

## JOASH, THE BOY KING.

– 2 KINGS 11:1-16. – NOVEMBER 6. –

**Golden Text:** – "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice." – Prov. 29:2.

THIS LESSON of itself contains very little of the spiritual "meat" for the household of faith. Nevertheless historical portions of the Scriptures, such as used in this lesson, have their special place and render service to the general cause. The connections of history are as necessary to the Bible as bones are to the living body. For this reason let us give special attention to the connecting history, that we may have before our minds a general view of the conditions in Israel at the time of the incidents of this lesson.

Going back, we remember Elijah's great work as the Prophet combating the influence of King Ahab and his heathen queen, Jezebel, and the Baal idolatry which they introduced. Although Elijah did not succeed in making a complete reformation in Israel, he did succeed in turning back to a considerable degree the influence of Baalism. As we have seen, not only did true religion prosper more in the kingdom of Judah but also in the kingdom of Israel, and it was respected during the period of Elisha's ministry as the Lord's Prophet. Although it was not the religion of the court it was the religion of the Israelites indeed. The prosperity of the cause of Jehovah in Elisha's day is best seen in contrast with the conditions which prevailed in the earlier part of Elijah's ministry.

Meantime the influence of Baalism extended from the court of Israel, and especially from the heathen queen, to the court of Judah: the son of the king of Judah marrying the daughter of the heathen queen, who, in character, evidently had a strong resemblance to her mother, Jezebel. From the time of her association in the kingdom of Judah the idolatrous influences there began to gain strong foothold

and a Baal temple was built, and under the royal protection the licentious worship of Ashteroth found favor with many of the people.

Upon the death of her husband, the king of Judah, his queen, Athaliah, daughter of Jezebel, continued her influence in the kingdom with her son, who then became king, and at his death, contrary to the law and usage of the Jews, she determined to make herself sovereign, and, to accomplish this, caused all of her grandsons to be put to death. That is, she supposed that she had accomplished this end; but her daughter, who had become the wife of the high priest and was evidently under his influence, saved the life of the youngest of the king's sons – her nephew, Joash – secreting him with a nurse in one of the apartments adjoining the Temple set apart for the use of the priests.

Our lesson relates to this boy, the heir of the throne of Judah, who at seven years of age, under the guidance of his uncle-in-law, the high-priest, was anointed and proclaimed the king of Judah. The lesson gives the particulars of the transaction by which the Temple guard became the king's guard – how the king's grandmother, the usurping queen, was first attracted to the Temple by the commotion amongst the people, and then quickly realizing the situation, cried, Treason, Treason, and fled to the palace, where she was executed.

A few years before the incident of this lesson, under the Lord's direction, Jehu had been anointed king over the sister kingdom of Israel, and although in many respects himself a bad man, he served as the sword of the Lord to execute retribution **[R3447 : page 315]** upon King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, who had wrought so much injury to the cause of true religion in the kingdom of Israel. Now, by the death of the usurping queen, Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel, the same pernicious influence was overthrown in Judah: that is to say, the reign of Jehu in Israel and of Joash in Judah marked a period of backset to Baalism.

Students of history, not seeing the divine plan of the ages, have been perplexed at the prosperity of evil doers in individual affairs as well as national, and the perplexity of such is increased when they consider the fact that Israel and Judah were nations with which God had made a special covenant and over which he exercised a certain measure of control. If heathen nations were allowed to go as they would into idolatry, etc., why was it that evil doers, evil practices, false worship, etc., were permitted to prosper in the nations over which God claimed oversight, control, etc.?

The answer and the only answer is that God's time for taking active control of the affairs of the world, subduing evil and advancing righteousness, had not yet come. The entire Law dispensation, from Moses to Christ, was introduced during a period when nothing else could have been brought in. The Gospel could not have been proclaimed at that time because the foundation for it had not yet been laid – the foundation being the *redemption* accomplished by the death of Christ. Nor could the death of Christ have been properly accomplished sooner, or the Gospel age and its work begun sooner, because in the divine plan and foreknowledge that great event was arranged to take place just long enough in advance of the Millennial Kingdom to permit of the gathering out the Church of the First-born, the Bride class, Christ's joint-heirs in the Kingdom.

For these reasons God introduced the Law dispensation, as the Apostle declares, – "The Law was added because of transgressions, until the promised seed should come." The Law Covenant made with Israel served two particular objects: (1) In its laws and Atonement Day sacrifices, typical jubilees, etc., it foreshadowed or typified glorious and great things to be fulfilled during this Gospel age, some of them during the Millennial age. (2) It served to show the constantly downward tendency of sin, and how impossible it would be for the world to lift itself out of present degradation and sin and weakness even if God should release the whole world from

original sin [R3447 : page 316] and the original death penalty. Moreover, we are to remember that although Israel and Judah exhibited great weakness along the lines of idolatry, nevertheless they were by no means as corrupt in these respects as were the nations round and about them – the remainder of the world. Whatever peculiarity there was consisted in the fact that they still maintained some reverence for the *invisible* Jehovah, some semblance of worship for him whom other nations regarded not at all.

The whole history of Judah and Israel shows us that, notwithstanding the trend of the majority towards sin and idolatry, there were still amongst them Israelites indeed whose hearts were sincere towards God. We have examples of this in Elijah and Elisha, the sons of the prophets, the Shunamite, and others. Nevertheless, in thinking of all these we are to remember that they were still in the dark as respects the divine plan. No revelation of God's great salvation had yet been made: only a dim light of a hope of the resurrection of the dead and everlasting life for those obedient to God had reached even the wisest and best of them. In harmony with this is the statement of the Apostle, "The Law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ," and again his declaration that "Christ brought light and immortality to light through the Gospel," and again the statement that this "salvation [in which we now rejoice] *began* to be spoken by the Lord." – John 1:17; 2 Tim. 1:10; Heb. 2:3.

We are not, therefore, to compare present-day conditions amongst those who profess to be spiritual Israelites, with the old-time conditions referred to in this lesson, because in the meantime the true Light, the Lord Jesus, has come into the world; and although the world as a whole has not recognized him, the Israelites indeed have had the eyes of their understanding opened, so that they are blessed and benefited by this true Light, which in God's due time shall lighten every man that cometh into the world – when the

Millennial day shall dawn and the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his beams. Then, in the fullest sense of the word, the righteous shall be in authority – Christ, the great King, and the Church, his Bride and joint-heir in the Kingdom – and then the people will rejoice. They will rejoice in a manner not possible at present, for now, as the Apostle declares, even under the best of rulers, while Satan is at the helm, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together." – Romans 8:22.

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