



LESSON X. — SEPTEMBER 4.

The Death of Elisha.

II. Kings xiii., 14-25. Memory verses 20, 21. Read the chapter.

Golden Text.

'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.' Psa. cxvi., 15.

Lesson Story.

Forty-five years have passed since our last lesson. Elisha, now an old man of eighty, lies on his death-bed. Joash, the young king of Israel, comes down to the lowly dwelling to mourn the illness of him who had been the strength of Israel for the last sixty years.

Over sixty years have gone since the mantle of Elijah fell on Elisha, and the king now addresses Elisha in the same words that that prophet had used to Elijah, 'My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.' Even the king realized that the man of God was the real strength of Israel, rather than the armies and horsemen.

The aged prophet told the young king to take bow and arrows and shoot them in the ground toward the east, telling him that the arrows shot were tokens of deliverance from the Syrians. Each arrow meant a victory, but the careless and unbelieving king shot only three and then gave it up. At this weakness the prophet was very indignant, God had offered the king complete victory over his enemies if he would only ask for it, but the foolish man was too careless to even take the trouble to ask.

Anyone can see the foolishness of Joash and wonder at his carelessness and unbelief when the affairs of a nation hung on his acts. But the world is full of just such people to-day, God is offering to us victories and deliverances just as great as those he offered to Joash. Every Christian should be a wonderful conqueror and the instrument of deliverance to others, God would give all his children great and mighty gifts were it not for their unbelief and hardness of heart. He is more willing to give than we are to receive.

Elisha died. The triumphant death of a child of God is sometimes more used for the conversion of others than their life would have been. The death of a Christian should be an occasion of solemn joy to other Christians.

Jesus lives! Henceforth is death,
But the gate of life immortal.

After Elisha's death and burial the Moabites invaded the land in small companies. One day the Israelites were taking a dead man to be buried, they saw one of these bands coming so they just laid the body in Elisha's tomb. When the man touched Elisha's bones he immediately came to life again. So the good we do lives after us, when we have left this earth some remembrances of our lives, and testimonies may still be used for the conversion of others.

Lesson Hints.

About one hundred and fifty years had passed since the division of the kingdom of Israel after the death of Solomon. Five dynasties had ruled over Israel, Joash was the third king in Jehu's dynasty, he reigned sixteen years. They might have been sixteen years of victory and conquest if Joash had taken the trouble to believe God and claim the victories. But his unbelief brought him sure defeat.

'My father'—Elisha took a loving, fatherly interest in the young king.
'The chariot of Israel'—the strength and hope of the nation.

'Bow and arrows'—the weapons then used.
'Elisha put his hands on'—to show that the power to conquer came only from the Lord.

'Eastward'—toward Syria. The Syrians were invading and oppressing Israel. It was an ancient custom to shoot an arrow into the enemy's country as a symbol of hoped-for victory over them.

'Arrow of the Lord's deliverance'—Joash plainly understood that deliverance for his

country was the gift God wanted him to have.

'Aphek'—a town about six miles east of the Sea of Galilee on the road to Damascus.

'Wroth'—indignant that God's proffered gifts should be so lightly esteemed.

'Sepulchre of Elisha'—the bodies were not put in coffins, but were placed in the tomb bound in cloths.

'Touched the bones'—showing clearly that all Elisha's work had been God's working through him. This is the only miracle God ever worked through dead bones.

'The Lord was gracious'—and gave them deliverance because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. 'The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy.' (Psa. ciii., 8.)

Questions.

1. How old was Elisha when he died?
2. Should we fear death?
3. How did the prophet show the king that God would give deliverance to Israel?
4. Who were the enemies of Israel?
5. Why did God have compassion on his people?
6. How many times did Joash beat Benhadad?

Lesson Hymn.

Give me the wings of faith, to rise
Within the vale, and see
The saints above, how great their joys,
How bright their glories be.

Once they were mourners here below,
And poured out sighs and tears;
They wrestled then, as we do now;
With doubts, and griefs and fears.

I asked them whence their glory came,
They with united breath,
Ascribe their victory to the Lamb,
Their triumph to His death.

