



LESSON VI.—NOVEMBER 6.

Joash, the Boy King.

II. Kings xi., 1-16.

Golden Text.

When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice. Proverbs xxix., 2.

Home Readings.

- Monday, Oct. 31.—II. Kings xi., 1-16.
 Tuesday, Nov. 1.—II. Chron. xxii., 1-12.
 Wednesday, Nov. 2.—II. Chron. xxiii., 1-11.
 Thursday, Nov. 3.—I. Sam. iii., 1-14.
 Friday, Nov. 4.—I. Sam. xvi., 11-23.
 Saturday, Nov. 5.—II. Kings xxi., 1-16.
 Sunday, Nov. 6.—II. Chron. xxxiv., 1-7, 26-28

(By R. M. Kurtz.)

INTRODUCTION.

Some of our lessons are full of spiritual helpfulness, others of practical teachings for everyday affairs, while still others are mainly taken up with matters of Bible history, bringing to notice especially certain persons and circumstances connected with their lives.

The lesson before us belongs rather to the last named kind, though we must not, in studying facts of history, overlook the hand of Providence in national affairs. In this account of Joash we find a purpose of God being slowly worked out.

When Elijah was so discouraged and fled to Mount Sinai, God had told him that he should anoint Hazael to be king of Syria, and Jehu to be king of Israel. The purpose of this was that from without and within Israel, the northern kingdom of ten tribes, was to be punished for Baal worship.

Though the anointing of both these two men did not follow at once, it was carried out as Elijah had been told, whether by Elijah in person or through his instructions.

If you read the passage in II. Kings between the last lesson and this you will discover that Hazael was indeed to inflict punishment on Israel while Jehu destroyed the house of the wicked Ahab, including Jezebel.

Unfortunately for Judah, the southern kingdom of two tribes, Jehosaphat had permitted his son Jehoram to marry Athaliah the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, and Athaliah was a wicked and ambitious woman, like her mother, Ahaziah, who was born of this marriage, reigned over Judah but a year, before his death at the hands of Jehu, and he followed the ways of his grandfather Ahab.

In reading it will prevent confusion to remember that both Judah and Israel had a King Jehoram and a King Ahaziah.

JOASH SAVED FROM DEATH.

1. 'And when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead she arose and destroyed all the seed royal.
2. 'But Jehosheba, the daughter of king Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons which were slain; and they hid him, even him and his nurse, in the bedchamber from Athaliah, so that he was not slain.
3. 'And he was with her hid in the house of the Lord six years. And Athaliah did reign over the land.'

Upon the death of her son, King Ahaziah, Athaliah was ambitious to seize the government herself. Utterly unprincipled, this daughter of Jezebel decided upon murder as the short road to power, and thereupon slew the royal seed of Judah.

But the Lord had said to David, by the prophet Nathan, 'And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.' And now the Lord fulfilled his promise in this hour of peril. A woman, the wife of Jehoia-

da the high priest, possibly from simple compassion for the little prince whose bloodthirsty grandmother sought his life, hid the child Joash and his nurse and thus saved his life.

For six years Joash was kept in the temple, while the wicked Athaliah ruled the land. So was the seed of David preserved that one of his descendants should occupy his throne.

THE HIGH PRIEST ASSUMES CHARGE OF AFFAIRS.

4. 'And the seventh year Jehoiada sent and fetched the rulers over hundreds, with the captains and the guard, and brought them to him into the house of the Lord, and made a covenant with them, and took an oath of them in the house of the Lord, and shewed them the king's son.

5. 'And he commanded them, saying, This is the thing that ye shall do; A third part of you that enter in on the sabbath shall even be keepers of the watch of the king's house;

6. 'And a third part shall be at the gate of Sur; and a third part at the gate behind the guard: so shall ye keep the watch of the king's house, that it be not broken down.

7. 'And two parts of all you that go forth on the sabbath, even they shall keep the watch of the house of the Lord about the King.

8. 'And ye shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand: and he that cometh within the ranges, let him be slain: and be ye with the king as he goeth out and as he cometh in.'

The high priest, Jehoiada, whose wife, the aunt of Joash, had preserved the young prince alive, now determined to place the rightful ruler upon the throne. True, Joash was but a child, and for a time would be king only in name, but the throne was his by divine promise, and the high priest now planned to place him upon it.

He summoned the rulers of the royal guard, bound them in a covenant, and shewed them Joash, their rightful king. Then he issued orders, stationing divisions of men at various points about the temple and the king's house. The priests and Levites divided into courses, but Jehoiada seems to have summoned all to duty for this crisis, and armed them for service. See the account of the action by Jehoiada in II. Chronicles xxiii.

THE KING CROWNED.

