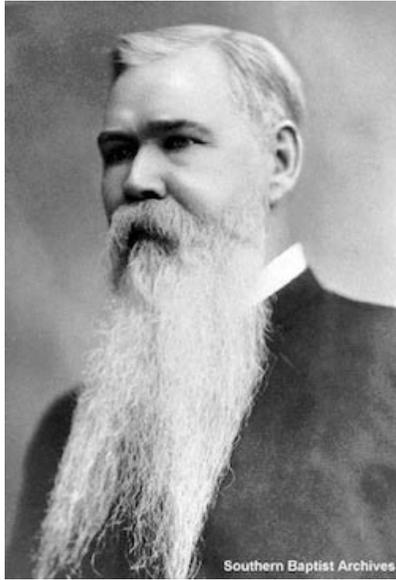


AN INTERPRETATION OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE



BY

B. H. CARROLL

Late President of Southwestern Baptist
Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas

Edited by

J. B. Cranfill

BAKER BOOK HOUSE

Grand Rapids, Michigan

New and complete edition

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Broadman Press

ISBN: 0-8010-2344-0

VOLUME 8

**THE PROPHETS
OF THE
CHALDEAN
PERIOD**

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I. THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH

INTRODUCTION AND INTERPRETATION

The prophet, Zephaniah, is the author, and he says that he was the great-great-grandson of a man named Hezekiah. He traces his genealogy back to the fourth generation, an unusual thing, for it was customary to give only the father's name, but sometimes they gave the grandfather's name. Here he styles himself, "The son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah," and it is altogether probable that he means King Hezekiah who reigned during the time Isaiah prophesied. Thus Zephaniah belonged to the royal family of Israel; a great-great-grandson of King Hezekiah. Such being the case, Zephaniah's home was in Jerusalem among the nobility and the princes of the city. He was therefore familiar with the life of the princes, their habits, their religion, all of their idolatrous customs, and the fact that he himself was a prince and thus knew the life of the princes royal of Jerusalem, accounts for some expressions which we find in his book.

The date of this book was somewhere between 630 and 622 B.C. during the reign of "Josiah the son of Ammon, king of Judah." It was probably before the discovery of the book of the law in the Temple, its promulgation and enforcement by the hand of the king, and the great reformatations instituted by Josiah as a result of finding the book of the law. In this book we find that there were a great many idolatrous customs in Jerusalem among the people, which would hardly be probable after the reformation, which took place in the reign of Josiah. Thus we place it sometime after 630 B.C. and before 621 B.C.

Zephaniah was a contemporary of Jeremiah who began his prophecies about 628 B.C., in the thirteenth year of the reign of King Josiah, and prophesied until about 525 B.C., covering altogether a period of about forty years. Zephaniah was only a young contemporary of Jeremiah, and engaged in preaching and

instituting the great moral reforms under Josiah. But Zephaniah makes no reference to Jeremiah.

The occasion of his prophecy was that which gave rise to the prophecies of Jeremiah also, viz: The sins of the people of Jerusalem, their idolatry, their oppression, their commercial greed, and generally, their social and their religious iniquities. It is to rebuke them, to warn the people of the punishment, and to predict the day of Jehovah and the fall of the city and nation that Zephaniah gives his word of prophecy. This punishment comes in the Scythian invasion, that horde of people from the far north which in innumerable multitudes poured down through Central Western Asia, devastating everything they touched – Assyria, Babylonia, Syria, and the kingdoms north thereof, Northern Israel to some extent, and the Philistine plain to the borders of Egypt, where they were bought off by the king of Egypt. That fearful scourge broke over the country in the time of Zephaniah.

The style of Zephaniah is good, and in some parts excellent. It is not equal to that of Nahum and much inferior to that of Isaiah. It resembles Isaiah in many respects, probably more than any other of the prophets, but he was not the equal of that superb, poetic, and literary genius. There are some words in the book of Zephaniah, say the Hebrew scholars, that are seldom used elsewhere, and some that are used nowhere else, which renders the interpretation difficult. Like Jeremiah, Zephaniah himself seems to put little confidence in the reforms instituted by King Josiah, knowing that those reforms were mainly external, imposed by the royal authority, and that the people's hearts were not changed. Zephaniah seems to have thought that the reforms that had already been instituted by Josiah were ineffective. They did not touch the heart of the nation. Therefore, he made no mention whatever of them.

In the book of Zephaniah we have the fullest description, up to this time, of the day of Jehovah, that day which the people in Amos' time were looking for and wished for, but which Amos said was the very

opposite of all they expected. It was a day of doom for the nation. Zephaniah gives us a fuller description of it, and we have in his prophecy the merging of prophecy and apocalypse, for there are some passages in Zephaniah descriptive of the day of Jehovah that are almost apocalyptic, as Daniel and Zechariah in the Old Testament, and Revelation in the New Testament.

The following is an analysis of the book:

Introduction: Author and date (1:1).

I. The punishment of Judah and Jerusalem (1:2to2:3).

1. The destruction universal (1:2-6).
2. Jehovah's sacrifice (1:7-13).
3. The "day of Jehovah" described (1:14-18).
4. Warning and admonition (2:1-3).

II. The punishment of the nations (2:4-15).

1. Philistia doomed (2:4-7).
2. Moab and Ammon doomed (2:8-11).
3. Ethiopia and Assyria doomed (2:12-15).

III. The restoration of the remnant (2:1-20).

1. The incorrigible city (2:1-7).
2. Wrath against the nations (3:8).
3. Salvation of the remnant (3:9-13).
4. Joys of the restoration (3:14-20).

Zephaniah had a wide vision; he seemed to see all the world, and picture the doom that was to come upon all animate creation: "I will utterly consume all things from off the face of the ground, saith Jehovah. I will consume man and beast," thus coming down to more details, according to the custom of Bible writers, – first, a general statement, then a detailed statement, "I will consume the fowls of heaven and the fishes of the sea, and the stumblingblocks with the wicked. And I will cut off man from off the face of the ground, saith Jehovah." This is a statement of judgment that is to come and affect all nature and mankind.

Now he comes down to further particulars: "I will stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem." They shall be involved in this general universal catastrophe that is to come in the day of Jehovah. Then further particulars: "I will cut off the remnant of Baal," that is, Baal worship shall be exterminated and even the remnants of it shall be destroyed, "and the name of the Chemarim with the priests." The Chemarim were a class of priests, who served in a form of idolatry with certain gods. It is supposed by some, with some probability, that the word refers to the black robes which the priests wore in that service. The word "chemarim" comes from a word which means darkness. Our word "chimera" has a similar root.

Then he goes on in verse 5: "And them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops," a form of star worship or sun worship, imported from Babylonia or Assyria, and was practiced by the people upon their housetops right in the city of Jerusalem. "Them that worship, that swear to the Lord and that swear by Malcam," or, by their king, who, like the people that were imported into Samaria after the destruction of the Northern Kingdom, served Jehovah and served their own gods also. They had a sort of mixed worship, combining the worship of Jehovah with the worship of other gods, and there seems to have been that class in Jerusalem at this time who swore by Jehovah and by their king, or Malcam, or their Molech; we cannot be sure of the exact reference. "Then he comes down to

another class: "And them that are turned back from following Jehovah," the backsliders. And the last class he mentions is those that had not sought Jehovah nor inquired after him, the indifferent, the irreligious, godless ones. Thus he describes all the classes of sinners – the indifferent, the irreligious, the backsliders, the worldly members that are saved, yet trying to follow God and follow the world, the idolaters, and then the priests that in their black robes served the various gods.

Jehovah commands them to hold their peace at the appearance of Jehovah God, "for the day of Jehovah is at hand; for Jehovah hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath consecrated his guests." He means that the destruction of Jerusalem and of Judah will be Jehovah's sacrifice in the day of Jehovah. And he goes on in verse 8, thus: "In that day of the Lord's sacrifice I will punish the princes (for they were the chief sinners in Jerusalem) and the king's sons," not particularly the king's sons nor the king. Josiah is on the throne, the best king Israel ever had. He is only a young man, and Zephaniah had no word against him; he was irreproachable and unblameable. But the king's sons, the members of the royal family, not Josiah's sons, (he was too young to have any sons grown up) but the immediate members of the royal family; the king's sons are among the first to receive the punishment that comes when the day of Jehovah appears.

"And he will punish all such as are clothed with foreign apparel." The young nobles of the city who sent for their robes to foreign countries, perhaps to Babylon, where they made the finest garments in all the world, as the society ladies today send to Paris for their best hats and dresses. The princes and the nobles of Jerusalem sent to foreign lands for their garments; Zephaniah condemns that thing.

In verse 9, he has a striking reference: "In that day I will punish all those that leap over the threshold, that fill their master's house with violence and deceit." "Leap over the threshold" is an obscure expression. There are two interpretations. One is that it refers to a superstitious custom of people who would not step upon the

threshold of the house, but who would leap over the threshold into the house without stepping thereon, on account of a superstitious custom that arose because Dagon, the god of the Philistines, fell over the doorstep of the house, when the ark was taken in the days of Samuel.

The other, and I think the better interpretation, is that it refers to these young and rapacious princes who did not scruple to break the laws and customs, and even the sanctity of the threshold; who leaped over into houses and robbed them either by stealth or in a legal fashion, for there is such a thing as legal robbery. Unscrupulous men, who cared nothing for the sacredness of the threshold, but leaped over, trampling under foot all the sacred rights of the house and home and hospitality in their greed for gold. They "filled their master's houses with violence and deceit" as a result of leaping over the threshold in their rapacity.

Now he goes on to describe the calamity that shall befall Israel, and the outcry: "a noise from the fish gate," which was probably in the northeastern corner of Jerusalem, the most convenient gate to the Jordan Valley and to the Sea of Galilee from which they brought their fish to Jerusalem; "and a howling from the second quarter," or a howling from the Mishneh, probably from "the new city," the second part of the city, the new part where Hulda, the prophetess, lived, as we find in the book of Kings in connection with the discovery of the law. "And a great crashing from the hills," that surround Jerusalem and upon which it is situated. Then he said, "Howl, ye inhabitants of Makesh" (or the mortar), and it probably refers to the valley that runs through the center of Jerusalem, called the Tyrolean Valley, between Zion, on one side, and Moriah on the other. "For all the people of Canaan are undone," or perhaps, "the merchant people" are undone, for the word "merchant" comes from the same root as the word "Canaan." A Canaanite was a merchantman, a trafficker. "All they that bear silver are cut off."

The next two verses give a description of how the calamity comes upon the city: "It shall come to pass," he says, "that I will search Jerusalem with candles," or lamps, to find out just what the people are doing, to search out every individual, "and I will punish the men that are settled on their lees." This is a figure taken from their custom of making wine. The wine when fresh and new was placed in vessels, and very soon there would gather in the bottom a thick sediment, and after that gathered for a little time, they would pour off the wine into another vessel and thus keep it fresh. If they allowed it to remain in the first vessel, it would soon become putrid and muddy, thick and unfit for use.

In this figure he describes the people as at ease and with plenty. It had been some fifteen or twenty years since the reign of Manasseh when they had the hard time, when Jerusalem was red with blood. Since then they had become somewhat wealthy; they had settled down and were taking it easy; they had wealth and prosperity and somewhat of luxury. Zephaniah says, the people thus settled down like wine, upon their lees, and had become thick and muddy, and their brain had become clouded and sluggish and their religious life dull and heavy; they were troubled with inertia. That frequently happens today with well-to-do people, in comfortable circumstances, who have this world's goods, and have to some extent settled down on their lees and are taking it easy; churches that have fine houses, a fine preacher, and a fine choir, all their debts paid, sometimes settle down on their lees. The result is that church gets thick, muddy, inert, sluggish, stupid, and becomes putrescent and unfit for use. If we become respectable and comfortably situated, we settle down in self-satisfaction, congratulating ourselves on the fact that we are a very good people. People in this way become thick, and sluggish, and dull. That is the tendency the world over with mere respectability. That is the crying sin and shame of our church life throughout the world today. As soon as a church settles down and takes it easy it becomes dull, sluggish, disgusting. They have to be kept at work or they will soon become thick and unsavory. As Brother Truett says, you have to keep them on the run

all the time, or they won't go at all. "The Lord will not do good," they say, "neither will he do evil." We have our prayer meeting and revival services and some good deacon will say, "It won't do any harm."

He now goes on to speak of their punishment: "Their wealth shall become a spoil, and their houses a desolation; they shall build houses, but none shall inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards but none shall drink the wine thereof." That is the sacrifice of Jehovah on that day when he comes in destruction and judgment.

The day of Jehovah is described in verses 14-18: "The great day of Jehovah is near, it is near . . . the voice of the day of Jehovah." Its characteristic, its striking feature is this: "The mighty man," the hero, the warrior, "crieth bitterly." Then comes the full description of it: "A day of wrath, and trouble, and distress; a day of wasteness, desolation, and darkness, and gloominess; a day of clouds and thick darkness; a day of trumpet and alarm, against the fenced cities and against the high battlements."

In verses 17-18 he describes the distress that shall come upon men, how their blood will be poured out as dust and their flesh as the dung; silver and gold will not deliver them; whose land shall be devoured and shall make a terrible end of all that dwell in the land.

Then follows the warning to the wicked and the admonition to the righteous in 2:1-3. The warning to the wicked is this: "Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation that hath no shame; before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of Jehovah come upon you, before the day of Jehovah's anger come upon you." Then he addresses the meek, the godly: "Seek ye Jehovah, all ye meek of the earth, that have kept his ordinances; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye will be hid in the day of Jehovah's anger." And they were hid in the day of Jehovah's anger, for when the Scythians overran all that part of Syria, they passed down the Philistine coast and left Judah and Jerusalem untouched, and the godly remnant was hid in the day

of Jehovah, for that was one of the days of Jehovah, as there have been many since, and will be yet more before the last day comes.

Philistia (2:4-7) is doomed and her land shall belong to Israel: "Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation; they shall drive out Ashdod at the noonday, and Ekron shall be rooted up. Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea coast, the nation of the Cherethites." We meet with this word "Cherithites" and also "Pelethites" in connection with the bodyguard of David and Solomon; they are constantly referred to during the period of the Divided Kingdom, also after the Exile. The people of this strip of territory who were called Cherethites, were evidently of Philistine blood, and by David and Solomon were made special bodyguards. We do not know for what reason, except that they must have been peculiarly fitted for tins duty. For centuries the Pope of Rome has had Swiss bodyguards; he will not trust Italians.

"The word of Jehovah is against you, O Canaan, the land of the Philistines; I will destroy thee; . . . the sea coast shall be pastures, with cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks. And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed their flocks there and shall dwell in the houses of Ashkelon for Jehovah their God shall visit them and bring back their captivity." Zephaniah presupposes a certain captivity of Judah and when they return they shall inhabit not only all Judah, but the coast and the Philistine plain and dwell in the cities of the Philistines.

Ammon was doomed (2:8-11) because they had reproached God's people and had magnified themselves against their border; they were doomed to be destroyed. This is the same complaint which Amos, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel lodged against these people. "Moab shall be doomed to destruction because of her pride," and verse 9 says, "Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon shall be as Gomorrah, the breeding place of nettles and salt pits, and a perpetual desolation."

The doom of Ethiopia is given in one sentence (2:12) : "Ye Ethiopians also, ye shall be slain by my sword." The doom of Assyria is given in verses 13-15. This is the same subject which engrosses the attention of Nahum. Notice what Zephaniah says, verse 14, "And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations: both the pelican and the porcupine shall lodge in the capitals thereof; their voice sing in the windows; desolation shall be in the thresholds for he hath laid bare the cedar work." And he describes the doom of Nineveh in the same terms that are afterward used to describe the pride of Babylon, and later on by John, to describe the pride of Rome, the last and greatest Babylon. "This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! everyone that passeth by her shall hiss, and wag his hand." This idolizing of self is a very common characteristic of large and wealthy cities. Every great city has a peculiar form of pride. This was the spirit of Nineveh. And what the result? "How is she become desolate, a place for beasts to lie down in!"

Jerusalem is described as a city, incorrigible in its wickedness (3:1-8). In verses 1-2, he hurls his denunciation against her: "Woe to her that is rebellious and polluted! to the oppressing city!" Here is the charge: "She obeyed not the voice, she received not correction, she trusted not in Jehovah, she drew not near to her God." Verse 3 gives the description of her rulers, princes, prophets, and priests: "The princes within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves; the prophets are light and treacherous; the priests have profaned the sanctuary, and done violence to the law." In spite of all that, "Jehovah in the midst of her is righteous; he will not do iniquity; every morning doth he bring his justice to light, he faileth not," a beautiful passage, "but the unjust knoweth no shame." Then he describes the desolation that is to come in verses 6-7, but verse 7, particularly, brings to us the idea of how incorrigible they were: "I said, Only fear thou me; receive instruction; so her dwelling should not be cut off, however I punished her, but they rose up early, and

corrupted all their doings." They would not receive correction; they were beyond that, utterly incorrigible. This is in essence the same things Jeremiah said at this time also.

Verse 8 brings before their minds the thought that the day of Jehovah is coming, "Therefore wait ye for me, saith Jehovah, until the day that I rise up to the prey; for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger; for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy."

The particulars of the salvation of the remnant are set forth in verses 9-13. Verses 9-10 tell of the people that shall come up to Judah and Jerusalem: "For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent." That is what I am going to bring about in the future, and more than that: "From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my supplicants, even the daughter of my dispersed shall bring mine offering." There is going to be a gathering from the far nations and my people shall come back. Then in verse 11 he describes how the proud are to be cut off: "For then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride; and thou shalt no more be haughty because of mine holy mountain." Verse 12 describes the remnant that shall be left: "I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of Jehovah." A remnant shall be saved, even in the day of Jehovah, in the midst of this universal destruction. In verse 13 the remnant is described: "They shall do no iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid." These are practically the same words that were used by the other prophets, Micah and Amos, particularly Micah.

Radical critics with scarcely an exception, say that Zephaniah did not write section 3:14-20; that it was written during the exile or immediately after, by some writer who wanted to supplement Zephaniah's prophecy and offset the picture which he had drawn.

That is their theory, and as we have stated repeatedly, the thing that inspires that view is that they do not believe in real inspiration, an inspiration which enabled a man to see the future. A real revelation they virtually deny, and that is the reason they deny certain parts of these prophecies to these ancient writers.

The joys of the restoration are described in verses 14-20. This is a beautiful picture of the restoration, the blessed messianic age, very much like the pictures found in Isaiah 40-66. He says, "In that day," which shows that the prophet is looking forward to a time which he sees in the future and describes it. Verse 14 begins: "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all thy heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. Jehovah hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy; the king of Israel, even Jehovah, is in the midst of thee; thou shalt not fear evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, "Fear thou not, O Zion, let not thine hands be slack. Jehovah, thy God, is in the midst of thee; a mighty one who will save."

There are some good gospel texts here. "He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing." Why? Because his love will now be reciprocated; his love will now be satisfied; it has its response; it has won its object, and he will rest and be at peace in his love; no more turmoil, no more anxiety; God has found his people and his people have found him; he will rejoice over them with singing.

Then he goes on with his description as to how they are to be gathered: "I will gather them that sorrow for the solemn assembly, who were of thee; to whom the burden upon her was a reproach. Behold, at that time I will deal with all them that afflict thee; and I will save that which is lame, and gather that which was driven away; and I will make them a praise and a name, whose shame hath been in all the earth." And the last verses give another statement as to how this restoration shall take place: "At that time will I bring you in, and at that time will I gather you; for I will make you a name and

a praise among all the peoples of the earth, when I bring back your captivity before your eyes, saith Jehovah."

This vision of Zephaniah compares favorably with the visions of other prophets. He had a broad vision, almost as broad as Isaiah's, or Micah's, in which they picture the mountain of the Lord's house as exalted above all the hills, and all the nations flowing into it to receive the law. He says here that they shall have a name and a place among all the peoples of the earth, the restoration period, when Jehovah dwells within them in all his holiness and righteousness and truth. Such is Zephaniah's picture of the day of judgment and such is his picture of the age to come. In prophetic vision he sees through an appalling cloud of darkness and destruction of that day, into the future when God shall save his people and his tabernacle shall be with them and he shall be their God and they shall be his people. While Zephaniah's picture is not quite equal to that of Isaiah's or Micah's, and in many respects far beyond Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's and vastly inferior to the magnificent visions of John that he saw on Patmos, in essence they are all the same.

QUESTIONS

1. Who the author of Zephaniah, what his lineal descent? and what the bearing of this fact on his fitness for his work?
2. What the date of this book and what the reason for assigning this date to it?
3. With what great prophet was Zephaniah contemporary?
4. What the occasion and purpose of his prophecy?
5. What can you say of the style and contents of the book?
6. Give an outline of the book.
7. What Zephaniah's vision of judgment, generally and particularly

8. Describe the sacrifice of Jehovah and explain the terms contained therein (7-13), and show the application to modern conditions.
9. Describe the "day of Jehovah" as given by Zephaniah.
10. What the warning to the wicked and the admonition to the righteous in 2:1-3?
11. Describe the doom of Philistia (2:4-7).
12. Describe the doom of Moab and Ammon (2:8-11).
13. Describe the doom of Ethiopia and Assyria (2:12-15).
14. Describe the incorrigible city (3:1-8).
15. What the exhortation of 3:8 and what determination therein expressed?
16. What the particulars of the salvation of the remnant (3:9-13)?
17. What say the radical critics of the paragraph, 3:14-20, and what the basis of their theory?
18. Describe the joys of the restoration (14-20).
19. How does this vision of Zephaniah compare with the visions of other prophets?

II. THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK INTRODUCTION AND INTERPRETATION

The theme of this chapter is the prophecy of Habakkuk. As regards the author, nothing more is known of him, no reference is made to him in any other portion of the Scriptures besides what is given in Habakkuk 1:1. The name is a little peculiar. It means to embrace, or to be embraced. It found its application to the prophet in that he kept very close to God. Apparently he was well known, for he styles himself "the prophet," which may or may not imply that he was prominent in prophetic circles. But it does imply that he was well known. He was a contemporary of Jeremiah, although they make no reference whatever to each other. Thus while Jeremiah was preaching his great sermons and seeking to lead Israel back to God, Habakkuk was also grappling with another great problem.

The date of this book is almost certainly in the reign of Jehoiakim between 609 and 605 B.C. We put it subsequent to 609 B.C., because the conditions which the prophet describes could hardly have existed during the reign of Josiah. We put it before 605 B.C., for it seems altogether likely that he wrote before Nebuchadnezzar inflicted that terrible defeat on Pharaoh-Necho at Carchemish and became the supreme ruler in western Asia. In the book of Habakkuk, Chaldea, or Babylonia, was the rising power, but had not yet come to its highest pinnacle of greatness. The evil conditions of the time fit the earlier half of the reign of Jehoiakim.

The prophecies in the book of Jeremiah seem to imply that exactly the same evils existed then as were depicted by Habakkuk. We also find that he makes no reference to Assyria or Nineveh, its capital, which shows that Nineveh was destroyed at this time, and the power of Assyria was forever crushed. He does refer to the Chaldeans, and it was shortly before and after the destruction of Nineveh that the Chaldean power was rising to its place of supremacy. Putting things together then, it seems most likely that it was written between the years 609 and 605 B.C. in the reign of Jehoiakim.

The style of the book is almost classical. Habakkuk is one of the most original of the Hebrew writers. He is a sublime poet. Though we have only one of his poems preserved to us, it is one of the finest poems in Hebrew literature. He is a literary genius of the highest type, almost equal to that of Isaiah. There are many textual difficulties in his prophecy; the text has in some places suffered corruption, as we shall see as we proceed with the study of it.

It is well for us to note at this point that there were four great prophets prophesying or preaching in this period. There was Jeremiah, one of the greatest of the prophets; there was Zephaniah, whom we studied in our last chapter; there was Habakkuk, who perhaps did comparatively little preaching, but who lived during that period; and then in Jeremiah 26 there is reference to a certain prophet named Uriah, who prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem, fled into Egypt to escape the wrath of Jehoiakim, was brought back to Jerusalem and slain. These four prophets were contemporaries. Jeremiah was saved because he had a friend among the princes; Zephaniah was a prince himself and therefore he escaped; Habakkuk, we know nothing about; he probably was in obscurity, as he seems to be more of a writer than a preacher. Uriah suffered martyrdom at the hands of the wicked and unscrupulous king.

Jeremiah's problem was to warn Israel of her sins, predict the coming destruction, prophesy of the preservation of the remnant and the restoration to their own land again after the exile, and – thus be the means of preserving religion among the exiles, securing their return and preparing the way for the glorious age that should follow. The prophecy of Zephaniah was very similar to that, but the prophecy of Habakkuk is different. Habakkuk is not a preacher in the same sense in which Zephaniah and Jeremiah were. It is no part of his talk to warn the people of their sins, to warn them against the impending destruction at the hands of Babylon, to seek to induce, if possible, repentance on their part and to promise a future return and restoration. That is not his problem.

In Habakkuk we see what is called speculation in Israel. I am not sure that we have the beginning of speculation here, but we certainly have speculation, or we have an instance of the mind of a prophetic man, dealing with one of the most perplexing problems that could ever occupy the attention and thought of a mortal being. It is not how Israel shall escape the punishment of her sins, but it is this problem: Why does God allow this evil to exist? How is it that God can allow Israel to go on in this state? How is it that God permits this moral evil? And then when he projected that problem, he received his answer from Jehovah, and the answer is this: Israel is allowed to go on in her iniquity, but God is going to raise up the Chaldean power to punish her for her sins, and she must suffer destruction because of those sins at the hands of that power.

Then another question comes upon the horizon. The Chaldeans were terrible and ruthless warriors, worse than the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem, and how can a holy God who has pure eyes – too pure to look upon evil – how could he permit such a nation as Chaldea to swallow up a nation vastly better than themselves? In answer to this question he takes his stand upon what he calls his watchtower, the watchtower of history, to observe God's providences and see what God is going to do. God gives him a vision and tells him to write it on a tablet. What did it mean? It is the settlement of the great problem troubling the mind of Habakkuk. Habakkuk gets his answer, and the answer is that the nation of the Chaldeans carried within themselves the principle of death, and must perish through their iniquity as truly as Judah must perish because of her iniquities. The triumph of the Babylonian power is but temporary.

God in the future will work out his principle of righteousness, providence will vindicate itself, and in chapter 3 we have the prophet's vision of God marching through history, and he pictures him as few poets have ever pictured God in his providential management of the world and its affairs. The question is then, How can God, holy and pure and righteous as he is, permit this evil in Judah and in Babylonia? It will be observed at once that it is a

profound question, one of the most perplexing questions that ever troubled the human mind. Habakkuk is not the only one who has asked that question. How is it that God permits the colossal evils that have been going on for millenniums in this world? What is the meaning of it all? Such questions have troubled many minds.

The following is a convenient analysis of the book of Habakkuk:

Introduction: The title, (1:1).

I. The prophet's problems (1:2 to 2:4).

1. The prophet's cry (1:2-4).

2. Jehovah's answer (1:5-11).

3. A new problem (1:12-17).

4. The prophet's attitude (2:1).

5. Jehovah's explanation (2:2-5).

II. The prophet's proclamations (2:6 to 3:19).

1. The vision of destruction in five woes (2:6-20).

2. The prophet's prayer and psalm (3:1-19).

The prophet cries against injustice and oppression (1:2-4). Abominable iniquities were prevailing in Judah and Jerusalem under the reign of that wicked king. The prophet was unable to restrain himself, and he broke forth, "O, Jehovah, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear?" This cry is not necessarily the cry of prayer; it is the cry of distress, the cry that arises from a heart which feels that something is wrong, feels it deeply, and cries out to God because of it. It may include prayer, but it is not primarily prayer. He has been crying to God because of this iniquity and God doesn't seem to be listening: "Thou wilt not save! How long must I continue?"

"I cry out unto thee of violence," and that word "violence" is the word they used when any great crime was being committed, as murder or robbery. It is one of the strongest words in the language. Instead of crying, "Murder," he would say, "Violence." It means that the worst of evils prevailed in the city and in the land. "And thou wilt not save I" How long is God going to stand this condition of affairs and not save us from it?

Then he raises another question: "Why dost thou show and cause me to see iniquity, crookedness, perverseness? for destruction and violence are before us; and there is sin and contention." That was the condition of affairs in the reign of Jehoiakim. The law found in the Temple not long before this and which was promulgated under good King Josiah and accepted by the nation, with the king at its head, "is slackened, and justice doth never go forth; for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore justice goeth forth perverted." It will be observed that the sins mentioned here are those that Amos charged against Northern Israel, that Jeremiah and Micah especially charged against Southern Israel, the same conditions, and the same iniquities prevailing. Such is the prophet's cry.

There is a great difference of opinion among interpreters regarding this oppression, violence, and perversion of justice, as to how it arose. Some maintain that it was because of the oppression of the Chaldeans; and others that it was the oppression of Egypt, for during this time Judah and Jerusalem were swaying between these powers; at one time Assyria, then Babylonia, and then Egypt. But this explanation does not fit the case. It was not a case of foreign oppression. Foreign oppression did not cause the law to be slack and justice and judgment to be perverted. Foreign oppression would not necessarily affect the social, commercial, and religious life of the people. The prophet had in mind evidently the actual condition of Israel during the reign of Jehoiakim when wickedness prevailed among the people, especially in Jerusalem itself.

Jehovah's answer to the cry of the prophet (1:5-11) is that he is going to raise up the nation of the Chaldeans and they are going to be the means of punishing Israel for her sins. God calls attention first of all to the great wonder he is going to perform: "Behold, ye among the nations, and look and wonder marvelously, for I am working a work in your days," which shows that the Chaldeans now rising up on the horizon had not yet attained their greatest height. "Behold, I am working a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you."

Assyria and Nineveh had been crushed and it was almost inconceivable to them that another nation would be raised up, almost as cruel and as rapacious as was Nineveh herself. He has done that many times in history and since the days of Habakkuk. What a wonder that people have not believed, although it has been told them. In verse 6 this is explained: "I raise up the Chaldeans." Let us note particularly the description of this nation: "that bitter and hasty nation," swift in their movements, could strike blows where they were least expected, "that march through the breadth of the earth to possess dwelling places that are not theirs." That was the purpose of all their conquests, to seize upon possessions not theirs, the same as was the purpose of Assyria and Nineveh. "They are terrible and dreadful; their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves," not from any higher source. "Their horses are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves; their horsemen shall spread themselves, and shall come from afar; they shall fly as the eagles that hasteth to devour." A very vivid description of the swiftness with which the Babylonian army marched.

They shall come for what? Verse 9, "They come all of them for violence; the set of their faces is forward; and they gather captives as the sand. Yea, he scoffeth at kings, and princes are a derision unto him; he derideth every stronghold; for he heapeth up dust, and taketh it." They will gather the people together like heaps of dust, no matter whether kings, princes, or strongholds, the Chaldeans will

gather them together as they would gather dust in their hands. "Then shall he sweep by as a wind, and shall pass over, and be guilty," or commit sin, "even he whose might," whose strength, whose prowess, "is his god." There is such a thing as a deifying of force, the worship of strength, or a man making his strength his god, or a man making money his god. Why? Because money is power. The Babylonian made his might his god; he worshiped his strength, and Babylonia is not the only nation that has done that same thing.

Habakkuk (1:12-17) expresses a very beautiful faith in God and a very high and holy conception of him: "Art not thou from everlasting, O Jehovah my God, my Holy One? we shall not die." He voices the consciences of the very best people of Israel, God's people. "We shall not die. O Jehovah, thou hast ordained him [the Chaldeans] for judgment; and thou, O Rock, hast established him for correction." That is why the Chaldeans have been raised up. Then he goes on: "Thou that art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and that canst not look on perverseness," and this is what gives rise to his problem, "Wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and boldest thy peace when the wicked swalloweth up the man that is more righteous than he; and makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them?" He goes on with his description: "He taketh up all of them with the angle, he catcheth them in his net, and he gathereth them in his drag: therefore he rejoiceth and is glad."

Here is a nation that treats every other nation and people as if they were mere fish of the sea; he casts his great conquering net in and brings it up full, as mere fish to be devoured or thrown away. How can God look upon such things as that, such a nation treating God's own people in this way? That is his problem. Then he goes on with the description, verse 16: "Therefore he sacrificeth unto his net, and burneth incense unto his drag; because by them his portion is fat, and his food plenteous." Then the question arises, "Shall he therefore empty his net, and spare not to slay the nations

continually?" Is God going to let such a rapacious and insatiable monster go like that, devouring the people forever?

The prophet's attitude toward this question (2:1) was a waiting attitude, or the attitude of faith and honesty. The prophet in receiving an answer to this great question as to what providence means by permitting such, says, "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and look forth to see what he will speak with me, and what I shall answer concerning my complaint." I will take my stand upon my tower where I can observe what God is going to do and what God will answer to my complaint; how he will answer my question.

Jehovah's explanation of the new problem is that the Chaldean principle is the principle of death, but the righteous have within them the principle of life: "Jehovah answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tablets, that he may run that readeth it." Let the people see what is coming; write your vision plainly so that when a man sees it and reads it, he will run. And when the vision was written and they saw it, they felt like running. The vision, he says, is for the appointed time, this is a vision of coming destruction, the coming judgment, the overwhelming power of the Chaldeans: "The vision is for the appointed time, it hasteth toward the end, and shall not lie." It is true, though it tarry, wait for it: it will surely come, it will not delay. Now he repeats the statement, making it emphatic, to impress upon them the fact that that vision which Habakkuk saw of the coming destruction of judgment must certainly come.

I think you will find in verse 4, the greatest text in Habakkuk and one of the greatest texts of the Bible: "Behold, his soul is puffed up, it is not upright in him; but the righteous shall live by his faith." Behold, the soul of the Chaldean is puffed up, elated with mirth, with self-sufficiency; "but the righteous one shall live by his faithfulness." This is the text upon which Paul bases his theology and his interpretation of Christianity, and he uses it more than once.

Let us try to find the interpretation of it: "The righteous shall live in his faithfulness." The word here is "faithfulness," not merely faith. The root of it is the word which means faith, and from which we get our word "amen". It means faithfulness, integrity, perseverance, and especially, steadfastness. Applied to business life it means integrity and steadfastness; to family life, faithfulness of father and mother, husband and wife, and child. Applied in every other respect we can interpret it by the word "faithfulness".

Paul says, "The just shall live by faith," that is, the soul shall find forgiveness and new life in Jesus Christ through the exercise of faith in his gospel. It implies there also the doctrine of perseverance and steadfastness. The just man, the righteous man shall live by his faithfulness, not merely by believing once in Jesus Christ, or believing once in God, but he shall go on living by that faith in steadfastness and perseverance in his belief.

This is the great characteristic of Job, that he was proved to be steadfast, and the finest commentary, explanation of the doctrine of perseverance, or the preservation of the saints, is the book of Job. That is the principle of life, the principle by which the righteous shall live, by which Judah and Israel shall live, but the principle that animates the soul of the Chaldeans is pride, self-sufficiency, which unbalances all his powers and is the principle of death. It is suicide. That is the vision upon the tablet, great and eternal principles: that sin is suicide; that faithfulness is life. This is Habakkuk's great contribution to the Old Testament theology.

Jehovah illustrates his answer in 2:5. The proud, treacherous, insatiable Chaldean shall become a proverb to the nations: "Yea, moreover, wine is treacherous, a haughty man, that keepeth not at home," means this: As wine will make a man drunk, it also makes him treacherous, with a tendency to wander away; so the Chaldean, drunk with his conquests, proud, self-sufficient, wandering everywhere wherever he can find anything to satisfy his lusts for conquest. As wine creates an appetite never satisfied, so the

drunkenness that comes from conquests enlargeth his desire as Sheol, the underworld, with its insatiable maw that is never satisfied, "but gathereth unto him all nations and heapeth unto him all peoples." It is conquest, the lust for dominion and power, that is as insatiable as death and Sheol.

Verse 6 says that the nations would take up a parable against him, a taunting proverb. Here he pictures the downfall of Babylon, who because of her greed, oppression, and plunder should have nations rise up against her and taunt her. Five songs, or five woes, follow:

1. The plunderer shall in turn be plundered, 2:6-8: "Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and that ladeth himself with pledges!" That is, making himself a debtor to all these nations by taking their possessions; and by continually treating the nations this way, he made all the nations his creditors, and he himself was debtor to them all. "Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booty unto them? Because thou hast plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder thee, because of men's blood, and for the violence done to the land, to the city, and to all that dwell therein."

2. A house built by evil gain shall witness against its owner, 2:9-11: "Woe to him that getteth an evil gain for his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the hand of evil!" That is a picture of many businessmen and other men of the present age, who set up a nest for themselves on high to be reserved for a rainy day. "Thou hast devised shame to thy house, by cutting off many peoples, and hast sinned against thy soul. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it," a figurative expression, that the house built thus will witness against its owner.

3. The capital built by blood shall be as fuel to the fire, 2:12-14: "Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity!" just as Nineveh and Babylon were established by iniquity. "Behold, is it not of Jehovah of hosts that the peoples labor

for the fire, and the nations weary themselves for vanity?" That is the case because Jehovah hath decreed it. "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea," a fine text, which goes to show that the city being built by blood shall be burned, shall be destroyed, but Jehovah's cause will triumph.

4. The producer of drunkenness and shame shall in turn be put to shame, 2:15-17: "Woe to him that giveth his neighbor drink, to thee that addest thy venom and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!" What is the meaning? Not simply giving one drink and compelling him to drink, but it means that he oppressed the people, brought them down to degradation, weakness, and shame, in order that he might gloat over their wretched, shameful condition, the figure being drawn from Noah when he got drunk and lay in his tent in a shameful condition.

Now Chaldea was to make all nations drunk, bring them down to shame and degradation and gloat over their condition. Then the woe follows: "Thou art filled with shame, and not glory; drink thou also, and be as one uncircumcised; the cup of Jehovah's right hand shall come round unto thee, and foul shame shall be upon thy glory. For the violence done to Lebanon shall cover thee, and the destruction of the beasts, which made them afraid; because of men's blood, and for the violence done to the land, to the city, and to all that dwell therein."

5. The gross idolatry of Babylon disappoints the idol maker, 2:18-20: "What profiteth the graven image, that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, even the teacher of lies, that he that fashioneth its form trusteth therein, to make dumb idols?" Then he says in verse 19, "Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise! Shall this teach? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it." Compare that with Isaiah 44 for a description of idolatry. Then he goes on: "But Jehovah is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep

silence before him." A splendid contrast that is, one of the finest in all the world's literature, between the idols of Babylon and Jehovah, the living God.

Chapter 3 is in the form of a poem, picturing the theophany, the appearance of God as he is executing his vengeance in the world and saving his people: the picture of God appearing on the horizon of history, combining the elements that we find portrayed in the deliverance from Egypt, the bringing of Israel into Canaan, and some of the great historical deliverances that followed. A company of Savants in France gathered together and each one was to bring one of the finest quotations of poetry that he could discover, and Benjamin Franklin appeared with them on invitation and contributed his part to the program by reading this poem of Habakkuk. They were enraptured, wanted to have it published, wanted to know whence it came, who wrote it, where it was found, and thought it the finest thing they had ever heard. Franklin simply referred them to this book in the Bible.

