



LESSON X.—DEC. 4.

The Book of the Law Found.

II. Kings xxii., 8-20. Memory verse 19. Read II. Chron. xxxiv.

Golden Text.

'Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.'—Psa., cxix., 2.

Home Readings.

- M. II. Chron. xxxiv., 1-13.—Josiah did right in the Lord's sight.
- T. II. Kings xxii., 8-20.—The book of the law found.
- W. II. Chron. xxxiv., 14-33.—Josiah made a covenant before the Lord.
- T. Psa. xix., 1-14.—'The law of the Lord is perfect.'
- F. Psa. cxix., 1-32.—'Blessed are they that keep his testimonies.'
- S. Psa. cxix., 97-120.—'Therefore I love thy testimonies.'
- S. Psa. cxix., 145-176.—'I do not forget thy commandments.'

Lesson Story.

Josiah, the grandson of Manasseh, was only eight years old when he was set on the throne of Judah at his father's death. He reigned thirty-one years.

The good son of a bad, weak man, Josiah had much to contend with, and a great work of reformation to do in his kingdom. At the age of sixteen he gave himself wholly to God and spent the next ten years trying to break down the power and strongholds of idolatry in the land. In the eighteenth year of his reign he set about repairing the Temple, and as the priests and workmen were clearing out the cupboards in the Temple walls, they found in some corner the ancient roll of the law of God, given through Moses, nearly eight centuries before, (Deut., xxxi., 9.) This book had been lost or forgotten for some years, and the people had grown careless and forgetful of its precepts.

Hilkiah, the high priest, gave the Book to Shaphan the scribe, and Shaphan took it and read it to the king. When the king heard the law and the standard which God had set, he was filled with dismay. He saw how far short of righteousness was the life of his kingdom. He saw himself in God's light and could not but notice his shortcomings. Josiah sent at once to enquire of God what would happen to him and to his people for the neglect of God's word. So the messengers went to Huldah the prophetess who gave them a message from God. Jehovah said that he would bring desolation on the land, according to his covenant, (Deut. xxix, 14-28) because of the people's disobedience and idolatry. But to Josiah God promised peace because he had believed God's word as soon as he heard it, and humbled himself and mourned before God on account of his people's wickedness.

Josiah then caused the book to be read in a solemn assembly of all the people, and together they renewed their covenant with God. After this they kept a most solemn passover, such as there never had been before, and to which the people looked back in later days as the most wonderful and beautiful passover ever held (II. Kings, xxiii., 22.)

Lesson Hints.

'Hilkiah' — the high priest, supposed to have been the father of the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. i., 1, 2.)

'Shaphan, the scribe'—the king's secretary. 'Book of the law'—the Pentateuch, or first five books of the bible. This was the word of God in which David found such comfort and beauty, and surety of guidance. (Psa., cxix.)

'The money found'—probably some silver and gold left from the great offerings of the time of Joash. (II. Chron. xxiv., 10.) Also a collection had been taken up by Joash's command, both in the Temple and throughout the whole land. (II. Chron. xxxiv., 9.)

'Shaphan read it'—he was probably one of the few learned men who could read well. The art of reading was only taught to those who intended to devote their lives to study and instruction. The common people were

taught orally, generation after generation learning from their fathers' lips the story of the beginning of the world and the history of their race. (Deut. vi., 7-9.)

Thank God for an open bible and the power to read God's word for ourselves! Thank God for the Holy Spirit who will make clear to us the will of God through his word. (John xiv., 26.)

'He rent his clothes'—in token of sorrow for the sin of his people. He had tried to live a perfect life himself, but when he measured himself against God's standard he saw his lack. He realized that the awful sins into which his people had fallen must be punished according to God's word.

'The college' — the Revised version calls this the 'second quarter,' or the nearer part of the city.

'I will bring evil' — the people were so steeped in sin that they must be destroyed with the sin. But because of Josiah's renewal of the covenant and the sincere repentance of a few of the people, a remnant were finally saved. (Isa. xi., 11.)

Lesson Hymn.

Praise God for the bible, which comes as a friend,
To counsel and comfort, to guide and defend;

Praise God for the bible, far better than gold,
The words of sure promise its pages unfold.

Praise God for the bible, the mirror of sin,
That shows us our wrongness, without and within;

Praise God for the bible, the water of truth,
Which gladdens and cleanses the way of our youth.

Praise God for the bible, it burns like a fire,

As dross from the silver, each evil desire;
Praise God for the bible, his letter of love,
To fathers and children, inviting above.

Praise God for the bible, that kills like a sword,
Our sins and wrongdoings, and fights for the Lord;

Praise God for the bible, a lamp in our path,
To guide through life's journey and shadows of death.
—'Endeavor Banner.'

Questions.

