses in Scripture truth. We do not wonder that under such training the land rose to a position scarcely inferior to the golden age of David and Solomon.

THEY TAUGHT. It was a teaching rather than a preaching service—nearer to the Sunday-school than to the "public worship." The book...with them. Those who instruct in God's word should have it in their hands as well as in their heads; for themselves, that their teachings may flow from God's pure fountain and not from the broken cisterns of human thought; for their hearers who will feel the power of the direct reference far more than of the mere quotation. Throughout all. Not merely the leading cities. The more remote, the greater the need. Let us seek out the people, without waiting to be sought by the people. Fear of the Lord fell. The surrounding nations respected the fortified frontiers of Jehosephat, and dreaded the wrath of his mysterious Deity. The world can see and will honor those who are earnest in God's service.

GOLDEN TEXT: And they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the

Lord with them, and went about through all the cities of Judah, and taught the people. 2 Chron. 17, 9.

DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION: Value of divine truth. The next lesson is 2 Chron. 19. 1-9.

A CALL TO PREACH.

The fact that you are called to preach is no reason that you should go to preach now. The call you now hear is a call to get ready to preach. No man is called to preach at once, or if there be such a case it is a very rare case. I know God calls uneducated men to preach, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred he does so; but that does not mean that they are to preach without education, nor does it mean that education is not a necessity to preaching, or that the church should thrust an uneducated boor into the pulpit. There are men who are powers for God, who have never seen the inside of a college, and we may find many nuisances in the pulpit who came from the college as well as from elsewhere. The word "nuisances" seems hard, but it is expressive; and you know its meaning.—Bishop Foster.

FINE PRAYERS.

I believe God abhors fine prayers. If a person asks charity of you in elegant sentences, he is not likely to get it. Finery in dress or language is out of place in beggars. I heard a man in the street one day begging aloud by means of a very magnificent oration. He used grand language in very pompous style, and I dare say he thought he was sure of getting piles of coppers by his borrowed speech; but I, for one, gave him nothing, but felt inclined to laugh at his bombast. Is it not likely that many great prayers are as useless? Many prayer-meeting prayers are a great deal too fine. Keep your figures and metaphors and parabolic expressions for your fellow-creatures, use them to those who want to be instructed, but do not parade them before God. When we pray, the simpler our prayers the better; the plainest, humblest language which expresses our meaning is the best.—Spurgeon.

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