In this proclamation concerning righteousness the viewpoint is that of the majesty of Jehovah, and the consequent triumph of his people. In the first movement the prophet declares his recognition of the divine interference, his consequent fear, and breathes a prayer for the revival of Jehovah's work (3:2). He then proceeds to celebrate the greatness of Jehovah as manifested in his dealings with his ancient people. This is a review of God's work in the history of Israel, in an exalted strain of poetry, 3:3-15: At Sinai (3-4); the plagues in the desert (5) ; the terror of the nations at Israel's coming (6-7); crossing the Red Sea and the Jordan (8-10); Joshua at Bethhoron (II) ; conquest of the land (12-15). In the last section of the poem the prophet expresses fear and faith concerning the judgment. The contemplation of the judgment on the "puffed up" had filled him with fear, yet he triumphed in God. Describing the circumstances of utter desolation, he declares his determination in the midst of them to rejoice (3: 16-19). This view of the

mountaintop faith of the prophet here furnishes a fitting conclusion of our study of this prophet. May his faith and spirit possess us!

QUESTIONS

1. What the biblical information concerning the author of Habakkuk?
2. What the date of this book and the circumstances fixing it?
3. What of the style and literature of this book?
4. What four great prophets of this period were contemporary and what the problem of each?
5. What other question arises in this connection?
6. Give an outline of this book.
7. What the cry of the prophet, what its nature and cause, what the prevailing condition, what the theories respecting this oppression and what the real state of affairs?
8. What Jehovah's answer to the cry of the prophet, what the destructive work of the Chaldeans and the characteristics of their army (1:5-11)?
9. What of Habakkuk's faith in Jehovah and what new problem arises here (1:12-17)?
10. What the prophet's attitude toward this question (2:1)?
11. What Jehovah's explanation of the new problem, what specific charge to the prophet and why this special commission?
12. What was the writing on the tablet and what Paul's use of it?
13. How does Jehovah illustrate his answer (2:5)?

14. What was to be the attitude of the nations toward this devouring monster?
15. What the first woe (2:1-8)?
16. What the second woe (2:9-11)?
17. What the third woe (2:12-14)?
18. What the fourth woe (2:15-17)?
19. What the fifth woe (2:18-20)?
20. What the literary form of chapter 3, what the contents Hi general, and what historic incident of the use of this poem?
21. Give more specifically the contents of this poem?

III. THE BOOK: OF JEREMIAH INTRODUCTION

Jeremiah 1:1-3

The book of Jeremiah is the longest in the Bible coming from the hand of a single writer, or author. The book of the Psalms is a larger book, but it is really a compilation of various writers, five great books in one. The book of Jeremiah contains his prophecies and the events of his life covering about forty-four years, one of the most stirring periods of Hebrew history.

The greater part of the book was no doubt written by Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe, or secretary, though some parts may have been written by Jeremiah himself. Of these facts we cannot be absolutely sure, though we do know that Baruch wrote most of it. In Jeremiah 36 we have the story of how the author came to write his prophecy. He tells us that somewhere about the year 604 or 603 B.C. in the reign of King Jehoiakim, by the command of Jehovah, he dictated the substance of all his prophecies, covering eighteen or nineteen years previous, to his scribe, who wrote them in a book, or roll. Baruch wrote down these words, including the prophecy of how God would destroy Jerusalem because of the sins of the people. The roll was taken and read to the king and he was so enraged that he cut it in pieces and threw it in the fire. Thus the first edition was burned.

A short time after this he again dictated to his scribe these prophecies, and Baruch wrote them down. It was the same prophecy, but many like words were added unto them. That edition of Jeremiah's prophecies was preserved, and we have it in the first seventeen chapters of the book. It is doubtless true that he gave here the substance of his prophecies covering the early period of his life. To these seventeen chapters the remainder of the book has been added. There is no doubt that all of the book except chapter 52 is from Jeremiah, although some modern critics say that about four-nineteenths of it is really Jeremiah's and about four nineteenths Baruch's and the rest belongs to many writers unknown. They have figured it down very fine, even down to the nineteenth part. These

are vulgar fractions instead of inspired writings. Jeremiah 52 was not from the hand of Jeremiah, but was taken from the book of 2 Kings and is a repetition of the 2 Kings 24 almost word for word.

There are more difficulties in the study of the text than in the study of almost any other book of the Bible. In the third century B.C. a Greek translation was made in Egypt by many scholars from the original Jewish manuscripts that they might have the Scriptures in Greek. That translation was called the Septuagint. From this it appears that the book of Jeremiah has more corruptions in the text than any other book of the Bible; 2,700 words were left out of the Septuagint Version, or about one-eighth of the book. Most of these words, however, are words of lesser importance; for instance, such expressions as "Thus saith the Lord," introductory words which do not take from the substance of the book, or from the heart of the prophecy, to any great extent. The critics differ as to which to follow, the Septuagint Version or our Massoretic Hebrew text. Many of them prefer the Septuagint. Ezra and those who follow him evidently preferred the Hebrew text, for it has been preserved in connection with the Old Testament Scriptures and is in our Hebrew Bible.

A convenient outline of the book of Jeremiah is as follows:

Introduction: Title, author, and date (1:1-3).

I. The prophet's call (1:4-19):

1. Personal (1:4-10).

2. Official (1:11-19).

II. The prophet's commission (2-13):

1. The impeachment, call, and Judgment (2-6)

2. The sins of worship and backsliding (7-9).

3. The sin of idolatry and the broken covenant (10-13).

III. The prophecies before the fall of Jerusalem (14-39):

1. God's decree to punish (14-17).

2. Lessons from the potter (18-20).

3. Message to Zedekiah (21-27).

4. Jeremiah and the false prophets (28-29).

5. The "Book of Consolation" (30-33).

6. Prophecies of the siege and the Rechabites (34-35).

7. The history of the roll (36).

8. History of the siege, (37-39).

IV. The prophecies after the fall of Jerusalem (40-45):

1. Against going into Egypt (40-42).

2. While in Egypt (43-44).

3. The exhortation of Baruch (45).

V. The prophecies concerning the nations (46-51):

1. Concerning Egypt (46).

2. Concerning Philistia (47).

3. Concerning Moab (48).

4. Concerning Ammon (49:1-6).

5. Concerning Edom (49:7-22).

6. Concerning Damascus (49:23-27).
7. Concerning Koedar and Hazor (49:28-33).
8. Concerning Elam (49:34-39).
9. Concerning Babylon (50-51).

VI. Historical supplement (52):

(The following analysis, as a preview of the book, will be followed closely in the discussion.)

We have in verses 1-3 the preface. Whether this was written by Jeremiah himself or by Baruch we cannot be absolutely sure, but it constitutes the introduction. In this passage we have stated the family of Jeremiah, his home, and when he began to prophesy. We see that his life and ministry cover the reigns of five kings. These were Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiakin, and Zedekiah. The reigns of Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin were very short. This preface was probably written by Baruch, the scribe, after the book had been compiled.

SECTION 1. Jeremiah 1:4 to 6:30 This is the early group of prophecies and gives the substance of his preaching during several years of the reign of Josiah. They belong somewhere between 626-621 B.C. It was written by Baruch in 604 B.C., but burned by Jehoiakim and rewritten in 603 B.C. As to the details, note:

1. The call and commission of Jeremiah (1:4-19). In the study of the life of Jeremiah we discover that emphasis is laid on his call, his consecration, and his commission.
2. His account of the nation's history. It had been one long history of wickedness, and backsliding from God (2:1 to 4:4).

3. The inevitable result of such a history (4:5 to 6:30). The inevitable result was destruction, complete and overwhelming. This destruction was at hand. It came perhaps at the hand of the Scythians. We find that about this time there was a great invasion by these terrible people, who swept down through Palestine, almost to Egypt but were driven back by Psammetichus, the Egyptian king. It was like the invasion of the Tartars, or Huns, of a later time. It may be that Jeremiah had this invasion in mind as the agent that God would use in destroying the people. But they did not come into the mountains of Judah. However that may be, we do know that Nebuchadnezzar completed the work that this Scythian horde left undone.

SECTION 2. Jeremiah 7-10 This covers the reign of Josiah, and probably the reign of Jehoiakim, reaching from 618-607 B.C., written 604 B.C., burned about the same time, and rewritten 603 B.C. Note in detail:

1. The destruction of the Temple of Jehovah was here threatened. Jeremiah pointed to the fact that they had so sinned centuries before that God had destroyed Shiloh, and would destroy their present Temple (7:1-15).

2. The prophet goes on to warn them of the exile, because their wilfulness must be punished (7:16to9:2).

3. The people are grossly corrupt and destruction is inevitable. The nation will not repent (9:3-26).

4. Jeremiah describes the wicked condition of the idolatrous nation and warns against them (10:1-16). In this section we find many similarities to Isaiah 40-44. There are many expressions almost identical.

5. Jeremiah's distress and his prayer that the people might be saved from their punishment (10:17-25).

SECTION 3. Jeremiah 11-17 This belongs to the early years of Jehoiakim's reign. The subject of this section is the idolatry and sins of Judah and the result. The prophet illustrates this thought and repeats it over and over again, under different figures and from different viewpoints. As to details, note:

1. The preaching of the covenant which some hold belongs to a former period, immediately after the discovery of the book of the Law, but more probably after the breach of the covenant at the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim (11:1-8).

2. Apostasy charged against Judah, and a plot to take Jeremiah and put him to death (11:9-23).

3. Jeremiah pleading with God and with the people. How pathetic and how tender is this pleading of Jeremiah (12:1-7).

4. The sign of the marred girdle and the water bottle, and their lessons (13). This tells how Jeremiah is told to go to the Euphrates River and hide his girdle in a rock. He goes and gets the rotten girdle and brings it to Jerusalem as a picture of the destruction which shall be the result of their sins and wickedness.

5. The drought and its lesson. Sometime in the early part of the reign of Jehoiakim a terrible drought falls upon the land and Jeremiah sees the meaning of it and preaches its lessons to the people. Some people cannot see how the hand of God is in a drought, but this prophet did (14-15).

6. The domestic life of Jeremiah and its illustration of the sins of Judah. He was told that God would not permit him to marry. He could not have a home. He was not to go to the house of mourning. Neither was he to go to the house of feasting. He was to be a recluse and a man of solitude (16).

7. If he cannot enter into the social life of the people at all, he must turn to God alone. God was his only refuge. The people's sins were too deep dyed to be cleansed (17:1-18).

8. Consecration of the sabbath (17:19-27). Here we find the same problem that Nehemiah had in his time. The great and ever living problem of the sabbath, then as now.

(NOTE. – These are probably the chapters that Jeremiah dictated to Baruch. The remainder of the book consists of short histories. It is a compilation of pieces of writing and accounts of the life and teachings of the prophet. His lessons and prophecies against the nations and against Judah are placed together with no chronological order or regularity.)

SECTION 4. Jeremiah 18-20 This belongs to the reign of Jehoiakim, sometime before 600 B.C., doubtless written and published later. The subject for this section is lessons from the potter and the results which the prophet experiences. He sees a potter working at his wheel. He sought to make a fine piece of pottery out of a lump of clay and it was marred in his hands. So he made it over into a cruder vessel. That is the way it would be with the people. God could not make out of them the fine vessel he would have made, because of their sins. In chapter 20 we have an account of Pashur, the chief officer of the house of the Lord, who struck Jeremiah and put him in the stocks and kept him there over night. In all literature there is hardly anything to be found more pathetic than the passage (20:8-13).

SECTION 5. Jeremiah 21 This belongs to about 588 or 587 B.C. It was in the latter part of the reign of Zedekiah and was the prophecy of Jeremiah to Zedekiah. The king sent for the prophet and asked him to tell the results of the siege. He told him that it meant that the city should be given to the enemy.

SECTION 6. Jeremiah 22-23 In these chapters the prophet describes the miserable reign of the kings of Judah, especially that of Jehoiakim. The priests are false prophets and likewise denounced.

SECTION 7. Jeremiah 24 We see here how these passages lack chronological order. This chapter speaks of the first year or two of the exiles now in Babylon. It compares them with the people in Jerusalem. He pictures those who had been taken away with Jehoiachin, and those who had remained in Judah, as good and bad figs. Those in Babylon are the better of the two. I doubt if those who remained in Judah felt very much complimented by his words.

SECTION 8. Jeremiah 25 This contains an oracle concerning Judah and the neighboring nations. We find in the latter part of the book distinct prophecies concerning those nations mentioned here. This oracle was delivered about 603 B.C., perhaps a little later.

SECTION 9. Jeremiah 26 This chapter gives the result of the discourse in chapter 7, in which Jeremiah describes the destruction of the Temple. Enemies of the prophet rose up, consulted together and said that this prophet must be put to death. But Jeremiah escaped because he had friends among the princely families.

SECTION 10. Jeremiah 27-29 Jeremiah contends with Hananiah, a false prophet. He advises the king to submit to the Babylonians. Jeremiah retires from the contest for a while, then utters a prophecy against Hananiah. In chapter 29 we have the letter which Jeremiah wrote to the exiles in Babylon, counseling them to remain there for seventy years. A certain prophet in Babylon wrote back to put Jeremiah to death, and Jeremiah wrote a prophecy against him in response.

SECTION 11. Jeremiah 30-31 These contain what is called "The New Covenant." It is Jeremiah's "Book of Consolation" for Israel. It corresponds to the latter half of the book of Isaiah (40-66), called "The Old Testament Book of Comfort." It contains Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the new covenant.

SECTION 12. Jeremiah 34 This describes an incident which occurred during the siege of Jerusalem. The king of Egypt came up to help Zedekiah. The city was relieved for a time. Then the people went back to their wicked lives again. This occurred in 587 B.C.

SECTION 13. Jeremiah 35 This goes back to about 597 B.C. Here the prophet gives a striking lesson from the example of the Rechabites.

SECTION 14. Jeremiah 36 We have here the story of the writing of the prophecy by Baruch.

SECTION 15. Jeremiah 37-39 This treats of the siege and capture of Jerusalem, 586 B.C., the desolation of the inhabitants, the efforts to save themselves in the city and Jeremiah's advice to submit. He is charged with treason. They seek to kill him. He is saved by friends. The city falls and is destroyed and Jeremiah is saved by the king.

SECTION 16. Jeremiah 40-44 This is a history of Judah and Jerusalem after the fall of the Temple. Thousands are carried into exile, and thousands remain. Gedaliah is appointed governor, a community is formed at Mizpah. Ishmael, a traitor, murders the governor and escapes. Under Johanan the people go to Bethlehem, consult Jeremiah, and flee to Egypt contrary to his advice. They cling to idolatry while in Egypt.

SECTION 17. Jeremiah 45 He gives an exhortation to Baruch. Here is excellent advice to preachers: "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not."

SECTION 18. Jeremiah 46-51 This is the record of Jeremiah's oracles concerning the nations. They were doubtless delivered sometime between 605 and 585 B.C., and are as follows:

1. An oracle concerning Egypt (46). See Isaiah 19; Ezekiel 29-33.

2. An oracle concerning the Philistines (47). It is interesting that both Isaiah and Ezekiel have messages concerning these nations. See Isaiah 14:18-33; Ezekiel 25:15-17.

3. Moab (48). Much like Isaiah 15-16.

4. Ammon (49:1-6; Ezek. 25:1-17).

5. Edmon (49:7-22; Isaiah 34; Ezekiel 25.)

6. Damascus (49:23-27; also Isa. 17).

7. Kedar and the king of Hazor (49:28-33; Isa. 21).

8. Elam (49:34-39).

(NOTE. – These latter prophecies seem to have been written in the reign of Zedekiah, about 594 B.C., just a short time before the prophet's death.)

9. Babylon (50-51). Here we have a long prophecy against this nation.

SECTION 19. Jeremiah 52 This is a historical supplement containing records from the book of 2 Kings, of the story of the fall of Jerusalem and the captivity.

QUESTIONS

1. What can you say of the book of Jeremiah as compared with other books of the Bible, and what of its contents and the period which it covers?

2. Who wrote the book of Jeremiah? What is the history of its writings and what say the critics?

3. What of the difficulties of the text of Jeremiah, what version indicates these and what the critics' position?

4. Give a convenient outline of the book of Jeremiah.

5. Give the items of information in the title of the book and a bird's eye view of the book itself.

IV. THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF JEREMIAH

Jeremiah 1:4-19

Our study in this chapter is the life and character of Jeremiah. In our last chapter we gave a bird's-eye view of the book, which purports to be the substance of his prophecy, and the main events of his life. In this chapter we shall study something about the prophet himself. I want, as far as possible, to lead you into his inner life and soul and see, as best we can, the relationship of his life to his book.

Jeremiah's call and commission are found in 1:4-19. He was predestined to be a prophet. He learned this when he became of age, and at the time of his call. He puts it thus: "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before the time thou wast born, I sanctified thee; I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations." We see there also a great truth which has been exemplified many times since, that when God calls a man to be his prophet, or preacher, he sometimes begins with him before his birth. Sometimes he begins two or three generations before he is born.

Dr. Carter Helm Jones was being prepared to preach for at least two generations. J. Hudson Taylor was consecrated by his mother to God to be a missionary before his birth. Many another man received the divine impress to be God's preacher before he was born. It takes a great deal to make a fine type of preacher. He needs all the forces of a good heredity to his makeup and on his side. We never will have great preachers till we have first, great mothers and even great grandmothers.

Jeremiah received his call and consecration when he was a young man. That was no little thing in relation to his future greatness as a prophet. We have some very interesting facts about that call which we find recorded in 1:6-10. Jeremiah felt his weakness and inability. He says, "Ah, Lord Jehovah! why hast thou called me to be a prophet? I do not know how to speak. I am but a child. I am only a boy. How can I be a preacher to the nations? I am too young for

that." How many preachers feel like that when God lays his hand on them? God have mercy on the preacher who does not feel himself weak! When he realizes that God has called him, that is the way he ought to feel. Now look at God's answer to all the prophet's belittling of himself: God said, "Say not I am a child." It does not matter if you are but a boy. I am going to tell you what to say. You can talk if I tell you how; being a boy does not have anything to do with it. I know what I am doing in calling you. "To whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of them; for I am with thee, saith the Lord." That seems to have convinced Jeremiah. He appears to have been satisfied and begins his work.

Then the Lord gave unto him two visions, to assure and encourage him, 1:11-16. "The word of the Lord spake unto me saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see an almond-tree." The almond tree was the first to put forth its blooms. It blooms about January. The blossoms are beautiful and fragrant. This tree is called the watcher, "the opener" of spring. By that God showed this man that he was a watcher. This gave Jeremiah assurance that God was watching over him and would keep his word. With that vision in his heart he was prepared to give God's message to the world. That kind of thing establishes a man so that he can never be shaken. The second vision gave the prophet some idea of his message. The Lord said, "Tell me what thou seest. And I said I see a boiling, seething caldron and its face is from the north," – ready to pour out its contents toward the south. Now that was clearly an indication that the enemies of the Lord were coming from the north. The horde of warriors like a seething caldron were to come and fulfil the prophecies of Jeremiah. So then, it appears from this latter vision that Jeremiah's mission was to warn the people of the impending invasion.

Then he received a specific commission (1:17-19). That commission is, "Gird up thy loins, rise and speak unto them all that I command thee. Be not dismayed at them lest I dismay thee before them." Do not be afraid of them: don't run, for I will be with thee. Don't be

afraid of them or I will make you to be afraid before them. Don't be afraid of God's message. The cowardly preacher is the most contemptible of all men. Now look at the strong promises here. "I have made thee a fenced city, an iron pillar and brazen walls. I have made thee as brazen walls against the priests and princes." This assured him that God was with him, and that he was to go not in his own name, but in the fear and strength of God. Such in brief is the commission of Jeremiah to the great work of being a prophet to the nations.

We have seen that as soon as the call came to him he felt his weakness and inability. He said, "I am only a boy." He had a deep consciousness of his inability. As we come to study the inner suffering of this man we find in him one of the most pathetic figures in history. Jeremiah was a patriot. He loved his city, his country, and his people as few men ever loved them. He was also God's prophet and was commanded as such to speak God's message, and that message was the doom of the nation, ruin to the people that he loved. To be faithful to his people he felt that he must stay with them. Thus he was between two fires. He was driven from pillar to post and wavered between desire and duty, till he was forced to take refuge in God alone and let his people perish, for they would not heed his message.

Now let us look at his suffering in view of the impending doom as he sees how surely his nation is to be destroyed (4:19-22). Hear him as he breaks forth in bitter wailing, "O my vitals, my vitals, my heart is disquieted within me." He beholds the doom of the people and it breaks his heart because he loves the people, and he loves God and therefore must denounce the people for their sins. Destruction is coming (8:18-19). After describing the inevitable doom of the people he breaks forth thus: "Oh that I could comfort myself against sorrow I my heart is faint within me. . . . 13 not the Lord King in Zion?"

The question is, If the Lord be in the city then how can it be destroyed? But he says, "The Lord is far from Zion." Then he breaks forth in that very familiar passage, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." He identifies himself with the people. He feels most deeply their doom. He then turns his thoughts to the causes of their sickness and bursts forth, "Is there no balm in Gilead," is there no medicine for this disease? Is there no help for this awful state of the people? "Is there no physician there?" Why then is there no health? "Why is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" Then we have another touching expression of his grief, 9:1-2: "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for my people." Such an expression is to be found nowhere else in literature. For a man to wish that his eyes were a fountain of tears, that he might shed enough tears to wash away the sins of the people; that he might thus suffer to help his people! Where is there a parallel to this passage? We don't know much about suffering for people and with people, when we place ourselves in the light of this passage. We have never gone down into the depths of anguish like that. It is like Jesus Christ. In this passage we are reminded of Jesus as he weeps over Jerusalem. He breaks forth again: "Oh that I had a hiding-place, that I might hide myself from their sight." He wanted to go away that he might get away from their wickedness. But if he had, he would have come back to weep for the people and warn them against their sins.

His inner or spiritual conflict is described in 12:1-6. No sufferer ever endured the mental and spiritual agony of this prophet, save Jesus himself. He discovered that a plot had been made against him by the men of Anathoth, his native city. They had decided to stop his preaching because he was discouraging the people and talking like a traitor. Jeremiah heard about it. We see how the problem arose. Here was God's prophet delivering God's message, and he was suffering agony of heart and sore trial, while those enemies of his were living in plenty and comfort. Why did not God punish them? Why did he have to suffer instead of these wicked men? It is the old, old

problem. It is the same problem in the book of Job, and in Psalm 73. This problem has troubled many people since. Why is it that the wicked suffer not and the righteous are so often troubled, and the rich who are so wicked prosper and are happy?

Then Jehovah said, "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of the Jordan?" If you are discouraged now, if you run now, what will you do when the real test comes? That was like a flash of common sense to help this man out of the difficulty. He saw that his contest with these men of Anathoth was a little thing; that it was but an introduction to what was in store for him. The time was coming when he would have to contend with men worse than these men of Anathoth. If you are going to get discouraged in this land of plenty, what will you do when the swelling of the Jordan comes? The swelling of the Jordan, or the pride of Jordan, is taken by some to refer to the rich verdure and brush which grows upon its banks; by others, the animals which infest these woods; by others, the floods of spring which drive out the animals to the hills to commit their depredations. Such shall be the onslaught of the enemy, as wild beasts ravaging the land. How will you stand that, Jeremiah? What will you do when the real test comes, if you are ready to give up now? That is a fine lesson for us to learn today. If we cannot stand little difficulties what will we do when great difficulties come?

He makes another complaint, 15:10-11: "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention." Then God gives him encouragement in that he will be with him: "Cheer up, Jeremiah, for I am going to make you triumph over all." He comes to another difficulty, 15:15, 18-19: "O Lord, remember me and avenge my sufferings. . . . Why is my pain perpetual and my wounds refuse to be healed? . . . If thou return, then will I bring thee again." Jeremiah, come back to your early life and then I will help you before men. If thou wilt take forth the precious from the vile,

thou shalt be as my mouth." Now here is a great text. What a great thing it is to learn to separate the precious from the vile. If he will come close to God, God will stand by him. "Quit talking about yourself, and then you will not have such difficulties."

Now we come to another great conflict in the prophet's mind (20:7-18). Take first 20:14-18. He was cast down. He was in terrible agony, 20:14: "Cursed be the day in which I was born." That is like Job 3. God has commanded me to preach this awful message and then he lets these men persecute me. Oh that I had never been born! O God, what dost thou mean by getting me into this trouble? Thus he complains. He had thought to quit preaching. He was discouraged: "Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name." But then he said, I cannot quit; I must preach. Now that is a true prophet. He makes up his mind that he will not preach, but he cannot help it. He is God's man. And as God's man he must preach. "Then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I cannot contain." He rises to higher ground, 20:11: "O Lord, thou art a mighty one and my persecutors shall not prevail."

There are certain steps by which this prophet rises to the high plane which God wants him to attain. He blames God for bringing him into the opposition of these wicked men. Then God assures him that he will save him from his persecutors and leads him to see that the persecution was a blessing to him. He ends with words of praise (v. 13).

We have something of his domestic and social life in 16:1-9. The substance of this is that he is forbidden to marry and to have a family, because of the evil times coming upon the land. He is forbidden to build a house, to go to the house of mourning or to the house of mirth. He is forbidden to go to the house of pleasure, because he is a man whose mission is to warn of punishment. He is to be himself a message of warning to the people. He is to warn by his very life that the nation is about to be destroyed. He is not to go

to the house of pleasure because destruction is coming on the people.

Jeremiah's conflict with the false prophets is described in 23:9-40. Their character is evil. Jeremiah speaks as if some of those prophets in Jerusalem were living private lives of corruption. He is deeply shocked at it. "My heart is like a drunken man. In my house I have found wickedness." These prophets were living corrupt lives. They were hypocrites. They pretended to be pious like the Pharisees in Jesus' time, but inwardly they were as dead men's bones. Jeremiah was grieved. A corrupt life indicates at once a false prophet.

Jeremiah charged that their message was their own and not God's (23:16): "They teach you vanity, they speak a vision of their own heart and not out of the mouth of the Lord." They also preach for popularity. That is another characteristic of the false prophet. He preaches for money. He is a man who preaches to please the people. He speaks out of his own heart and not of the Lord. Here is a fine lesson for us. The true preacher preaches the vision which the Lord gives and not his own visions and dreams.

His charge respecting their attitude toward sin was that these false prophets made light of sin and its consequences (vv. 17-18). No wonder they lived corrupt lives themselves, for their conception of sin was low. They made sin a little matter. They said that it would not bring such terrible consequences; that it was really necessary to the development of character; that it was a stage in the progress upward.

His charge concerning the counsel of God was that they stood not in God's counsel (23:21-24): "If they had stood in my counsel they had not caused my people to err." This statement implies that these prophets had made no honest effort to look at the question from God's standpoint; they were not on God's side; they had no real knowledge of God; had no experience of his power. Such men have no true insight into the word of God.

His charge concerning their dreams and visions was that they had dreamed their own dreams (23:25-29): "They tell their dreams for the word of the Lord." "What is the chaff to the wheat?" asks the prophet. They feed the people chaff. It is a fine accomplishment to be able to distinguish between wheat and chaff in religious matters.

His charge respecting their sermons was that they stole their sermons (23:30-32, especially, v. 30). There were true prophets in Jerusalem and the false prophets stole their prophecies and palmed them off for their own. This is a characteristic of a false prophet. It may be better for the people if a preacher steals another preacher's thunder, than to feed the people chaff, but it is not better for the preacher himself. Thus we observe that one of Jeremiah's bitterest conflicts was with the false prophets. They were a thorn in his side, a continual source of annoyance, and a powerful factor in the downfall of the nation.

He charges that they were users of cant-phrases (23: 33-40). An experience common to the prophet was, "The burden of the Lord." The false prophets made use of this phrase to give authority to their utterances, to such an extent that it became a mere "cant-phrase," meaningless and empty. The prophet declared that this phrase should be no longer used 23:36: "Every man's own word shall be his burden." People shall no longer ask, "What is the burden of the Lord," but, "What hath Jehovah answered thee?" Or, "What hath Jehovah spoken?" Those that use this phrase, "The burden of the Lord," shall be cast off, and an everlasting reproach and perpetual shame shall be brought upon them (23:40).

QUESTIONS

1. What the theme of this study, and what, in general, does it embrace?
2. What of Jeremiah's call and commission (1:4-19) and what the application, to modern preachers?

3. How did Jeremiah receive this call and commission, and how did the Lord deal with him?
4. How did the Lord assure him and what the visions and their interpretation?
5. What his specific commission and what assurance did the Lord give him here?
6. What, in general, his inner sufferings and what the cause?
7. How does the prophet express his inner sufferings for his people?
8. What the spiritual conflict in Jeremiah and what the problem arising in connection with it?
9. What his further complaint and what the Lord's reply?
10. What the depressing effect of the inner conflict upon the prophet and what his final conclusion?
11. Show the process by which the prophet attained the right attitude.
12. Describe his domestic and social life (16:1-9).
13. In his conflict with the false prophets what his charge as to their character (23:9-40)?
14. What his charge respecting their message?
15. What his charge respecting their attitude toward sin?
16. What his charge concerning the counsel of God and what does it imply?
17. What his charge concerning their dreams and visions?

18. What his charge respecting their sermons?

19. What the charge respecting cant-phrases?

V. THE IMPEACHMENT, CALL, AND JUDGMENT

Jeremiah 2-6

This chapter is a discussion of the prophecies of Jeremiah during the reign of Josiah, chapters 2-6. They are abstracts from Jeremiah's sermons, preached sometime between 626 B.C. and 608 B.C., eighteen years of his public ministry. Here we have the essential points of his discourses for that time, the best parts of the prophecies which he had uttered during that long period. Josiah was one of the best kings that Israel ever had. There are no sins recorded against him. The most complete reformation ever enacted in the nation was wrought under his direction. But it was an external reformation. It is true that he destroyed all the idols, all the high places and stopped the idolatrous worship throughout the entire realm, but he did not change the hearts of the people. "The serpent of idolatry was scorched but not killed." The renovation was not deep enough; it was a reformation only.

We cannot enforce religion by statutory law, legal authority, or royal mandate. It is a matter of the heart. During those years and following, the prophet Jeremiah was at work. His keen prophetic and penetrating mind was able to see deeper than Josiah. He perceived that the reformation and the revolution were external. He knew that many of the people, in fact, most of them, had never really repented. He knew that the nation was still inclined to idolatry, and ready to lapse into heathen worship; yea, he knew that as soon as the pressure was removed, the nation would fall back into the old life of wickedness and idol worship.

Now, the subject matter of these five chapters is this: Israel's history one long apostasy which would bring on her inevitable destruction. For eighteen years Jeremiah sought to drill that into the people's minds and hearts and produce the needed reformation which alone could save. Let us see how he went to work; how he brought this truth before them; how he appealed to them; what arguments he

used; what threats he uttered against them, if possible to turn them from idolatry and bring them back to the true worship of Jehovah.

The subject of chapter 2 is this: Israel's history a continual defection to idolatry. He is dealing with all Israel. He makes no distinction between Northern and Southern Israel. He is talking here to the whole race. He reviews their history, that is, their religious history and their present condition.

He has a very beautiful statement here in Jeremiah 2:1-3, picturing the former fulness of Israel. He says, "The word of Jehovah came unto me saying, Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals; how thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto Jehovah." Thus he introduces his arraignment with this reference to their former fidelity. Israel started out faithful and true. Hosea pictures her as a faithful bride. She was faithful and true at first. Israel was true to God, and God was true to Israel. Now that is the same picture here and it may be that he got it from Hosea. The relation between the nation and God was fidelity and love. It was the "honeymoon" of the nation's life. That is how she started.

Since then Israel's history has been one of repeated acts of unfaithfulness to her God. The prophet seeks to drive it home to their very hearts by a series of questions. We have this question in 2:4-8: "What unrighteousness have your fathers found in me, that they have gone from me?" Was it because they had found unrighteousness in God? Had they found Jehovah untrue? Had they discovered unfaithfulness in him? We might ask the backslider today, "Is it because there is something wrong with God that you turn from him?" There is a great sermon in that. He shows next that the leaders turned from him: "I brought you up into a plentiful land, to eat the fruit thereof." I was kind to you; I gave you no occasion to turn from me; I never forsook you and left you in need; I cared for you. Still you and your leaders turned from me. "I brought you up

into a land of plenty, to eat the fruit thereof; but when ye entered ye defiled my land and made my heritage an abomination. . . . They that handle the law knew me not; the rulers also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit."

A serious question is raised in 2:9-13: Has any other nation changed gods but you? "Pass over to the isles of Kittim and see; send unto Kedar, and consider diligently; and see if there hath been found such a thing." Kittim here refers to the island of Cyprus and the isles of Greece. Go there and see if they have ever changed their gods. Has it ever been done in the world except as you have done it? Hath a nation changed its gods? "But my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit." Do you know of any nation in history that has ever done such a thing? These Hebrews had changed their God? Why had they done so? What reason could they give? Jeremiah says, You Israelites have changed to other gods, and in that you are an exception to the nations of the earth. The strange thing about it, too, is that you have changed from your true God to those that are not gods. "My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Here we have for the first time in the history of religion, a statement that the idols of the nations are not gods. Verse 13 is one of the most beautiful passages in all the Bible. God is a fountain of living waters. That sounds like the words of Jesus to the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well. Idolatry is pictured as cisterns that are broken; that cannot hold water. He means to say that every other form of religion but the worship of Jehovah is a false religion; there is no saving truth in it; it is dry; it will not hold water; it is man made. That is a true description of all false religions. Some scientists and men who study religions deny this; they say that there is a certain amount of truth in other religions as well as in Christianity. Well, so there is some truth in every one, but not saving truth. All other religions are man-made cisterns that will not hold water. This is one of the most suggestive texts in all the Bible, as to the comparative value of the religion of

Jehovah and other religions; as to the value of Christianity as compared with heathen religions.

He says, in 2:14-17: "Is Israel a servant? is he a home-born slave?" Is he such that he must become a prey? "The young lions have roared upon him, and yelled." Now it is only the slave in the household that is whipped to make him do his duty. Is that the case with Israel? Must he be whipped like a slave to compel him to do his duty? to obey Jehovah? Other nations have whipped him, they have chastised him, "They have broken the crown of his head." Was Israel but a slave to be thus whipped and beaten? Is there no manhood in the nation? What a powerful appeal to national pride and honor is this? He raises another question in verses 18-19: "Now what hast thou to do in the way to Egypt, to drink the waters of the Shihor? or what hast thou to do in the way to Assyria, to drink the waters of the River?" What business have you turning from Jehovah to make alliances and seek help from Egypt? What business have you to be turning to Assyria for aid? We have seen that one of the causes of the destruction of both the Northern and the Southern Kingdoms was that they made alliances with Egypt rather than trust in Jehovah. It was an evil thing that they should turn from Jehovah to seek aid from human strength.

Other questions are raised in 2:20-25. He says, 2:21-22: "I planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate branches of a foreign vine?" That reminds one of Isaiah 5. Here he is saying that they were bad to the heart: "Though thou wash thee with soap, with lye, yet is thine iniquity marked," or ingrained, "before me." In verses 23-25 we see Israel trying to condone her sin. She has tried to make out that she has not done wickedly. Now can you say you have not been faithless? You are like the wild ass in the wilderness, snuffing up the wind in her desire – who can turn her away? They, like an animal, were running hither and thither, wild with passion, raving with desire for other gods, crazed with eagerness for idolatry. It is not a very elegant figure, but a highly suggestive one.

Then the question of 2:26-28 is, Why don't you go to your idols in the time of trouble? As a thief is ashamed when found out, so is the house of Israel; priests, princes, and king, that say to a stock, Thou art my father; and to a stone, Thou art my mother. Now why do you come to me in trouble? Why don't you let your gods help you? This passage tingles with sarcasm. It is a very striking arraignment, showing the helplessness of heathenism.

In 2:22 he presents the impossibility of improving the internal nature by external applications. This is true because:

1. Of the nature of the operation. Wash and paint are applied only to the external.
2. They do not affect the diseased will.
3. They do not free one from fascinating and enslaving pleasure.
4. They do not affect a morbid appetite which increases with indulgence.
5. They have no power to break habit.
6. They cannot remove the blindness of the understanding.
7. They cannot purify a drugged conscience.

If this be true then why should we preach? Because:

1. There is a law that condemns and a gospel that liberates from the bondage of the law;
2. The only hope of a change lies in driving one from the conviction that he can change himself.

The following poem contains the whole story: O Endless Misery I labor still, but still in vain; The stains of sin I see Are woaded all, or dyed in grain, There's not a blot will stir a jot, For all that I can do;

There is no hope in fuller's soap Though I add nitre, too. I many ways have tried; Have often soaked it in cold fears; And when a time I spied, Poured upon it scalding tears; Have rinsed and rubbed and scraped and scrubbed And turned it up and down; Yet can I not wash out one spot; It's rather fouler grown. Can there no help be had? Lord, thou art holy, thou art pure: Mine heart is not so bad, So foul, but thou canst cleanse it sure; Speak, blessed Lord; wilt thou afford Me means to make it clean? I know thou wilt; thy blood was spilt; Should it run still in vain?

A sinner released from hell would repeat his sins.

There are yet other questions propounded in 2:29-37: Why do you plead with me when all the while you transgress against me? I have smitten you; I have smitten your children but they are incorrigible; they will not be corrected. You have killed the prophets that were sent unto you. Why then will you still plead with me? Why do you have anything to do with me? Go after those gods that you have made for yourselves.

Verse 31: "O generation . . . have I been a wilderness unto Israel, or a land of thick darkness?" Now that is a question full of suggestion. You have turned away from me. Is it because my religion and my services have been like living in a wilderness where there is no light, no love, no joy, no food? Have I never been a blessing? Is that the reason you have left me? How suggestive! Many people think the services of God are like a wilderness. O Backslider, have God and his services been as a wilderness to you, that you have strayed away? You have not been a faithful bride. "Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me, days without number. How trimmest thou thy way to seek love!" Just like a married woman fixing up to make love to a man that is not her husband. See her as she adorns herself to look attractive that she may win favor of strange men. Now that is the picture here. "Why gaddest thou about?" This is the only place in the Bible where that word, "gad," occurs.

Jehovah shows his love and faithfulness to Israel in spite of her sins (3:1-5). Though Judah has been faithless, there is a prospect of a better future for her: If a man put away his wife, can she return to him? No, "Yet return again to me, saith Jehovah." I will take you back in spite of all. See what you have been doing; you have been like a watcher in the wilderness, watching for false gods and religions to come along – that you might adopt them. They have betrayed you. "Wilt thou not now cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth?"

A special lesson by Jehovah is given to Judah (3:6-18). This is a contrast, unfavorable to Judah (6-10). Judah had taken no warning from the downfall of the Northern Kingdom. Notice especially 3:10: "And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not returned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith Jehovah." Now that gives us some idea of the opinion of Jeremiah in relation to Josiah, the great king, in his work of reform. Josiah had touched only the outside of the matter. Judah was no better than Northern Israel, but rather worse. Her improvement was only feigned.

Note the comparison in verses 11-13. The promise was to Northern Israel first. In that promise was blessing on condition of return. Verse 12: "Go, and proclaim these words toward the north. . . . I will not look in anger upon you; for I am merciful, saith Jehovah." These blessings are going to come when Judah repents, 3:18: "In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I gave for an inheritance unto your fathers." Observe that the blessing is to come when Judah and Israel walk together; when they are united again. By that statement he shows that Northern Israel was not more steeped in iniquity than Southern Israel. The Messiah's advent is coming and Judah will come in with Israel.

Jehovah holds out hope of Judah in 3:19-22: "But I said, How I will put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land. . . . Ye shall call me My Father, and shall not turn away from following me.

Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, saith the Lord. . . . Return, ye backsliding children, I will heal your backslidings."

The prophet bases his hope for Israel on the fact that the perverted nation shall confess its sin verses 23-25, especially verse 24: "The shameful thing [the thing ye have been worshiping, Baal] hath devoured the labor of our fathers. . . . for we have sinned against Jehovah our God, we and our fathers." Now that is a great confession. The prophet presumes to speak for the people by way of prediction that they will do this someday. He still has hope for Israel.

