

CAN KINGS DESTROY TRUTH?

The International Sunday School Lesson for June 4 is, "King Jehoiakim Tries to Destroy God's Word."—Jeremiah 36.

By William T. Ellis.

Censorship and propaganda are greater evils in the life of the today than either militarism or political corruption. If the facts, full and untaunted, may not have free course among all peoples, then nations cannot act wisely, in the light of full knowledge. Responsible newspaper men and other publicists are deeply concerned over the continuance of war practices of censorship and news-coloration at its source: the press itself receives the blame for a condition which it is almost powerless to change. There are many signs that thoughtful persons, in and out of the profession of journalism, are aroused over the existence of this evil, whereby official or other power and privilege seek to prevent the dissemination of the truth.

This is nothing new, even though it represents the most serious problem of our time. The mighty have ever tried to control thought. This present Sunday School Lesson brings before millions of persons simultaneously an ancient attempt of a Jewish king to destroy a writing which he did not like. The angry monarch with a penknife, cutting into shreds the parchment scrolls containing



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and of the more intimate personal glimpses of the historical characters concerned. King Jehoiakim was on the throne of Judah, which was fast approaching its doom, though he was blind to the fact. Jeremiah, the prophet who had spoken for God in the name of the King's godly father, was in prison—but as Paul, in like circumstances, exultingly exclaimed "The word of God is not bound." Jeremiah could not speak in person to the people and the kings; yet, again like the imprisoned Paul, he could write.

What prison doors have been pried open by the pen! There is no limiting or restraining the person to whom God has given the gift of writing. All barriers of distance and time, yes, and of censorship, too, are ultimately overcome by the written word. It is an awesome responsibility, is this one of writing, especially nowadays, when even such unworthy lines as this present article will be thrust under the eyes of literally millions of readers.

Just as a reader may throw down his newspaper in disapproval or tear it up, so King Jehoiakim, when the writings of Jeremiah got to him, indignantly and contemptuously cut the scroll into pieces, and so burnt it up, because he disapproved of the prophet's warnings. But he did not impair by one jot the fate narrated. We cannot avert judgment by ignoring or despising the book that contains it. A ship's captain may be angered by the news conveyed in a government storm-warning, and he may toss overboard the wireless message; but that act will not affect the progress of the storm. God's word is true, and will be fulfilled, whether men scoff at it or not. In Jehoiakim's case, the prophet simply produced another scroll—with still more unpleasant additions.

A Prophet And His Times.

With most of our world horizon darkened by storm clouds, there is scarcely need to repeat the teaching of this lesson that all truth of God has to do with the times in which we live. Jeremiah wrote of current political conditions and their significance; that is what made the king angry. Still some hearers grumble at the sermons which squarely lay the revealed will of God alongside of our own times. They want the preacher to "stick to the simple gospel," without any embarrassing applications to the present. Yet the only truth worth quoting is that which has a bearing upon our own life and generation. The clergyman who never disturbs anybody's complacency may well ask himself whether he is preaching vital truth.

There is an interesting story, which some enterprising Bible class may well enact in dramatic form, by assigning the parts,—back of the central fact of Jehoiakim's foolish attempt to destroy the word of the Lord. It begins with Baruch, secretary to Jeremiah, and first of that long line of amanuenses who have been indispensable to the great teachers of the race. Baruch took Jeremiah's prophecy by dictation, and wrote it by pen on parchment. Then, as directed, he read it to the people in the temple. He did this again, later, when the kindred-spirited young man, Micaiah, worthy son of a brave father, of the sort who wanted something done about the new truth he had heard—Thank God for fearless youth that is not afraid to apply the highest teaching it hears!—carried the grave and alarming prophecies to the princes. It was sensational news the young patriot brought to his elders.

These representatives of the people straightway sent for Baruch, and hearing with alarm the scroll, declared, "We will surely tell the king of all these words." After learning all they could from Baruch about the authorship of the book, they bade him and Jeremiah hide while they imported the news to the king—for they knew the royal temper.

As for the king, he sent for the scroll and heard it; but caloused in the conceit and complacency which so often invest the privileged as an impenetrable shell, his majesty showed his contempt for the prophecy by cutting up and burning the parchment, as if that ended the matter. Even while he mocked, the feet of Babylon were turning toward his country and his capital. Three men present, one of them the father of Micaiah, were brave enough to remonstrate with the king, but he was obdurate, and would not give God the chance for clemency which, as always, Jehovah sought to exercise.

Our judgments judge us. Jehoiakim's repudiation of the prophet's word proved a repudiation of the last way out of disaster. He perished ignominiously; but, lo, the words that he tried to destroy by fire are being studied today over the whole world. (Copyright, 1922, by The Ellis Service.)

Oases Girl Wedded.

Railton, May 29.—On Wednesday, May 3rd, a wedding took place at St. Patrick's church, Railton, when Elizabeth Anna, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Harris, and John Joseph Donoghue, Westport, were married. The bride was attended in a suit of navy tricotine with hat to match. She was attended by her sister, Helen, who wore a tailored suit of brown. Robert Donoghue, brother of the groom, acted as best man. The wedding march was played by Miss Kathleen Liston, and during the nuptial mass special music was rendered by Misses Kathleen and Marie Liston, accompanied by their brother, Jay, on the violin. Mr. and Mrs. Donoghue motored to Kingston and left via Grand Trunk for a short honeymoon in Toronto and Niagara Falls. The large assortment of gifts received, testified to the popularity of the bride and groom. Mr. and Mrs. Donoghue will take up their residence on a farm near Westport.

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