1. How old was Josiah when he was set on the throne of Judah?
2. Compare his character with that of his grandfather.
3. What were the chief events of his reign?
4. How was his reign remembered in later times?

Suggested Hymns.

'Take time to be holy,' 'What a Friend we have in Jesus!' 'At the feet of Jesus,' 'Out of my bondage,' 'Have you any room for Jesus?' 'Around the throne of God,' 'I think when I read.'

Practical Points.

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The Book of the law found. II. Kings xxii., 8-20.

Hilkiah, in 627 B.C., made a greater discovery than Columbus in 1492 A.D. Verse 8.

Business habits are as useful to the Christian as to the worldling. Verse 9.

No book describes human nature so clearly as the word of God. Verses 10, 11: also Jer. xvii., 9.

'The penitent's prayer is never spurned by Jehovah. Verses 12-14: also Psa. xxxiv., 18.

God's words are always fulfilled, a comfort to the Christian and a warning to the unconverted. Verses 15-17.

Obedience to God is rewarded in many ways, both in this life and in that which is to come. Verses 18-20.

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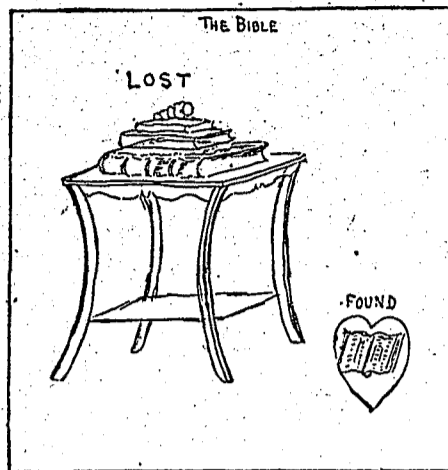
Christian Endeavor Topics.

Dec. 4.—Systematic and proportionate giving.—Mal. iii., 7-12.

Lesson Illustrated.

The way in which this special copy of the law, surmised by some to have been the original, by the hand of Moses, came to be lost, we do not know. It may have been hidden during the reign of Ahaz. The Rabbin say it was hidden under a pile of stones. Nowadays we hide our bibles differently, a top shelf, a corner of our bureau, the bottom of our trunk and most successful of all, some

of our parlor tables where magnificently bound copies, illustrated, ornamented, self-promouncing with maps, aids, concordances and other things, too numerous to mention, certify to our orthodox respectability, and by their very weight of information, excuse us from ever looking at them. Hands off, children, this is a thing not to be touched. Dirty



little fingers must leave no marks here. Hungry little eyes must not feast on these treasures. The bible is a thing to be let alone, and then mother says in later years, 'My boy does not read his bible. I wonder why.'

A bible is lost until prayerful, searching eyes find its treasures, and lay them up in the heart.

A Hopeless Case.

A teacher in a Sunday mission-school in the West End of Boston, had a boy in her class who seemed to be proof against every good influence. It was a wonder that she secured his attendance for any length of time; but by her tact and kindness she held her other pupils, and he came apparently for company's sake, and for the fun and mischief he could stir up among the other scholars.

He gave no signs that her teachings had touched his moral nature—or, in fact, that he had any moral nature. He grew, apparently, more unprincipled as he grew older, until all she had done for him seemed wasted pains; but she continued to treat him kindly, and never forgot him in her prayers.

One day she heard of his arrest for complicity in a recent burglary. She did what she could to secure him legal counsel in his trial, and through two years' imprisonment which followed, occasionally visited him. He never gave any indication of penitence. His sullen, defiant temper, greatly discouraged her; but her faith and love were invincible.

He disappeared after his release. All who knew him supposed he was dead or lost under a feigned name somewhere in the criminal herds of the cities.

Nearly thirty years passed. The lady went to California. In the meantime she had married. Her children were grown, and she, with her husband, was visiting friends in the Pacific States. In one city where she stayed, a question of political reform was agitating the people, pending a change in the municipal government. Her host and hostess were to entertain one of the candidates for the mayoralty. 'He is our man,' they said, 'and we hope to elect him, for he is an earnest Christian, and stands for high principle in public and in private life.'

The gentleman came, and was about to be introduced to the visitor, when, to her surprise, he spoke her name. She could not recognize him in the handsome, bearded man before her, but he was her bad boy of the Boston West End Sunday-school.

'I lived a reckless life for several years after I left Boston,' he told her, 'but I was not able to forget your great patience and kindness, nor some of the things you said to me. Under God, I owe what I have to-day of true manhood, to you.'

Examples of apparently utter depravity are met by every lover of his kind who gives himself to the uplifting of humanity, but it is an unsolved problem whether there ever was a really 'hopeless case.' We are told that 'genius loves difficulties,' and it is equally certain that supreme faith in Christ and in his teachings loves the 'hopeless cases'—let the phrase mean what it may.—'Youth's Companion.'