Jehovah makes a proposition to Israel in 4:1-4, that he will bless them if they will return: "If thou wilt return to me, and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight; then shalt thou not be removed." But the change must be thorough (3-4) a very suggestive passage: "Thus saith Jehovah to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground." Finney, in his great book on revivals, has several sermons on this text. He says that every revival of religion ought to begin with preaching on this text. The fallow ground must be broken up. "Fallow ground" stands for two things: First, undeveloped possibilities; and, second, unused powers. The ground must be both broken up and sown with right kind of seed. "Sow not among thorns." Every revival of religion has that object in view. Put the weeds and briars out and put the unused talents and powers to work. Sow the seed of righteousness and benevolence where the weeds of sin and waywardness have been. If we are going to be Christians, let us be wholehearted ones. Break up the fallow ground by putting sin out and service in. All this means that the change must be complete.

The following is a digest of the coming judgment of 4:5 to 6:30. In this description of the coming judgment he pictures it as advancing from the North. He had in mind the coming Babylonian invasion. Note these items:

1. They are told to get themselves to the fortified cities, 4:5-10: "Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry aloud and say, Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the fortified cities. . . . flee for safety, stay not; for I will bring evil from the north."

2. It is coming even to Jerusalem herself (vv. 11-18). Jeremiah now speaks of the invasion as a hot, withering blast from the desert. He sees the foe coming as a swift cloud; the watchers are at hand; he hears the snorting of their horses; he sees them enclose the cities.

3. The anguish of the prophet. Here we have the suffering of this magnificent patriot, verse 19: "My vitals, my vitals!"

4. The devastation is pictured verses 23-26: "The earth was waste and void." The same expression is used in Genesis (1:2). The heavens had no light. The mountains trembled, the cities were broken down. The whole land was devastated. All this is a vision of the destruction to come.

5. The destruction is almost complete (vv. 27-31). Notice verse 27: "I will not make a full end." There is a remnant to be left, the root, the stock, not the entire people. It is not to be utter destruction.

6. This is merited, for all are corrupt (5:1-9). Here is a striking statement: "Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see if you can find a man, if there be any that doeth justly." He means to say, You cannot find a true man in the whole city. There was not one manly man in Jerusalem. This reminds us of Diogenes, going through the streets of Athens with a lantern looking for a man. In Sodom there were not to be found ten righteous men, only one, and he was a poor specimen. So it is here in Jerusalem. All are corrupt. Verse 5: "I will get me unto the great men," the leaders. But he finds that they were corrupt, too.

7. Verses 10-19 is a picture of the disaster. They are not to make a full end, but disaster is to come, 5:16-17: "Their quiver is an open sepulchre, . . . they shall eat up thy harvest, and thy bread, which thy

sons and thy daughters should eat; . . . they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig-trees; they shall beat down thy city." But remember they shall not make a full end. There shall be a remnant. The cause of all this is the corruption of the people (vv. 20-29). Both people and prophets are evil. He repeats these warnings and messages over and over again. He describes the moral condition of the people. A wonderful and horrible thing is come to pass in the land, 5:30-31: "The prophets prophesy falsely." The preachers are deceiving the people. And the worst thing about it is that the people like to have it so.

8. The foe is still nearer. The capital is invested and must be prepared, for the enemy plans to storm it; another vivid picture, 6:1-8: "Flee for safety, ye men of Jerusalem." Flee to Tekoa, flee to the wilderness, for evil is coming from the north. A great destruction is coming. Thus he goes on with his awful picture of the destruction hastening upon the city. The enemy says, We will take it by storm, at full noon; no, it is past noon; the shadows begin to decline; let us go up at night; let us take it by a night attack.

9. The doom is certain and fixed (vv. 9-21). Note verse 14: "They have slightly healed the hurt of my people, saying, Peace, peace; where there is no peace." We are indebted to Jeremiah for that oft-quoted sentence. It is classic. Spurgeon preached a great sermon on that passage. His theme was a blast against false peace. Verse 16: "Stand ye in the way and see, and ask for the old paths." There has been many a sermon preached from that text, on the subject, "The Old Paths."

10. In 22-26 is a full description of the enemy. Note the minuteness of it, verse 23: "They have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea; they ride upon horses; they are against the daughter of Zion."

11. There is another picture of the nation. In 6:28-30: "They are as grievous revolvers." "Going about with slanders, they are brass and iron. . . . They are refuse silver, fit only to be thrown out in the street. As silver amalgamates with other metals and loses its value,

so these people by amalgamated religion become refuse to be tossed aside into the dump pile of rubbish. This is a magnificent passage. It sums up what Jeremiah preached and taught for eighteen years.

QUESTIONS

1. When were these prophecies uttered and what the conditions under which they were spoken?
2. What the subject matter of these chapters and what the general content?
3. What the subject of chapter 2 and to whom addressed?
4. What the picture of Jeremiah 2:1-3?
5. What, in general, Israel's history after the first love, what question raised in 2:4-8, and what the charge here brought against the leaders?
6. What question is raised in 2:9-13, what two sins charged against Israel and how illustrated?
7. What the questions of 2:14-19 and what their application?
8. What the other questions raised in 2:20-25, and what the application of each, respectively?
9. What the question of 2:26-28 and what its application?
10. What the import of 2:22?
11. If this be true, then why should we preach?
12. Can you recite from. memory the poem based on Jeremiah 2:22?
13. What the questions propounded in 2:29-37 and what their application?

14. How does Jehovah show his love and faithfulness to Israel in spite of her sins (3:1-5)?
15. What special lesson by Jehovah is given to Judah and what the result?
16. What hope does Jehovah hold out to Judah in 3:19-22?
17. On what does the prophet base his hope for Israel and how is it signified?
18. What proposition does Jehovah make to Israel in 4:1-4 and of what homiletic value is this section?
19. Give a digest of the coming judgment of 4:5 to 6:30.

VI. SERMONS ON THE TEMPLE WORSHIP

Jeremiah 7-10; 26

These events occurred in the earliest half of the reign of Jehoiakim, about 607 or 606 B.C. Though the nation was going back to idolatry, the Temple ceremonies and sacrifices were carried on with great zeal and elaborateness. The people seemed to put their trust in the Temple rather than in God who dwelt therein. They believed that the sacrifices themselves availed much, and that their salvation was secure, if they performed these services. The relation of their conduct to their worship did not seem to trouble them. Jeremiah heard God's call to preach to them in the very Temple itself, to preach to the multitude of worshippers that thronged these courts. He seized upon the occasion of a great feast, when the multitude was the greatest and addressed the throng on the necessity of a better life with their worship. Jeremiah was in the Temple that is called the house of Jehovah. There was unquestionably a large concourse of people gathered together. Some suggest that the purpose of that assembly may have been to consider means of defense in the face of impending disaster upon the nation. It may have occurred sometime when Jehoiakim had been compelled to pay tribute to a foreign king.

Jeremiah speaks to the people a message of warning: "Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place." Then he gives them some very suggestive advice, some very earnest words of warning: "Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah." That is very suggestive. It is a warning to people who are trusting in the external, the ceremonial and the ritual; that these avail nothing where the spirit and the heart are lacking. They believed, because they had the Temple of Jehovah and kept up its ceremonies, that it would stand for ever and that God would protect them for the Temple's sake. Jeremiah prophesied that the Temple would be destroyed. Less than twenty years afterward these words of the prophet were fulfilled. The Temple was destroyed. But these people

said, "It is impossible that this temple should be destroyed, for it is the temple of Jehovah." They were saying, "The temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah!" This is a blow against all heathen religions, and also the Roman Catholic religion. The people were trusting in the ceremonies and externals: "The temple of Jehovah! The temple of Jehovah! The temple of Jehovah!" The prophet demanded that they change their life; that they turn from their wickedness, else the Temple would be no good to them.

The prophet here charged them with all kinds of sin: with falsehood, with lying, with deceit, with murder, and with idolatry of various kinds. They were like the Negro woman who was accused of a certain sin and when asked, "How can you do that?" she replied: "Well, I never lets that interfere with my religion." These people divorced morals and religion. They never let their religion interfere with their conduct. Furthermore, the prophet charged them with making their beautiful Temple, in which they were trusting, a "den of robbers." That is the same condition that Jesus found about 600 years later. He said, "Ye have made my Father's house a den of thieves." The people were saying, "It is impossible for the Temple to be destroyed; God will defend his house." But the prophet reminds them that God did destroy his house: Remember the days of Eli and his sons, and Samuel yonder at Shiloh; that God destroyed Shiloh where the tabernacle was then. This is the only direct reference we have to the destruction of Shiloh. The ark of the covenant was captured, and the tabernacle is heard of later as stationed at Gibeon and later on was stored in the Temple. God destroyed their dwelling place at Shiloh and he can destroy it in Jerusalem. That is the lesson here.

The result of that sermon is recorded in Jeremiah 26. In that chapter Jeremiah or Baruch writes down what the prophet had said, not the same words exactly but the substance of it. The priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speak these words in the house of Jehovah. Then they, the ecclesiastical leaders, began a persecution. They were the parties that were directly concerned,

because they administered the Temple worship and services, and if the Temple were to be destroyed, they would be out of work, and thus they took offense at the words of Jeremiah. They did not enjoy his going around and threatening the destruction of their church house and thus put them out of business.

Now, it was the same in the days of Christ. It was the ecclesiastical leaders who began the persecution against him. It was the chief priests, the scribes and the rabbis that were aroused because he rebuked them for burying the law under their traditions. So it was here. These priests and prophets (false prophets) were enraged at this kind of preaching and they laid hold of Jeremiah and said, "Thou shalt surely die." The persecution of Stephen is a parallel case. They attempted to prove against Stephen the charge that he had spoken against the Temple; that he had spoken blasphemous words against Moses and against "This holy place." The Sanhedrin asked him, "Are these things so?" He admitted the statement and that was sufficient charge in their minds. But he went on to prove to them that God might be worshiped without a Temple; that he had been worshiped in many places besides Jerusalem. That was adding crime to crime, and so they killed him.

Jeremiah was in the hands of the priests and prophets, and was in imminent danger. They were about to kill him, but there was another class of men, not there at the time, but they heard of it. These were the princes of Judah who heard the confusion, hurried from the king's house to the house of Jehovah, and heard these priests and prophets about their charges against Jeremiah, saying that he was worthy of death. Jeremiah made his defense (v. 12). His defense was that Jehovah sent him to prophesy. He says that God commanded him to say to them that they must amend their ways. Then he went on to say that he had told them the truth and that he was in their hands; that they could do with him as they would, "Only know ye for certain that, if ye put me to death, ye will bring innocent blood upon this city and upon yourselves and the inhabitants of the land,

for God hath sent me to say these things to you." Jeremiah did not take back a word.

There is no doubt that if it had not been for the princes and the people who were on his side he would have immediately been put to death. Certain elders of the land rose up and spake to the people. They said, "No, don't be rash. You remember that Micah, the prophet, prophesied that Zion should be destroyed, and although he prophesied thus, Hezekiah, the king, and the people did not put him to death." These men remind us of Gamaliel. Then they tell the story of another occasion. He did not fare so well as Micah. There was a different king upon the throne. Jehoiakim was now at the helm. He it was who with wicked hands took the prophecy of Jeremiah, God's holy message, and cut it to pieces and burned it. He did not stop till he put the prophet, Uriah, to death. He fled to Egypt but the king brought him back and executed him.

The outcome of this was that Jeremiah was saved. He escaped these enraged priests and prophets through the influence of the princes. They were men of influence and power, and they took his part in the face of his enemies. He had a particular among the princes, Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, who was chiefly instrumental in rescuing him. Intercession for this people is now useless, 7:16: "Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me." Jeremiah could not save Judah and Jerusalem. No man could do it. Not even Jesus Christ could save the wicked land and city in his day. Savonarola could not save Florence. So the day of opportunity had passed for Jerusalem.

Their idolatry is described in 7:17-20: "Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?" This was in the reign of Jehoiakim. It could not have occurred in the reign of Josiah. "The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead the dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven," probably Ashtoreth. They made cakes doubtless in the shape of that queen, as we, in our childhood, made cakes in the

shape of men. So they made their cakes in honor of their heathen goddess. Verses 19-20 show the result of such conduct.

The import of 7:21-26 is that the basis of the law is obedience, not ceremony. In verse 21 is a touch of sarcasm: "Add your burnt offerings." This is like Isaiah and Amos, who exhort the people to increase their religious efforts that were but dead forms. Amos says, "Come to Gilgal and transgress."

Verse 22 says, "I spake not unto your fathers, when I brought them out of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices: this is the thing that I commanded them saying, Hearken unto my voice." Now, the critics take that as one of their strong points. They maintain that it plainly says that ceremonial legislation of the Pentateuch was not given by Moses but that it was written later. They refer to this with great boldness saying, "Does not Jeremiah, the prophet, plainly say that God did not speak unto Moses or the fathers concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices down in Egypt or in the wilderness?" When Israel came out of Egypt, the nature of the covenant made between God and Israel was as follows: "If ye will obey my voice and keep my covenant, then indeed ye shall be mine own possession from among the peoples, and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:5-6). And we are told in verse 8 that the people promised, saying, "All the words of Jehovah we will do." Now, the basis of that covenant on the part of Israel was obedience. The basis on God's part was grace. "If ye will obey my voice," is an expression of grace, an overture that is not deserved. It is free and voluntary on God's part. "If ye will do what I tell you, I will be to you all that is needed." The people said, "We will obey the covenant."

So it was made, and Jeremiah was right when he said, "I spake not to your fathers in the wilderness concerning sacrifices and burnt offerings, but this I said, Obey my voice." The Ten Commandments were given as a standard of obedience and faith. They showed the people wherein they might obey God's voice. The condition is there

laid down and their acceptance implies faith and love on their part. That is the foundation principle of Christianity itself. In this passage it is clear that Jeremiah makes a great contrast between ceremony and obedience.

Jeremiah (7:27-28) goes on to describe the unbroken disobedience of the people. They had continued in disobedience ever since they had been in the land of Canaan. Next we have the lament of Jeremiah over the destruction, 29-34: "Cut off thy hair, O Jerusalem, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation. The people have set their abominations in the house that is called by my name. They have burned their sons and their daughters in the fire, therefore behold the days shall come that it shall no more be called the valley of Topheth, nor the valley of Himom, but the valley of slaughter. The dead bodies of this people shall be food for the birds of the heavens and for the beasts of the earth. Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth and gladness, the bridegroom and the bride, for the land shall become a waste."

In 8:1-3 Jeremiah shows that these barbarians who were coming, were going to be so ruthless that they would not stop with the killing of the living, but they would break open the graves of the kings of Judah, the princes, the mighty men and the prophets and would tear their bodies out of their graves and desecrate them. Now, that was the highest indignity on an Oriental, for the grave of his dead is sacred. Yet these barbarians would go even to that extremity.

In 8:4-9 the prophet again exposes the wickedness of the people and points to the exile that is not to be averted. Many similar passages we have already examined. There are repetitions in Jeremiah. They would not repent and obey the word of the Lord, therefore this punishment is coming. "How do ye say, We are wise, and the Law of Jehovah is with us?" "Our scribes have been reading the Law until they have mastered it." That is just what they did in the days of Jesus. They had covered up the commandments of the Law by their

traditions. They had added many things, too. In verse 12 he asks, "Were they ashamed when they had committed abominations? Nay, they were not ashamed." Then Jeremiah described the enemy approaching: "The snorting of the horses is at the gate," and so he goes on with his description of the foe coming upon the land. In 18:22 we have that lament which we have already studied before: "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." "Oh, that my head were a fountain of water that I might weep rivers of tears!"

We have a graphic picture in 9:3-9: "They bend their tongues as a bow is bent." A bow is made to bend. That is the purpose for which it is made. The idea is that they use their tongues as if they were made for lying. They speak falsehood as if that was the main use of the tongue. The people are so corrupt that they lie as if that were the normal way of speaking.

The picture of 9:10-16 is a picture of the impending devastation. Note the language of the prophet in 9:11, 13, 16: "And I will make Jerusalem heaps, and a den of dragons; and I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant . . . And the Lord saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein; . . . I will scatter them also among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known; and I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them." The call of 9:17-22 is a call for the female mourners. They are called upon to mourn and lament because of the destruction: "Call for the mourning women that they may come, and for the skillful women. Let them take up a wailing for us." There was soon an occasion for it.

The contrast of 9:23-24 is a contrast between true and false glorying. Here is a marvelous text and a great subject: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he hath understanding, and knoweth me." What is he to

glory in? Not in human power and worth but in the knowledge of Jehovah who is powerful and loving. That is like the apostle Paul who said, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Christ." There was no cross of Christ in Jeremiah's time, but the idea is much the same. The knowledge of God, such a God as Jehovah, is the summum bonum of life, the highest object of human glorying.

The prophecy of 9:25-26 is a prophecy of the punishment of the nations. Some of the heathen nations were to be punished with Judah, and the prophecy of 10:1-16 is a prophecy concerning idols, a distinct prophecy. It is a description of the idols of the heathen nations, a magnificent portrayal of the vanity of heathen worship, in contrast with the glorious worship of Jehovah. The critics claim that this passage was not written by Jeremiah, but long after him. It is very much like Isaiah 40-44, and they claim that it was not written till after those chapters were written, between 400 and 200 B.C. Now, that is a mere guess. Isaiah wrote chapters 40-44 and Jeremiah wrote this later. He was probably writing to the exiles. Though God's people were in Babylon, Jeremiah addressed this passage to them to exhort them to remain faithful to Jehovah in the midst of heathen worship.

Now, it is significant that verse 11 is in Aramaic, not Hebrew. There are many explanations by critics and scholars of this phenomenon. Some say that it is a corruption of the text. Others that it is a marginal note crept into the text. Others say that it is an instruction given to the exiles in Babylon, which is highly probable. They spoke Aramaic and not Hebrew. So this passage would enable them to have a ready argument to meet the advocates of idol worship. In the Aramaic the people would understand it, and could readily use it in argument for their own worship.

We have a prophetic picture in 10:17-25. In this section he pictures the coming exiles. The people are bidden to gather together their wares and belongings, and prepare to go into exile. There was a time when their punishment might have been averted but it is too late

now. The hour has come, the shepherds are worthless, the foe approaches from the North. Their heathen neighbors who have done great evil against the nation of Israel shall be punished. The prophet asks Jehovah to pour out his wrath upon them.

QUESTIONS

1. What the date and occasion of these prophecies?
2. What warning did Jeremiah here announce, and what remedy did he prescribe?
3. What charge did the prophet prefer against them, what example in their history did he cite and what it-s lesson?
4. What the result of this sermon as recorded in Jeremiah 26 and what the final outcome? Discuss fully.
5. How is the doom of Jerusalem indicated in 7:16 and what other similar cases?
6. How is their idolatry described in 7:17-20 and what the result?
7. What the import of 7:21-26, what the critics' contention with respect to it, and what the reply?
8. How is their disobedience described in 7:27-28, what the lamentation of Jeremiah and what the prophecy here of their doom?
9. What great indignity here prophesied against the people of Judah and Jerusalem?
10. What the prophet's message, warning and lamentation in 8:4 to 9:2?
11. What the picture of 9:3-9?
12. What the picture of 9:10-16?

13. What the call of 9:17-22?
14. What the contrast of 9:23-24?
15. What the prophecy of 9:25-26?
16. What the prophecy of 10:1-16, what say the entice of this passage and what the reply?
17. What the prophetic picture in 10:17-25?

VII. THE BROKEN COVENANT OF JUDAH AND GOD'S DECREE TO PUNISH

Jeremiah 11-17

These prophecies were doubtless uttered during the reign of Jehoiakim, sometime between 608 and 603 B.C. They were written first by Baruch, as dictated by Jeremiah in 604 B.C., but cut to pieces and burned by Jehoiakim and then rewritten 603 B.C. They are also a report of Jeremiah's preaching during the reign of this king, Jehoiakim.

The first two chapters (11-12) deal with the broken covenant; chapter 13, with the rotten girdle and the lessons drawn from it; the chapters 14-15 set forth the prophecies relating to the drought that came upon the country at that time; chapter 16 gives the story of Jeremiah's personal life and the lessons to be derived from it; chapter 17 deals with the impending evils that are threatened upon Jerusalem and exhorts them to keep the sabbath. This is the general outline of these chapters.

The occasion for the utterance of the prophecies of chapters 11-12 was a lapse of the people from the reformation under Josiah into the sins under Jehoiakim. Under that wicked king they broke the covenant that they made with good King Josiah, and lapsed into idolatry again. In the opening words of chapter II the prophet pleads with them to remember their covenant and to suffer no backsliding. That was the real occasion. There had been a great reformation under Josiah; they had broken their covenant in going back into idolatry and the prophet pleads with them to remember their covenant so recently made. We know that Jeremiah helped Josiah and we also know that he preached during the reign of Jehoiakim.

He says, "The word of Jehovah came unto me saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and speak unto the men of Judah, and to the

inhabitants of Jerusalem; and say thou unto them, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel: Cursed be the man that heareth not the words of this covenant, which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God."

We find almost these identical words in Deuteronomy 27:16-26.

Jeremiah receives those words from the Lord and, like a true Israelite, he replies, 11:5, "Amen, O Jehovah." That expression reminds us of the scene that was enacted soon after Israel entered Palestine when the nation was gathered together and the law was read, the blessings and curses, and the people all answered each time, "Amen." Over and over again this is repeated. Here he hears the words of the covenant as uttered to him by Jehovah, and he answers, "Amen." He answered for the people of Judah and Jerusalem, that is, he answered, "Amen," and he wanted them to answer likewise. But they did not.

The charge against the people in verses 6-8 is that of a violation of the covenant. He says, 11:6: "Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and the streets of Jerusalem, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant and do them. For I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice." In these three mighty words Jeremiah sums up the substance of the great covenant made at Sinai: "Obey my voice." "Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the stubbornness of their evil heart: therefore I brought upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but they did them not."

The people are charged with a conspiracy against the Lord, 11:9-13: "And the Lord said unto me, A conspiracy is found among the men of Judah, and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers." This statement shows the

occasion of this prophecy. The people had had an understanding about this, and had agreed among themselves that they would not do as Josiah had commanded them to do; they would not worship Jehovah. Jeremiah calls that a conspiracy against God. They forsook Jehovah and made a covenant with other gods. The breaking of one covenant means the entering into another covenant with other gods.

The doom of the nation is indicated in the fact that Jeremiah is forbidden to pray for them 11:14: "Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them; for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me because of their trouble." The nation is doomed. We have here a full description of the doom that is to come upon this nation, the details of which we need to study very carefully. Verse 15 presents a great difficulty for the textual critics. There are three ways it may be rendered: "What hath my beloved to do in my house, seeing she hath wrought lewdness?" The Septuagint renders this as in the margin: "Why hath my beloved wrought abominations in my house? Shall vows and holy flesh take away from thee thy wickedness, or shalt thou escape by these?" Ball, in the "Expositor's Bible" renders it, "What hast my beloved to do in mine house? Shall her many altars and holy flesh take away her sin from her?" The text, as we have it, is obscure. We will pass it with the reminder that the general subject of the section is that the nation is doomed and woes are pronounced against her; that Judah cannot be saved by her formal religion.

The result was a plot against Jeremiah, who was commanded to stop prophesying or lose his life. This was the first crisis in Jeremiah's life. He returned from Jerusalem to Anathoth and found that there was a conspiracy, a plot against him among his own friends. He must stop preaching or lose his life. This is how he puts it, 11:18-20: "And Jehovah gave me knowledge of it, and I knew it: then thou showedst me their doings. But I was like a gentle lamb that is led to the slaughter; and I knew not that they had devised devices against me." That expression reminds us of Jesus' words when he was plotted against and killed. He means to say, "I was Just doing my

duty; I knew not that they were plotting against me; I knew not that they devised devices against me." This is what they devised, saying, "Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered." After that discovery the prophet commits his case to Jehovah for vengeance. This shows that he had risen to a high plane of abiding faith. Jeremiah says, "I shall see thy vengeance on them; for unto thee have I revealed my cause." The next three verses (vv. 21-23) contain the record of what Jehovah said regarding the manner in which these wicked conspirators should be punished: that their sons and daughters should perish.

The prophet raises a question in 12:1-4 and Jehovah answers it in 12:5-6. We studied this passage in the chapter on "The Personal Life of Jeremiah." I will not go into details here. The occasion of this marvelous passage was the plot against Jeremiah. He saw that these men who plotted to destroy him were living in plenty and prospered while he suffered. So he raised the great question as to why it is possible for the wicked to prosper and the righteous to suffer. Then he received his answer: "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses?" That means, If you are going to give up before this little opposition that is but a trifle, what will you do when the great test and the real crisis comes?

The captivity is described. Here the prophet pictures these evils as having already taken place, 12:7-13: "I have forsaken my house, I have cast off my heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies. My heritage is become unto me as a lion in the forest; . . . Is my heritage unto me as a speckled bird of prey? . . . Then go and assemble all the beasts of the field and come upon her to devour her." Then he accuses the shepherds of destroying the vineyard: "They have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. . . They have sown wheat and have reaped thorns." They must perish. In this we have a bare outline of the

judgment to come. This is doubtless the substance of the sermons he preached.

Judah's evil neighbors are referred to in 12:14-17. This doubtless means Edom, Ammon, and the enemies on the south. They harassed Judah in the time of Jehoiakim. What about these evil neighbors? Well, he says, "I will pluck them up from off their land, and I will pluck up the house of Judah; and after I pluck them up I will return and have compassion on them as I will have on Judah." That reminds us of the magnificent prophecy of Isaiah: "All the nations shall come up to Jerusalem to worship; all the peoples shall flow to Mount Zion, for the word of Jehovah shall go forth from Zion."

In 13:1-7 the prophet employs a symbolic action, and the interpretation of it is found in 13:8-11. By a command of Jehovah he buys a beautiful girdle, a common element of clothing in the East, and wears it for a time. Then the Lord commands him to take it and go to the river Euphrates and hide it in the cleft of a rock. He does so, and after many days the Lord said to him, "Go thou to the river Euphrates and take the girdle which I commanded thee to hide there. And I did so and went and digged up the girdle and behold it was marred and good for nothing." Now, that was an object lesson to the people. Thus he says, 13:11: "For as the girdle cleaves to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah that they might be unto me for a people, but they would not hear." That is a remarkable figure. The Lord chose the people of Judah and Israel as a man chooses a girdle and wears it about him. Judah had been a girdle for Jehovah, and he desired that they remain as a beautiful girdle forever, but they would not.

The prophet uses another symbol, that of a bottle, 13:12-14: "Every bottle shall be filled with wine: . . . Do not we know that every bottle shall be filled with wine? Behold I will fill all the inhabitants of this land with drunkenness." That bottle is a symbol of drunkenness, the drunkenness that is come upon the people. The

symbol means that they shall be destroyed, as drunken men are destroyed.

There is an exhortation in 13:15-17, a command to the queen mother in 13:18-19, a curse announced in 13:20-27, and a great text in 13:23. In verse 13:16: "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains," is one of the most beautiful figures in all the Scriptures. That is like Jesus' parable of the lost sheep. In verse 18, he speaks thus: "Say thus to the king and queen mother." He probably refers to the wife of Josiah, whose son, Jehoiachim, sat upon the throne. He said to the queen mother and the king, "Humble yourselves." Then he addresses the shepherds and the princes: "Where is the flock that I gave you, the beautiful flock?" Where is it, thou king, and queen mother, and ye princes and prophets? Where is my beautiful flock that I gave you to care for? Then comes that classic passage: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Thus Jeremiah reaches the conclusion that man has to be changed before he can obey the word of God, and he cannot change himself.

A drought is pictured in 14:1-6. A drought in that land was terrible: "Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish, they sit in black upon the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up. And their nobles send their little ones to the waters: they come to the cisterns, and find no water; they return with their vessels empty." That is a pathetic picture. We can almost see those children in their thirst and distress.

We have the prophet's plea for the people in 14:7-9 and Jehovah's reply in 14:10-12. Here we have Jeremiah's first intercession and its answer, verses 7-17. See how he pleads in verse 7: "Work thou for thy name's sake, O Jehovah; for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee, O thou hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a sojourner in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside for a night? Why

shouldest thou be as a man affrighted, as a mighty man that cannot save? Yet thou, O Jehovah, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not." Sinners treat God as if he were a stranger, a sojourner, a man who is helpless to save. In verse 11: "Plead not for this people." That is the answer to his prayer. "Pray not for this people for their good. When they fast, I will not hear their cry. . . I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence." So it is possible for people to go so far that God himself must give them up.

Jeremiah assails the priests and the prophets (14:13-22). He says (v. 13), "The prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, nor the famine." Then the Lord said unto him, "These prophets are) liars. They shall perish. These people that believe them shall perish, too. There is no hope for them." But he will not give up. He begs God to spare the city and the people. Verse 19: "Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? . . . Why hast thou smitten us, and is there no healing for us?" Thus he speaks for the people out of his heart: "We acknowledge, O Jehovah, our wickedness . . . we have sinned against thee. Do not abhor us, for thy names sake; do not disgrace the throne of thy glory." It is said of Joseph Parker, the great preacher of London, that upon one occasion he prayed, "O Lord, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory." Some of his stiff-backed hearers received a distinct shock when they heard it. One Presbyterian brother said, "Blasphemy!" but Dr. Parker was simply quoting Jeremiah. That shows that some preachers do not know everything in the Bible. "Do not disgrace the throne of thy glory," that is, "do not disgrace Judah and Zion," but he did; they were destroyed.

The impending danger is described in 15:1-9. We cannot go into detail here. It is not necessary. Read the passage. One point, verse 9: "Her sun is gone down while it was yet day." That is another classical expression. Note also, verse 1: "Though Moses and Samuel plead for these people I could not save them." Moses pleaded for the people when they broke the covenant at Sinai. He begged God to

blot him out of the book rather than destroy the people. God did hear him and saved them. Samuel was a man of much prayer. Samuel saved Israel by his prayers in the time of Eli. "Though these mighty men of prayer, Moses and Samuel, were to pray to me I would not save these people." How far can people wander away? There is a limit to God's grace and mercy.

There are several thoughts in the paragraphs of 15:10-21. The prophet complains again and receives a reply. We had this in the chapter on "The Life and Character of Jeremiah," and will not go into details here. It is sufficient to say that God answered him and maintained that the doom of the people was inevitable. Now we have the prophet's last pleadings with God (vv. 15-21). We also studied this in the same chapter. Study carefully the text.

Then came the word of Jehovah to Jeremiah (16:1-9). We discussed that in a former chapter. Sufficient to say that he is commanded not to marry, not to have a family, not to mingle with merrymakers, not to have the joys or pleasures of social and family life. He is to be separated, a living example of warning to the people, for destruction is coming. No Jew would refuse to marry or have a family if there were not sufficient reasons for it.

Some questions are raised by the people in 16:10-13, viz: "Why are these calamities to come? What are the iniquities that we have done?" The answer is that they have forsaken Jehovah and walked after other gods.

There is a comparison in 16:14-21. The punishment of the captivity shall be most severe and terrible, therefore their return to their own land shall be even more wonderful than the deliverance from Egypt: "The day shall come that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth that brought the children of Israel up out of the land of Egypt." That fact would sink into insignificance in the face of the evils that were to be when Israel was scattered, and when God would gather them again from among the nations; that would be more wonderful than

bringing them up out of the land of Egypt. The deliverance would be great because the punishment would be so terrible.

The nature of Judah's sin and punishment is indicated in 17:1-4. Their sins are deep and indelible and therefore their punishment is severe: "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, graven on their hearts and on the horns of their altars." Spurgeon, in a sermon on this text, discussed how sin can be graven into the human heart and cannot be erased by human power. It is written with a pen of iron, written in the very soul and nature. No stronger figure could be used to show the permanent effects of sin. As a result, punishment is certain.

A striking contrast is found in 17:5-11. Faith in man leads to destruction; faith in God leads to security. Verse 5: "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from Jehovah." In verses 7-8, we have the substance of Psalm 1: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in Jehovah . . . he shall be as a tree planted by the waters; he shall not fear when the heat cometh, but his leaf shall be green; he shall not be careful in the year of drought, but his tree shall continue yielding fruit." Verse 9 is one of the profoundest descriptions of the human heart to be found in the Scriptures. It came to Jeremiah out of his experience.

The import of 17:12-18 is that Jehovah is a sure source of strength. Few remarks are needed on this passage. Jeremiah's faith in God shines very brightly here. Some expressions are very rich and suggestive, such as verses 12, 13, 14, 17.

The prophecy of 17:19-27 is a prophecy concerning the keeping of the sabbath. This was the great problem of Nehemiah. He had to meet it, and here it is in Jeremiah's day also: "Go, stand in the gate and say unto the people, Ye shall bear no burdens on the sabbath day." Verse 25: "Then shall there enter into this city kings and princes sitting on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, . . . The men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall remain forever," this is, if they keep the sabbath day. Then the text

shows how the nations will come upon them if they do not keep the sabbath day: "If you will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day and not to bear burdens and enter into the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day, then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched." This is one of the most significant passages on the sabbath question in all the Bible. This paragraph furnishes the basis for God's chastisement in the Babylonian captivity. It is specifically stated that this captivity was the penalty for the disregard of the sabbath law.

QUESTIONS

1. What the date of this group of prophecies?
2. Give a general outline of the group of chapters.
3. What the occasion of the prophecies of Jeremiah 11-12?
4. What the reply of the prophet to the words of Jehovah in 11:1-5 and what the application?
5. What the charge against the people in 11 :6-8?
6. What the charge against the people in 11:8-13 and what the result?
7. How is the doom of the nation indicated (11:14-17) and what the difficulties of the text?
8. What the result as it pertained to the prophet, how did he meet it and what Jehovah's responses? (11:18-23.)
9. What question does the prophet raise in 12:1-4 and what Jehovah's reply in 12:5-6?
10. How is the captivity described in 12:7-13?

11. Who Judah's "evil neighbors" referred to in 12:14-17, what the threat against them and what hope held out to them?
12. What the symbolic action of 13:1-7, and what its interpretation (13:8-11)?
13. What other symbol used by the prophet here (13:12-14) and what its interpretation?
14. What the exhortation in 13:15-17, what command to the queen mother in 13:18-19, what curse announced in 13:20-27, and what great text in 13:23?
15. Describe the drought as pictured in 14:1-6.
16. What the prophet's plea for the people in 14:7-9 and what Jehovah's reply in 14:10-12?
17. What Jeremiah's complaint and Jehovah's reply in 14:13-22?
18. Describe the impending danger (15:1-9).
19. What the thoughts in the paragraphs of 15:10-21?
20. What the word of Jehovah to Jeremiah in 16:1-9, and what its lesson?
21. What questions are raised by the people in 16:10-13, and what the reply?
22. What the comparison in 16:14-21 and what great hope is therein expressed?
23. How is the nature of Judah's sin and punishment indicated in 17:1-4?
24. What contrast in 17:5-11 and in what other scripture do we find the same thought?

25. What the import of 17:12-18, and what suggestive passages in this paragraph?

26. What the prophecy of 17:19-27 and what can you Bay of its importance?

VIII. THE LIFE OF JEREMIAH DURING THE LATTER HALF OF THE REIGN OF JEHOIAKIM

Jeremiah 18-20; 22-23, 25; 35-36; 45

We have already described some of the events that occurred during the reign of Jehoiakim and this period, but we group them together in this chapter and discuss them more in detail. These prophecies may have been written by Baruch at the time they were uttered or at Jeremiah's dictation. Some of them may have been written later and one of them was doubtless written by Jeremiah himself. They comprise the chapters given at the head of this chapter. We shall take them up in the order there given. It is quite probable that some of these prophecies and events occurred a little subsequent to 604 B.C., or after the roll was written and then burned by the king. We cannot fix with any certainty the events of Jeremiah's life in chronological order. The chapters of this book are grouped with no regard to the order of events in the life of the prophet. In fact, the book makes no claim whatever to be a biography.

We have here in these chapters some lessons from the potter, the prophet's message to the kings, the princes, the priests, and the shepherds of Israel, as well as the prophets of Judah; prophecies against the neighboring nations; the incident of the writing and the reading of the roll of prophecy; and admonitions to Baruch, his scribe.

We have the story of the potter in 18:1-4. Jeremiah had been preaching about twenty years and had used, as we have seen, a great many illustrations, a great many figures to make forceful his teachings and illustrate them, so that they would show the workings of divine providence in Israel. One day when he was sitting in the city meditating as to what he should say to the people, what he should use as an illustration so that they would feel the weight of their doom and rejection, suddenly an inspiration comes to him to go down into the lower part of the city from where he was sitting, down into the valley, the valley between Zion and Mount Moriah, called

the Tyroean valley, or it may have been the valley of Hinnom. So he goes down and notices a potter sitting at his work. While he watches him, there leaps into his mind and heart a great idea, and he draws an illustration from the potter and his works. In this he is like Jesus who drew many of his illustrations from the common things of life and the affairs of men about him.

Jeremiah watched the potter. He saw him place a lump of clay on his wheel and with his deft fingers begin to mold and fashion it into a piece of pottery, and while he is attempting to fashion it into a beautiful piece, it crumbles and goes to pieces. It would not respond to his treatment. It was too crude for the fine purpose he had in mind, and so it crumbled and fell. It would not adjust itself to the ideal of the potter, and so he could not make the vase he had intended. He did not throw it away but picked it up again and began to mold it into another pattern not so beautiful or fine. He made this one but it was a poorer grade, a more common piece of pottery. We find this recorded in verses 1-4.

In the application (18:5-12) Jeremiah brings before our minds one of the most beautiful lessons, illustrating divine sovereignty and human freedom, to be found in the Bible. The application shows the relation of the human will to the movement of divine power. He says, verse 6, "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith Jehovah. Behold, as the clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel." That is a weighty expression; that nations are clay in God's hand, as individuals are; the world is but a lump of clay in God's hands to be fashioned as he wills. "As the clay is in the potter's hands, so are ye in my hand." He goes on to explain the import of that truth: "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy it [that was the mission of Jeremiah to the nation of Israel and to the surrounding nations] ; if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them."

This brings us face to face with a great truth in human life; a great fact that must be considered in order to understand the mysteries of divine providence. We can apply the truth to ourselves and ought to do so. It is a statement that in the event that a nation changes its conduct, or repents, God changes his attitude, not that he changes his will, but that he wills to change. Repentance in the main is a change of the will, that is, repentance in man is a change of the mind, or will, but repentance in God is the will to change. So God changes his attitude toward men when they repent. That is the way it is with the potter; he wills to fashion the clay according to his plan, but when it will not adjust itself to his ideal, then he changes his plan and fashions it as best he may. The idea is this, if the potter cannot make the best kind of a vessel out of the clay, he will do the next best thing. How mightily this truth applies to individuals. He uses the materials we give him. He does the best he can to train us as we submit to his leading. Thus, this principle, as illustrated by the potter and his clay, applies to us in our daily lives. It is only as we are pliable that God can work with us and through us.

In verse 10 he says, "If they do that which is evil in my sight then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them." Now, that is the same idea as set forth in repenting and not doing evil. If we change, he will, in harmony with his changelessness, change, too. He will do with us as we do with him. Jonah said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed." That was God's prophecy concerning that wicked city. After all that threatening, God did not do it because they repented, and Jonah was angry and disappointed. He wanted the city to be destroyed. The city repented, and then God repented, too, and thus the change was in the city and in God. Here in verse 11 he says, "Behold I frame evil against you; return every one from his evil ways."

Then in verse 14 he draws lessons from nature. He shows how constant nature is. He says, "Shall the snow of Lebanon fail from the rock of the field? or shall the cold waters that flow down from afar be dried up?" He fixes his eyes on the snow-capped Lebanons or

Hermon, and he sees that the snows are there perpetual according to the laws of nature. That snow as it melts is the source of the rivers of Damascus and the winding Jordan and they never dry up. Their source is stable; it faileth not. These streams run perpetually. He says in verse 15: "My people have forgotten me, they have burned incense to false gods; they have been made to stumble in their ways." They are unstable but nature is not, and God is not, and thus he describes their defection from him.