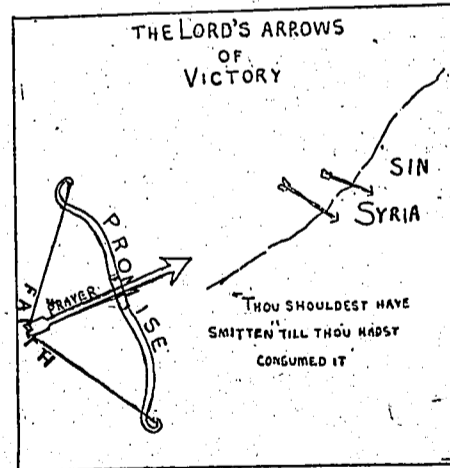
Many are the friends who are waiting
to-day,
Happy on the golden strand,
Many are the voices calling us away,
To join their happy band!
Calling us away, calling us away,
Calling to the better land!

Suggested Hymns.

'Jesus lives,' 'Trust and obey,' 'Sleep on, beloved,' 'Faith is the victory,' 'Eternity,' 'All hail the power of Jesus' name,' 'How firm a foundation.'

LESSON ILLUSTRATED.—Sept. 4.

Our lack of knowledge of the customs of the day makes us apt to think that the prophet judged King Joash too harshly. He does not say so himself, however. His faith fell short, and his victories did the same, so we draw the bow and fit an arrow to it.



Syria becomes a high obstacle in the way with two arrows half-way up, and the third aimed but little higher. Call the hill sin and name our arrows prayer, on the bow Promise, and on the string Faith, and if our aim be low we shall, as Joash did, conquer only in part.

Sunday School Teacher in Trouble.

A rap at the door of the parson's study, and one of the Sunday-school teachers of his church followed the invitation to come in.

'Pastor, I want to talk with you a little about my Sunday-school class.'

'All right,' said the pastor, 'I shall be most happy to talk with you.'

'I have come this morning because I feel utterly discouraged about my class.'

'How long have you had the class?'

'Five years.'

'What is your particular trouble?'

'I really do not know, and that is why I come to you, I have had the class so long, and yet none of them are Christians, and it seems as though something must be wrong somewhere.'

'Have you ever talked with them personally about accepting Christ?'

'No, not personally, but I have several times talked with them all together, urging them to be Christians.'

'Did you give them an opportunity, at such times to show whether they wanted to accept Christ?'

'No. I never thought of that.'

'Do you really think you care for the souls in your class?'

'I thought I did, and yet I never gave them a chance to accept Christ. When talking with them together in the class, I can see now that I might have given them some opportunity of making some sign. But then I really have no time to talk with them personally. I only see them on Sundays, and then only during the Sunday-school hour.'

'How much time do you spend during the week praying for your class?'

'Well, I am ashamed to say it, but some weeks I never pray for them at all.'

'About the personal work—have you no time at all?'

'Not a moment, so far as I can see.'

'Did you ever pray for time to talk to each scholar personally?'

'No, I never thought of praying for time. How about writing to them? Could you not write to, at least, one every week, if only a few lines?'

'Oh, yes; I could do that.'

'When any of your scholars are absent, do you go to their homes to see why?'

'No, I have no time for that, either.'

'How about sending them a postal card, telling them that you are sorry that they were away, and that you will be glad to see them in the class the next Sunday.'

'I really begin to feel as though I had not been doing anything.'

'I believe that if you will make this matter a subject of earnest prayer you will find many times in the week when some effort, however slight, may be made that will help your scholars.'

'First, there must be a willingness on your part to sacrifice for the young souls entrusted to your care. It is certainly a matter of vital importance that every Sunday-school teacher should be in the closest touch with her scholars; not tiring them with the subject of their salvation, but constantly keeping before them this great question in a tender, gentle, loving way.'—Union Gospel News.

The Primary Teacher.

Of the many qualifications that might be named, especial attention is directed to the following:

1. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in the teacher's heart, because no teacher can lead a child into experience which he has not himself had.

2. A belief in child Christians, so that the most susceptible and promising years of life may not be wasted.

3. A knowledge of the bible, that the best form of truth may be presented to little minds as never to be forgotten first impressions.

4. An understanding of childhood, so as to know how to adapt the truth in such a way as to make it practical to the daily lives of children.

5. An enthusiasm for teaching little people, because nothing is ever well done by a half-hearted interest.

6. Trust in the children as a basis for good behaviour on their part.

7. A vivacious manner will keep children on the alert.

8. Genuineness as a ground of respect and confidence, since children are keen discerners of character.

9. Firmness, without which there will be developed bad behaviour on the part of the children, and perplexity on the part of the teacher.

10. Punctuality, without which enterprise would be sure to fail of directness and force.—Sunday-school Teacher.