9. 'And the captains over the hundreds did according to all things that Jehoiada the priest commanded: and they took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that should go out on the sabbath, and came to Jehoiada the priest.

10. 'And to the captains over hundreds did the priest give king David's spears and shields, that were in the temple of the Lord.

11. 'And the guard stood, every man with his weapons in his hand, round about the king, from the right corner of the temple to the left corner of the temple, along by the altar and the temple.

12. 'And he brought forth the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, God save the king.'

From the fact that the instructions of Jehoiada were carried out so readily, it may be inferred that the time was fully ripe for setting aside the wicked Athaliah, who had usurped the power. Among the weapons to be used in the defense of this young king were those belonging formerly to David, his illustrious ancestor.

When all had been arranged, the young king, only seven years old, was brought out and crowned, and 'the testimony' was given him. According to Deuteronomy xvii., 18, the king was to have his own copy of the law, so this 'testimony' was now presented to Joash, when he was crowned and anointed king.

Now the time had come to throw off all caution and secrecy. Judah had an heir of David upon the throne, and the company present at his coronation burst into a great shout, 'God save the king.'

THE VIOLENT END OF A CRUEL LIFE.

13. 'And when Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people, she came to the people into the temple of the Lord.

14. 'And when she looked, behold, the king stood by a pillar, as the manner was, and the princes and the trumpeters by the king, and all the people of the land rejoiced, and

blew with trumpets: and Athaliah rent her clothes, and cried, Treason, Treason.

15. 'But Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of the hundreds, the officers of the host, and said unto them, Have her forth without the ranges: and him that followeth her kill with the sword. For the priest had said, Let her not be slain in the house of the Lord.

16. 'And they laid hands on her; and she went by the way by which the horses came into the king's house; and there was she slain.'

Thinking herself secure, after she had slain all, as she thought, of the royal house, Athaliah did not suspect the uprising that was at hand, not knowing that a royal prince had been preserved in the Lord's house. But sudden vengeance overtook the murderess in the very midst of fancied security.

Hearing the acclamations of the guard and the people, and the trumpets she went to the temple, the centre of the commotion, and realized in a moment what had occurred. With a brazen front, typical of certain types of criminals, this designing, treacherous, and murdering woman rent her clothes as though deeply grieved by disloyalty on the part of the people, and shouted, 'Treason, Treason.'

But her ploy for sympathy and aid failed her. Sternly the high priest ordered her led away to death. The temple was not to be profaned by her blood, and anyone who followed her as a defender or friend was to be cut down.

So they took her out to her miserable but deserved end. Says one commentator, 'Athaliah was conducted to the royal stables which adjoined the palace, and there put to death.' So Judah rid herself of this daughter of Jezebel, and turned to her lawful king.

The lesson for November 13 is, 'Joash Repairs the Temple.' II. Kings xii., 4-15.

C. E. Topic.

Sunday, Nov. 6.—Topic—Some of God's promises that cheer me. II. Peter i., 1-4. (A promise meeting.)

Junior C. E. Topic.

HELP IN TIME OF TROUBLE.

Monday, Oct. 31.—Help for Moses. Ex. iv., 13-17.

Tuesday, Nov. 1.—Going at God's bidding. Ex. iv., 18-23.

Wednesday, Nov. 2.—Two brothers meet again. Ex. iv., 27-31.

Thursday, Nov. 3.—Moses and Aaron and Pharaoh. Ex. v., 1-9.

Friday, Nov. 4.—The suffering people. Ex. v., 10-23.

Saturday, Nov. 5.—God's promise. Ps. xl., 15; xlv., 1.

Sunday, Nov. 6.—Topic—God's help in time of trouble. Ex. vi., 1-8; I. Peter iii., 12.

It is not more talent you need, but grace to make a right use of the talent you have.

A teacher was recently recounting how, he was given a class of six little boys. One became a minister, others made a success of life, and the teacher thanked God for the privilege of service. Such work pays.

A Sunday-school scrap-book should be kept by every secretary for the preservation of every printed programme and item about the school. After thirty or forty years such a book will be of priceless value to the 'old folks' who like to tell how 'we used to do.'

Why not get the scholars to help in keeping track of absent ones, and being on the alert to bring new ones. Dicky knows when a new boy moves into the neighborhood; and Dicky may be a Sunday-school missionary if you will encourage him. Perhaps somebody says, 'Oh, our school is so big that we can't look after every boy and girl. Perhaps they may do it in the little schools, but we can't in our great ones.' Well, that great school is in danger of becoming small if run on such a principle. The greatest and most successful of our schools are most careful in looking after their scholars, and that is the real secret of their success. If your school kept all the scholars who have ever been in it, and were lost for lack of attention, wouldn't it be a larger school?—S. S. World.