As a result of this preaching the people begin to devise plans for taking Jeremiah (18:18). They decide that his preaching must stop. They must get rid of him. They concocted a scheme against him once before and he was saved from their trap. Now they concoct another scheme. They said, "Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for [even though he be dead] the law shall not perish from the priests, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words." Now what is the use of listening to this preacher of calamity? We have the law. We will not lose the book of wisdom. We will always have these with us. Then Jeremiah begins to pray to the Lord to punish these plotters, verses 19-20: "Give heed to me, O Lord, . . . Shall evil be recompensed for good? Remember how I stood before thee to speak good for them," and now they plan to kill me.

He had been standing there and preaching the truth to these men and now he fears the Lord is going to let them kill him. He says, "I have tried to help them. I would give my life to save them. And now this is what they are doing." He prays that God will punish them; that he will give them over to the sword and destroy their children. "Let their women become childless." Now, was that an expression of mere bitterness? No! It was not mere human anger; it was a deep sense of outraged justice. Verse 23: "Jehovah, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay me; forgive not their iniquities, neither blot out their sin from thy sight." That reminds us of Psalm 109. It seems contrary to the spirit of Christ, yet it reminds one of the spirit

of Jesus when he says to the Pharisees and the Sadducees, "How can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

We have here another lesson from the potter (19:1-13). Jeremiah is told to go and buy an earthen bottle made also by a potter. He bought it. We do not know what sort; it may have been a good one. Then the Lord said, "Take of the elders of the people, and of the elders of the priests; and go forth into the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the gate of Harsith, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee." That place was just outside the walls of the city, the place where the rubbish was thrown, perhaps where the potters and their factories were. Now, go down there, Jeremiah, with that vessel.

This is what he was to say: "Hear ye the word of Jehovah, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem; . . . Behold, I will bring evil upon this place." Then he goes on to give the reasons. They had worshiped idols continually. They had done evil repeatedly. "This place," as a result, "shall no longer be called the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the place of slaughter." Verse 8: "I will make this city an astonishment, and a hissing." Destruction shall come. "Every one that passeth by shall be astonished and hiss and they shall eat the flesh of their children." Then he took the elders and the priests and in their presence he broke the bottle to pieces. Then he said, "As I have broken this bottle, so will Jehovah break in pieces this city, so that it cannot be put together again." The lesson is seen in verse II: "It cannot be made whole again." As that bottle is destroyed forever, so will I destroy this nation and I will destroy it forever, as far as human power is concerned.

Immediately after this incident Jeremiah comes back to the Temple and repeats the warning he had given, to the elders and the priests: "I stood in the courts of the Lord's house and said to all the people, I will bring upon this city and this people all the evils that I have pronounced against them, because they have made their necks stiff that they hear not my words." There are no people on earth so sure

of doom as those who have simply made up their minds that they will not hear. These are they who are deaf by choice. These people had gone so far that they would not even listen. Of course, then, they could not hear. Even now sometimes people simply make up their minds that they will not hear and there is no hope for them.

Pashhur was the chief officer in the Temple. He was himself a prophet but a false one. He heard the words of Jeremiah and noted that threat. It enraged him. He set upon Jeremiah and struck him and put him in the stocks, till the following day. His smiting probably refers to whipping on the soles of his feet with the bastinado. He then put him in the stocks. His hands and feet put through openings in planks, he is forced into a stooping position. His head perhaps was put through a wooden stock or pillory. This is the first physical violence that Jeremiah had suffered.

"Then said Jeremiah unto him, the Lord hath not called thee Pashur, but Magor-missabib." "Pashur" means a man in quietness or peace, and "Magor-missabib" means terror all around. Mr. Pashur, your name must be changed. You are going to be a terror to yourself. That is your fate. Thy friends shall fall by the sword and thine eyes shall behold it. "For thus saith Jehovah, I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon and he shall carry them captive to Babylon and shall slay them with the sword. I will give them the treasures of the Temple and this city. This shall happen to you and your friends who prophesy falsely." And so they did. Very soon Mr. Pashur was taken captive to Babylon and died, surrounded by terrors. The rest of this chapter contains Jeremiah's lamentation. We studied this in the chapter on "The Life and Character of Jeremiah." I called attention to that section where Jeremiah cursed the day in which he was born. He accused God of alluring him into prophesying and then deserting him. Then God led him step by step out of his despondency and up to the plane of praise and joy.

About this time, when Jeremiah was at liberty, a great many enemies had overrun the land of Palestine and the people had flocked to

Jerusalem for protection. Among this host came the Rechabites. When Jehu was carrying on his revolution he met Jonadab who had founded this order, or sect, of the Rechabites and invited him into his chariot. They were noted for three things: They vowed not to live in houses; to have no vineyards; and to drink no wine forever. This class of people took refuge in Jerusalem; Jeremiah goes to these Rechabites, takes their leaders into the Temple and sets bottles of wine before them.

Note 35:3 (Jeremiah writes, this himself): "Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, . . . and I brought them into the house of Jehovah." He goes on: "And I set before the sons of the Rechabites bowls of wine, and I said unto them, Drink ye wine. "But they said, We will drink no wine; for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father, commands us." They were faithful to the commands of their ancestor. Jeremiah seized upon this occasion as a basis for addressing the people. He goes on to say that Jonadab had commanded this people so and so. "They kept that command, but ye would not obey God who commanded you to serve him." He outlines the punishment that will come upon the people, but makes a promise unto the sons of Jonadab, verse 19: "Therefore saith the Lord of hosts, . . . Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever."

He inculcates the principle of righteousness and justice in 22:1-9. The king is to be the instrument of righteousness and justice. There is no doubt that Jehoiakim, the vassal of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, sat on the throne. Jeremiah appeals to him to do right and be just. In verse 4 he says, "If you do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants and his people. But if ye will not do these things, I swear by myself, that this house shall come to desolation." And thus he goes on with his message of destruction. He repeats it over and over again.

The fate of Shallam, or Jehoahaz, is described in 22:10-22: "Weep for him that goeth away; for he shall return to his native land no

more." Then a charge against Jehoiakim is found in 22:13-23. This king was a heartless tyrant. He had a passion for building. He had a magnificent palace. He built by using the people unjustly. He was without conscience or principle: "Woe unto him that buildeth a house with unrighteousness." The son of this king succeeded him and the prophet goes on to describe the ruin coming upon this house (vv. 20-23).

Then follows judgment on Jehoiachin (vv. 22:24-30). This was doubtless written after the death of Jehoiakim. Jehoiachin was taken to Babylon, and it may have been written immediately preceding that event. We cannot be sure as to the exact time this section was penned. Verse 24: "As I live, saith Jehovah, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim were a signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence." He then goes on to describe the fate of the house; how Jehoiachin with his mother should be cast out and die in a foreign land, never to return to Judah. The king was to have no heir to sit upon his throne.

The message of 23:1-8 is one regarding the princes, or shepherds. These princes of Judah and Jerusalem are spoken of as the shepherds of the people. They were the political and civil shepherds. God called them the shepherds of his pasture. He charged them with neglect of duty: "Therefore saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Ye have scattered my flock." They had not provided them spiritual pasture. But a time is coming when they shall come together again and shall have good shepherds. Verse 5 is a messianic prophecy: "I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, . . . Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely."

The prophet's own title of 23:9-40 is, "Concerning the Prophets." We discussed this in a former chapter. We showed Jeremiah's charge against these false prophets. They were caterers and time-servers. They preached what the people wanted them to preach. They felt the pulse of the people and then shaped their messages accordingly.

The prophecy of chapter 25 is a prophecy concerning Judah and the surrounding nations. This was in the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim, 604 B.C., after Jeremiah had been preaching twenty-three years. Note some details here:

1. In 1-14 Jeremiah predicted that Nebuchadnezzar would take Palestine, Judah, and Jerusalem; that he would lead them captive to Babylon; that there should be desolation; that this nation should serve the king of Babylon seventy years; that when the seventy years was accomplished, then Jehovah would punish the king of Babylon, and that nation for their iniquity and their land should be a desolation forever.

2. Verses 15-26 show that the cup of the wrath of Jehovah must be drunk by all the nations surrounding Judah. He said that they should drink the cup of the wine of his fury. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, shall drink it; the land of Uz, the Philistines, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, Sidon, those of the Grecian Archipelago, Dedan, Tema, Buz, Arabia, Zimri, Elam, the Medes, and Sheshack shall drink of it.

3. Verses 27-29 show that the nations must drink it. This is the substance of that passage. The doom is inevitable. The last part of the chapter, verses 30-38, gives a description of the conquest of the Babylonians, and the terrible destruction which should come upon the nations.

An account of the writing, reading, burning, and rewriting of the roll is given in 36:1-32. This is an interesting incident. In the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim, 604 B.C., the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah and told him to write his prophecy. Doubtless the persecution was so intense that he had to stop preaching. Jeremiah was a faithful prophet, but he could not preach any more in the open, and so the Lord told him to write his prophecies in a book, or roll. That was a wonderfully wise suggestion. If Paul had not been imprisoned two years at Caesarea, it is possible Luke would not have written his Gospel. If the same great apostle had not suffered his Roman imprisonment, we would doubtless never have had his

matchless epistles to the Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians, and Hebrews. If Bunyan had not gone to jail, doubtless Pilgrim's Progress would never have been written. And so it is here, if Jeremiah had not been persecuted, we would in all probability never have had his written prophecy. He ordered Baruch to write it down as he dictated it to him. It was the substance of his twenty-three years of ministry. How long he was in writing it, we do not know, doubtless some months. After he had written it the next thing was to read it to the people. We cannot go into details. Here is the story in substance: Baruch took the roll and went to the Temple where the people passed, stood in the door with the princes and the friends of Jeremiah at his back and read the prophecy. It made a deep impression on the princes and the people. It had a different effect on others. They resented it and hated Jeremiah the more. Some of them went and told the king about it. In brief, he had it brought to him. Jehudi read it and the king cut it to pieces and soon every shred of it was a heap of ashes. Then he ordered the arrest of Jeremiah, but he had securely hidden himself. Then Jeremiah and Baruch wrote the prophecies again.

We have certain admonitions of Jeremiah to Baruch in chapter 45. After all his heroism this man Baruch grew despondent. This faithful scribe who had stood by Jeremiah through all his troubles now becomes troubled. We are told about it in chapter 45: "Thus didst thou say, Woe is me, for Jehovah hath added sorrow to my pain." Jeremiah tells him that the Lord breaks down that which he has planted: "Behold, I will pluck up this whole land." Baruch, have you thought that there were great things coming to you? Did you expect better things? "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." I am going to bring evil upon this whole land. You are not going to be a great man but your life is going to stand. What fine advice that was to this faithful secretary and scribe. Do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not. Your life will be spared, that is enough.

QUESTIONS

1. What the subject of this chapter of this INTERPRETATION? And what the dates of these several chapters of Jeremiah?
2. What, in general, the contents of these chapters?
3. What the story of the potter in 18:1-4?
4. What the prophet's application of the incident of the potter to Israel and what, in particular, the meaning of God's repentance here toward Israel for good or evil? (18:5-12.)
5. What the lesson here drawn from nature by the prophet? (18:13-17.)
6. What the result of the prophet's preaching (18:18) and what his response? (18:19-23.)
7. What the second incident of the potter's vessel and what its application? (19:1-13.)
8. What the prophet's message in the Temple immediately following the second lesson from the potter's vessel?
9. Give an account of Pashhur's persecution.
10. Who were the Rechabites, what their characteristics and what the lesson enforced by Jeremiah based upon their history?
11. Who addressed in 22:1-9 and what the message to him?
12. Who is spoken of in 22:10-12 and what is there said of him?
13. What the charge against Jehoiakim and what the result (22:13-23)?
14. What the contents of 22:24-30?

15. What the message of 23:1-8 and how are the shepherds here characterized?

16. What the prophet's own title of 23:9-40 and what the charge of Jeremiah here against these false prophets?

17. What the prophecy of chapter 25 and what the essential points noted?

18. Give an account of the writing, reading, burning, and rewriting of the roll (36:1-32).

19. What admonitions of Jeremiah to Baruch in chapter 45 and what their lesson?

IX. THE PROPHECIES OF JEREMIAH IN THE REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH

Jeremiah 21; 24, 27-29; 34; 37-39

We have here the prophecies of Jeremiah, during the reign of Zedekiah, the last king of the Jewish people. These prophecies are to be found as indicated at the head of this chapter. They are not all the prophecies that Jeremiah uttered or that were written during this reign, but they are the prophecies that he uttered relative to that period and bearing upon the events of that reign. During Zedekiah's reign he also wrote the messianic prophecy that we shall discuss in the next chapter.

When Jehoiakim burned the roll of his prophecies, he commanded his officers to go and take Jeremiah and Baruch. The Lord hid them or they would have lost their lives as Uriah had. Jeremiah and Baruch remained in hiding during the remainder of Jehoiakim's wicked reign, four or five years. The latter part of this reign, as given in our books of 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles, was a troublous time. Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. That king stirred up bands of the Moabites and the Edomites to come and trouble his kingdom. His cities were besieged and he himself was slain and his body cast forth as refuse outside the walls of the city. His son, Jehoiachin, succeeded him to the throne. Jehoiachin was quite young, some authorities say eight years, other authorities, eighteen years of age. His mother reigned with him, and was probably the power behind the throne. Jehoiachin continued the rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar, and the result was that in a little over three months, that great king buried his hosts against Jerusalem and besieged the holy city. Jehoiachin, acting on good and wise advice, surrendered the city, and so he himself with his queen mother and the royal family were deported. Nebuchadnezzar, convinced that he was not a safe man to have upon the throne, had him and his royal family taken to Babylon and confined there. On

the succession of "Evil Merodac" to the throne he was given a certain amount of liberty.

About 597 B.C. something over 7,000 of the best blood of Jerusalem, including the princes, the nobles, and the elders, with their wives, their slaves, and the most valuable and choice vessels of the Temple were carried away to Babylon. Ezekiel was carried away with them and began his prophecy in the fifth year of this captivity.

We can readily see that the removal of 7,000 of the best people from Jerusalem, such a thinning of the people, would give an opportunity to the many that were left. These nobles, princes, and elders, who were left in Jerusalem, were congratulating themselves that they were much better than those unfortunates who were carried off into exile. Such a conclusion would be perfectly natural. They were saying, "Those who had to go away and suffer such hardships are bad and so are suffering for their sins. We are left here in peace and so the Lord is with us." That resulted in pride, and was a very foolish state of mind for this people. Jeremiah knows that destruction is awaiting them, if they continue in their ways of wickedness.

The theme of Jeremiah 24 is Jeremiah's comparison between those in exile and those left behind. Note the following points:

1. The vision (vv. 1-3). Jeremiah is shown in a vision two baskets of figs, set before the Temple of the Lord. He goes on to explain the occasion and the time when this occurred. The description is found in verse 2: "One basket of very good figs, like the figs that are first ripe; and the other basket had very bad figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad." Verse 3 continues the description, as given to Jehovah by the prophet.

2. The fate of the good figs (vv. 4-7). "Like these good figs so will I regard the captives of Judah." Those in exile are the ones referred to, and so he says he will take care of them: "I will bring them again into this land: I will set mine eyes upon them for good."

3. The fate of the bad figs (vv. 8-10). These bad figs were the people living in Jerusalem, those who were puffed up, regarding themselves better than others because they were so fortunate as to escape deportation. "These bad figs are so bad that they cannot be eaten. So will I give up Zedekiah and the kings of Judah, and his princes and the residue of Jerusalem and those that remain in this land and them that dwell in the land of Egypt. I will even give them up to be tossed to and fro among all the kingdoms of the earth for evil; to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse in all the places whither I shall drive them."

Naturally the effect of that kind of preaching upon the people of Jerusalem was not very gratifying. Jeremiah did not make friends very fast by that kind of comparison and application. But he was a true prophet. He preached God's truth, whether welcome or not.

The theme of chapters 27-29 is Jeremiah's exhortation to submit to the yoke of Babylon. This prophecy occurred during the first or second year of the reign of Zedekiah, who had been put upon the throne by Nebuchadnezzar as his vassal. The date is about 596 B.C., certainly within two years after the exile under Jehoiachin. There was a movement among the various small nations surrounding Judah, a sort of revival of their political interests. The kings and the princes of these sections had conceived the idea that they could league together and revolt against Babylon. The kings of these various nations had sent their ambassadors to Zedekiah at Jerusalem to form a league, or a conspiracy, by which they could throw off the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar. Zedekiah was but a weakling, a mere tool in the hands of his chief princes. He had a certain reverence for Jeremiah and therefore he consulted him about it. But he feared the princes. He wanted to do right, but being a weak king, he was led to ruin and destruction by bad advice. He was afraid of Jeremiah, afraid of Nebuchadnezzar, afraid of his princes, and afraid of the prophets. To such a man all these nations came for consultation. They held their convention in Jerusalem, and to such a conference

Jeremiah came as adviser. He advised that they all submit to Babylon.

Now, in Jeremiah 27:1 there is an interpretation. It says, "In the reign of Jehoiachin," and it should be, "The reign of Zedekiah." Compare verse 12. Somehow that mistake has crept into the text. Jeremiah is commanded to make a yoke. He sets the yoke upon the heads of these ambassadors as a symbol. It is something like his symbolic action with the girdle. He puts the yoke on the heads of these envoys of Moab, Tyre, and the rest; also Zedekiah, the king of Judah, and gives his message. It is in verse 6: "And now have I given all these lands into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, my servant. The beasts of the field I have given him also." Verse 7: "And all the nations shall serve him and his sons' sons till the time of his own land come." Then destruction shall come upon him: Verse 8: "And it shall come to pass that the nation and the kingdom that shall not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith Jehovah, with the sword and with famine and with pestilence till I have consumed them by his hand." Then he throws out this warning: Don't listen to the preaching of your prophets for they are false. They have not the word of God. Listen to me and submit. No better advice was ever given to a king. Jeremiah was a man who had divine wisdom and gave advice that would have saved the people. He was called to be the savior of his country, and to be the prophet of the nations, the nations mentioned here. He would have saved them all, if they had listened to him.

We have some specific advice of the prophet to Zedekiah, the king, in 27:12-15. Notice what he says: "And I spake to Zedekiah, the king of Judah, according to all these words, saying, bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him and his people and live." But this advice to Zedekiah was to a weakling. He was respectful to the prophet, but afraid of his princes.

In verse 16 he says, "I spake to the priests and the people, saying, Thus [He warns them against these false prophets, which had doubtless been inciting this revolt among the nations by prophesying that they could succeed.] . . . Serve the king of Babylon and live." These prophets are prophesying a lie unto you. Why should this land become a desolation? These prophets had been preaching to the people that this exile would soon be over; that they would soon bring back the beautiful vessels of the Temple. This was fine talk to the people, for they wanted those vessels back. That suited the people fine, and the prophets knew it, so they just preached what the people wanted. These vessels will not come back. Just wait a little while and see if their prophecies come true. Thus saith the Lord concerning you: You shall be carried to Babylon and you shall be there until the day that I visit that land. Not only are these vessels not coming back, but you are going into exile also. Now, that was not a popular kind of talk, but it was divine wisdom.

A conflict with Hananiah, the false prophet, is described in chapter 28. Here was a strange incident. We have a conflict between two men, able men, influential men, men of high position and rank; one a false prophet, the other a true prophet. Externally both are good men. Hananiah was the son of a prophet, of the priestly line. Doubtless this Hananiah had been hired by the enemies of Jeremiah to counteract his influence with the people. They hired this man to make the people believe that these vessels would come back. So Hananiah comes forward. He stands in the gate of the Temple and thus addresses the people: "Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon; within two full years I will bring into this place all the vessels of the Lord's house, that Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, took away from this place. I will bring back Jehoiachin and the royal family within two years and everything will be restored within that two years."

Now, that was delightful preaching. That was just what the people wanted. But there was Jeremiah and he had to be reckoned with. Hananiah had all the marks of truth in him. Jeremiah seems to have

wavered. He treats this man with all the courtesy of a gentleman. He stands there and listens to his message. He stood with the people that stood in the house of the Lord. When Hananiah had finished he said: "Amen: the Lord do so; may it be as you have said." Jeremiah would have been glad if it had been true. He was patriotic and loyal. Nothing would have rejoiced him more than for this to have happened. "Oh, that it might be so!"

But in verses 7-8 he says, "Nevertheless hear thou this that I speak unto thee. The prophets that spake in the olden time prophesied against many countries and against many kingdoms." What did he mean by that? That the prophets who were true prophets prophesied destruction; that the punishment was coming. He means to say that the criterion by which one could determine a true prophet was that he prophesied evil. Now this man Hananiah was a false optimist. The true prophet sees the evil as well as the good. So by that process of reasoning he proved that Hananiah was a false prophet. He prophesied only good, hence he could not be a true prophet. I have prophesied evil and therefore I am in line with the tried and true prophets. How did the people like that?

We may well suppose that the majority of them did not like it. When Hananiah saw that the tide was coming his way, that the people were with him, he seized the yoke that Jeremiah was wearing before the people and smashed it to pieces. This is what he says: "Even so will I break the yoke of the king of Babylon before two full years end." That was a bold stroke. Jeremiah was silenced for the time. But he did not give it up entirely; he went his way and talked to Jehovah about it. God gave him his answer. In verse 13 we have it: "Go, tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith Jehovah: Thou hast broken the bars of wood; but thou hast made in their stead bars of iron." This kingdom shall be suddenly destroyed. as for Hananiah the Lord said, "Thou makest this people to trust in a lie. . . Behold, I will send thee away from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast spoken rebellion against Jehovah." And Hananiah died the same year in the seventh month, two months after this incident.

An account of a letter of Jeremiah to the exiles is found in Jeremiah 29. Zedekiah was the vassal of Nebuchadnezzar and in order to assure him that he was true he sent two messengers to him. Their names are given in verse 3. These two messengers took letters from Zedekiah to the king in Babylon. Jeremiah took occasion to send a letter by these messengers to the exiles in Babylon. False prophets were over there, too.

They had been predicting that they would soon return to their own land. So Jeremiah sent them a letter, the substance of which is to be found from verse 4 on to the end of the chapter. This we will discuss briefly. He advised the people to settle down, to marry, to be true to the king of Babylon and after seventy years, that is, about two generations, God's will concerning the king of Babylon would be accomplished, and then they should return to their own place. In verse 13 we have a beautiful statement: "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." In verses 21-22 we have this statement regarding two false prophets in Babylon, Ahab and Zedekiah, who were prophesying the destruction of Babylon and the immediate return. Word of this comes to the ears of Nebuchadnezzar. That king was not a man to be trifled with. Here were two exiles stirring up an insurrection in his realm. Jeremiah says, "He roasted them in the fire." He tried to do the same thing with the three Hebrew children, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. It was not an uncommon thing for a man to burn people to death then. That was the fate of these two false prophets.

But we come to another incident in verse 24. There was one Shemaiah who sent letters from Babylon to the princes and guardians of the Temple about Jeremiah, and said that this man, this Jeremiah ought not to be at large. Verse 26: "Every man that is mad, and maketh himself a prophet, that thou shouldest put him in the stocks. . . Now therefore, why hast thou not rebuked Jeremiah of Anathoth, who maketh himself a prophet to you, for as much as he hath sent unto us in Babylon, saying, The captivity is long," and thus and so. Then the men of the Temple read the letter to Jeremiah, and

he responds, verse 32: "Behold, I will punish Shemaiah and his seed; he shall not have a man to dwell among this people, neither shall he behold the good that I will do unto my people, saith Jehovah, because he hath spoken rebellion against Jehovah."

Jeremiah's advice to Zedekiah during the siege is given in chapter 21. This chapter is very much out of chronological order. This weak king is still in the hands of his princes, who are trying to throw off the yoke of Babylon. They have been all this time expecting help from Egypt. Pharaoh Necho who had slain Josiah, king of Judah, had been succeeded by Pharaoh Hophra. He had overthrown his adversaries at home and was now ready for Asia. There was an Egyptian party in Jerusalem and they soon had their plans ready for Zedekiah. They proposed to form an alliance with this Pharaoh against Nebuchadnezzar. This they did against the advice of Jeremiah. The outcome of the matter was that Nebuchadnezzar swept down upon Judah and Jerusalem to subdue them.

Zedekiah sent an anxious message to Jeremiah inquiring if there was any message from the Lord. His answer was brief. He simply told him that the Lord would not save the city as he did when Isaiah was the prophet. But he says in verse 5: "I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm even in anger and in wrath and in great indignation, and I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beasts and they shall die of great pestilence." This siege was to end in the downfall of the city. In verse 8 he says, "Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death. He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword and by famine and by the pestilence, but he that goeth out and falleth away to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live and his life shall be unto him for a prey."

The incidents of the siege are described in chapter 34. Under the preaching of Jeremiah and the stress and strain of the siege, the people's consciences were awakened and they gave heed to the law of Moses and made a covenant that they would liberate all the slaves

according to the law of Moses, which said that when a Hebrew became a slave to another that he should be such only six years. That is recorded in the law as found in Exodus 21:2 and Deuteronomy 15:12. That law was given by Moses. They usually neglected it, but they did it now while there was pressure on them, but as soon as the pressure was removed they went back to their old ways again, verse II: "But afterward, they turned and caused the servants and handmaidens, whom they had caused to go free to return and brought them into subjection for servants and handmaidens." This occurred while Pharaoh-Hophra was coming up to Jerusalem to relieve the city. Nebuchadnezzar defeated him and drove him back. When the pressure was removed their conscience grew calloused again. Jeremiah broke out in great bitterness against this, 34:17: "You granted liberty, then you took it back. I proclaim to you a liberty to the sword and to famine. I will make you to be a curse among the nations of the earth." In spite of all the solemnity with which you made the covenant you broke it. I will cause the Chaldeans to return to the city and make it without inhabitants.

The effect of Jeremiah's preaching is recorded in chapters 37-39. Jeremiah's forty years and more of preaching had verily been in vain. The people would not heed. There seemed to be a fixedness in their perverseness. They evidently hardened their hearts to go after idols. There is a saying, "Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad." It was so with these people. They were mad after idolatry. The siege had now been on more than a year. It lasted eighteen months altogether, accompanied with all the horrors of a siege. These events are recorded in chapters 37-39. We take them up in order:

Jeremiah 37:2: "Neither he, nor the people of the land, hearkened unto the words of the Lord." This general statement is followed by the details:

Zedekiah was a weakling. He wanted to do what Jeremiah said, and if he had been stronger he would have done so. So he sent for him

and asked his advice. He says, 37:3: "Pray now unto the Lord our God for us." Jeremiah answered him, 37:7: "Behold, Pharaoh's army that is come forth to help you shall return into their own land; the Chaldeans shall come again and fight against this city. They shall take it and burn it with fire."

At the time the siege was raised and the Chaldeans went to meet the Egyptians, many people broke out of the city. Jeremiah was one of them. He started to go to his home at Anathoth to take charge of a certain piece of property he had bought, verse 12: "Jeremiah went out of Jerusalem at the gate of Benjamin." He came in collision with the captain of the ward whose name was Irijah and he said to Jeremiah, "Thou goest to the Chaldeans; thou art falling away to the Chaldeans." Many others were doing the same thing and nothing was said about it, but these people now had a chance to get in a blow at Jeremiah, because he had been stoutly counseling the people to surrender to the Chaldeans. Jeremiah said, "I do not fall away to the Chaldeans." Irijah did not believe him, but seized him and brought him before the princes, "and the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan, the scribe." This is the second time Jeremiah had been arrested, but the first time he was imprisoned.

The king called for Jeremiah and asked him, "Is there any word from the Lord?" "No," said Jeremiah, "The only word is this: Thou shalt be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon." Then he pleads for himself: "Cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan, the scribe, lest I perish there." Zedekiah, the king, was kindly disposed toward him. He gave him some liberty. He remained in the court of the guard six months or more, guarded by the king.

Then the princes put him in the dungeon. These princes were the real cause of the fall of Jerusalem. They hated Jeremiah. They had been treating with Egypt, and he had advised against them; his counsel had weakened many of the people in their loyalty to the plans of the princes; so they hated him, and now that they had him in

their hands they wreaked their vengeance on him. Verse 4: "Then the princes said to the king, Let this man we pray thee be put to death, forasmuch as he hath weakened the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people."

That the king was a weakling is shown in verse 5: "Then Zedekiah, the king, said, Behold he is in your hands; do as you will, for the king is one that can do nothing against you." There was a certain Justification for these princes who saw only the military aspect of it. If any man had done as did Jeremiah, in connection with the siege of Richmond or Vicksburg, he would have been promptly dealt with as a traitor. So they took Jeremiah and threw him into a deep cistern, or pit. It had no water in it, but it was deep with mud and he sank down into that, and they left him thinking that would be the last of him. At last, they thought, his tongue was silenced. But he was rescued by a slave, an Ethiopian, named Ebedmelech. He felt kindly toward Jeremiah, so he went to the king and the king gave him liberty to rescue him (38:7-13).

Another audience with the king is allowed Jeremiah (14-28). This is Jeremiah's last audience with Zedekiah. Verse 17: "If thou go forth to the king of Babylon thou shalt live, and the people." He could yet save the city. Then the king told him not to tell anybody about the interview. If there had been a man on the throne, he would have saved the city. Then follows an account of the capture of the city and its destruction (39:1-10). A careful reading of this passage will be sufficient.

Jeremiah was saved by the command of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. He had heard about Jeremiah and his services, how he had counseled the people to surrender, and spared his life; told them to take good care of him and let him do as he would.

The prophecy in 39:15-18 is concerning Ebed-melech, the slave who had saved Jeremiah's life. It is beautiful to see how Jeremiah remembered this man. He writes down in the word of God what should be his reward, thus: "I will surely save thee, saith Jehovah."

Jerusalem is now a smoking ruin, and the people are scattered far and wide. The nobles and the princes are slain before the king, and his own sons are slaughtered before his own eyes. Zedekiah's eyes are put out and he is carried captive to Babylon. If he had only followed the advice of Jeremiah, all would have been well. The position of a prophet in the state is supreme; it is the highest honor that can be bestowed upon any man.

QUESTIONS

1. What the theme of this chapter of this INTERPRETATION and what the historical setting?
2. What the theme of Jeremiah 24 and how is it presented? Explain fully.
3. What the theme of chapters 27-29 and what the general condition in Judah and the surrounding nations at this time?
4. How do you explain the name "Jehoiachim" in 27:1, what the symbolic action of the prophet here and what its meaning? (27:1-11.)
5. What the specific advice of the prophet to Zedekiah, the king, in 27:12-15?
6. What his advice to the priests and the people and how does he meet the prophecies of the false prophets?
7. Give an account of the conflict between Hananiah and Jeremiah (28).
8. Give an account of the letter of Jeremiah to the exiles (29).
9. What Jeremiah's advice to Zedekiah during the siege? (21.)
10. What the incidents of the siege? (34.)

11. What the effect of Jeremiah's preaching and how are the people characterized? (37-39.)
12. What the general statement of this in 37:1-2?
13. Give an account of the king's request of Jeremiah and his response (37:3-10).
14. Give an account of Jeremiah's second arrest and first imprisonment (37:11-15).
15. Give an account of his deliverance from the prison (37:16-21).
16. What was next done with him and what the particulars (38:4-6)?
17. How did he escape and what the particulars?
18. Give an account of Jeremiah's last audience with the king (38:14-28).
19. Give an account of the capture of the city and its destruction (39:1-10).
20. How was Jeremiah saved and what the particulars? (39:11-14.)
21. What the prophecy in 39:15-18?

X. THE PROPHECY OF JEREMIAH ON THE RESTORATION

Jeremiah 30-33

This prophecy may be called Jeremiah's messianic prophecy, or the prophecy of the blessed age, the messianic age, that glorious age that was to come. Most of the teaching of Jeremiah up to this point is permeated with the note of sadness and of doom, the theme of which is destruction. From this Jeremiah might be called a thorough-going pessimist, but here we shall see that he was anything but a pessimist. He was one of the greatest optimists. When his nation seemed so determined to go on in sin and rebellion against God and hence to destruction, Jeremiah could be nothing but a pessimist, so far as the immediate future of his country was concerned. There is such a thing as a sane and sensible pessimism. The man who is a pessimist when he sees that sin is unbridled in its sway over the people, is the only man who takes a sane view of the situation. But in this passage we will see that Jeremiah was one of the greatest optimists that the world ever saw.

Blessed is the man who can mediate between the pessimist and the optimist. All the prophecies concerning the messianic age, and the restoration from the exile to Palestine were optimistic. Amos was a pre-exilic prophet, and he prophesied a return of the Jews and a glorious age; so did Hosea, Isaiah, Joel, Micah, and Zephaniah. All of these pictured the return to Jerusalem and the worship in Mount Zion. Isaiah puts it in the form of a reign of David's son over a true and righteous Israel, at the time of the restoration from the Exile in Babylon. Joel pictures the messianic age and we are told in Acts 2 when it was fulfilled. Peter there declares that Joel's prophecy was fulfilled in what was enacted at that time. Ezekiel pictures it also as a restored nation and a restored theocracy in chapters 40-48.

Now, let us consider what Jeremiah has to say concerning the Jews and their glorious restoration. In these four chapters (30-33) we have three great subjects:

1. The triumphal hymn of Israel's salvation (30-31)
2. The story of the purchase of a field by Jeremiah during his imprisonment, and the explanation (32)
3. The promise of the restoration with the renewed glory of the house of David and the Levitical priesthood (33)

Observe that this prophecy is not dated. It merely says, "The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah." It is altogether likely that it came in the latter part of the reign of Zedekiah, possibly during the imprisonment in the court of the guard, or it may have occurred a little earlier than that.

In the introduction the prophet is commanded to write these things (30:1-3). The fact that God commanded Jeremiah to write this messianic prophecy shows that he put considerable value upon it and that he intended it to be preserved for his people, Israel. He said, "The days will come, saith Jehovah, that I will turn again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah; and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave their fathers, and they shall possess it." This is the essence of the prophecy contained in chapters 30-31.

The prophecy relative to Judah in 30:4-11 is that there shall be an end of Judah's troubles, for the foreign domination shall cease. Judah is pictured here as sorely troubled. Notice verse 5: "We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace." Then he pictures the nation in that figure, which is so many times used in the Scriptures, as in the pain of travail. Verse 7: "For that day is great, so that none is like unto it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble." Then he adds, "But he shall be saved out of it." In verse 8: he describes how the foreign domination of Babylon shall be broken off. Verse 9: "They shall serve Jehovah their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them."

Of course, this is not David himself, in a literal sense, that shall be raised up. It means that one of David's royal posterity shall reign

over Israel. Israel shall have her kingdom restored and on the throne a king of the old royal line. In a large measure that promise was fulfilled in David's greater son, Jesus Christ. In verse 10 he calls Israel by the name of "Servant," the word used so often in Isaiah 40-66, and promises return and rest. Verse II: "I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have scattered thee, but I will not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee in judgment, and will in no wise leave thee unpunished."

Judah is pictured in 30:12-17 as incurably wounded. The hurt of the cities of Judah is incurably deep but she shall be restored to health. Verse 12: "Thy hurt is incurable, and thy wound grievous," therefore punishment must come to Judah. Then he pictures her as being despised among the nations, forgotten by her lovers, i.e., all those nations whom she followed after strange gods. He adds that their chastisement was a cruel one, but that it was because of the greatness of their iniquity; because their sins were so increased. Verse 15 adds: "Why criest thou for thy hurt?" There is no use crying. Why do you cry unto me? "Thy pain is incurable." It was all because of the greatness of their iniquity. Verse 16: "They that devour thee shall be devoured; and all thine adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity." Verse 17: "I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds."

There is a promise respecting Jerusalem and other cities of Judah in 30:18-22. The city shall be rebuilt and shall be prosperous. Verse 18: "And the city shall be builded upon its own hill, and the palace shall be inhabited after its own manner." Now, that was particularly fulfilled under Ezra and Nehemiah, in their later history. Verse 19 describes the happiness and merriment of the people. Verse 20 says, "Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me." Verse 21: "Their princes shall be of themselves and their ruler shall proceed from the midst of them." He shall be of the royal line; shall be of themselves. Their rulers shall proceed from their own blood. They shall be relieved from the domination of Assyria, Egypt, and Babylon.

The prophecy of 30:23-24 is that there shall be a sweeping tempest upon her enemies: "Behold, the tempest of Jehovah, even his wrath, is gone forth, a sweeping tempest: it shall burst upon the head of the wicked." This undoubtedly refers to the nations that have harassed Judah so long.

The picture found in 31:1-6 is that Israel shall be restored to the worship of their own God, Jehovah. Verse 1: "I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people." This was true when God brought them forth from Chaldea and from Egypt after the exile. The great motive expressed is that God might be their God and they his people. In the glory of the restoration he says, "I will be the God of all the families of Israel." In verse 3 we come to a great and glorious passage, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." That is a great text. We have here a vision of the fidelity and love of Jehovah for his people. He loves forever. "With lovingkindness have I drawn thee." That was true in Egypt. He drew them to himself. It will be true again when he shall draw them from among the nations. Jehovah loves the people of Israel now with the same jealous love as of old, and he is drawing them. The time is coming when he will draw them together to him with this everlasting love. This same truth applies to all Christians of the world, both Jew and Gentile.

Samaria shall be resettled and repopled: "Again shalt thou plant vineyards upon the mountains of Samaria. . . . For there shall be a day that the watchman upon the hills of Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto Jehovah our God." Which means that there will be watchmen who will watch for the rising of the new moon and the time of the feasts, and then the word will go from mouth to mouth and the people will all observe the feasts together. Now, that prophecy has never been literally fulfilled.

Samaria was peopled by aliens from Babylon and Assyria mixed with Jews and when the Jews returned from the exile, these people wanted to help them in the work of rebuilding, but they were spurned. This made the Samaritans the bitter enemies of the Jews

and of their leaders. In Jesus' time "the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans," but many of them were converted in Christ's ministry and through the apostles after Pentecost. The future will determine the glories of this prophecy.

There is a great promise in 31:7-9. A great company shall return from the north. Verse 8: "Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the uttermost parts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, and the woman with child." Verse 9: "I will cause them to walk by rivers of water, in a straight way wherein they shall not stumble; for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first born."

The announcement in 31:10-14 is that this return shall be proclaimed to the nations. This passage reminds us very much of Isaiah 40. The expressions are almost identical. Note the clause in verse 10 which is almost the same in both books, "As a shepherd doth his flock." Then in verse 12: "They shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow unto the goodness of Jehovah, to the grain, and to the new wine, and to the oil, and to the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden." That is a beautiful picture; the people coming shall be like that of a flowing stream hurrying on to an experience of the goodness of Jehovah. All the nations shall see it.

And mourning Ephraim shall be comforted and restored (31:15-20). Rachel is heard weeping for her children. She refuses to be comforted. Rachel was the mother of Joseph and he was the father of Ephraim, the leading tribe of the Northern Kingdom, which finally absorbed all the rest of the tribes of that division of the kingdom west of the Jordan. Hosea calls Israel Ephraim. Rachel weeping over her children is a pathetic picture of the destruction of the Northern Kingdom, but there is hope for it. She shall not weep forever. Verse 16: "Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith Jehovah: and they shall come again from the land of the enemy." Then he goes on to

describe the repentance of Ephraim. Verse 20 sounds much like Hosea in his great prophecy. Here Jeremiah says, "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a darling child?"

In the exhortation in 31:21-22 the wanderer is asked to return. Speaking to Israel, he says, "Set thee up waymarks, make thee guide-posts; set thy heart toward the highway, even the way thou wentest." Verse 22 is a remarkable prophecy: "How long wilt thou go hither and thither, O thou backsliding daughter? For Jehovah hath created a new thing in the earth: A woman shall encompass a man." In Jeremiah's time the man must encompass the woman. But this prophecy predicts that there is going to be a new state of things: "A woman shall encompass a man," shall surround him, that is, she shall win him and also be his protector and safeguard. The Spiritual application of that seems to be that the time will come when Israel, this backsliding and wandering woman, shall be changed; shall be different; she shall have a new disposition. Instead of God having to go after her and surround her and induce her to keep herself true to him, she will take the initiative; she will surround the Lord and shall be true to him; shall go after him, and meet him more than half way. That was true to some extent when they came back from the exile. They were true to God and protected his cause, but the larger fulfilment is doubtless yet to come.

The prophecy as to the life of Israel after the restoration (31:23-26) shows that the life of restored Israel shall be happy and blessed. Note verse 23: "Jehovah bless thee, O habitation of righteousness, O mountain of holiness." What a magnificent description of the city is that. That prophecy was fulfilled only to a very slight degree after the return from exile. Its true fulfilment is spiritual. Jeremiah was much pleased with the vision.

There shall be great material prosperity for the renewed people and there shall be individual responsibility. Great prosperity is shown in the verse 27: "I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and with the seed of beast." The idea there is

that it is going to be so thickly populated that it will be literally sown with men and with beasts, like a field. Then in verse 29, "In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." That was a proverb based upon the fact that because of the father's sins the children suffered. They kept saying that in the exile, because a multitude of those who were in exile never sinned as their fathers did, and had to suffer for the wickedness and sins of their fathers. Hence they kept saying, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." They were suffering for the iniquities of their fathers, not their own. There was a note of bitterness and complaint in it. They regarded the law as unjust. The great law of individual responsibility is here asserted. That doctrine is worked out with great clearness in Ezekiel 18.

In the blessings of the new covenant (vv. 31:31-34) we have the climax, the greatest of all Jeremiah's prophecies. This is indeed the high-water mark of all the Old Testament prophecy. Jeremiah had come to the conclusion that the heart of the man was deceitful and above all things desperately wicked and that he could no more change it of himself than the leopard can change his spots, or the Ethiopian his skin; that the people who are accustomed to do evil, cannot do good. They must be changed. There must be a new order of things, a new covenant. What is this new covenant? Verse 33 lays down a new condition: "I will put my law in their inward parts." Moses wrote it on tablets of stone but the law to be effective must be written in the inward parts. It must be written on the tablets of the heart. On that condition "I will be their God, and they shall be my people," saith Jehovah.

Then the prophet asserted the doctrine of individual, or personal experience of the knowledge of God, verse 34: "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more." He does not mean by that

that there shall be no more teaching but he does mean that each individual shall have a personal experience for himself. His parents cannot give it to him; each individual shall have a personal knowledge of God for himself. As regards their sins God provides a sacrifice so that he will remember their sins no more forever, consequently there shall be no more need for the sacrifices of atonement.

Now, that wonderful prophecy was not fulfilled in that restoration. When Nehemiah had completed the walls of Jerusalem, Ezra brought forth the book of the Law and read it before them and they made another covenant to keep the Law. That was 150 years after Jehovah had said, "I will make a new covenant." Ezra brought forth this same old covenant and the people adopted it again. That was not a new covenant, and in no sense a fulfilment of the prophecy here. The people asked Ezra to read it, which showed that it was in no sense in their hearts. This covenant is fulfilled in Christianity. Jesus preached the new birth and the principle of personal knowledge of God. It is the fundamental element of the gospel, that God's law must be in the heart, not in mere ceremony.

It is said of the new people in 31:35-37 that they shall be perpetual. They shall abide forever. This is expressed by a comparison of the material universe with God's eternal purpose concerning his people. The prophecy concerning Jerusalem in 31:38-40 is that the holy city shall be rebuilt. Jerusalem shall be holy unto Jehovah. Now, that was to some extent fulfilled in the restoration under Nehemiah and Ezra, but for 1900 years it has been trodden under foot. For the larger fulfilment we look to Christianity in the millennium.

The prophecy of chapter 32 occurred in the tenth year of the reign of Zedekiah, during the siege, when Jeremiah was shut up in the court of the guard. In that condition, when the city was thus surrounded and seemed doomed to pass into the hands of the enemy and be destroyed, Jeremiah utters this prophecy. The following are the main points of it:

1. The announcement of the Oracle of Jeremiah (32:15). This section simply contains the record of the fact that the oracle came from God to Jeremiah at this time and the fate of the city is announced.

2. The purchase of an ancestral field (32:6-15). Jeremiah received word from Jehovah that a certain man was coming to ask him to buy a field at Anathoth which belonged to Jeremiah's family and was within his right. God told him to buy it. He tells us that he did so, and paid seventeen shekels for it. Doubtless property was cheap at that particular time, for all the land was overrun by the Chaldeans. The deed was signed and two copies made; then they were subscribed to before witnesses. They were then deposited in an earthen vessel to be kept, because seventy years or more was to pass before they could be used. Such is the story. It reminds us of the incident that occurred in the wars of Hannibal. When he was encamped before the gates of Rome, the very ground upon which he was encamped was bought by men in the city, for they believed in the future of Rome. They paid for it and believed that they would make use of it. So it was with Jeremiah; he believed in the future of Jerusalem and Judah more truly than those men believed in the future of Rome.

3. His misgiving, with his retrospection of Jehovah's' power, justice, and lovingkindness, manifested in Israel's history (32:16-25). He closes that retrospection by summing up the situation. We find it in verses 24-25. The city is in a state of siege, and is going to be destroyed very soon.

4. Jehovah's reply to Jeremiah's misgivings (vv. 26-35). The reply is this: "Because of the people's sins Jerusalem shall be destroyed by the Chaldeans."

5. Jehovah gives an emphatic promise of future favor (vv. 36-44). Again and again Jehovah says, "I will gather them out of all countries; I will give them one heart and one way; I will make an

everlasting covenant with them." Men shall buy fields, shall subscribe deeds, seal them and call witnesses, etc.

Jeremiah gives the date of its deliverance, about the year 586 B.C., while the Chaldeans were besieging the city and Jeremiah was shut up in the court of the guard. The items of this chapter are as follows:

1. The call for a larger faith (vv. 2-3). Jehovah will show them difficult things.

2. The city shall be reinhabited and shall be joyful (4-9). [I am simply giving the substance of these portions. They are largely repetitions and details are not necessary.]

3. The land of Judah shall be repopulated (vv. 10-13). Verse 12 says, "Yet again there shall be in this place, which is waste, without man and without beast, and in all the cities thereof, a habitation of shepherds causing their flocks to lie down." In the cities of the lowland, the hill country, the South, Benjamin, and Judah, shall the flocks again pass under the hands of the shepherd.

4. David shall have a righteous successor upon the throne (14-18). Verse 15 contains the substance, a glorious messianic picture, like Isaiah 11:1-2.

5. The royal line of David and of the Levitical priesthood shall certainly be perpetuated, 19-22.

6. The Davidic Dynasty shall certainly be re-established (23-26). The seed of David shall sit upon the throne.

The fulfilment of this prophecy occurred partly in the restoration, partly in Christianity, and shall be completely fulfilled in the glorious reign of Christ when Christianity shall be triumphant throughout the world. In this we have a remarkable perspective of prophecy, a prophecy with several fulfilments stretching over a long period of time.

QUESTIONS

1. What the nature of this section of Jeremiah?
2. How does it compare with his former prophecies?
3. How does it compare with the prophets before him?
4. What the outline of these four chapters?
5. What the date of this prophecy?
6. What the nature of 30:1-3?
7. How is the importance of this section here indicated and what the reason assigned?
8. What the prophecy relative to Judah in 30:4-11?
9. How is Judah pictured in 30:12-17 and yet what hope is held out to Judah?
10. What the promise respecting Jerusalem and the other cities of Judah in 30:18-22?
11. What the prophecy of 30:23-24 and what the fulfilment?
12. What the picture found in 31:1-6 and when realized?
13. What the great promise in 31:7-9?
14. What the announcement in 31:10-14 and other Old Testament passage similar to it?
15. What prophecy here concerning Ephraim (31:15-20)?
16. What the exhortation in 31:21-22 and what the meaning of the "new thing" here?

17. What the prophecy as to the life of Israel after the restoration (31:23-26) and how did this prospect affect Jeremiah?
18. What the material blessings for the renewed people and how is their individual responsibility set forth? (31:27-30.)
19. What the blessings of the new covenant? (31:31-34.)
20. What is said of the new people in 31:35-37 and how is it expressed?
21. What the prophecy concerning Jerusalem in 31:38-40 and when fulfilled?
22. What the date of the prophecy of chapter 32?
23. What the main points of this prophecy?
24. What the date and contents of chapter 33?

XI. THE PROPHECIES OF JEREMIAH CONCERNING THE NATIONS

Jeremiah 46-51

We now take up the prophecies of Jeremiah to the foreign nations, recorded in Jeremiah 46-51. We note first, by way of introduction, that when Jeremiah was called to be a prophet, it was said, 1:5: "I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations." Note again in 1:10: "I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow." Thus Jeremiah's work was not to be confined to Israel, but to comprise the known world, at least all that part of it which had any relation to or connection with Israel. So, in Jeremiah 25, we see him exercising this function of prophet to the nations. Jehovah speaks to him and says) 25:15: "Take this cup of wine of wrath at my hand, and cause all the nations to whom I send thee to drink it."

We are not told that Jeremiah visited other nations. By this passage it seems that he did either visit them and deliver the prophecy, or that he wrote it and sent it to them by a messenger. Certain it is that he sent this message of destruction to all the nations that troubled Israel. He goes on, 25:17: "Then took I the cup at Jehovah's hand and caused all nations to drink it unto whom Jehovah sent me." In the next several verses we have all these nations named. There are twenty-one, altogether. And those nations which he names in Jeremiah 25 constitute some of the very people to whom he is writing the messages in this section. Again in chapter 27 we have Jeremiah exercising the prophetic function to the nations. In verses 2, 4 he makes a yoke to be sent to the kings of the nations and addresses the ambassadors that have been assembled at Jerusalem to arrange a plan for rebellion against Babylon and devise methods by which they may throw off the Babylonian yoke. Jeremiah meets them and Zedekiah and says, as recorded in the latter part of 27:12: "Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him arid live." He gave them this advice because he had said, "All

the nations shall serve the king of Babylon, and all those that do not serve him shall perish, or go into captivity, at the hands of the great Nebuchadnezzar. It is interesting to note that in the Septuagint Version, made in the third century before Christ, the prophecies found in chapters 46-51 are found immediately following 25:13, where their names are mentioned. That looks as if these were written and sent to the nations about the same time that Jeremiah gives his counsel to the messengers of the nations and to Zedekiah.

The dates of these chapters range from 604 B.C. to about 594 B.C. The critics put some of them much later. But there is ample evidence to lead to the conclusion that they occurred in that period in which Pharaoh-Necho suffered defeat at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, unto the fourth year of the reign of Zedekiah. Notice that these various prophecies to the nations are grouped together as Isaiah and Ezekiel grouped them. See Isaiah 12-23 and Ezekiel 25-32.

The date of the prophecy concerning Egypt is about 604 B.C. Probably the latter portion of the chapter was written a little later, but certainly the first twelve verses were written about 604 B.C. Compare with this Isaiah 19 and Ezekiel 29-32 which deal with the same subject, the downfall and punishment of Egypt. Jeremiah 46:1 is a general introduction to all these various prophecies.

We have an account of Egypt's defeat at Carhemish (46:2-12). The second verse gives the date and the occasion of the prophecy. They occurred somewhere about four years after the disastrous defeat and death of the good King Josiah at Megiddo. Pharaoh-Necho had pressed as far north and east as the fords of the Euphrates, seeking to swell his coffers and enlarge his territory. He was met there by the invincible Nebuchadnezzar. There was fought the great battle which was to decide the fate of one or the other of these two kings. Carhemish was a large city on the banks of the Euphrates, commanding the fords of that great river, which was the dividing line between the empires. Pharaoh-Necho was overwhelmed and driven back to Egypt. Jeremiah in the spirit of sarcasm addresses the

great army of Pharaoh-Necho: "Prepare ye the buckler and shield, and draw near to battle. Harness the horses, and get up, ye horsemen, and stand forth with your helmets; furbish the spears, put on the coats of mail."

Note the tone of verse 5: "Wherefore have I seen it? they are dismayed and are turned backward; and their mighty ones are beaten down, and are fled apace, and look not back: terror is on every side." Then again with a note of sarcasm he raises this question, verse 7: "Who is this that riseth up like the Nile, whose waters toss themselves like the rivers?" That is Egypt. Again, with a note of stinging sarcasm he continues in verse 9: "Go up, ye horses; and rage, ye chariots; and let the mighty men go forth: Gush and Put, that handle the shield; and the Ludim, that handle and bend the bow." In verse 10 he pictures the defeat: "For that day is a day of the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour and be satiate, and shall drink its fill of their blood; for the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates." This magnificent picture is the description of the hand of God punishing Egypt. It is a sacrifice of Jehovah's righteousness.

In verse 13 he gives the occasion and the substance of the prophecy. Nebuchadnezzar would come and smite the land of Egypt. Then in verse 14 he speaks of the cities of Egypt. He tells them to be ready and prepared. With a note of sarcasm he continues in verse 15 by asking a question, "Why are thy strong ones [thy gods] swept away?" Then the answer follows in the same verse: "Because Jehovah did drive them." That is the reason. In verse 17 we have a striking prophecy: "Pharaoh) the king of Egypt, is but a noise." He has no power; he is only a noise; all boast and brag and not to be feared.

In verse 25 he prophesies that Pharaoh's city, the city of Thebes, called "Noamon," or "Amon of No," shall perish. Of late years Egyptologists have discovered that city, and it is today just as

Jeremiah described it in this prophecy. It is utterly destroyed. In the latter part of verse 26 he makes a remarkable promise regarding the kingdom of Egypt. There shall not be made a full end of it; "afterward it shall be inhabited, as in the days of old"; Egypt shall not be utterly destroyed. It shall live. But Egypt was never the same after her defeat and subjugation by Nebuchadnezzar. Profane history tells us that in the year 560 B.C. or thereabout, Nebuchadnezzar defeated and overthrew Egypt. Jeremiah is vindicated in his prophecy here, since what he wrote took place beyond any doubt.

There are words of reassurance and encouragement to Israel in 46:27-28: "Fear not thou, O Jacob my servant, saith Jehovah; for I am with thee: for I will make a full end of all nations whither I have driven thee; but I will not make a full end of thee, but I will correct thee in measure, and will in no wise leave thee unpunished." That sounds much like the second part of Isaiah. In that prophecy this same promise is worked out in the great doctrine of the servant of God. The Philistines were the old, hereditary enemies of Israel. From the days of Samuel and the Judges, David and Solomon this nation had existed and was, all the time, an enemy and troubler of Israel and Judah.

The date of the prophecy (47:1-7) is a little uncertain. The latter part of the first verse says that this prophecy came before Pharaoh smote Gaza. Now that was the Pharaoh-Necho who defeated Josiah, some time previous to 604 B.C. He had laid siege to Gaza, the chief city of Philistia, and had utterly overwhelmed it. Previous to that Jeremiah uttered this prophecy against Philistia. He says in verse 2, "Behold, waters rise up out of the north, and shall become an overflowing stream, and shall overflow the land and all that is therein." Thus he pictures the invading hosts of Nebuchadnezzar coming from the north like an overflowing river, down the plains of Tyre to this Philistine city. In verse 4 he says that they shall all be overthrown.

Now, we have a remarkable question on this part of Jeremiah, verse 6. He sees this fearful shedding of blood, and raises the question, "O thou sword of Jehovah, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabbard; rest, and be still." Evidently this implies that God ordered this bloodshed and that the nation was doing his will in thus punishing the wickedness of the Philistines.

What the relation of Moab to Israel and what the main points of the prophecy against her (48:1-47)? It is interesting here to compare this passage with Isaiah 15-16, and also Ezekiel 25:9-11. Israel had come into very intimate relations with Moab. They passed through that land, and the tribe of Reuben had the territory which joined Moab. Between these two (Reuben and Moab) there were constant feuds with intermittent friendship. Finally Moab succeeded in throwing off the yoke of Israel and absorbing the tribe of Reuben. Moab was famous for her pride, her self-sufficiency. She was one of the proudest nations of the world. It was against this pride and self-sufficiency that this prophecy was directed. It contains a great many expressions that are identical with what we find in Isaiah 15-16. In this chapter the prophet gives us much of the geography of Moab. He mentions, altogether, about twenty-six cities. The principal thoughts are these:

1. Moab's threatened destruction and exile by Babylon (48:1-10).
2. Moab's disappointed hope, and the imminence of her calamity (48:11-25).
3. The humiliation of Moab, and her fate described (48: 26-46).
4. A promise of return: "Yet will I bring back the captivity of Moab in the latter days, saith Jehovah" (48:47).

I call attention to two or three striking passages in this prophecy against Moab. In verse 10 Jeremiah is speaking of the terrible work which Nebuchadnezzar will do to Moab and he wants that work thoroughly done, and says, "Cursed be he that doeth the work of

Jehovah negligently." Now that is a fine text. He continues, "Cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood." The idea in it all is that Jehovah wants these Babylonians to do their work thoroughly. Also in verse II we have a striking passage: "Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remaineth in him, and his scent is not changed." The figure here is that of fresh wine left to stand. When it is left thus, sediment gathers in the bottom. It becomes thick and stagnant and the quality is injured. Something like that had happened in Moab. She had grown stagnant; had been quiet for years. It was not good for her to remain in this condition. Self-satisfaction is not a good thing.

We have the prophecy against Ammon (49:1-6). The country of Ammon bordered on the land of Moab and the territory of the tribe of Reuben. There was constant strife between Ammon and Reuben. When Tiglath-Pileser invaded the land and deported the inhabitants, Ammon came up and seized the country that belonged to Reuben. Because of that incident Jeremiah uttered these oracles: "Hath Israel no sons? hath he no heir? Why then doth Malcam possess Gad, and his people dwell in the cities thereof?" He had seized the property that belonged to Israel, and that is what Jeremiah is denouncing. They shall all go into exile. He then closes this prophecy with a promise of restoration: "But I will bring back the captivity of the children of Ammon."

Compare with the prophecy against Edom the prophecy of Obadiah, which is almost identical. Jeremiah must have been familiar with the prophecy of Obadiah. Compare also Isaiah 34. Edom was a kinsman of the house of Jacob. Edom dwelt in his mountain fastnesses and impregnable heights, and was something of a military power. He never lost the bitterness of Esau against Jacob because the latter got his birthright and blessing. They first dwelt in tents and were Bedouin, but at this time most of them dwelt in cities or towns. Edom watched from his fastnesses the career of Jacob and, as

Obadiah says, looked on her destruction without pity. When she had opportunity she took some of the inhabitants of Israel, made them slaves and rejoiced over the downfall of Jerusalem. For such unbrotherly conduct Judah never forgave Edom. Sufficient is it to say that we have here the pronouncement of doom upon her and there is no promise of restoration. For several centuries Edom flourished to some extent, and in the time of the restoration she occupied considerable territory of Judah. In the time of Christ an Edomite sat upon the throne of Judah, but since then Edom has gone down and today nothing remains of her but a great wilderness of mountains and deserts.

In connection with the prophecy against Damascus (49: 23-27) we have prophecies concerning two little countries, namely, Hamath and Arpad. Damascus is to have troubles, she is to be sad in her fate and she is to wax very feeble. Her city is to be, not utterly destroyed, but greatly humbled. There is no promise of restoration.

Kedar is the name of the wandering and marauding, warlike tribes that live in the deserts east of Palestine, between eastern Palestine and the river Euphrates. They are called the "Children of the East." They have lived there from time immemorial. They were there before the days of Abraham and are there yet. The men of Kedar are to be overwhelmed by the Babylonian power. The city of Hazor is referred to as belonging to this people. The larger portion of these Arabians lived in tents and were Bedouin, but some of them lived in cities or villages. So the prophet addresses both classes, Kedar and Hazor, pronouncing destruction upon them.

We have the prophecy against Elam (49:34-39). In Abraham's time there was a king of Elam, who was the overlord of Babylon, and the over-lord of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. He came to the plains of Palestine and collected tribute from them. Elam was one of the principal forces that Abraham attacked and destroyed. A great many of the inhabitants were transported to northern Palestine when Samaria was destroyed by Sargon, so that Jeremiah is brought into

touch with these Elamites because they lived in the northern part of the country. The fate of Elam is bound 'up with the fate of Babylon and that of Israel. Elam is threatened with destruction, but in verse 39 there is a promise of restoration. It is interesting to note that in the fulfilment of that promise of restoration, there were Elamites in the city of Jerusalem when Peter preached his great sermon at Pentecost. Doubtless there were Elamites converted at that time and brought into the fold of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The prophecy against Babylon (50-51) is the longest of any of the prophecies concerning the foreign nations. Compare this with Isaiah 13-14; 40-48. The date of this prophecy is set forth in 51:59. It was in the fourth year of the reign of Zedekiah, about 494 B.C. Jeremiah penned this long prophecy and sent it by a messenger to the king of Babylon, to be read by the exiles, and he says in verse 63, "When thou hast made an end of reading this book, thou shall bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of the Euphrates: and thou shall say, Thus shalt Babylon sink, and shall not rise again because of the evil that I will bring upon her." A copy of the prophecy was kept by the prophet. This action was symbolical. We cannot go into detail in the study of this prophecy. The situation is the same as that set forth in Isaiah 40-66. It presents many of the same ideas and the same problems. There are scores of similar expressions. The principal ideas are as follows:

1. The people of Israel were in exile in Babylon and the city of Jerusalem had been destroyed: 50:6-7, 17, 28, 33; 51:11,34,51.
2. Babylon was the instrument of Jehovah in punishing Israel and the nations, four times stated: 50:7, 17; 51:7, 20-23.
3. Jehovah remains the deliverer of his people. This is stated by the prophet four times: 50:34; 51:5, 15-19, 36.
4. Jehovah will execute his wrath upon Babylon and her gods and they shall be destroyed. Fully two-thirds of this entire prophecy is

given to the discussion of this thought: 50:2-3, 10-16, 18, 21-27; 51:1-4, 8-9, 11-19.

5. The Modes and their allies are to break the Babylonian yoke. This is stated eight times altogether: 50:3, 9, 41-42, 44; 51:11,27-28.

6. Promise of release from Babylon and command to leave the city. Eleven times the prophet makes statements to that effect: 50:4-5, 8, 19-20, 28; and others.

7. Spiritual renewal of Israel shall follow the return from Babylon. This is stated by the prophet five times: 50:4-5; 51:10,50-51.

In these seven divisions we have the substance of these chapters. Isaiah 40-48 contains the same thoughts, sometimes even in the same words.

Almost all the critics maintain that Jeremiah did not write these chapters. Even a Baptist professor produced a commentary that was published by a Baptist publishing house, in which it is plainly affirmed that Jeremiah did not write them. The arguments used against the Jeremiah-authorship are in substance, as follows:

1. The historical situation had not yet arrived. These chapters picture Israel in exile, the Temple destroyed and Jerusalem in ruins. If Jeremiah wrote these chapters in 594 B.C. (and it is plainly stated that he did) Jerusalem was still standing, the Temple intact, and the end of Babylon was yet seventy years more in the future. Therefore, the critics conclude that since the historical situation was not in harmony with these chapters, Jeremiah did not write them. That conclusion is undeniably based upon the assumption that Jeremiah could not see the future.

2. There is not the same point of view on the part of the prophet. The point of view of the prophet about this time was that Zedekiah and his people must submit to Babylon, and if they would submit, they would be saved. But now in these chapters the point of view of the

prophet seems to be that these nations are to be destroyed and Judah triumph. Therefore, Jeremiah must have a different point of view. Did he? As in the other contention, it is based upon the assumption that Jeremiah could not see the future.

3. The temper which permeates these chapters was not that of Jeremiah. In other words, Jeremiah, during the reign of Zedekiah, had been friendly to Babylon in that he continually counseled submission to Babylon. He seems to be a friend to Babylon. Now, these two chapters were written by a man whose soul seemed to be on fire with denunciation of Babylon because of her ruthless and unrelenting cruelty to Israel. The critics cannot account for the change in the temper of Jeremiah, if it is conceded that he wrote these two chapters in question.

In reply, it may be asked, Does it follow that because he advised submission to a foreign power he loved that power and was not loyal to his own people? Jeremiah counseled submission to Babylon, not because he loved Babylon, but because he could see, in fact it was revealed to him, that Babylon was destined to prevail and that if his people would quietly submit, it would be better than to resist. By no means does it follow that he loved Babylon. He did not love Babylon; he was a patriotic Israelite and could not but have hated that savage nation that overwhelmed his own beloved kinsmen. It is easy to see how he could, with perfect consistency, thus write the doom that was coming upon this savage nation for its wickedness. Though it was a wicked heathen nation, God could overrule its cruelty to be the just punishment for Israel's sins and wickedness.

4. It is full of repetitions and lacks logical development. And so it does. But is it not in that very fact, like the work of Jeremiah? Our critical friends have worked out a system of logical development and they make heaven and earth fit into the mold of their theory. I fear that in trying to get all heaven into their logical system, they have failed to get any of it into their hearts.

Here are five reasons for accepting the Jeremiah authorship of chapters 50-51:

1. It is expressly stated that Jeremiah did write it (51: 59-64). That ought to settle the question.
2. The style is like that of Jeremiah, full of repetitions. We have called attention to that very thing over and over again in our studies of the book.
3. The prophecy is altogether appropriate. Jeremiah was a patriotic Israelite, and his feelings toward Babylon could not have been that of friendship. He must have been permeated with the spirit of denunciation.
4. Denial of his authorship is based upon a mechanical theory of prophecy and inspiration. That is, after all, the real source of these denials.
5. Granting inspiration, Jeremiah was thoroughly competent to write every word of these two chapters. We could not expect that Jeremiah, a prophet to the nations, would live and die without having something to say about Babylon.

QUESTIONS

1. What the theme of Jeremiah 46-51 and what the evidence elsewhere of Jeremiah's call to this special function as a prophet?
2. What the dates of these several prophecies?
3. What the date of the prophecy concerning Egypt, what parallel prophecies in the other prophets and what the nature of 46:1?
4. Give an account of Egypt's defeat at Carchemish (46:2-12).

5. Give an account of the overthrow of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar (46:13-26).
6. What the words of reassurance and encouragement to Israel in 46:27-28?
7. Who were the Philistines, what the date of this prophecy (47:1-6) against them and what the prophecy itself, especially verse 6?
8. What the relation of Moab to Israel and what the main points of the prophecy against her? (48:1-47.)
9. What things worthy of special note in this prophecy against Moab?
10. What the occasion of the prophecy against Ammon in 49:1-6 and what the points of the prophecy?
11. What the relation of Edom to Israel and what the prophecy here (49:7-22) against her?
12. What the prophecy against Damascus? (49:23-27.)
13. Who was Kedar and what the prophecy here against Kedar? (49:28-33.)
14. Who were the Elamites and what the prophecy against Elam in 49:34-39?
15. How does the prophecy against Babylon compare with the other prophecies here given, what the date and what the symbolical action in this connection, the meaning of it, and what the principal ideas?
16. What the arguments of the critics against the authenticity of this section and upon what is each based?
17. Give five reasons for accepting the Jeremiah authorship of chapters 50-51.

XII. THE CLOSING SCENES IN THE LIFE OF JEREMIAH

Jeremiah 40-44

These closing scenes in the life of the prophet took place subsequent to the year 586 B.C. and probably before 580 B.C. They occupied a space of about four or five years, possibly a few more.

We commence this discussion by looking at the fate of Jerusalem, and the fate of Jeremiah immediately following that event. In 40:6 we have an account of the fall of the city and its destruction by the men of the Babylonian army. Zedekiah and the chief captain, through a breach in the wall sought to make their escape into the valley of the Jordan and the plains of Moab beyond. The king and the remnant of his army were overtaken and captured by the Chaldeans and taken to Riblah, the headquarters of Nebuchadnezzar. Many of them doubtless escaped. Some of these found refuge in Moab, and some in the mountains of Judah. Thus there was a considerable number of the inhabitants that made their escape by fleeing in every direction.

When the forces of Nebuchadnezzar broke through the walls of the city and took it, the ruthless soldiers of the Chaldeans doubtless wreaked their vengeance upon the inhabitants. Judging from the picture in the book of Lamentations, many were slaughtered and many of the nobles were butchered, but they did not really sack the city. They took many captives. Their main object was to take the inhabitants alive, as there was value in them as slaves, and this was their aim more than mere butchery of the people. Of course, they sought to take the king's family and all of his household; also the nobles and all the chief families.

When they were destroying the city and taking the royal families, they found Jeremiah, the prophet, for he was imprisoned in the court of the guard. He was bound and taken out as far as Ramah, 40:2-4: "The captain of the guard took Jeremiah, and said unto him, Jehovah thy God pronounced this evil upon this place; and Jehovah hath

brought it, and done accordingly as he spake. . . . And now, behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which are upon thy hand." According to the account in the previous chapter he had received direct orders from the king to set Jeremiah free.

This heathen speaks as if he were a very pious man; as if he thoroughly believed in Jeremiah's doctrine: "The Lord hath brought this evil upon this place and done as he spoke because ye have sinned against Jehovah." Those are almost Jeremiah's very words. He speaks to Jeremiah and tells him to go back to Gedaliah, the governor, whom the king of Babylon had appointed over the land. This man that had been appointed governor was a member of the royal family and a great man, one of the princes of Jerusalem. Thus he returned and found that Gedaliah had called the people, and held a rally at Mizpah, about four or five miles from Jerusalem.

We have an account of the colony which was established at Mizpah (40:7-12). It is said that the people, when they heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, governor in the land, committed unto him the men and women and children. Verse 8 gives the names of the princes and chief men. Gedaliah called the people together and made appointments as he had authority to do. It says in verse 9, "And Gedaliah the son of Ahikam . . . [and this man, Ahikam, had saved the life of Jeremiah.] Fear not to serve the Chaldeans: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you." Now, that was exactly what Jeremiah had been preaching for years.

Here was one man who was with Jeremiah. It was doubtless because of this fact that Nebuchadnezzar had appointed him to this position. He says in verse 10: "As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah, to stand before the Chaldeans that shall come unto us." They could not live in Jerusalem. The city was in ruins. He planned to live at Mizpah, to meet the Chaldeans that would come to him.

In the latter half of verse 10, it says, "But ye, gather ye the wine and the summer fruits and oil, and put them in your vessels, and dwell in

your cities that ye have taken." In verse 11 he says, "The Jews that were in Moab, and among the children of Ammon, and in Edom, and that were in all the countries, when they heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of Judah, and that he had set over them Gedaliah, they returned to their native land." In the latter part of verse 12 it says, "And gathered wine and summer fruits very much," which seems to indicate that the people simply helped themselves to the fields and vineyards that had been left.

The king of Ammon, having heard of this new colony established at Mizpah, with Gedaliah as governor, set to work to induce a certain fanatical Jew by the name of Ishmael, to murder him. We do not know just why he desired the murder of the governor. It may be that he thought that it would mean increase of territory to him and that the people would rally to him and that would mean more power. Again, it may be that this man Ishmael was a fanatical Israelite who hated the Chaldeans and any one of his own people who was friendly to them. So he connived with the king of Ammon to do the deed. When Johanan found out this plot he warned Gedaliah, his friend) that Ishmael was about to take his life. But Gedaliah did not believe it. He felt that no one would dare to take his life, the life of the governor whom the great king of Babylon had appointed, for Nebuchadnezzar would not fail to punish a crime like that. But this man Johanan knew and so he says in verse 15, "Let me go, and I will slay Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no man shall know it." He knew that if Ishmael should slay the royal governor, Nebuchadnezzar would take vengeance on the people, and all must suffer.

An account of the murder of Gedaliah and his friends is given in 41:1-3. Ishmael was a fanatical patriot. He came to see Gedaliah, and the chiefs of the king's officers were with him. They came to Mizpah. So they ate bread together and among Orientals that is a sacred thing. But this man, Ishmael, did not scruple to violate this custom of his fellows. Verse 2 says, "Then arose Ishmael . . . and the

ten men that were with him, and smote Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan with the sword, and slew him."

The murder of Gedaliah was concealed, verse 4: "And it came to pass the second day after he had slain Gedaliah, and no man knew it, that there came men from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria, even four score men, having their beards shaven and their clothes rent." They had frankincense and meal in their hands to bring them to the house of Jehovah. They were coming to worship. Note now the treachery of Ishmael. It is said in verse 6 that he went forth to meet them, weeping all along as he went. He pretended to be in sorrow. He said to them when he met them, "Come to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam," and when they came in to the midst of the city Ishmael slew them and then cast them into the midst of the pit. But ten of them told this villain that they had stores of wealth, and begged him to spare them; so he saved them for the sake of their wealth. That gives us some idea of the character of this man, Ishmael. Ishmael carried away captive all the residue of the people and departed to go over to the children of Ammon (v. 10).

Ishmael gathered together what people he had and started, but Johanan was not idle. He gathered others and pursued and when he came near, all the people who had been carried away captive by Ishmael came over to Johanan but Ishmael managed to escape.

Then the colony went to Bethlehem under the leadership of Johanan. We readily see the plight in which Johanan now found himself. Word would come to Nebuchadnezzar that his faithful governor had been slain. Johanan knew what that would mean, and so did the people. They knew that the great king would send his army, and then there would be no mercy shown. They were afraid of the Chaldeans because Ishmael had slain the governor, Gedaliah (v. 18).

An account of the colony at Bethlehem and Jeremiah's relation to it is found in 42:1 to 43:7. We are following the nucleus of the nation, that part of the nation which constituted the organized body of Israel. There were thousands of the Jews in other nations at that

time, but we are following here the nucleus. This nucleus constituted the organized germ of the nation. The prophet had been forced to go with them. See verse 2: "Let, we pray thee, our supplication be presented before thee, and pray for us unto Jehovah thy God." Again, in verse 3: "That Jehovah thy God may show us the thing we should do and wherein we should walk." It looks now as if they were actually turning to the prophet; that they were on his side; that they were coming to his terms. Has he at last succeeded in winning the nation? Not at all, as we shall see.

The prophet said, Well, I will inquire of Jehovah for you. I will do this if you will promise me that you will do what he says. Ten days passed, and the prophet doubtless spent them in prayer, while the people spent them in consultation. At the end of the ten days Jeremiah received his message, and they had likewise made up their minds as to what they were going to do. We have that message in 42:10-11: "If ye will still abide in this land, then will I build you, and not pull you down, and I will plant you, and not pluck you up; for I repent me of the evil that I have done unto you. Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom ye are afraid; be not afraid of him, saith Jehovah: for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hands." Note also 42:13: "But if ye say, We will not dwell in this land; so that ye obey not the voice of your God, but say, We will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no more war, . . . So shall it be with all the men that set their faces to go into Egypt to sojourn there; they shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence; and none of them shall remain or escape from the evil that I will bring upon them."

The prophet is able to see through their motive. Notice particularly verse 20: "For ye have dealt deceitfully against your souls; . . . saying unto me, Pray for us unto Jehovah our God." In other words, he says, While begging me to inquire of God you have already made up your minds what you are going to do. Verse 21: "And I have this day declared it unto you; but ye have not obeyed the voice of God." Now, that is like many people in modern life. They may want to

know what God is going to do, what his will is, and yet at the same time have made up their minds already as to what they are going to do.

They refused to remain in Judah. "Then they spake to Jeremiah and said unto him, Ye have spoken falsely, for Jehovah your God hath not sent you unto us to say, Ye shall not dwell in the land of Egypt, to sojourn there." Now, that was a very strange saying. Jeremiah had prophesied during forty years that the city would be destroyed, and his prophecy had been fulfilled to the letter, and other things that he had foretold had come to pass, and here he is giving another prophecy, and they listen to him; then tell him that he prophesies falsely; that he is a lying prophet. Notice in 43:3: "But Baruch setteth thee on against us, to deliver us into the hands of the Chaldeans to carry us away." So they went into Egypt.

Jeremiah's symbolic action in Egypt is described in 43: 8-13. As soon as they arrived Jeremiah performed another of his symbolic actions, verse 9: "Take great stones in thy hand and hide them in mortar in the brickwork, which is at the entry of Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes, in the sight of the men of Judah." Professor Petrie, perhaps the greatest of all Egyptologists, found a few years ago in the mortar of the brickwork of the ruins of that very city, great stones hidden in mortar. We do not know that these were the very stones that Jeremiah put there, but certainly it is very suggestive. It looks as if Jeremiah's prophecy was verified. That city is in ruins. Verse 12: "I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt; and he shall burn them, and carry them away captive."

Now let us look at Jeremiah's message to the Jews in Egypt (44:1-14). There was a great assembly at Tahpanhes. Jeremiah seizes this opportunity to deliver his message to them about idolatry. Their sins brought punishment upon them. He urges them to repent and turn from idolatry. Verse 4: "Oh, do not this abominable thing." But the people were determined to remain in idolatry (44:15-23). The men had gathered together and their idolatrous wives were gathered with

them. Verse 16: "As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us, we will not hearken unto thee." In verse 17 he says, "But we will certainly perform every word that is gone forth out of our mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven." Now, we come to a remarkable passage. These people argue that because they stopped worshiping the queen of heaven, their calamities had come upon them. Jeremiah said that it was because they turned from Jehovah; they said that it was because they learned from the queen of heaven. That was the issue. They said that when Josiah made them stop worshiping the queen of heaven, then their troubles began. Then the women began to make their excuse. They said that their husbands allowed them to worship the queen of heaven. They did that, maybe, to keep peace in the family, and now they were being charged with the trouble. The meaning of it all was that these people had simply made up their minds that they would be idolaters, and no power in the universe could turn them from it. Jeremiah had been preaching against it for forty years, and they would not hearken. Now, they tell him that they will not listen, they will not obey. Then Jeremiah presented his argument in answer to their excuses and reasons: You have sinned and this is the reason for your calamity.

This is Jeremiah's last sermon, that is, it is the last one that we have any record of. He speaks to the people another word: "Hearken to this word: I have sworn by my great name, saith Jehovah, that my name shall no more be named by any man of Judah in Egypt. . . . And they that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt few in number." He continues as to Egypt: "Behold, I will give Pharaoh Hophra into the hands of his enemies, as I gave Zedekiah, the king of Judah, into the hands of his enemies." Indeed, it was only a few years till Nebuchadnezzar did invade Egypt and took it. There were Jews in Egypt until the time of Christ, but unquestionably very few of these Jews in Jeremiah's time escaped the perilous times that followed. According to the last trustworthy account we have of Jeremiah he was in Egypt. Tradition says that he died at the hands of his own people.

QUESTIONS

1. What the date of this section?
2. Give an account of the capture of Zedekiah and the chief captain, and those who escaped.
3. What disposition did the Chaldeans make of the inhabitants of Jerusalem ?
4. Give an account of Jeremiah's capture and release.
5. Give an account of the colony which was established at Mizpah (40:7-12).
6. Give an account of the plot against Gedaliah and the work of Johanan.
7. Give an account of the murder of Gedaliah and his friends (41 :1-8).
8. Give an account of the murder of the seventy pilgrims (41:4-10).
9. Describe the counter-attack of Johanan and Ishmael's escape (41:11-15).
10. What the result of this murder to Johanan and the people?
11. Give an account of the colony at Bethlehem and Jeremiah's relation to it (42:1 to 43:7).
12. What was Jeremiah's symbolic action in Egypt? (43:8-13.)
13. What was Jeremiah's message to the Jews in Egypt? (44:1-14.)
14. How did they receive his message and what reason did they assign? (44:15-23.) Give details.

15. What the last words of Jeremiah, where did he die, and what tradition respecting his death?

XIII. JEREMIAH'S LAMENTATIONS

Lamentations 1-6

We will now take up a brief survey of the book of Lamentations. This book belongs to the third division of the Old Testament, known as the Writings, the Greek Hagiographa. The book of Lamentations is grouped with four other small books and these five are known by the Jews as the Meghilloth. These five books are Songs of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. They are read at special seasons of the year by the Jews, and the book of Lamentations was read, and is still read, on the anniversary of the fall of Jerusalem, which occurred on the ninth day of the fourth month of their year, corresponding to about our August 9. For 2,200 or 2,300 years this book has been read in their assemblies at this time. Not only has it been read, but it has also been quoted by thousands and tens of thousands of Jews who tarry at the Jewish wailing place in Jerusalem. It has voiced the sorrow of the Jewish people over the destruction of their city and its Temple for more than 2,000 years. It will continue to do so until the Jews are brought to Christ and realize that there is no need for the Temple and the ritual; that these were done away by Jesus Christ.

Tradition says that shortly after the fall of Jerusalem, when Jeremiah was partly free, he sat down in a quarry, a few miles north of Jerusalem near the road to Damascus, and there composed these lamentations. The authorship of Jeremiah has been questioned by the critical school, but this tradition goes back as early as the third century before Christ, and the Septuagint Version says at the beginning of this book that Jeremiah wrote these words. The book itself is an elegy on the fall of the city of Jerusalem. Its theme is the destruction of the city and it voices the dismay and sorrow that fell upon the nation at that awful event.

A fine example of an elegy in modern literature is Gray's Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard. Lamentations is also an elegy

but composed by a prophet, and as such it has been rather unpopular, is seldom read, seldom used, and seldom preached from.

The form of the book which is not brought out in the translation, is that of an acrostic poem, except the last chapter. The first letter of the first Hebrew word in each verse begins with a corresponding letter in the Hebrew alphabet. There are twenty-two verses each in chapters I and 2. In chapter 3, sixty-six verses, a multiple of twenty-two. In the fourth, twenty-two. In the fifth, twenty-two.

Now, in 1:1, the first word begins with the first Hebrew letter of the alphabet. In 1:2 the first letter of the first word is the second Hebrew letter, and so on through the alphabet. Chapter 2 is the same. In chapter 3, the three first lines begin with the first letter, and the second group of three lines begins with the second letter, and so on to the end of that chapter.

The writer chose the word which contained the right letter at the beginning of that word. In many cases it was doubtless a difficult task. Some can hardly imagine Jeremiah taking the time to do that, and yet it is the tradition that he did. It seems to them that his state of mind would hardly lend itself to such a mechanical arrangement of his verse and his thought, but the book is before us, and the tradition is that Jeremiah wrote it, and we must take it as it is. Chapter 5 is not written in the acrostic form. The first four chapters only are thus arranged.

Now, the style, or form of the verse, is peculiar. The Hebrews had a form of verse, or stanza, which they used to express sorrow and which is called "the lament," or "the dirge." The form of the stanza is this: The first line is of average length, the second line a little shorter; also the next verse, or stanza, has the first line longer than the second, and so on all through the poem, which gives a peculiar funeral dirge effect to their song with a pathetic and melancholy cadence as they repeat it.

I call attention here to a few of these. Notice in chapter I: How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people I She is become as a widow, that was great among the nations) She that was a princess among the provinces is become tributary!

Thus, a large part of the poem has that peculiar, pathetic, melancholy, dirge like cadence which expresses, perhaps more accurately than any other form of poetry could express, the feeling that animated the hearts of those people.

The following is an outline of the contents:

I. The desolation and misery of Jerusalem (1).

1. The poem bewails the solitude and desertion of the city; her people are in exile, the enemy has seized her treasures, her glory is departed (vv. 1-11). Almost every point of view from which one can look at it is given; almost every possible expression of feeling and emotion are brought out here.

2. The city herself declares the severity of the affliction (vv. 12-16). Verse 12 is regarded as a messianic expression in Handel's Messiah, and may be likened unto the suffering of Jesus Christ. It is the voice of the city expressing itself through the prophet, calling attention to the unparalleled sorrow through which it has passed.

3. She acknowledges Jehovah's righteousness and prays for retribution upon her foes (vv. 17-22).

II. Jehovah's anger with his people (2).

1. The stress is laid on the causes of the suffering. Jehovah is her enemy; he has cast off his people, his land, and his sanctuary. That is brought out in verse 3 and others. As in other verses of the poem, he turns the kaleidoscope of his imagination upon the awful event and presents it in almost every phase (vv. 2:1-9).

2. The agony of the people in the capital, the contempt of the passers-by, and the malicious triumph of her foes (vv. 10-17). Here is doubtless one of the most terrible pictures of a siege to be found in all literature. He speaks about the virgins of Jerusalem; then he speaks about his own sorrow, then about the young children, the babes starving and crying to their mothers for bread and wine.

3. The nations are invited by the prophet to entreat Jehovah on behalf of its dying children. It responds in the prayer of verses 18-22.

III. The nation's complaint and its ground of consolation (3).

1. They bewail their calamities (vv. 1-20). Here he seems to call up every phase of it, and uses almost every figure to describe suffering. This section is paralleled in almost every line with some statement of Job where he describes his sufferings. I call attention to verse 19: "Remember mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall." This is the origin of that expression, Sinners whose love can ne'er forget, The wormwood and the gall.

2. They console themselves by the thought of God's compassion and the grace he may have in the visitation (vv. 21-39). Here we have some jewels in this poem. Verse 22 is one: "It is of Jehovah's loving-kindnesses that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." That means that they are not totally consumed because of the mercy of Jehovah. Jeremiah had said that he would not make a full end, because "his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." A man who could write that after going through the horrors through which Jeremiah passed, while he was looking upon the deserted city, his own loved capital, has achieved one of the greatest victories of faith that man can possibly achieve.

Everything had been taken away from Jeremiah except his life and God. He had nothing. Then he said, "The Lord is my portion," i.e., "He is enough for me." Another beautiful expression is verse 27: "It

is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." This is a fine saying and contains a fine philosophy.

3. The people are invited to confess their guilt and turn to God in penitence (vv. 40-54). Here we seem to be reading out of Jeremiah's own experience. This passage expresses how Jeremiah felt when he was put down into that dungeon, but they did not cut off his life.

4. He becomes more hopeful (vv. 55-57).

5. A confidential appeal for vengeance on the nation's foes (vv. 58-66). That is Jeremiah still. Almost every time he is under persecution and affliction he calls for vengeance.

IV. Zion's past and present contrasted (4).

1. The former splendor, and present humiliation of Zion and its inhabitants (vv. 1-11). He contrasts first, the gold that has become dim, the pure gold that is changed. Then the precious sons of Zion are mentioned. Their condition at present is contrasted with their condition in the past. "The daughter of my people" is also mentioned and her condition in the past contrasted with the present. "Become cruel like an ostrich in the wilderness." The infant, the nursing child, is different now. "Its tongue cleaveth to the roof of its mouth for thirst." They that have been reared up in scarlet, now embrace the dunghills, searching for some morsel to appease the pangs of hunger. Her mothers are also contrasted with their past condition.

2. Priests and prophets are so stained by guilt that they find no resting place even among the heathen (vv. 12-16). Verse 13: "Because of the sins of her prophets and iniquities of her priests that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her." As a result of that they wander as blind men in the streets; they are polluted with blood. Men cannot touch their garments; they say, "Depart ye, unclean, depart! depart! touch not." When they fled away and wandered, men said among the nations, "They shall no more sojourn here." They were so vile that even the heathen nations spurned them.

3. The people cannot escape their pursuers. Egypt has disappointed them, and Zedekiah, the anointed of Jehovah, has failed (vv. 17-20). Zedekiah, the anointed of the Lord, was captured by the Chaldeans and treated as if he were little more than an animal.

4. Though Edom may triumph for awhile, Israel's punishment will be completed and the cup will be passed to the foes (21-22). There is sarcasm here: "The cup shall pass through unto thee also; thou shall be drunken, and shalt make thyself naked."

V. The nation's appeal for Jehovah's Compassionate Regard (5).

(As we said, this chapter of the poem is not acrostic; is a little different from the other chapters; and may have been written later, a few years after the people had been in exile.)

1. He calls upon Jehovah to consider the affliction of the people, indicating the nature and severity of that affliction (vv. 1-18). Here, again, over and over in a great many different ways and fashions and forms and figures he reiterates the same sad truths and presents the same great sorrows. In verse 7 he voices the sentiments of the people that are suffering, both those in the city and those in exile. The complaint was heard by Ezekiel away off in Babylonia! Our fathers sinned, and are not; And we have borne their iniquities. That cry and complaint both Jeremiah and Ezekiel had to meet and answer. It was the cry that the people had to suffer for the sins of their fathers, and of which they were innocent. See Ezekiel 18.

2. Zion's desolation brings to his mind, by way of contrast, the thought of Jehovah's abiding power, and on the ground of this he repeats his appeal for help (vv. 19-22).

This is the greatest elegy ever written, though it begins in the greatest heights of confidence at the end.

Jeremiah was an ardent patriot, one of the greatest patriots of history. The Hungarian patriot, Kossuth, was worldfamed, but no

Kossuth loved his country and suffered more for it than Jeremiah, no Garibaldi ever fought and bled for his nation with truer heart than did this prophet, and no George Washington ever fought and prayed and worked and toiled more than did Jeremiah for his land. But even Jeremiah could not stay the inevitable; he could not save Jerusalem. Savonarola could not save Florence, nor could Kossuth save his country.

Jeremiah was a statesman-prophet, a prophet to the other nations as well as to Israel. He did not confine himself to the narrow realm of his own little nation and country; he saw what was going on throughout all the world and saw God's hand in history. He was bigger than his people. He took in all the known world in his horizon. He foresaw what was coming and he gave advice to all the nations.

His nature was deeply emotional. No man had greater tenderness of heart than Jeremiah; no man could sympathize more with his people. No man could be more overpowered with sorrow over their sins and their destruction. He even prayed that his eyes might be a fountain of tears, pouring forth their grief and sorrow and if possible wash away the sins of the people. Some of the greatest depths to be found in all human experiences are to be found in Jeremiah. He was the most human and most outspoken of all the prophets. He was not afraid to lay bare his heart. He allows us to see down into its very depths. He laments, he complains, he even complains to Jehovah, and writes his complaints in the inspired Word. He calls for vengeance upon his foes. He feels like accusing God for having called him into the prophetic work. When in the depths of despondence, he curses the day he was born, and actually censures his mother for having brought him forth. He even considers the question of quitting the ministry altogether. He was like a weaned child that has its struggle and cries, but by and by it rests upon its mother's bosom. So in the latter part of Jeremiah's life he is at rest, calm and patient. He has had his fight and is quiet. How human he was!

His nature was one of surpassing strength. It is generally considered that one of the fundamental things in Jeremiah's character was weakness. The fact that when he was called to the ministry he said, "I cannot speak, I am a boy, I am only a youth," does not mean that he was fundamentally weak. It is not a sign of weakness, that a man has a sense of weakness when called to such a work. The keener our sense of weakness, the stronger we are, because it makes us feel our dependence upon God, and we go to him for strength and he is with us and helps us by his Spirit.

Jeremiah was a strong man, one of the strongest the world has ever known from the moral point of view. He never shrank from his duty, even when it brought him face to face with death. There was a fire within him which burned, and when it burned Jeremiah spoke forth, no matter what it cost. The word of God was the very essence of his being. He even tried to prevent the inevitable, and fought for forty years against it – the inevitable, that Judah should perish. He has been described as "a figure cast in brass, dissolved in tears," which expresses better, perhaps, than any other statement, his character. Though all the world was against him he never flinched, he never shrank, he maintained a consistent attitude all that period of nearly fifty years, and never failed.

His prophetic insight was of the profoundest kind. No man saw deeper into humanity than Jeremiah. He was the first man to say, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?" He got a vision of the higher moral truths of the new dispensation of Jesus Christ, and in his prophecy of the new covenant he reaches greater heights than any other prophet. He saw true religion as no other man had seen it. His grasp of truth was so deep that he became absolutely dependent upon God, and was satisfied to lean on him alone because his people were against him. He was a sublime optimist. His prophecy of the restoration is sufficient comment upon that. He saw the better age clearer than any other prophet; he pictured a better covenant, a new dispensation.

His emotional nature is shown in his literary style, which is free from many adornments, has a great many common figures in it and does not compare with the beauty of Isaiah, nor with the finished and literary elegance of Ezekiel. It expresses his emotional nature. He repeats, he has many favorite phrases. At times he is poetic and there are in the book of Jeremiah a great many passages that are classic and immortal. His style resembles that of the book of Deuteronomy, the highest type of hortatory eloquence, for Jeremiah was influenced mightily by the Book which was discovered in the early part of his career.

From being the most despised of all the prophets, he came to be considered the greatest of all. In the book of 2 Maccabees where Judah is in doubt and difficulty, there appeared to him in vision a man, resplendent in beauty, magnificent in physique, with excellent glory beaming from his countenance. He gives to Judah a golden sword with which to smite his foes. It was Jeremiah. This is only a legend, but it shows the estimation in which he was held. When Jesus Christ came preaching and teaching, the people knew not who he was; some said he was John the Baptist, some said he was Elijah, some said he was Jeremiah. They never mistook him for Ezekiel, Isaiah, or Daniel.

He, in several respects, resembled Jesus Christ:

1. Both appeared at a similar crisis in the history of Israel – forty years before the end of the nation and the Temple.
2. Both were persecuted for predicting the fall of the ceremonial institutions and the ritual.
3. Both were at variance with the accepted orthodoxy of the time, and were regarded as heretical and dangerous.
4. Both showed that there could be a religion without a Temple and ritual, and thus saved religion in the downfall of these institutions.

5. Both made the way open for a positive statement of new doctrine.
6. Both suffered most at the hands of the religious leaders of the time.
7. Both lived lives of seeming failure, and died at the hands of their countrymen.
8. Both might have the words of Isaiah applied to them (Isa 53:3): "A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not." Also to both may be applied Lamentations 1:2: "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is brought upon me."

QUESTIONS

1. To what division of the Old Testament does this book of Lamentations belong, how is it grouped, and what its special uses by the Jews?
2. What the testimony of tradition and the Septuagint concerning its authorship, what its theme, what its character as literature, and what its artistic features?
3. What can you say of its style, or form of verse? Illustrate.
4. Give the outline of the book.
5. What can you say of Jeremiah as a patriot?
6. What of him as a statesman?
7. What of his emotional nature?
8. What of him as human?
9. What of his strength of nature?

10. What of his prophetic insight?
11. What of his optimism?
12. What of his style?
13. What of his rank among the prophets? Illustrate.
14. What of his resemblances to Christ?

XIV. THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL INTRODUCTION AND THE PROPHET'S VISION AND CALL

Ezekiel 1-3

Ezekiel belonged to one of the best and noblest families in Jerusalem, and was apparently a descendant of the family of Zadok, which could trace its descent directly to Aaron. Born in a priestly family he was a priest in his early years. With that privilege, there was familiarity with the law, and with the ritual. He was well educated, a man of the highest culture which Jerusalem afforded at that age.

It was in the year 597 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar came and besieged Jerusalem, and Jehoiachin surrendered the city to him, that 7,000 of the very best people of Jerusalem, including members of the priestly families, the nobility, the artisans, the smiths, and others of the leading citizens of Jerusalem, were taken away captive to Babylon. Ezekiel was taken with them, and during all the period of his prophecy he is among the exiles in that foreign land.

He was evidently a man of some wealth, as well as culture, and doubtless took a considerable portion of his wealth with him. He had a home, a wife, and possibly a family. He lived in comparative ease and comfort on the banks of the river Chebar, near a place called Tel-abib, not many miles from the city of Babylon.

There was a community of Jewish exiles in that place, and they seemed to be let alone, and were allowed to carry on a little government of their own, for we find that repeatedly the elders of this Jewish community came to Ezekiel to consult him regarding the fate of Jerusalem. It is difficult for us to understand their exact condition. They were apparently in comfortable circumstances.

They heard from home frequently no doubt, for there was a great deal of traffic, traveling, and letter writing in those days. They were, doubtless, envious of the people who had been left in Jerusalem, and

were exceedingly anxious as to the fate of Jerusalem itself, as their property to a large extent was still there. They naturally supposed that their property would be confiscated by those who remained in Jerusalem and Judah, and it comes out incidentally in the prophecy of Ezekiel that there was a deep and bitter grudge in their minds because the people who remained in Jerusalem had taken over the property of those who had been carried into exile. There was this reason also, as we find in Jeremiah 24, that the people who remained in Jerusalem considered themselves to be very good; they thought that they were the favorites of Jehovah since they had been left at home. Those that were taken away captive were therefore the greater sinners. Jeremiah tried to meet that in his parable of the two baskets of figs. The basket of good figs were those Jews in Babylon; and the basket of bad figs, those left in Jerusalem.

It has been said that Jeremiah was the spiritual father of Ezekiel. No doubt there is a large element of truth in that statement. A great man like Jeremiah doubtless had sons in the ranks of prophecy, as Paul had sons in the Christian ministry. Jeremiah must have had a vast influence over Ezekiel, for he had been a prophet thirty years in Jerusalem when Ezekiel was carried away into captivity. That thirty years of ministry stamped upon Ezekiel's mind and heart, his theology, his religious life, and his view of the great religious questions of his age. He had, no doubt, read Jeremiah's writings, for they were published in 603 B.C., six or seven years before Ezekiel was taken away. He must have been familiar with a great part of the writings of Jeremiah, for his own book gives in many places almost the exact thoughts and words of his great predecessor and contemporary. They were contemporaries for about fifteen years.

There are many similarities between Ezekiel's writings and those of Jeremiah. Their themes are nearly the same. Their ideas are often identical. Their problems are very similar. The strange thing is that, although they lived as contemporaries for fifteen years, neither one makes the slightest reference to or mention of the other. Jeremiah knows Ezekiel is prophesying in Babylon, yet he sends a letter all

the way from Jerusalem to Babylon with admonition to the exiles, and though Ezekiel must be aware of Jeremiah's prophesying in Jerusalem, he makes no reference whatever to the fact.

In contrast to Jeremiah, Ezekiel presents some striking peculiarities. His private life was very different, for he had his home and his wife, but Jeremiah was forbidden these. Like Jeremiah he absents himself from all the social enjoyments and pleasures of the people among whom he dwells, refraining from entering into their mournings or their feasting. In contrast with Jeremiah he records no inner struggle such as that prophet passed through, no such complaints, no such murmurings, no such agony, no such mournings and tears, no such doubts of God, no such attempts to give up the work of prophesying. Ezekiel gives no hint that he passed through those temptations which tortured the soul of Jeremiah in the early half of the latter's ministry. Ezekiel is more calm and judicial; he lays emphasis upon the divine sovereignty more than upon human freedom. He emphasizes the necessity and value of the human institutions, such as the Temple, the ceremonial, the ritual, the priesthood, and sacrifices, which Jeremiah does not. Jeremiah was willing to do without all these, if he could only have the heart religion which kept the people in fellowship with God and in obedience to him.

Ezekiel combines both the institutional and the spiritual. He combines the ritual and ceremonial with the new heart, the heart of flesh, the cleansed and pure spirit. He is in substantial agreement with Jeremiah on several points. His conception of the prophetic office is almost identical with that of his spiritual father. He conceives of himself as the one who is to warn, who is to pronounce judgment and threaten doom. His conception of the character of the people is exactly like Jeremiah's. His pictures are even more lurid and terrible. His conception of the history of Israel is almost the same as Jeremiah's. Jeremiah pictures her, from the time of her entrance into Canaan, as going astray after false gods, and her history as one long story of defection and idolatry. Ezekiel pictures

her, as from the very beginning prone to idolatry and her history, as a long story of spiritual harlotry.

Ezekiel's conception of the sin of idolatry is exactly the same as that of Jeremiah's. He characterizes it in scores of passages by that one striking name which stigmatizes all defection from the worship of Jehovah. His picture of society is much the same as that of Jeremiah's. He pictures it as having gone to the lowest depths, and as we go on in the study of his prophecy, we shall get some glimpses into those awful scenes which Ezekiel portrays. Like Jeremiah he prophesies the downfall of the state, the devastation of the country, the desolation of the city, the destruction of the Temple and the obliteration of the ritual.

Unlike that of Jeremiah, this book doubtless came from Ezekiel's own hand, written and completed by himself. It is in many respects the most orderly, the most logical, the most chronological, of all the books of the Bible. Almost every distinct prophecy is dated, so that we can give the exact date, the month and the year, in which these prophecies were given to Ezekiel, or were uttered by him.

The following is an analysis of Ezekiel:

I. The vision of the glory of God and the call to the prophetic office (1-3).

II. Symbolic prophecies of the overthrow of the city and the state (4 to 24).

By means of symbols, symbolic actions, allegories, and metaphors, Ezekiel brings before the minds of the exiles the inevitable fate of their beloved city and state in Palestine.

III. Prophecies concerning foreign nations (25-32).

IV. Prophecies of the restoration of the people of Israel and the reconstruction of God's people (33-39), which are in perfect order.

Having done with the prophecies concerning the foreign nations, he calls the attention of the people to their own glorious future.

V. A vision of the restored Temple and theocracy with the final glory and peace of the redeemed people of God (40-48).

Under this we have three sections:

1. An account of the restored Temple (40-43).
2. An account of the ordinances of the Temple as restored (44-48).
3. The boundaries of the Holy Land and the new distribution of the tribes within it (47-48), closing with the significant statement that in all this land, this territory, this Temple, the one great fact is that Jehovah is there.

The date of the prophet's vision and call is the year 592 B.C., the fourth month and the fifth day of the month (about August 5). It was in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity. That captivity occurred in 597 B.C. The place was by the river Chebar. The river Chebar was not a river proper, but one of the large irrigating canals which coursed through the plains of Babylon from the Tigris to the Euphrates, irrigating that rich and fertile country in which, some say, the garden of Eden itself originally was located. The irrigated plain of Babylon was probably the richest portion of land in all the world. It produced from two to three hundredfold.

In verse I, we have the expression, "the thirtieth year." Thirty years from what? Most probably thirty years of his own life, for he was certainly a mature man at this time. If he means the thirtieth year of his own age, then he is the only prophet that gives us any hint as to how old he was when he began to prophesy. The most plausible explanation is that it is the thirtieth year of his age, but this question has never been settled positively.

In Ezekiel I, we have the vision of the glory of God. He says that as he was by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened and he saw visions of God. Isaiah had his vision in the Temple, Jeremiah had his visions, and Ezekiel has a most wonderful vision. He describes it thus: "I looked, and behold, a stormy wind came out of the north."

Ezekiel saw it as a cloud coming, and he describes it as "a fire infolding itself," but perhaps a better translation would be "flashing continually," and as he looked at that great stormcloud moving up before him and the lightning illuminating it, there gradually appeared before him, as it were, the color of amber, a brightness round about it like amber, which was like an amalgam of gold and silver, a very brilliant metal.

He continued to look and he saw emerging from that cloud of flashing fire four living creatures who took on form. These were the four cherubim. Isaiah saw the seraphim, but Ezekiel calls them the cherubim. What are they like? The figure of a man. An angel in the form of a man, with a face fronting east, the face of a man. To the right is another face, the face of a lion; to the left is another face, that of an ox; behind is another face, the face of an eagle. There were four faces to this one figure. A great wing in front, a wing behind, a wing at each side, and a hand in connection with each wing – four wings and four hands, straight limbs, the foot round like that of a calf. One of these faces looking east, another facing west, a third one facing south, and a fourth one facing north.

So, looking at it from another direction, we see the face of a man; from another direction, the face of an ox; from another direction the face of an eagle; and another, the face of a lion. The wings in front and behind cover the body excepting the limbs and the feet. The wings at the side were lifted up when they flew and touched one another overhead so that one cherub touched another. When they were still, the wings were lowered to the side.

In the center of this four-square of cherubim was a fire, representing the glory of almighty God, flashing forth. How did they move? They

were all one, all made to move by one spirit. When one moved, all moved. They were not independent beings, but had to move together and all actuated and impelled and driven by the Spirit, that one Spirit that was in them.

This represented the four great cherubim which formed the chariot of almighty God, that we find in Revelation 4-5, where John makes use of these four living creatures, but in a little different sense. They are the highest of all the principalities and authorities in the heavenly places. They constitute a chariot upon which almighty God rides forth to do service in the uni-verse. They constitute his executive force. The man represents the highest form of created intelligence. The lion represents the highest form of courage, the ox steadfastness and strength, the eagle the highest form of vision and flight, the most majestic of all birds.

Thus, there are sixteen faces, sixteen wings, sixteen hands, altogether. Their limbs are straight; they are not jointed; they don't have to bend them when they walk, as they are not subject to the laws of locomotion as we are. How do they move? They have wheels, each one has a wheel, a wheel within a wheel. So that when the cherubim went forward each one was on a wheel. The same wheel which goes forward goes backward. The same wheel which goes to the left, goes to the right. He says these wheels were high and dreadful; that the rims and the felloes of the wheels were full of eyes. Two eyes fixed upon us is enough, but these great wheels full of eyes and all of them apparently looking straight forward form a terrible picture. When the four cherubim go in any direction, they have wheels upon which they glide like lightning; they need not turn, they never go corner-wise. They always go straight.

These cherubim with their great wheels full of eyes flash across the horizon like lightning. What a picture of the movements of almighty God! The eyes in the wheels represent the perfect omniscience of God; the cherubim represent his omnipotence; the wheels, with the lightning like rapidity with which they move, represent his

omnipresence. The spirit that animates the four cherubim also animates the wheels, moves all at the same time. As all the cherubim move the wheels move, with one instinct, with one life, with one power, with one motion, in one direction.

Above the chariot of four cherubim was a firmament representing the platform upon which rested the feet of the Almighty himself. When Moses and the elders of Israel saw God they saw him upon a pavement of sapphire; they saw the God of Israel, and did eat and drink. When John saw God it was on a sea of glass. When Ezekiel saw him it was upon a firmament above the cherubim. He says it was crystal, very much the same as John's vision of the sea of glass. This firmament was supported by these wings stretched out, the four corners joining together.

The noise of the movement of all these wheels (v. 24) was the noise of great waters like the noise of the Almighty, the noise of a tumult, like the noise of a host.

Then follows his description of God himself: "A voice above the firmament that was over their heads, was the likeness of a throne as the appearance of sapphire stone, and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness of the appearance of a man." He was of the color of amber. John said he was like jasper and sardius with a rainbow about his head. Ezekiel says, he is like amber and has a rainbow about his head; the whole appearance from his loins downward was the appearance of fire and there was brightness round about him. Ezekiel said, "It is an appearance of the likeness of the glory of God, and I fell upon my face."

The call and commission of the prophet is stated (2:1-7). In verse 1 Jehovah calls him: "And he said unto me, son of man." That does not have the messianic meaning which "Son of man" has in the Gospels. It means child of man, mortal man, you mortal being, in contrast with God: "Stand upon thy feet and I will speak with thee." It is a good thing for a man to know how to stand upon his feet. Sermons have been preached from this text, entitled "Self-respect."

"The Spirit entered into me when he spake with me, and set me upon my feet." Then he receives his commission. He was to speak to the children of Israel who were rebellious, who had transgressed against him, who were impudent, who were stiffhearted, who were to be unto the prophet like briers and thorns and scorpions. He was to speak to them whether they would hear or whether they would forbear. He had a terrible congregation to preach to: briers, thorns and thistles.

In 2:8 to 3:3 we have an account of that strange symbolic action, which we find in Revelation 10, where John performs almost the same action. Here is a roll, a scroll, it was written with mourning, lamentation, and woe. It was the message which Ezekiel was to give to those, his fellow kinsmen and exiles. And God says to Ezekiel, You are to eat this roll and go and speak unto the house of Israel. When you have taken it into your soul and are filled with it you can go and speak as a prophet. So he did and he found it very sweet. When John ate the roll he found it sweet in his mouth but exceedingly bitter afterward. Ezekiel found it sweet in his mouth but it did not become bitter afterward. What is the meaning of it? It is this: When God gives us a message, and we take that into our souls, it is one of the sweetest and highest pleasures possible to come to a human soul. Ezekiel found it sweet. It was God's message, though it was lamentation and woe.

The prophet is sent to Israel, a hardened people (3:4-11): "Thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of a hard language, but to the house of Israel." In verse 9 he says, "As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead." He needed a hard head to contend with those people.

Then the prophet was ordered to proceed to Tel-abib, not far from the river Chebar, where was a colony of Jews. He says, "The Spirit lifted me up and I heard behind me the voice of a great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of the Lord from this place." And the Spirit lifted him up and carried him away and he was set down by

them of the captivity of Tel-abib that were by the river Chebar, and he sat among them astounded seven days.

The charge to Ezekiel is set forth in 3:16-21. Ezekiel was a watchman to warn the wicked and the righteous. This paragraph shows the tremendous responsibility of the prophet and minister of God.

In 3:22-27 we have an account of the prophet as he was led away to the plain where he saw another vision and had revealed to him the persecutions that were coming to him. Verse 25 says, "They shall lay hands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them, and thou shalt not go out among them; and I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb." The prophet was shut up to his message which he received from Jehovah. He was not allowed to speak except as the Lord spoke to him.

QUESTIONS

1. Who was Ezekiel, what of his family, what advantages did he have, what of the colony of Jews in Babylonia, and what of their feeling toward the Jews left at Jerusalem?
2. What the relation of Ezekiel to Jeremiah?
3. What the similarities in the writings of Ezekiel and Jeremiah, what strange thing about their ministries and what the contrasts in their work?
4. What can you say of the order, logic, and chronology of this book?
5. Give an analysis of Ezekiel.
6. What the date and place of the prophet's vision and call?

7. Describe the chariot of God as seen by Ezekiel and give the meaning of its several parts (1:1-28).
8. How was God represented in this vision?
9. Describe the call and commission of the prophet as stated in 2:1-7.
10. Explain the symbolic action: of 2:8 to 3:3.
11. What the condition of the people to whom Ezekiel was sent and what his preparation to meet their condition? (3:4-11.)
12. Where did the Spirit lead him and what message did the Spirit bring to him in this connection? (3:12-15.)
13. How is the charge to Ezekiel set forth in 3:16-21 and what th& warning here for God's ministers in all ages?
14. Where did the Lord lead the prophet next and how was his solemn charge impressed upon him there?

XV. PROPHECIES ON THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

Ezekiel 4-14

Jeremiah was preaching in Jerusalem while Ezekiel was preaching in a similar strain to the exiles in Babylon. Jeremiah found that the people thought that Jerusalem, the center of Jehovah worship, could not and would not be destroyed. Ezekiel found the same conditions in Babylon. In the time of Isaiah, when the Assyrians were close at hand, God protected them and swept away 185,000 of their army and saved Jerusalem with the Temple. Their confidence in the perpetuity of their city seemed to be fixed. So they did not believe their city, their Temple, and their country would be destroyed. "It is God's nation, God's people, and God's Temple," they said. Moreover, they had false prophets in Jerusalem, prophets who were preaching the safety of the city, also false prophets in Babylon among the exiles, preaching the same thing. They preached that the exiles should speedily return; that the power of Babylon would be destroyed. There was one lone man in Judah, and one lone man in Babylon, preaching the destruction of the nation. This gives us some idea of Ezekiel's task, the tremendous task that he had, to make those people believe that their nation, their city and their Temple were going to be destroyed. In order to get them to believe that, he made use of all these symbols, metaphors, and other figures which we have in this great section. He made use of these symbols, or symbolic actions, to make his preaching more vivid and more impressive, and he began this series of symbolic actions about four and a half years before the city was surrounded by Nebuchadnezzar, about six years before it fell, for the siege lasted one and a half years.

The symbol of the siege of Jerusalem and its interpretation are found in 4:1-3. The great truth he wanted to impress upon them was that Jerusalem would be besieged and would be taken and destroyed; so he was commanded by Jehovah to take a tile, or a brick, a tablet in a

plastic condition, and to draw thereon a picture of a city, representing mounds cast up against the city on every side, from which the enemy could shoot their arrows down into the city and at the defenders on the walls. He was also told to set a camp round about it representing the soldiers encamped; he was to place battering rams there. These were huge beams of wood with iron heads which were pushed with great force by a large number of men, and thus driven against the walls and would soon make great holes in them. Then he was told to take an iron pan and put that between himself and this miniature city to represent the force that was surrounding it, and as that iron pan was impenetrable, so this besieging force was impenetrable. hard, and relentless, and would inevitably take and destroy the city without mercy.

Then he was told to lie upon his left side as if a burden was upon him. He was to do this according to the number of the years of the iniquity of Israel. He was to be bound while lying thus on his left side and he was to remain in that position 390 days. Then he was to lie upon his right side and bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days, representing the forty years of their iniquity; these, of course, are symbolic numbers in both cases. The commentators have been greatly baffled to figure out these periods which apply to Israel and Judah. The best explanation seems to be that of Hengstenberg who makes the 390 years refer to Israel's sin of idolatry beginning with Jeroboam and going down to the final captivity; likewise, the forty years, to Judah's iniquity beginning forty years prior to the same captivity. According to this reckoning Israel's period of iniquity was much longer than that of Judah and this accords with the facts of their history.

The scarcity and pollution of their food during the siege and after is symbolized in 4:9-17. Ezekiel was to take wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and spelt, various kinds of cheap grains that the very poorest of the people ate, mix them together and cook them on a fire made with the most disgusting and loathsome kind of fuel possible, and eat about twenty shekels per day and drink a little more than a

pint of water. Twenty shekels would be probably about a pound of our bread, one pound of this cheap, coarse bread, and a little over a pint of water a day. His soul revolted at such loathsome fuel and he was promised a better kind of fuel used by very poor people at that time. This again is a literary symbolism, the idea being to bring before those people the fact that terrible scarcity was before them, great depredation, and almost starvation, and when they were carried into the various nations their food would be unclean and polluted and they would be compelled to eat this unclean food.

The fate of the population by the siege and their dispersion is symbolized in 5:1-4. Ezekiel was told to take a sword, make it as sharp as a barber's razor, cut off the hair upon his head, take balances and divide it into three equal portions. Evidently Ezekiel must have resembled Elijah more than he did Elisha. A third part of it was to be put in the fire in the midst of the city; a third part, to be smitten with the sword round about, evidently hacking it to pieces; and a third part, to be scattered to the winds, and the sword was to go after it and hack it to pieces.

What is the meaning? One-third of the inhabitants of their beloved city should perish with famine and pestilence; one-third should be slain in the siege; the other third should be scattered among all the nations of the earth, and even this third the sword should pursue and nearly all of them should be cut off. These are striking symbols, full of meaning. They must have had some effect upon the hearers.

The interpretation of the foregoing symbols, as given by the prophet in 5:5-17, is that this is Jerusalem. Verse 5 says: "I have set her in the midst of the nations, and countries are round about her." The remainder of this section goes on to show how Judah had sinned, how she had revolted, how she had forsaken God, and verse 8 says, "Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I, even I, am against thee; and I will execute judgments in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations." Verse 10: "Therefore the father shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers; and I

will execute judgments on thee; and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter unto all the winds . . . and will draw out a sword after them." Verse 13: "Thus shall mine anger be accomplished . . . and I shall satisfy my fury upon them."

The prophecies of 6:1-7, 11-14 are prophecies against the mountains of Israel, that is, the seats of idolatry. All the kings that sought to create a reformation among the people had to deal with the high places. Hezekiah removed many of them, and at last Josiah removed all of them. They were renewed in the reign of Jehoiachim and doubtless in the reign of Zedekiah. It was against these high places that the prophets had been uttering their denunciations for centuries. Ezekiel, from the plains of Babylon, looks across the vast distance and sees the mountaintops and the hills with their shrines and altars and idols and he utters his prophecies against them. In the latter part of verse 3 he says, "I will destroy her high places," and in verse 5 he gives a terrible picture: "I will lay the dead bodies of the children of Israel before their idols; and I will scatter your bones around about your altars," and then he pictures the destruction of the idolatrous symbols of worship.

But hope is held out to Israel. In 6:8 is the gleam of hope through this awful picture of destruction: "Yet will I leave a remnant, in that ye shall have some that escape the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries." And then he says that many of those scattered through the countries shall remember God and regret, verse 9: "And those of you that escape shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captive," and the last part of verse 9 says, "And they shall loathe themselves in their own sight for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations." There was hope for the people throughout the countries that some of them would survive. There was scarcely a ray of hope for the city that any should escape. So Ezekiel preaches the doctrine of the remnant as does Isaiah, Amos, Hosea, Jeremiah, and all the other prophets of this period.

Chapter 7 is a lament, or dirge, over the downfall of the kingdom of Judah, and it is divided into four parts, thus:

1. The end is come upon the four corners of the land (vv. 1-4)
2. The end is come upon the inhabitants of the land (vv.5-9)
3. The ruin is come unto all classes and is universal (vv. 10-13)
4. The picture of the dissolution of the state (vv. 14-27) The theme of chapter 8 is, Israel's many idolatries, which have profaned the Lord's house and have caused him to withdraw from it. The date of this prophecy is fourteen months after the previous sections we have studied, in the sixth month, 591 B.C., which corresponds to our October.

Then the prophet sees what he calls the image of jealousy in the Temple (8:1-6). He sees a new vision of the Lord, and the one who sat above that firmament whose appearance was like unto fire, appears to Ezekiel again and, strange to say (we have to interpret this as a vision in symbol), took him by a lock of the hair of his head and carried him all the way from Babylon to Jerusalem. The Spirit took him thus and set him down at the door of the gate of the inner court and there he saw what he calls an "image of jealousy." It was not jealousy pictured, but an image of some of their deities, some form of Baal set up in the very Temple of Jehovah, which provoked him to jealousy. Thus, he pictures the idolatry of the people as existing in the very Temple and its sacred precincts made place for their idols.

The prophet now sees another vision, the secret idolatry of the elders in the chambers of the gateway (8:7-13). The images there were worshiped by the people at large. Now the elders, the leaders, are engaged in it, and he says in verse 10, "So I went in and saw; and behold, every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about." Verse II: "And there stood before them seventy men of the

elders of the house of Israel; and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, every man with his censor in his hand; and the odor of the cloud of incense went up." All this is used to represent the elders, the leaders of the people of Jerusalem, who were idolaters in secret, if not openly.

The women were lamenting and weeping for Tammuz, or Adonis, a heathen solar mythical being, nature personified and represented in winter as perishing or languishing, and in spring, reviving. Some writers think it represents the hot season of the year, as nature is all dead and withered, and is revived later on. Here the women are described, the ladies, the society ladies of Jerusalem, weeping as the heathen women did, because the force of nature, represented in this physical being, was apparently dead. It was a strange sort of worship indeed. It is not known as to just what the nature of this worship was, but it was something like that.

Then Ezekiel was shown the sun worship (8: 10-18). The latter part of verse 16 says: "about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of Jehovah, and their faces toward the east; and they were worshiping the sun toward the east." This gives us some idea as to the depths to which the people had gone in their idolatrous worship, even in Jerusalem and the Temple.

The first act of divine judgment, the slaughter of the inhabitants, is presented in chapter 9. Jehovah is represented as crying out and calling seven men, supernatural beings, six of them armed with a sword, and the seventh one armed with an inkhorn. These come forth into the Temple area and from there into the streets of the city. The man with the inkhorn set his mark upon all that should not be slain. Thus they entered the Temple; Ezekiel sat still in the vision and in a short while six supernatural men cut down a vast number. When they cut down all the Temple force they went out into the city and the slaughter went on. Verse 8 says, "And it came to pass, while they were smiting, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah Lord Jehovah! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel

in thy pouring out of thy wrath upon Jerusalem?" Ezekiel saw that if these six angelic beings went through the city, not many would be left. He cried out but it was of no avail. The second act of divine judgment is symbolized in chapter 10. Here Ezekiel sees the same glorious vision of God that he saw at first, and the voice came from him above the firmament saying to a man clothed in linen, "Take some fire" – from that central place among the cherubim – "take some of that divine fire and scatter it over the city." Then we have the description of how one of the cherubim, with one of those arms, took some of the fire and handed it out to this other being and he went abroad and scattered that fire over the inhabitants of the city. That is a symbol also. The latter part of chapter 10 is simply an extended description of the same vision recorded in chapter 1. We have a threat of destruction and a promise of restoration in chapter II. The occasion of the destruction of Jerusalem was virtually the revolt on the part of the princes against Nebuchadnezzar. It was the princes of Judah that led Zedekiah into revolt, the princes that were so obnoxious to Jeremiah, the princes of Judah that caused the downfall of the city and tried to put Jeremiah out of the way. Ezekiel, in vision, sees those princes and he sees them counseling and planning to make a league with Egypt and revolt against Nebuchadnezzar. He denounced them. Verse 2 says, "And he said unto me, Son of man, these are the men that devise iniquity and that give wicked counsel in this city; that say, The time is not near to build houses." If we are going to fight, this city will be a caldron and we will be the flesh, and it is better to be in the frying pan than in the fire. This city, the capital, may be destroyed; the time of war has come; let us fight and stay inside." They did so, and in the remainder of the chapter we have the denunciation of Ezekiel. He says, "I will bring you forth out of the midst thereof, and deliver you into the hands of strangers." And that actually happened, for Nebuchadnezzar captured all these princes with Zedekiah; they were brought before him at Riblah and every one slain with the sword.

The latter part of the chapter states that there will be some left; a remnant will be saved among the exiles. There shall be a few found

faithful, and in verses 17-19 is a marvelous promise: "I will gather you out of all the countries where you have been scattered," and in verse 19, he anticipates Christianity, saying, "I will give them a new heart, and put a new spirit within them, and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep mine ordinances, and do them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." The hope of the nation was in the exiles, not in the people that were left in Jerusalem. Immediately following that, the cherubim that had appeared near the house of Jehovah, were removed east on the Mount of Olives and departed thus from the city, signifying that Jehovah had abandoned Jerusalem.

There are two symbolic actions described in chapter 12. Ezekiel is told to gather up such things as he would require to take with him if he were going into exile, just as one would pack his trunk or grip to go to another place. So Ezekiel packs up his goods in the sight of the people in the daytime, and has them all ready. That night he goes to the wall of the city and digs a hole through, and with his goods upon his shoulder makes his way through that hole of the wall to go out. It was a symbolic action, performed to impress the people. He interprets his action thus: The people of Jerusalem shall take their belongings and go into exile, and Zedekiah, the prince of Jerusalem, will dig a hole through the wall of the city and with his goods upon his shoulders will try to escape. He actually tried to do that, but was taken. Verse 11 says, "Say, I am your sign: like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them; they shall go into captivity." Verse 12: "And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the dark and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, because he shall not see the land with his eyes." This is a mild way of expressing the truth that Zedekiah tramped all the way to Babylon with his eyes having been bored out by Chaldean spears.

Another symbolic action is recorded in verses 18-19, as to the eating of bread and drinking of water, and then Ezekiel quotes a proverb,

"The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth." They were saying that the visions and prophecies did not come true. He answers, "Thus saith the Lord God: I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the fulfilment of every vision."

The false prophets and prophetesses are characterized in chapter 13. Jeremiah had to contend with the false prophets, but Ezekiel had to contend with the false prophets and prophetesses. They are described thus:

1. The false prophets are described as jackals burrowing in the ground, and making things worse instead of better (vv. 1-7).

2. They whitewash the tottering walls that the people built and they daub them with untempered mortar (vv. 8-16). The people built up walls of defense by their foolish plans and the false prophets agreed with them. They tried to smooth the danger over, saying, "Peace for her."

3. The denunciation of the false prophetesses (vv. 17-23). These women deceived the people. Verse 18: "Thus saith the Lord God: Woe to the women that sew pillows upon all elbows, and make kerchiefs for the head of persons of every stature to hunt souls!" These pillows were little cushions fastened on the joints of their hands and arms to act as charms. The custom exists today in the East. Ezekiel denounces them in verse 20: "Wherefore, thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make them fly, and I will tear them from your arms; and I will let the souls go, even the souls that ye hunt to make them fly." These were the spiritualists of that day. They are with us yet, only their methods are different.

The answer of Jehovah to idolaters who inquire of him is found in chapter 14:

1. The answer is this, Put away your idols or look out for the judgment of God. There is no use in coming to inquire of Jehovah through me if you are idolaters in heart (14:1-11).

2. The principle of divine judgment is found in verses 12-23. It is this: Righteous men shall not save sinners, only their own souls. Notice verse 14: "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness." Verse 16: "Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they should deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only should be delivered, but the land should be desolate." So no matter how many righteous men there may be, and how righteous they may be, only they themselves shall be saved in the terrible sack of the city. Thus, the righteous could not save Jerusalem, any more than Lot could save Sodom.

QUESTIONS

1. What the problem of Ezekiel in Babylon and what prophet with

2. What encouragement did the people have both in Jerusalem and in Babylon to believe in the safety of their holy city and nation, and what Ezekiel's method of impressing upon the exiles the fallacy of such an argument?

3. What the symbol of the siege of Jerusalem and what its interpretation? (4:1-3.)

4. How are the people bearing their sins here symbolized and what the interpretation? (4:4-8.)

5. How is the scarcity and pollution of their food, during the siege and after, symbolized in 4:9-17?

6. How is the fate of the population by the siege and their dispersion symbolized? (5:1-4.)

7. What the interpretation of the foregoing symbols, as given by the prophet in 5:5-17?
8. What the prophecies of 6:1-7, 11-14 and what the history of these high places?
9. What hope is held out to Israel amid this awful picture?
10. What the theme of chapter 7 and what its parts?
11. What the theme and date of chapter 8?
12. What was the "Image of Jealousy" seen by Ezekiel (8:1-6), and what the particulars of this vision?
13. What the prophet's vision of the elders and what its interpretation (8:7-13)?
14. What was the abomination of Tammuz? (8:14-15.)
15. What of the sun worship? (8:16-18.)
16. How is the first act of divine judgment and slaughter of the inhabitants represented? (9.)
17. How was the second act of divine judgment symbolized? (10.)
18. Explain the threat of destruction and the promise of restoration. in chapter 11.
19. What two symbolic actions described in chapter 12, and what their interpretation?
20. How are the false prophets and prophetesses characterized in chapter 13?
21. What the answer of Jehovah to idolaters who inquire of him and what the divine principle of judgment? (14.)

XVI. PROPHECIES ON THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM (CONTINUED)

Ezekiel 15-24

We may ask ourselves at the outset, What purpose did Jeremiah serve in preaching forty years the downfall of the city, warning the people of their sins, though he knew that downfall was absolutely certain, yet all the time seeking to save the city? Why should God require a man to give forty years of his life to guard the people against the inevitable? Why should he require of a man like Ezekiel so many years of preaching to those already in exile concerning the fall of the city of Jerusalem? Why should he exert himself in the manner in which he did, to warn those in Babylon of the fall of Jerusalem?

Jeremiah's preaching had this effect: It prepared the people in a measure for the downfall of their Temple and their capital and thus helped them to keep faith in God. Whereas, the fall of their capital and city without such a warning would have inevitably shattered their faith in God. Jeremiah's prophecies of the restoration and the glorious future also helped the earnest heart to prepare for that future and for that restoration. Ezekiel's preaching to the exiles in Babylon also prepared them for the fall of Jerusalem and also preserved their faith in God. It furnished them with truth to keep alive their faith during the period when their Temple was gone; it also served as a stay during the period of the exile and prepared them for the return. Though it seems that Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's long ministries were temporarily fruitless, yet they were the means of preparing the people for a possible future and their work abides.

Why did Ezekiel use all these symbols, figures and metaphors to those people who were already in exile in Babylon? It was to prepare their faith, so that when the shock came they might withstand it and be ready to return when God called them. As a result of Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's preaching, nearly 50,000 people were prepared to return as soon as the decree of Cyrus was sent

forth. One may see no immediate result of his preaching, yet when he is preaching what God wants him to preach, the fruits may be all the greater because they are delayed.

In chapter 15 we have the parable of the vine tree and its interpretation. This is a parable in which Israel is likened to a vine tree among the trees of the forest. The vine tree is a very lowly tree. It is of comparatively little use. The wood thereof is not taken for fire, nor do people make pins or pegs from it. It is simply cast forth to be burned as rubbish. It is not profitable for anything. Then what does he mean? The Kingdom of Judah was among the great kingdoms of the world as the lowly vine tree was among the trees of the forest. It was of little use; it would not do for wood to burn; it would not do to make furniture or anything useful. It was simply cast off. All this we readily see would have its effect upon the people. It is a blow at their national pride. It goes to show that a mere vine of the forest that is cast away and burned as rubbish may be destroyed, while the lordly trees of the forest are still preserved. Judah is a lowly, contemptible kingdom beside the other kingdoms, and it is no great thing if she does perish. Notice, he makes no mention of the fruit of the vine. There was no fruit to this vine. In the case of the grape the vine is useless when there is no fruit; the vine is utterly valueless and fit only to be cast off. Thus he prophesied that Jerusalem should be burned with fire and its inhabitants destroyed.

In chapter 16 we have an allegory of the foundling child and its interpretation. This whole chapter is an allegory. Judah is described as a wretched outcast infant on the very day of its birth, thrown out into the field, a thing all too frequently done among Semitic and other Oriental peoples. There the infant lay, ready to perish. Jehovah comes along and sees the child thus in its neglected, wretched, forsaken condition; takes pity upon it; cares for it in the best way possible; rears it up until the child, a female child, becomes a young woman. She becomes of marriageable age, and then she is espoused to her husband, Jehovah. He adorns her with all the beauties with

which a bride can possibly be adorned, and crowns her with a beautiful crown, and as verse 14 says, "Thy renown went forth among the nations for thy beauty; for it was perfect, through my majesty which I had put upon thee." All went well for a time, but the foundling child which had the disposition of the Amorite and of the Hittite, very soon became the faithless bride and then rapidly degenerated into a shameless and abandoned prostitute. She prostituted herself with Egypt, with Assyria, and with Babylonia and their gods; then went into the very extreme of wickedness and sank to the very lowest depths of shame.

As a result of this absolute abandonment to wickedness, this prostitution of herself to idol worship, the nation is doomed to destruction at the hands of the very people after whom she had gone, and whose gods she had sought and worshiped. They were to gather around her from every side and were to destroy and lay waste the very bride of Jehovah. This passage is doubtless the analogue of that famous passage in Revelation 17, where the apostate church is compared to the harlot sitting upon the beast. He goes on and compares Jerusalem with Samaria and with Sodom. Notice verse 46: "Thine elder sister is Samaria, she and her daughters, that dwelleth at thy left hand; and thy younger sister that dwelleth at thy right hand. is Sodom and her daughters."

In verse 48 he says that Jerusalem is worse and more shameless than even Sodom: "As I live, saith the Lord God, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters." In verse 49 he gives the sin of Sodom: "Pride, fulness of bread, and prosperous ease," the besetting sins of the society women of every city of the land. Verse 51 says, "Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thine abominations," and verse 53 says, "I will turn again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, and the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them."

What does he mean by saying that Sodom shall return from her captivity? No Sodomite was preserved; everyone perished. I think it means that in a future age all the land shall be reclaimed and even the place of Sodom shall be repopled and, when restored and repopled, will be like unto the inhabitants of Samaria and Jerusalem; that they will be loyal and true with new hearts and right spirits. It cannot be taken literally, for it is impossible that a Sodomite could return from captivity. It is necessary to read carefully all this allegory at one sitting to get its effect, to see and feel its force. It is powerful. Israel was not the descendant of an Amorite nor a Hittite. She had the blood of Chaldea and of Aram, but what he means is that there was in Israel from the very first the seeds of idolatry that existed in those Amorites among whom she lived. Thus Ezekiel prophesies the return of Samaria, the return and restoration of Jerusalem as well as Sodom, the last no doubt in a figurative sense.

We have had symbols, symbolic actions, and parables; now we have a riddle. The riddle is this, 17:3f: "A great eagle with great wings and long pinions, full of feathers, which had divers colours, came unto Lebanon, and took the top of the cedar; he cropped off the topmost of the young twigs thereof, and carried it into a land of traffic; he set it in a city of merchants." And in verse 5 it says, "He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful soil; he placed it beside many waters; he set it as a willow tree." Verse 6: "And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs." Then it began to send its roots in another direction as we see from verse 7: "There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers: and, behold, this vine did bend its roots toward him, and shot forth its branches toward him, that he might water it."

What is the meaning of it? The first great eagle was Nebuchadnezzar who came from Babylon and lopped off the top of the cedar, Jehoiachin, the son of Josiah, and carried him away to Babylon with

seven thousand of the best people. He then set Zedekiah upon the throne and made him a feeble, weak vassal, with the hope that Zedekiah would depend upon him, pay him tribute, seek strength and power from Babylon, i.e., send out his roots to Babylon. But instead of that, Zedekiah begins to plot with Pharaoh-Necho of Egypt and instead of sending roots toward Babylon, he sent them toward Egypt. This is the riddle and the explanation. The riddle found in verses 1-10 and the explanation in verses 11-21.

In verses 22-23 we have the promise of a universal kingdom. He uses the same figure, that of the lofty top of the cedar, the symbol of the lawful descendant, the legitimate heir to the throne of Israel. After the return, God is going to take the lofty top of the cedar and crop off a twig from the topmost limb and plant it in the top of a high mountain in Israel. The latter part of verse 23 says, "And under it shall dwell all birds of every wing; in the shade of the branches thereof shall they dwell." Here he means that from the royal family of David, a twig, the topmost twig, shall be taken by Almighty God, and shall be set upon a high and lofty throne and his kingdom shall become so large, so wide, so broad, that its dominion will be universal, and all the peoples of the world will come to lodge under its branches and enjoy its protection. This, of course, is the messianic kingdom.

In chapter 18 we have Ezekiel's discussion on the moral freedom and responsibility of the individual before God. This is the most important theological contribution which Ezekiel made to the thought of his age. In this chapter he meets one of the most perplexing problems that ever troubled men. It was the great religious problem of his age. When Jeremiah prophesied the restoration of the people to their land, he said that the time would come when they would no longer say, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge," but each one should bear and suffer for his own sins and sustain an individual, personal relationship to God. Individualism, liberty in religion, was a messianic principle with Jeremiah, but Ezekiel is already living in

the new order of things, and he takes up the problem that confronted Jeremiah: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are on edge."

What does he mean? It was a proverbial saying and there is implied in it a reproach against divine providence; a suggestion that God is unjust in his administration of the laws of the world; that the children are suffering wrongfully for sins they never committed, but which their fathers committed. All that is implied in it, but the real significance of the proverb is this: "The sins of which you accuse us were born in us; we can't help them; we must sin; our fathers sinned and the evil has been transmitted to us; we can't help ourselves."

The proverb rose out of the fact that God dealt with nations as units, and the individual shared the effects of that dealing. That was the case with Israel all down through the ages until this period. But now when the greatest crisis in the history of the nation had come, the nation destroyed, the city burned, the Temple gone, the ceremonial and ritual at an end, the national religious life collapsed, what would be the effect? The only way in which religion could be preserved was for them to realize that each individual soul had an individual and personal relationship to God. This was something new in the history of religion, this idea of individual responsibility to and relationship with God.

Ezekiel meets this great problem and deals with it fairly and squarely. There are two principles brought out in this chapter, which are these:

1. "All souls [individual personalities] are mine, saith the Lord."
2. "I have no pleasure in the death of any one of these persons. I do not wish any one of them to perish. It grieves me that they do. I have no pleasure in it."

And then, arising from these two principles are two conclusions:

1. Each soul's destiny depends upon its relation to God.
2. It is their privilege to repent and turn from sin.

The following is an analysis of the chapter:

1. The individual man is not involved in the sins and fate of his people or his forefathers (1-20). He says in verse 5, "If a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right," and the latter part of verse 9, "he is just, he shall surely live." Verse 10: "And if he beget a son that is a robber, a shedder of blood he [the robber] shall surely die." Verse 13: "But hath given forth upon usury, and hath taken increase shall he then live? He shall not live: he hath done all these abominations; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him." In the latter part of verse 17, he says, "The righteous man shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live." In other words, no man shall die because of his father's sins, but because of his own, and no man shall be responsible for his son's sins, but for his own. Each individual shall bear his own personal relationship to God and that alone.

2. The individual soul does not lie under the ban of its own past (21-23). Ezekiel means to say this: "If any man going on in sin, should turn from his sin and should repent and get right with God, he shall live. He is no slave to his moral environment, no victim of the sins of his ancestors, he is not compelled to go on in sin. He means to say also that if a man going on and doing right should fall into sin and do unrighteousness, then he shall die in his iniquity; he shall suffer its consequences; he shall not have attributed to him anything of his past righteousness; that would be completely nullified. He shall not have an average made of his righteousness and wickedness, but according to the condition of his heart at that time he shall either live or die. Now, that does not abrogate the law of heredity; it does not say that we do not inherit evil tendencies; it does not say that the result of our past lives will not continue with us, but it does say that everything depends upon the man's personal and individual

relationship to his sins and to his God; that the trend of his mind, the bent of his character, is that which fixes his destiny.

In other words, it is the doctrine of moral freedom which implies individual responsibility, with a possibility of repentance, a possibility of sin, a possibility of individual relationship to God, a possibility of life or death. This chapter is worthy of long and careful study.

There is a lamentation in chapter 19, set forth in two parables. Here Ezekiel represents Jerusalem as a lioness. She brought up one of her cubs, or whelps, and he became a young lion; the nations came, caught him, bound him, and he was carried away to Egypt. That was Jehoahaz, the son of Josiah. When he was gone, the lioness brought up another one of her whelps and he grew up to be a young lion. The nations came against him and he was caught and carried away to Babylon that his voice should be no more heard on the mountains of Judah. That was Jehoiachin. He makes no mention of Jehoiakim for he was only a vassal set upon the throne by Pharaoh, not the chosen heir to the throne. He makes no mention of Zedekiah for he also was a vassal placed upon the throne by Nebuchadnezzar, not by the choice of the people, and he was not one of the lioness's whelps.

Then, verses 10-14, he describes the mother as a vine, and shows how the vine is to be plucked up, burned, and destroyed, signifying the end of the reign of Zedekiah with the destruction of his capital.

The prophet reviews the past history of Israel in chapter 20 and emphasizes the principle that has saved Israel, viz: Jehovah's regard for his own name. The elders came to inquire of Ezekiel about the law, or about the fate of the city. Ezekiel said that God would not be inquired of by them. He then goes on to review the history of Israel, and shows them the principle which actuated Jehovah in the saving of that nation. It is this: In verse 9 he says, "I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt." And in verse

14 he refers to their salvation in the wilderness: "I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations" and in verse 22, referring to his dealing with them while in the wilderness, he says, "Nevertheless I withdrew my hand, and wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations." And from verses 30 to 44 Ezekiel, in prophetic vision, sees that the return from captivity, the restoration from Babylon, the setting up of the glorious messianic kingdom in Jerusalem and Judah, will be done on this very same principle, viz: Jehovah's regard for his own name.

The following is a summary of the contents of 20:45 to 21:32:

1. The fire in the forest of the South (20:35-49). The South refers to Judah and Jerusalem. Ezekiel sees from his situation in Babylon a fire raging in the South and burning the nation. It is a fire that shall not be quenched.

2. The sword of Jehovah shall be on Jerusalem (21:1-27). In substance, it is this: The sword of Jehovah is the sword of Nebuchadnezzar. It is coming against the city. When it is drawn it shall be sheathed no more. From verses 8 to 17 we have Ezekiel's "Song of the Sword," a peculiar dirge picturing the sharpness of the sword and the anguish of the people. From verses 18 to 27 the prophet represents the king of Babylon as undecided whether he should attack Ammon or Jerusalem first. He stands at the parting of the ways, and uses divination; he shook the arrows to and fro, he consulted the teraphim, he looked in the liver. He drew forth the arrow marked, "Jerusalem." Hence he marches there first.

3. Threatening prophecy against Ammon (21:28-32). This contains very little that is different from the prophecy against Jerusalem and from what shall follow. The prophet repeats in chapter 22, in new form, the same charge he has been making over and over again; the same that Jeremiah had made so repeatedly: the sins of Jerusalem are idolatry, bloodshed, open licentiousness, incest, and almost every other conceivable form of evil. Because of all this her

destruction was certain and necessary, and all nations were involved in it.

We have the symbolism of two harlot women in chapter 23. This is a history of two harlot women, Samaria and Jerusalem, under the names of Aholah and Aholibah. This is largely a repetition of chapter 16. The chief thoughts are as follows:

1. The infidelities of Samaria with Assyria and Egypt (vv. 1-10).
2. The infidelities of Jerusalem with Assyria, Babylon and Egypt (vv. 11-21).
3. Therefore, her fate shall be like that of Samaria (vv. 22-35).
4. A new description of their immoralities and another that of punishment (vv. 36-49).

The date of the prophecy in chapter 24 is the very day upon which Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem, August 10, 588 B.C. The prophet here performs a symbolic action just as the siege begins. He takes a caldron, a great iron pot. The Lord tells him to pour water into it, to gather pieces of flesh, good pieces, the thigh and shoulder and choice bones; to take from the choicest of the flock, and to pile the wood up under it and to make it boil well. "Let the bones thereof be boiled in the midst of it." Thus the symbolic action is carried on by Ezekiel.

What does it mean? At the moment Nebuchadnezzar began to surround Jerusalem the prophet performs this action. Jerusalem was the caldron; the inhabitants were the flesh therein, Jehovah was kindling the fire; he was piling up the wood and setting it ablaze, so that the unfortunate city would be seething and boiling and roasting as the flesh in a caldron. It was made so hot that the very rust of the iron was purged out and left it clean. In other words, Jerusalem should be so cleansed by the captivity and destruction of its city, that

there would be left only the pure and clean (1-14). (See the author's sermon on this paragraph in *The River of Life*.)

Another symbolic action occurs on the death of Ezekiel's wife (24:15-27). The prophet mourns not. There is a very remarkable statement in the verse 16. God says to Ezekiel, "Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet thou shalt neither mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. Sigh, but not aloud, make no mourning for the dead; bind thy headtire upon thee, and put thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover thy lips, and eat not the bread of men." Then he says, "So I spake unto the people in the morning; at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded." This symbolic action actually happened.

He says in verse 18, "I spake unto the people in the morn under the overwhelming grief that had fallen upon him so suddenly, he showed no signs of grief, he shed no tears, and heaved not an audible sigh. The people were unable to understand his actions, verse 19: "And the people said unto me, Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou doest so?" He tells them: "And ye shall do as I have done: ye shall not cover your lips, .nor eat the bread of men." He means that very soon, as by a single stroke, a swift and inevitable stroke of justice, their fair and beloved city, Jerusalem, shall be destroyed, and they will be so stunned, so bewildered, so dumbfounded, so paralyzed that they will be unable to eat bread or even to sigh. In that stunned and dazed condition they shall bear their almost unbearable burden. It was a striking symbol, very touching, and it must have had great effect.

QUESTIONS

1. To what end were the ministries of Jeremiah and Ezekiel?
2. What the parable of the vine tree and its interpretation? (15.)
3. Give the allegory of the foundling child and its interpretation (16).

4. What the riddle of chapter 17, what is its explanation, and what is the great promise in the latter part of this chapter? 5, What is Ezekiel's discussion on the moral freedom and responsibility of the individual before God? (18.)
6. What the lamentation in chapter 19, and bow is it act forth in two parables? Give their interpretation.
7. What the principle upon which Jehovah acted toward Israel discussed in chapter 20, and what the details of the discussion?
8. Give a summary of the contents of 20:45 to 21:32.
9. What the renewed charge against Jerusalem? (22.)
10. Who the two harlot women of chapter 23 and what the chief thoughts of this chapter?
11. What the meaning and application of the boiling pot and the blood on a rock? (24:1-14.)
12. Explain the prophet's action at the death, of his wife.

XVII. PROPHECIES AGAINST THE FOREIGN NATIONS

Ezekiel 25-32

Ezekiel has grouped his prophecies in regard to the foreign nations that came in contact with Israel, as Jeremiah also groups his prophecies in chapters 46-51. Isaiah also groups his, in reference to the foreign nations, in chapters 13-23. These three greatest of the prophets had oracles on the nations with whom Israel came in contact during that period of their history. Amos also devotes the earlier part of his prophecies to utterances regarding these same nations. Nahum devotes his prophecy to predicting the downfall of Nineveh and the Assyrian Kingdom. Obadiah's entire prophecy relates to the downfall of Edom.

Some may ask the question, Why these prophecies against the foreign nations? Let us endeavor to find some reasons why Ezekiel should give these oracles against the foreign powers. They were written during the siege of Jerusalem, at a time when Ezekiel was perfectly sure that the city would fall, as he had been preaching for many years that doctrine to the exiles. Jeremiah had been preaching the same thing to the people in Jerusalem and Judah. The fall of Jerusalem at the hands of foreign and heathen powers would seem to establish the triumph of heathenism. The nations would conclude from this fact that because Jehovah's kingdom, city, and Temple had fallen and the great heathen powers had triumphed, therefore Jehovah was inferior to the heathen gods.

On this point the prophets of Jehovah had something to say, and such was apparently the occasion for these prophecies. They would serve to confirm the sentence of God upon Israel in showing that God dealt with the foreign nations as he did with Israel; that he punishes sin as surely and as severely among the heathen as he does in Israel, and although the heathen nations seem to survive for awhile, they are no exception to the rule of righteousness with Jehovah. Again, the downfall of these nations at the hand of Jehovah and the prophecies regarding them, would have their influence upon

Israel for the future. With the heathen nations out of the way, Israel would be free to return to her land and set up the everlasting kingdom that Jeremiah and Isaiah and Ezekiel had prophesied. The enemies, the old hereditary enemies of Israel, shall be destroyed utterly and absolutely, therefore the kingdom of God shall have free course to be glorified.

Ezekiel speaks of seven nations; five of them are small, but two of them are large nations. He says nothing of Babylon except by way of inference. He is living in Babylon and doubtless that was sufficient reason for refraining from speaking against that great empire.

The prophecy against Ammon is found in 25:1-7. Ammon bordered on the tribe of Reuben, and when that tribe was deported by Tiglath-pileser, Ammon seized the territory of Reuben contrary to what was right. Ammon had suffered at the hands of Jephthah, and also David through his general, Joab. Ammon bore hatred against Israel, but along with Judah he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, out of no friendship to Judah, but with the possible hope of freedom for himself. When Judah was destroyed, Ammon rejoiced and because of that Ezekiel hurls his denunciation against him: "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Because thou saidst, Aha, against my sanctuary, when it was profaned; and against the land of Israel, when it was made desolate; and against the house of Judah, when they went into captivity; therefore, behold, I will deliver thee into captivity; thou shalt be utterly destroyed and thy capital, Rabbah, shall be a stable for camels and thy territory shall be possessed by the roving Bedouin Arabs of the desert." He holds out no hope for the future whatever. Jeremiah did. prophesy a future for Ammon, but Ezekiel does not.

Ezekiel's prophecy against Moab is recorded in 25:8-11. Isaiah and Jeremiah also have oracles against Moab. Moab had, like Ammon, seized a part of the territory of Reuben and was famous for her pride, an inordinate, selfish pride. When Jerusalem fell Moab also

scorned her and rejoiced over her fall and said, "Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the nations." Because Moab said that Jehovah's people, with their king, was just like other nations, "therefore," says Ezekiel, "Moab shall be overwhelmed and destroyed forevermore." No hope for the future is held out for Moab by Ezekiel. Jeremiah did give some hope to Moab, but none is given by Ezekiel.

Then follows the prophecy against Edom (25:12-14). The country of Edom lies south of the Dead Sea and north of the Gulf of Akabah. Edom had borne hatred against Israel since the days of Esau. It was born in her, and she was nourished in animosity toward her neighbor. David almost exterminated the Edomites, and they were brought into subjection time and time again. They never forgave Israel, and when Judah and Jerusalem were overwhelmed, Edom also rejoiced and took captive all the fleeing Israelites she could and sold them into slavery. Because of that Ezekiel pronounces an irretrievable doom: "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, I will stretch out my hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and beast from it; and I will make it desolate from Teman; even unto Dedan shall they fall by the sword."

The prophecy against Philistia (25:15-17): These were likewise the old, hereditary foes of Israel. They were very much like the Edomites in their feelings against her. They were revengeful, filled with an everlasting enmity, and rejoiced when Jerusalem went up in smoke. Because of that Ezekiel hurls his denunciations against the Philistines: they were to be crushed by the yoke Nebuchadnezzar. They had already been almost wiped out by the Assyrians. They were destroyed as a nation by the Babylonians, and at the time of the Maccabees they were completely exterminated as a nation.

Tyre was one of the greatest commercial nations of the old world, corresponding to the English nation in the modern world. The date of this prophecy is 586 B.C., the first day of the first month of the siege of Jerusalem. The prophet devotes three chapters to his oracles

against Tyre. That city had achieved great commercial importance. She traded with every known nation in the world; she had lent her influence to every nation; she was the envy of almost every nation. She was the most active, the most aggressive, had the greatest commercial power, in some respects the greatest wisdom and the greatest skill, as well as the greatest colonizing power, of any nation at that period. From the thirteenth century Tyre was the commercial center. She had been friendly to Judah and Jerusalem under David and Solomon and some later kings, but for a century or two her relations to Judah had been changed; she had grown jealous of Judah's commercial advantages, and was now exhibiting the same hatred and jealousy toward Judah that all the other nations were manifesting. She rejoiced over the fall of Jerusalem the same as the other nations. Her business rival was now destroyed; her own chances were enhanced and, with the true spirit of commercial greed, she was glad that her sister nation had perished.

The destruction of the city of Tyre is described in chapter 26. In verse 2 the prophet gives his reason for hurling this denunciation and prophecy of destruction against Tyre: "Son of man, because that Tyre hath said against Jerusalem, Aha, she is broken that was the gate of the people; she is turned unto me; I shall be replenished, now that she is laid waste." Therefore, he denounced her and predicted her fate.

It was by Nebuchadnezzar, and in predicting her fall and end, verse 5 says, "She shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea; for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God; and she shall become a spoil to the nations." He would scrape the great rock, the island upon which Tyre was built, so that the very dust itself would be taken off and there would be nothing there but a bare rock for spreading and drying the nets of the fishermen. That is almost literally true today and has been for centuries.

From that verse on, he predicts the siege of the city by Nebuchadnezzar. Tyre was built upon an island rock a short distance

from the shore and was one of the strongest forts of the world. Nebuchadnezzar had to build a causeway from the mainland to reach the city. Ezekiel describes his mode of attacking the city in verse 9: "And he shall set his battering engines against thy walls, and with his axes he shall break down thy towers," and he continues with a full description of the rushing of the chariots over the streets and the indiscriminate slaughter of the inhabitants, with a sack of the great city.

From verses 15-19 we have the consternation of the various nations over the fall of this great commercial center. If New York, that center of commercial life, were to be destroyed, it would not send a greater thrill of consternation throughout the civilized world and would not more seriously affect the industrial life of America than did the fall of Tyre shock every nation and affect the commerce of every people of the world. They are represented as being in a state of consternation and it says in verse 17, "They shall take up a lamentation for thee, and say to thee, How art thou destroyed, that wast inhabited by seafaring men, the renowned city, that was strong in the sea, she and her inhabitants, that caused their terror to be on all that dwelt there." In the last two verses of that chapter he describes the inhabitants of Tyre as sinking down into Sheol, the pit, or abyss, the abode of the dead, and there abiding in darkness forever.

We have a magnificent description of Tyre by Ezekiel under the figure of a great ship in chapter 27. In this chapter we have one of the finest passages in the Old Testament and one of the best opportunities for the study of ancient commerce to be found anywhere. Tyre is pictured as a gallant ship, a splendid big ship, one of the great merchantmen of that age: "They have made all thy planks of fir trees from Senir [Hermon]; they have taken a cedar from Lebanon to make a mast for thee. Of the oaks of Bashan have they made thine oars; they have made thy benches of ivory inlaid in boxwood, from the isles of Kittim [Cyprus.]" Her sail was made of fine linen from Egypt, and it was an ensign. Ships did not carry flags

in that age, but they had colored sails and figures marked upon them which served the purpose of a flag. Thus the purple of Egypt served as an ensign, or flag. Blue and purple linen of Elishah [which refers to Peloponnesus] furnished the awning for the ship.

The men of Sidon, a town about twenty miles north, and the men of Arvad, a town still farther north on the Mediterranean coast, were its mariners, or rowers. Ships in that age had one or two sets of rowers. The ship in which Paul sailed had rowers, and the mariners in Jonah's ship rowed hard. The men of Tyre, the wisest of the world, as they thought, and the best seamen and navigators of the world, were their pilots. The elders of Gebal, the best carpenters, were their calkers, literally, the leak-stoppers. Look at the army on board to guard this magnificent ship: They were men of Arvad; "Persia and Lud, and Phut were in thine army, thy men of war: they hanged the shield and helmet in thee; they set forth thy comeliness . . . and valorous men were in thy towers."

Then he goes on in (vv. 12-14) to describe the sea commerce of the great city of Tyre. To Tarshish, away on the western coast of Spain, the Strait of Gibraltar on the Atlantic Ocean her trade extended. "Tarshish was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all kinds of riches; with silver, iron, tin, and lead, they traded for thy wares." From Javan, Tubal, (south of the Black Sea) and Meshech, they brought vessels of brass and slaves. Togarmah is supposed to be modern Armenia, probably bordering on the Black Sea also. They reached this country by ships through the Black Sea and the straits. What did they get there? Horses and mules. So much for the sea commerce.

Now he gives the land commerce (vv. 15-25). Dedan was the Arab tribe bordering on the southern and eastern boundary of Palestine and Edom. Here they got horns of ivory and ebony which indicates that these merchants either went into Africa and made use of the elephant tusks, or went into India and obtained the ivory and ebony there.

Syria, round about Damascus, supplied them with emeralds, purple and broidered work, fine linen, coral and rubies.

Judah supplied them with wheat of Minnith, and Pannag (perhaps a kind of confection), honey, oil, and balm.

Damascus supplied them with the wine of Helbon, the finest and best wine of the world at that time; also with white wool.

Vedan and Javan supplied them with bright iron, cassia, and calamus.

Dedan supplied them with precious clothes for riding. When the ladies would go out riding, the fine clothes they wore came all the way from Dedan, probably located in southeastern Arabia.

Arabia and the princes of Kedar supplied them with lambs, rams, and goats.

Sheba and Raamah supplied them with all kinds of spices, precious stones, and gold.

Haran, Canneh, Eden, Asshur, and Chilmad supplied them with blue cloth and broidered work, and in chests of rich apparel, bound with cords and made of cedar.

Now that is a magnificent description of the commerce of Tyre. It is the analogue of that marvelous description which we find in Revelation 18:1-20, where John pictures all the merchants of the earth mourning over the fall of the great city, Babylon. Many things there are identical with the articles of commerce here.

Next we have the fate of this magnificent ship (27:26-36): "Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters: the east wind hath broken thee in the heart of the seas. Thy riches, and thy wares, thy merchandise, thy mariners, and thy pilots, thy calkers, and the dealers in thy merchandise, and all thy men of war, that are in thee,

with all thy company which is in the midst of thee, shall fall into the heart of the seas in the day of thy ruin." Her rowers had rowed into dangerous waters, and the divine powers broke upon her. The east wind, or divine judgment, produced the fall of the great city of Tyre. In verses 28-36 there is the lamentation of the nations over the fall of this great city, just as John pictures all the merchants of the world lamenting over the fall of the great mystical Babylon, Rome.

The pride and fall of Tyre are represented in 28:1-19. This is a representation of what he had already said, only here he takes the prince of Tyre as a personified spirit of the city, the prince, representing the people, and gathering up in himself, as it were, the spirit of the people. He directs his lamentation against the prince. He represents the prince of Tyre as saying, "I am a god, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas." That was the spirit of Tyre and is the spirit of every great commercial center where the commercial spirit rules and reigns.

Babylon said, "I am, and there is none else beside me." Self-glorification, self-deification, idolizing self, is the besetting sin of every great commercial city. It has been and is today, and because of this great commercialism and inordinate pride, the prince of Tyre was doomed to destruction. They had great wisdom, worldly wisdom; they had great power, great wealth, great glory, but they were great idolaters and as such they perished. In verses 11-19 he pictures the prince of Tyre as a cherub in the garden of God, or on the mountain of God, clothed in all the magnificence of the finest and most precious and costliest stones that could be found. This cherub, this angelic being, fell prey to sin and was destroyed.

There is also a prophecy against Sidon in 28:20-24. (For the prophecies of this passage see the text.) Sidon was an important city a few miles north of Tyre and her fate was involved in the fate of Tyre. When Nebuchadnezzar destroyed one he destroyed the other, with all the villages and towns adjacent to it.

Then follows another wonderful prophecy of the restoration of Israel and the blessings upon her after her return (28:25-26).

Egypt was a great nation, one of the greatest nations of the world, and Ezekiel devotes four chapters to her fall. The date of it was during the siege of Jerusalem, 587 B.C. The following is a summary of the prophecy against her:

1. A general statement of the fall of Egypt (29:1-16). Egypt is compared to a dragon, a crocodile, a huge alligator floundering around in the river Nile and boasting, as he says in the latter part of verse 3: "My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself." That was the spirit of Egypt. That great dragon-crocodile shall be taken with hooks in his mouth and Jehovah will pull him up and drag him forth and all the little fishes that belong to him will hang onto his scales, and he will be taken out into the wilderness and there he will be meat for the beasts and fowls of the air. This means that Egypt shall be destroyed from one end to the other, from the tower of Seveveh unto the border of Ethiopia. "Yet thus saith the Lord God: At the end of forty years will I gather the Egyptians from the peoples whither they were scattered; and I will bring back the captivity of Egypt, and will cause them to return into the land of Pathros, into the land of their birth; and they shall be there a base kingdom." After that Egypt shall be the basest of the kingdoms; "neither shall it any more lift itself up above the nations: and I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations." From that time until this, Egypt has been a poor, weak, and worthless power.

2. The reward of Nebuchadnezzar for failure to get booty at Tyre (17-21). The prophecy against Tyre that we have been studying was uttered in the year 586 B.C. Shortly after the fall of Jerusalem Nebuchadnezzar besieged Tyre and continued the siege for thirteen years. We are not told whether he succeeded in capturing and destroying the city or not. Now, this prophecy came from Ezekiel in the year 570 B.C., the first month, first day of the month, sixteen

years after he had written the previous prophecy. During those sixteen years Nebuchadnezzar had been besieging Tyre for thirteen years and had apparently destroyed the city as Ezekiel had prophesied, but had taken no spoil. Ezekiel had definitely prophesied that Nebuchadnezzar would utterly and completely overwhelm Tyre, and he had seemingly done it. This prophecy throws some light upon the situation. Verse 18 says, "Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, caused his army to serve a great service against Tyre; every head was made bald, and every shoulder was worn; yet had he no wages, nor his army, from Tyre, for the service he had served against it." How extremely hard was this thirteen years of toil! Now that plainly indicates that Nebuchadnezzar did not succeed in securing the wealth of the Tyre.

The truth seems to be that the people of Tyre spirited away by ships all their wealth and most of their inhabitants, and capitulated to Nebuchadnezzar at the end of about thirteen years, and when he entered the city he had nothing to destroy nor any wealth to take. Such seems probable, though we have no history that would justify the statement.

Now, because Nebuchadnezzar had performed this service for Jehovah against Tyre and had received no wages (vv. 19-20), God says, "Therefore, thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon; and he shall carry off her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army. I have given him the land of Egypt as his recompense for which he served, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord God."

3. The terror and dismay of the surrounding nations (30: 1-19). The fall of a nation sends a thrill of horror and dismay through the world, and the fall of a great nation like Egypt struck terror into the hearts of all the surrounding nations, Arabia, Ethiopia, Crete, etc.

4. The broken arm of Egypt (30:20-26). Egypt had had one arm broken, probably by Nebuchadnezzar. Now Ezekiel prophesies that

Egypt shall have both arms broken, and her power shall be destroyed.

5. Pharaoh represented as a lordly cedar cut down (31:3), "Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon." He is using Assyria as an example for Egypt. He goes on with his magnificent description of the cedar. It is cut down. The Babylonians and Medes lay the ax at the roots and the cedar falls, crashing among the nations. In verse 16 he pictures them as going down into the nethermost part of the earth into the pit of Sheol to abide forever.

6. Lamentation over the fall of Egypt (32:1-16). Here we have the picture of the dragon again, destroyed and left for a prey of the birds and beasts.

7. The welcome to Sheol, or Hades, by the nations (32: 17-32).

This has been said to be the most weird piece of literature in all the world. All the people of Egypt, the princes, the mighty men, the soldiers, who were slain in these wars, go down into Sheol, the underworld, the place of the departed, and there existing in their shadowy and weak existence, grouped together and with them is Assyria and all her hosts that were slain with the sword: grouped together also. and with them, Elam and all her hosts; grouped around them Meshech, Tubal, and all her multitude; Edom, her kings, and all her princes, and all the Sidonians grouped together in Sheol. These are all in the shadowy world below, surrounding Egypt. In verse 31, Pharaoh and his hosts and all these foreign countries and their hosts, are said to be in Sheol where light is as darkness, and are gathered together in groups and Pharaoh shall see them and shall be comforted over all this multitude of slain ones. It is a picture of their conception of the underworld, Sheol, which is the place of the dead who have passed through what we know to be the grave, down into the spirit world. Thus Ezekiel leaves these nations in Sheol, the place where there is no light.

QUESTIONS

1. What prophets prophesied against foreign nations and what can you say of the grouping of their prophecies?
2. Why these prophecies against foreign nations?
3. What and why the prophecy against Ammon? (25:1-7.)
4. What and why the prophecy against Moab? (25:8-11.)
5. What and why the prophecy against Edom? (25:12-14.)
6. What and why the prophecy against Philistia? (25:15-17.)
7. What can you say of Tyre's commercial importance and her attitude toward Judah and Jerusalem?
8. How is the destruction of the city of Tyre described in chapter 26?
9. Give the magnificent description of Tyre by Ezekiel under the figure of a great ship (27).
10. How is the pride and fall of Tyre represented in 28:1-19?
11. What the prophecy against Sidon in 28:20-24, when fulfilled and what prophecy relative to the children of Israel?
12. Summarize the prophecy against Egypt (29-32).
13. What the added prophecy concerning Tyre in 28:17-21?

XVIII. PROPHECIES OF THE RESTORATION

Ezekiel 33-39

The subject of this chapter is Ezekiel's prophecies of the restoration of Israel. Jeremiah (30-33) gave a similar group of prophecies, and in the book of Isaiah (40-66) we find this same theme: The restoration of Israel and its future glory. Here Ezekiel discusses the same theme.

We saw in the last chapter that Ezekiel had, in a prophetic way, disposed of the foreign nations, the enemies of Israel, having predicted the entire overthrow of all those who had been the means of Israel's downfall with the exception of Babylon. He gave no direct prophecy of the downfall of Babylon, only an indirect one prophesying her rule over Egypt for about forty years, which implied that he believed that Babylon would fall at the end of that period. Thus it may be seen that these chapters on the restoration of Israel are in their logical place in his prophecies. He had predicted the fall of Jerusalem, the capital, and the scattering of the people among all the nations. Then he predicted the fall of all the nations that were her enemies, and having finished with them, the way was made clear for his predictions regarding the future of Israel. He devotes these seven chapters to the blessed age, the messianic age, which follows the return of Israel from her exile in these foreign lands.

The great function of the prophet is here set forth. He is to be a watchman (33:1-20). The figure, of course, is an Oriental one. It was the custom in those lands to build a watchtower on the border of their territories, or at the approaches to their cities, or near their great centers, and appoint a man to stand upon the watchtower and when he saw an army coming he was to blow his trumpet and warn the people. There were many throughout Israel and all Oriental lands. The prophet transfers the figure to spiritual functions as regards the people of Israel.

The duty and responsibility of the watchman are set forth in verses 1-6, which are easy to comprehend and which need not be commented upon except that the watchman has the responsibility for the lives of those over whom he watches. If he sees the foe coming and warns, his duty is done. If he sees the foe coming and does not warn and any of the inhabitants lose their lives, their blood shall be required at his hands because he had failed in his duty. He shall suffer as a result of that failure.

This duty and responsibility were impressed upon Ezekiel thus: The Lord speaks unto Ezekiel and says, "So thou, son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die, and thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way; that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it, and he turn not from his way; he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul."

A glance at the situation will explain this more clearly. Ezekiel in chapter 18, prophesied and brought before the people that great doctrine of individual responsibility and liberty. He exploded the old theory that a man is the slave of his environment and must necessarily suffer for the sins of his fathers. It is not necessary that he should perish because of the sins of his fathers. Ezekiel brought before them the great doctrine that Jehovah does not will the death of any man; that Jehovah has given to all men the privilege and possibility of repenting and if they repent and turn, the penalties of their past sins or their father's sins are forever abrogated and they are free from them. The doctrine of individualism is there set before us, and this chapter is an application of that principle.

Ezekiel now realizes that, since his nation is destroyed, their capital in ruins, the center of religious worship is gone, that his duty is to speak to individuals; that now it is with individual Israelites. His duty is to warn them of their own sins and the dangers that are

consequent upon their sins. He is not to speak to the nation in the mass any more, but he is to deal with individuals and put each individual upon his own personal responsibility and relationship to God. He can thereby prepare the people to return to the land and begin anew the nation God has purposed they should become.

The condition of the minds of the people is that of despondency, making the prophet's appeal of no effect. Verses 10-20, especially in verse 10, we have the condition of their minds set forth: "Thus ye speak, saying, Our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we pine away in them; how then can we live?" This indicates at once that the people were in a state of despair. They had no hope; they believed that their doom was inevitable; that it was useless for them to think of enjoying fellowship with God and life any more. To counteract that complaint and that condition of mind, Ezekiel brings before them four great principles which are found in the remainder of this section, and I will embody the substance of these verses in these four statements:

1. That Jehovah desires that men shall live.
2. That man is not irrevocably bound by the past, but may repent.
3. That men are to come to God individually and thus come into the new Israel.
4. That men are judged more by what they are than by what they have been.

Let us now discuss the theme, occasion, and date of the prophecy of Ezekiel in 33:21-33. On hearing of the fall of Jerusalem, Ezekiel announces the conditions of return. These conditions are moral and religious. In verse 21 we have the date of this prophecy: the twelfth year, that is one year after the fall of Jerusalem, tenth month and fifth day of the month, almost eighteen months after the fall. He says, "One that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten." Some find a chronological difficulty here.

Some of the ancient versions say it was in the eleventh year and tenth month, which means that Ezekiel heard of the fall of Jerusalem six months after that event occurred. According to this account of Ezekiel it was a year and six months. It seems to them almost incredible that it would require eighteen months for the news of that great event to reach the prophet and much more likely, he received the news at the end of six months, that being ample time for the caravans to reach Babylon and the news to spread. But it is better to take it as it stands, allowing for probable delays on the part of this messenger in getting to Babylon.

Now, after he received news that the city was smitten, he had a word to say to the people that remained in Palestine; that remnant spoken of in Jeremiah (40-44), Ezekiel addresses in 33:23-29. Note verse 24: "Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance," which seems to refer to the miserable remnant that was left at Mizpah, Bethlehem, and various other places. They say, "Abraham was one, only one, and he inherited the land, but we are many and the land is given us for an inheritance." Their idea is that since to Israel was given this land, and they were the nucleus of Israel, and since Abraham being only one, developed into such a large nation, they who are many have as many more chances of developing into a great nation, and therefore they remain in Palestine believing that they will become a great nation and possess the land for all the future. The people who said that were still practicing their idolatry. Ezekiel says, "Thus saith the Lord God: As I live, surely they that are in the waste places shall fall by the sword; and him that is in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured; and they that are in the strongholds and in the caves shall die of the pestilence."

In verses 30-33, we have the effect of Ezekiel's prophecies upon the people with whom he dwelt, there by the river Chebar in Babylon. Here is a passage of great comfort to a preacher sometimes. Ezekiel has now become popular and he is drawing fine congregations; the

people are flocking to hear him, and they say, verse 30: "And as for thee, son of man, the children of thy people talk of thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord." And he goes on to say how they came and heard the words but did them not, for with their mouth they show much love but their heart goeth after their gain. They have a great many good things to say to their preacher but their hearts go after their gain. "And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not." "Fine sermon, very lovely song, prayed splendidly," they say but they never think of heeding what the preacher says.

The evil shepherds are described (34:1-10). They feed themselves, not the flock. Jeremiah had something to say regarding those evil shepherds. Ezekiel has a strong denunciation of them in these ten verses. These shepherds feed themselves and care for themselves, but care nothing for the sheep, and the sheep wander through the forests and the deserts and upon every high hill and are scattered among all the nations of the earth and there are none that seek after them to bring them back. As a result the shepherds are denounced verse 10: "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my sheep at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the sheep; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; and I will deliver my sheep from their mouth, that they may not be food for them."

But Jehovah takes care of his sheep after disposing of the evil shepherds. Jehovah will undertake the care of the flock in the restoration period (vv. 11-19). Notice particularly verse 11: "Behold, I myself, even I, will search for my sheep, and will seek them out." Latter part of verse 12: "So I will seek out my sheep; and I will deliver them out of all places whither they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." Verse 15: "I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God."

Jehovah says that he will be the shepherd. He makes no reference here to a messianic Saviour, the Christ, or King that is to come. He himself is going to do it. And then in verses 17-22, Jehovah says that he is going to separate and distinguish between different parts of the flock.

Verse 17: "I judge between sheep and sheep, the rams and the he-goats." He is going to see that the leaders among the people of Israel are not like cattle that go down to the stream and drink and muddy the water, thus making it unfit for the others to drink. Jehovah is going to distinguish between them and see that they are in their proper places. Then from verses 23 to 31 it says that Jehovah will raise up David as Shepherd and there shall be great prosperity. He said before, "I will be the Shepherd," but now he says, "I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd." This is messianic and refers to the work of Christ. In the latter part of verse 26, he describes the prosperity that shall come: "There shall be showers of blessing." Here is where the words of the song, "There Shall Be Showers of Blessing," came from. The prophet continues the magnificent description of the prosperity of the country and how all shall flourish under the rule and care of this great Shepherd, David, not David himself in person, but a member of his dynasty and of his family, who is Christ, our Lord.

There is a prophecy against Edom in chapter 35. The substance of this chapter is this: Mount Seir, or Edom, had sinned against Judah and Jerusalem at the time of her calamity (v. 5). He charges Edom with two sins: (1) "Thou hast had a perpetual enmity"; (2) "Thou hast given over the children of Israel to the power of the sword in the time of their calamity." When Edom, or Mount Seir, found Israel down, they trampled on her as hard as they could. Verse 10 mentions a third sin, and that is (3) "Thou hast said, These two nations and these two countries (northern and southern Israel) shall be mine, and we will possess it." The point is this: When Israel was deported to Babylon and the country left desolate, the Edomites

came from the south and took possession of all the land of Judah they possibly could and began to inhabit and make it their possession. Because of that the prophet's denunciation is buried against them, prophesying the downfall of their capital and their country. It was necessary for the prophet to do this. They were encroaching upon Israel, and they must be driven forth from the land to make way for Israel.

Then there is a prophecy concerning the land of Israel in 36:1-15. This is the counterpart, or the other side, of the prophecy (6) where he denounced the mountains of Israel because they were the high places of worship and predicted their desolation and overthrow. In the future age, the mountains of Israel shall be delivered out of the hand of the enemies, and they shall become abundantly fruitful. Notice, especially, verse 8: "But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people Israel; for they are at hand to come," i.e., "Ye shall till and sow and I will multiply men upon you; all the house of Israel, and the cities shall be inhabited and the waste places shall be builded." Then he says, "And I will multiply upon you man and beast," carrying forward his glowing description of the prosperity and fruitfulness of the land.

In verses 16-23 the prophet says that Jehovah will do this thing for his name's sake and in honor of his own holy name: "Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God: I do not this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for my holy name which ye have profaned among the nations whither ye went."

In verses 24-38, we have the restoration and regeneration of Israel. Here we come to the New Testament ground, in the gospel dispensation. This is Ezekiel's deepest, sweetest, and best prophecy. This passage calls to mind a notable challenge of Alexander Campbell, substantially in these words: "The whole world is challenged to produce even one passage in any part of God's Word, from Genesis to Revelation, proving that God ever commanded prophet, priest, preacher, or layman to sprinkle or pour water – just

water – pure water, on man, beast, or thing as a moral ceremonial or religious rite." In response to the challenge the one passage cited was this scripture, Ezekiel 36:25. Of course it was easy for Mr. Campbell to show the irrelevancy of this passage. It does not meet the requirements of the challenge because:

(1) It is not a command of God to any man to do any sprinkling whatever, but an express declaration of some kind of sprinkling that God himself will do.

(2) The clean water of the text was not even in its type just water, but was a compound called the water of purification whose recipe is found in Numbers 19:1-10. This was a liquid compound of ashes and water. A red heifer was burned. Into the burning was cast cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet cloth. The ashes of this burning were gathered up and mingled with water and this mixture was called the water of cleansing, or of purification.

(3) The typical efficacy of this mixture was in the ashes of the red things burned: the red heifer, the red cedar wood, red hyssop, and scarlet cloth; red signified blood. The antitype is the blood of Christ, Hebrews 9:13-14: "For if the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on the unclean sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

(4) The whole passage in Ezekiel 36:21-38 refers to those last gospel days when the Jews, long disobedient, blinded, and scattered, will be gathered and saved, as set forth by Paul (Rom. 11:25-36). This salvation will be of grace (Ezek. 36: 22). It will be by regeneration (Ezek. 36:25-26). This regeneration will produce a spirit of obedience (Ezek. 36:27). This regeneration consists of at least two parts, cleansing and renewal. The cleansing (Ezek. 36:25) is effected by the application of Christ's blood typified by the water of purification, the antitype of which is the blood of Christ (Heb. 9: 13-14; 1 John 1:7). The renewal (Ezekiel 36:26) is the change of man's

nature. Both of these ideas appear in John 3:5: "Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." This is one birth. It is the Spirit birth. The water signifies cleansing; the Spirit, renewal. The same ideas appear in Titus 3:5: "The washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Lord." In none of these passages is there the slightest reference to baptism.

Now let us consider the vision of dry bones (37:1-14) and its interpretation. What are these dry bones? Is this a literal resurrection from the dead, or is this a conversion, a spiritual resurrection? It is not either. Verse II gives the clue to the interpretation. These bones are the house of Israel. What makes them so dry? "Behold, they say, Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off." They have no hope whatever as to the resurrection, or renewal of their national existence. They were saying, "We are scattered among all the nations. Our city and our capital is gone and there is no hope for our nation and our people any more." Nationally or religiously, they were as dry bones which had no hope of a resurrection. Now there is no distinct reference to any resurrection of the body, nor of any spiritual regeneration. It is national.

The prophet was required to preach to them. He preached and the bones began to come together and he kept on preaching and flesh came upon them, and by and by they stood up. The whole house of Israel raised to a new national life and existence! Then he kept on preaching and the result was as we see in verse 14: "I will put my spirit within you and ye shall live and I shall place you in your own land and ye shall know that I am Jehovah." That was fulfilled to some extent in the return of the 50,000 after the decree of Cyrus, but it was never completely fulfilled. An army of about 50,000 whose spirit Jehovah stirred up, returned at first, and that stirring up was the result of the preaching of Ezekiel and Jeremiah and the study of the latter part of the book of Isaiah. The figure of the resurrection is used in verse 12, thus: "I will open your graves and cause you to come out of your graves," but the graves are national graves, not

literal. This is referred to by Paul (Rom. 11:15) as a resurrection and contemplates the final gathering of the Jews before the millennium.

The union of Judah and Israel is symbolized in 37:15-28: "Take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim." These two sticks he joined together. This is a symbolic action similar to many other actions of Ezekiel which we have already considered. The meaning of it is this: "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his companions; and I will put them with it, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in my hand." Jeremiah prophesied the same thing; so did Isaiah in substance; so did Hosea; so did Amos, Micah, and Zephaniah.

It was the belief of all the prophets that when Israel returned from exile it would be one nation, a united nation. Ezekiel goes on, "I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all." ID verse 24 the king is called "David my servant," that is, one of his descendants; a member of his dynasty shall be king over them and they shall have one shepherd. Then he says, "I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them." Verse 27: "My tabernacle also shall be with them; and they shall be my people," all of which has its fulfilment in the millennial age. This reminds us of Revelation 21:3.

An account of the invasion of Gog and Magog is found in chapters 38-39. This is the picture of the last and final struggle of all the nations with God. We find that John refers to the same struggle in Revelation 20:7-9: "When the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall come forth to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war: the number of whom is as the

sand of the sea. And they went up over the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down out of heaven and devoured them." Ezekiel says, 38:2: "Son of man, set thy face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him," nations lying probably away to the north of Israel on the borders of the Caspian and Black Seas representing the great barbarian hordes that infested central Asia and northern Armenia on the very outskirts of the then known world. "I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed and in full armor, a great company with buckler and shield, all of them handling swords."

What does this mean? Ezekiel is picturing the millennial age, the messianic age, and away in the future after the glorious age has been in progress, for how long we cannot tell, he sees this vision of the final struggle. Israel has been enjoying the blessedness of that age for centuries and the nations around her have been destroyed. The nations lying far off on the outskirts of the world now rouse themselves for a final onslaught on God's kingdom. "And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell securely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates." Thus the people are unprotected; they are living in the messianic age when all is peace and harmony. "I will go to them that are at rest." What for? "To take the spoil and to take the prey." This is the final conflict of the barbarian nations of the world with their vast hosts, against the messianic kingdom.

What is to be the result? We find in verses 17-23, Ezekiel says the prophets have for a long time been prophesying of this very thing, though we do not have any distinct reference to the prophecy. As Gog, with his hosts, encompasses the whole land of Israel and surrounds the city, then Ezekiel says in the latter part of verse 18, "My wrath shall come up into my nostrils . . . I will rain upon him, and upon his hordes, and upon the many peoples that are with him,

an overflowing shower, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone." That is to be the end of Gog and his innumerable hordes.

Then we have this statement, 39:4: "Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy hordes and the peoples that are with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured." And in verse 9, he says, "And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall make fires of the weapons and burn them, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall make fires of them seven years." Verse 12 says that the people of Israel are going to bury all those that fall and they are to be seven months burying the dead, and are to have a rule that when any person finds a bone he is to set up a mark by it until the body has been buried outside in the valley. Then we have the feast of all the birds of the air and the beasts of the field upon the slain. The chapter closes with a description of Israel's restoration (vv. 28-29). The best commentary on the destruction of Gog is found in that short passage, in Revelation 20, where John pictures Satan as raising an insurrection among all the nations of the world at the close of the millennium. Ezekiel pictures it as taking place a long while after the restoration and the blessed messianic age. (See the author's discussion of this subject in his book on Revelation.)

QUESTIONS

1. What the theme of this section and where do we find the same subject discussed in Jeremiah and Isaiah?
2. Show the logical order of these prophecies.
3. What the great function of the prophet and how is it here set forth?
4. What the duty and responsibility of the watchman?
5. How was this duty and responsibility impressed upon Ezekiel?

6. What the condition of the minds of the people and how does the prophet meet it?
7. What the theme, occasion, and date of the prophecy of Ezekiel in 33:21-33, and what chronological difficulty here and its solution?
8. Whom does the prophet address in 33:23-29, what the occasion of this address and what the prophet's message to them?
9. What the effect of Ezekiel's preaching on the people in exile (33:30-33)?
10. How are the evil shepherds described in 34:1-10, what the prophet's denunciation of them and how does Jehovah take care of his sheep?
11. What the prophecy against Edom in chapter 35 and why?
12. What the prophecy concerning the land of Israel in 36:1-15?
13. What the motive of Jehovah in doing all this (38:16-23)?
14. Expound 36:24-38, showing the controversy about it, and its true interpretation in the light of the New Testament.
15. What the vision of dry bones (37:1-14) and what its interpretation?
16. How is the union of Judah and Israel symbolized and what the glorious picture that follows (37:15-28)?
17. Give an account of the invasion of Gog and Magog and the result (38-39). Discuss fully.

XIX. THE FINAL CONDITION OF THE REDEEMED

Ezekiel 40-48

The date of this prophecy as given in 40:1 is about 572 B.C., thirteen years after his last prophecy before this one and fourteen years after the fall of the city of Jerusalem. Thus, there is an interval of thirteen years between the last writing of Ezekiel before this and this one.

As to what Ezekiel was doing during the thirteen years between his last prophecy and this one, we have no record whatever. Perhaps after he had prophesied the restoration of Israel and the glorious messianic age as found in chapters 36-37, Ezekiel was thinking and pondering in his mind over the messianic kingdom. He was thinking of what it would be like, what would be its constitution, what would be its temple, what would be its temple service, what would be the relation between the king and the priesthood and what would be the condition of the people.

After those long years of thinking and pondering in his own mind, at last the vision broke upon him. A great many visions have come to God's prophets and God's servants along the line that they had been thinking and meditating. Thus the vision broke upon Ezekiel, and he saw in this vision the final condition of the restored and redeemed people of Israel. He does not picture any method of salvation in these chapters because he conceives of the people as enjoying salvation; they are in a condition of salvation, saved forever. It is the kingdom of God that he has in mind, the kingdom of God set up on earth with its center in Jerusalem and existing in all its glory, blessedness, and beauty. We call it the millennium, for to Ezekiel it was the millennial period of the world's history.

This picture is cast in the Jewish mold. The best place to the Jew on this earth was in Palestine, his own land. There was death and burial and all the various incidents of life in this blessed age. There were families, there was a city of a certain size, a tabernacle of a certain

size, and buildings, and chambers; there was a priesthood, there were sacrifices, there was to be a Prince of the line of David, the messianic Prince. All these things were to comprise the glorious messianic age, was all cast in the Jewish mold, and not to be taken as literal.

Now, in these chapters Ezekiel gives the religious side of the kingdom of Israel. He deals very little with anything but the religious phase. He touches on the geographical side of the country, a little on the civil side of affairs, but puts the emphasis almost entirely upon the religious and ecclesiastical. To Ezekiel religion was the foundation of a nation, for the foundations of national existence and the great informing principles in all national life from the beginning of history to the present time, have been the religious conceptions of the people.

Ezekiel, in vision, was brought by the hand of God into the land of Israel, and set down upon a very high mountain, whereon was, as it were, the frame of a city. Placed upon this high mountain Ezekiel opens his eyes in vision and sees a man, who appears to him as a man of brass. This is an angelic and supernatural being. He has a line of flax in his hand, also a measuring reed, and stands at the gate of this great structure.

Ezekiel 40:1-4 gives the introductory remarks of Ezekiel showing how this vision occurred. He was standing facing the west and also facing the east gate of the great sanctuary. Before him lay an enclosure, a tabernacle, 500 cubits square, measuring probably 800 feet or about 250 yards square. This enclosure was surrounded by a wall six cubits high and six cubits broad, or thick. Right before him was a gate, the east gate, approached by seven steps. The gate itself was really a large building, twenty-five cubits broad altogether and fifty cubits long, reaching into the court of the temple. Inside that gate was the outer court. That outer court was 150 cubits from the outer wall to the inner wall, and one hundred cubits from the inside entrance of the gate to the next gate on the inner wall. This outer

court ran around three sides of the enclosure and on these three sides were the pavements and chambers round about on the walls.

He then approached the inner court and that had a gate facing east just the same size as the gate on the outer court, approached by eight steps showing the gradations up into the holy place. Right in front of the gate which was the same size as the other gate, was a square place of 100 cubits and in the center of that was the altar for the burnt offerings. Right behind the gate approached by ten steps was the temple building itself. There was the porch, there the holy place behind it, and the most holy place behind that, and chambers around on three sides. There was a space of five cubits on either side of this temple building and chambers twenty cubits wide on the outside of that space. The raised pavement on which the temple stood was exactly 100 cubits square and reached back to the wall that surrounded the inner court. To the north of the outer court was a gate exactly the same as that of the east gate; to the south, a gate exactly the same as the one Ezekiel entered; on the west there was no gate at all. To the inner court there was a gate to the north and a gate to the south, exactly like the one to the east which Ezekiel entered.

A more detailed description of the temple with its parts is found in verses 5-16. There he describes the outer gate by which he approaches, ascending seven steps. The outer gate has a threshold, and the entrance into the outer court has on either side three lodges or guard chambers, intended for sentinels who abode there and watched the multitudes that thronged the gates into the temple courts. This entire gate was twenty-five cubits wide by fifty cubits long, reaching fifty cubits into the outer court minus the breadth of the wall.

In verses 17-19 he describes the outer court just inside that gate. That outer court is altogether 150 cubits wide minus the wall and reaches around three sides. It is covered with a pavement and around on these three sides next the wall are chambers, large rooms. What

these were for he does not tell us; doubtless they were intended for service in connection with the temple worship.

In verses 20-23 we have described the north gate which is exactly the same as the one on the east which he entered. In verses 24-27 he describes the south gate which is exactly the same as the east and the north gate.

In verses 28-37 he describes the inner court. He enters the gate of the inner court by an approach of eight steps, passes through that fifty cubits deep into the inner court. There is a south gate and a north gate exactly the same, all facing the great altar in the center of the court 100 cubits square in the temple area itself.

In verses 38-43 he describes the tables that are on either side of the north gate that enters into the inner court. Outside in the outer court are four tables for killing the sacrifices and washing them; inside are four tables for the sacrifices, and there are other large stone tables upon which they would lay the instruments for slaying their sacrifices. It was the law of Leviticus that the sacrifices were to be slain north of the altar, so all these tables and instruments are at the north gate which approaches the inner court north of the great altar.

Now in the inner court we have on either side of that court which is about 250 cubits square counting the thickness of the walls on the north side and on the south side, large chambers. These chambers were for the use of the priests in their ministrations. Those on the north were for the use of those who helped the priests in their services; the south for the sons of Zadok who were the leaders among the priests. In verses 38-49) he approaches the temple itself and the porch facing the temple building; ten steps brings him up on to the raised platform which is exactly 100 cubits square and which contains all the great temple buildings.

In 41:1-14, he describes the porch, gives the measurements, then the dimensions of the tabernacle which is forty cubits long and twenty cubits wide; then the holy of holies which is exactly twenty cubits

square. Ezekiel does not go into the holy of holies; only the messenger goes in and brings out the measurements and tells them to Ezekiel. The walls are six cubits thick; then there are little chambers on either side, and there are walls five cubits thick beyond them. The lower chambers are four Cubits wide, the next, five; the next, six, just the same as those of Solomon's Temple. All around on either side of that Temple with its chambers, which was nearly forty cubits wide altogether, was an open space of five cubits, and outside of that, again on this pavement of ten cubits, along the two sides were buildings used as chambers for the priests.

In verses 15-26 he describes the inside of the temple proper. It is made of wood, beautifully carved wood, cherubim carved as was Solomon's Temple; palm trees carved and engraved upon the wood also, and only one altar, no table of shewbread, no golden candlestick, no ark of the covenant, no laws written on tables of stone; they were written on the tables of the heart now and there is no need for an ark of the covenant or for these other things, only an altar representing the prayers and worship of the people. There are doors into the holy place and folding doors into the most holy place. We do not read that Solomon made any doors between those apartments.

Now in 42:1-14, the other buildings that are inside this inner court are described. This inner court, as we have said, is about 250 cubits square; 100 cubits are taken up by the altar, 100 for the temple buildings and chambers, then there are fifty cubits on either side along the north and south sides. Now these are described in the section we have just mentioned. They are chambers, and one row is three stories high, extending along 100 cubits on the north side of the temple buildings, and south side also a row 100 cubits long. These are for the priests, in which they store their garments, and in which they dress that they may appear before the people in the outer court and perform the services in the inner court.

In 42:15-20, we have the measurements of the outer wall and the whole area of the buildings. Here he gives the general measurements. Now note that he says 500 reeds. A reed is six cubits. Thus he gives the general measurements such as I have described. Thus far he has been describing the temple and we readily see it is impossible to give all the details.

In 43:1-12 we enter upon a new theme: the vision of the entrance of Jehovah into this house, this temple, to abide forever. Notice that Ezekiel says in the latter part of verse 3: "The visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar." The same magnificent picture of the four cherubim appears here now right at the gate of the temple and Jehovah thus enters into the temple by the east gate, there to abide forever. Note what he says to Ezekiel as he enters, verses 6-7: "And I heard one speaking unto me out of the house; and a man stood by me. And he said unto me, Son of man, this is the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever. And my holy name shall the house of Israel no more defile." Thus he goes on to describe the new and blessed condition of Israel and how they are purified from all their sins. Then in verses 10-12 Ezekiel shows to the people this vision of the great temple that they are to have, and he says that they shall be ashamed of their iniquities when they see and learn the pattern. It is a perfect temple, perfect equipment, divinely measured and symbolizes the relation of Jehovah to his people.

Now in verses 13-17 he describes the altar of burnt offerings in the center of that 100 cubits square in the court. Eight in front of the east, north, and south gates: that altar has a base eighteen cubits square and one cubit thick, resting upon the solid earth; then another place above that sixteen cubits square, and another one fourteen cubits square, and the uppermost one twelve cubits square with four projections, or horns, one at each corner. So the altar stands high and is twelve cubits, or about twenty feet, square.

In verses 18-27 he describes the sacrifices and the ceremonies relating to the altar. The sacrifices and ceremonies are to be performed by the sons of Zadok and they are to cleanse the altar and purify it and make it ready for the sacrifices of God.

In 44:1-3, he says that the east gate was to be kept forever shut, because through that gate Jehovah had entered and he had entered to remain forever, and therefore the gate by which he had entered must be closed forever, and no being in heaven nor on earth should pass through it.

In verses 4-14, we have the subordinate position of the Levites. The Levites previous to the exile had become idolatrous, almost to a man; they had gone after the worship of idols (but many of the priestly families had remained faithful to Jehovah) and because of that Ezekiel says that the Levites should not serve in the temple, but should be degraded to a secondary position and only the sons of Zadok could minister in the inner court.

In verses 15-30, Ezekiel gives the precepts and the rules regarding the priests. These priests were of the sons of Zadok. Doubtless, Ezekiel himself belonged to that line. They alone were to go into the inner court; the people were allowed in the outer courts, but only the priests in the inner court. They were to have linen garments and everything was to be so pure and so clean that they were not allowed to wear any garments that would hold perspiration; not one drop of perspiration was allowed to remain in their clothing; they were to be scrupulously clean. Their beards were not to be shaved; they were not to drink any wine while performing the services; they were to marry only a certain class of women, the widow of a priest or a virgin of the house of Israel; they were to teach the people, and they were to be the judges in all cases of the law. The priests were to judge between the litigants. They were to have no possessions, verse 28: "I am their inheritance; and ye shall give them no possessions in Israel; I am their possession." They were to have all the first-fruits of the land and certain other material resources.

In 45:1-8, we have the portion of land assigned to the priests. In almost the center of this land of Israel, a space 25,000 cubits wide extending from the Mediterranean Sea to the river Jordan was set apart for the prince and the priests and the city and the temple. In the center of that was a section 25,000 cubits long and 25,000 cubits wide divided thus: 10,000 cubits of the northern part was for the Levites, 10,000 cubits in the center, for the priests and in the center of that was this section we have just described; south of that, 5,000 cubits wide and 25,000 cubits long was the city area and in the center of that was the city itself, about two miles square; lands on either side also about two miles square; the whole section was about eight miles square. The Levites had a section about two by eight miles; the priests had a section about two by eight miles, and the city, a little more than two by eight. At each end of this section reaching to the Mediterranean Sea on the west side, and to the Jordan on the east, was the portion of the prince, or royal family, the messianic king.

In verses 9-17 we have the ordinances for the prince. He was strictly commanded to be just and square in his dealings, and strange to say, the prince received the tithes from all the people of Israel, and he supplied the priests with all their sacrifices, and sustained them out of what the people brought to him. The prince was a very important personage. He was really the Messiah, the messianic King.

In verses 18-25 we have the ordinances for cleansing the temple, for the atonement, for the Passover, and the various offerings, for which see the text.

In 46:1-15, we have the ordinances for the feasts. They are going to have sacrifices, feasts, pilgrimages, in this blessed messianic age, according to Ezekiel, and he lays down rules for the feasts of the new moon, the sabbath, the Passover, and all other appointed feasts. It is to be the Levitical system carried out to perfection all through the ages. But remember that this is only the Jewish mold into which these blessed events are cast.

In verses 16-18, Ezekiel says that a prince cannot forfeit permanently his inheritance. If he does deed it to any member of another noble family, it reverts back to the royal family in time. Thus these two portions of land are reserved to the line of David forever.

In verses 19-24 we have described the kitchens for the priests. They are to have kitchens in the temple, and in the far northwest corner of the inner court, and in the far southwest corner of this inner court are great buildings that serve as kitchens where the priests are to boil their meat for these services in the temple; then in the same corners of the outer court are large buildings where they are going to boil the meat and sacrifices for the people. The Levites are to do this, as they are not allowed in the inner court.

In 47:1-12 Ezekiel describes a stream which issues from the temple and flows down to the inner court and outer court and out by the east gate through which Ezekiel had entered and through which Jehovah had entered, and which is forever closed, down across the land toward the valley of the Jordan and the Dead Sea. Many have preached from that chapter on "The River of Life." It ran through that desert land, and coursed down to the awful wilderness surrounding the Dead Sea, making everything green and the trees bore their fruit every month, the analogue of John's vision of the River of Life flowing through the great city of God. Then it flows through those deserts and into the Dead Sea healing the water which became alive with fishes and everything the river touches lives. It flows down into the barren deserts, the dead seas of life, the worthless places, and heals them. There are certain portions by that Dead Sea that Ezekiel says were given to salt, the marshes. These were not healed but were given to salt as they needed the salt in the east for their sacrifices and their food, that was a hot climate. Thus closes the vision of Ezekiel of the land of Israel. The land is rich and verdant, teeming with life and fruitage; it is the blessed messianic age. (See the author's sermon on "The River of Life.")

Verses 13-23 describe the boundaries of the Holy Land and the privilege of strangers attaching themselves to the tribes. The boundaries of the Holy Land we cannot exactly fix but they extend west to the Mediterranean Sea; to about the entering in of Hamath for the northern boundary; the eastern boundary is the valley of Jordan down through the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea; the southern boundary is by way of Kadeshbarnea and to the brook of Egypt. That is Ezekiel's Holy Land.

In 48:1-7, he tells what tribes are going to live north of the oblation. This tract of land, 25,000 cubits wide and reaching from the Mediterranean to the Jordan, is the oblation; the tribes that are to live north of the oblation we find in verses 1-7. To the far north is Dan; south of him is Asher, reaching from the Mediterranean to the Jordan Valley; the same for Naphtali, and a similar section for Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben, and Judah, bordering on the oblation which was the center and contained the portion for the Levites, temple, city, and prince. Why he has them in that order we cannot tell.

In verses 8-22 we have the oblation itself and its divisions again described: 25,000 cubits wide, reaching from the Mediterranean to the Jordan and in the center of that square, 10,000 to the north for the Levites, 10,000 for the priests and in the center of that, the temple; then a section, 5,000 wide to the south for the city. We see by this that Ezekiel does not think that the temple should be in the city, and he separated them by a distance of about three miles. The city is about two miles square. It has land on either side of it which is to support the people. Ezekiel makes no provision for the growth of the city, nor for the increase of the Levites, nor for the priests; there they are and they are going to abide forever.

In verses 23-29, he gives the tribes south of the city, and the first one is Benjamin. Ezekiel puts Judah north and Benjamin south, while before, they had always been the reverse. Below that is

Simeon, then Issachar, then Zebulun, and Gad; previously they had been closer together.

Then verses 30-35 tell of the gates of the city. There are three on each of the four sides. This is the analogue of John's magnificent vision of the holy city – "on the east three gates, on the north three gates, and on the south three gates, and on the west three gates." He goes on to show which tribes shall enter in by these several gates: three tribes on one side, etc., grouping Ephraim and Manasseh under the name of Joseph. He closes by saying, verse 35, "And the name of the city from that day shall be Jehovah-shammah," Jehovah is there, that is, all this land is to be sanctified by the presence of Jehovah, from Dan in the far north to Gad in the far south. As one approaches the oblation, it is to be more holy; the domain of the priests and the sanctuary, still more holy. The outer court, the inner court, the temple platform, the holy place, then the most holy of all.

That is Ezekiel's picture of the great messianic age. He believed that all the people that inhabited this land were people who had a new heart and a right spirit, who had the old stony heart taken out of them and a heart of flesh given them; that God's laws were written in their hearts and on their minds; that they walked in his statutes and in his law; converted people, regenerated people, living in bliss upon the earth.

Will this ever be literally fulfilled? Can it be possible that when Jesus Christ comes this will be fulfilled as Ezekiel pictures it? Our pre-millennialist brethren believe that this will be literally fulfilled. They believe that Christianity must revert back to Judaism with Jerusalem as its center. To me it is unthinkable that our gospel with its worldwide vision and mission can become so cabbined, cribbed, coffined, and confined that it will be shut up to Palestine and to Judaism. That would be an unthinkable anticlimax.

QUESTIONS

1. What the date of the writing of this prophecy?

2. What was Ezekiel doing during the thirteen years between his last prophecy before this and this one and what the bearing on this last prophecy?
3. Give a bird's eye view of the temple as Been by Ezekiel.
4. Give a more detailed description of the temple with its parts.
5. Describe Jehovah's entrance into this temple and give its significance.
6. Describe the altar of burnt offerings and the sacrifices to be offered thereon.
7. What the ordinance regarding the east gate and why?
8. What the ordinance respecting the position of the Levites and why?
9. What ordinances regarding the priests?
10. What provisions were made for the priests?
11. What the ordinances regarding the prince and what special provision for the people by the prince?
12. What the ordinances for cleansing the temple, etc.?
13. What the ordinances for the feasts?
14. What the ordinances for the inheritance of the prince?
15. What the special provision for the work of the priests and Levites?
16. Describe Ezekiel's "River of Life" and give its significance.
17. Give the boundaries of Ezekiel's holy land.

18. What tribes are to be north of the oblation?
19. Describe the oblation itself.
20. What the tribes south of the oblation?
21. Describe the gates of the city and give the position of the tribes.
22. What do you say of the fulfilment of this magnificent prophetic picture by Ezekiel?