

"mercy and that every church ought to assemble themselves together on that day to worship God, and show by their example that they esteem the day according to the command, 'Remember, &c.' And we believe that every church ought to set apart one day in every month to acknowledge their Covenant."

Two weeks afterwards I was again at the same place of worship, for we had no preaching; not by the same Elder, but by another with whom, as yet I had never met. We may call him Elder Hatley. Not only the whole church, but the whole settlement was assembled. The house was filled, and without, on the shaded sides of the building numbers of men, who had found seats within their wives, were waiting; but as yet there was no Elder. Within a few minutes after the hour (11 a.m.) however, a stranger is seen by those outside to dismount and tie his horse to a sapling near the door and walk demurely in. A few knew, and most suspected that this was the Elder. He patiently edged his way along through the crowd to the chair which had been left vacant for him behind the little table. Hitherto he had seemed to notice no one. But now he cast an anxious glance around upon the almost solid mass of upturned faces before him and the rows of heads peering in at the windows and door. For a moment he buried his face in both his hands above the table, and then he arose and gave out the hymn from Watts, (the only hymn book in use in that day, and I sometimes heartily wish we could have it restored to our congregations) "Sweet is the work my God, my King." He then prayed. His manner throughout was very solemn. His prayer was short, delivered in a moderately low voice, his language very reverent, and yet it carried with it the seeming that it was addressed to a willing, present auditor. After the prayer another hymn was sung. And I may as well remark here that the reading of a portion of Scripture as a part of public worship was entirely unknown in our early churches; and the same is true of our Methodist brethren of the period. After the hymn he gave out his text:—"Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." Darkness, he said, might arise from either of two causes; the obscuration of the source of light, or the injury or destruction of the organs of sight. Every night when the sun sets it is dark; but if the sky is overcast with clouds and mist, or fog lies upon the earth, then it is darkness. The unfortunate neighbor who is belated on such a night finds it impossible to proceed with safety. Now he plunges into a bog hole; the next step, perhaps he stumbles over a log; and then dashes himself against a tree or a stump. [Illustrations very suitable to the state of the country.] But the darkness mentioned in the text would seem to be of the other kind, internal, *Ye were darkness*, not the atmosphere—the fields,—the highway, nor the villages. Not for want of sun, moon, or stars, but for want of eyes. If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness. The apostle explains it:—"The god of this world blinds the minds of them that believe not," &c. "We learn from the text," he continued, "first, the state of man by nature, [so he pronounced it] here called "darkness," and second, the state to which we are translated

by the grace of God, through faith in Christ Jesus, here called "Light in the Lord." He then proceeded, in the simplest vernacular language, and in a modest colloquial style to illustrate these two great points of evangelical truth. He spoke for more than an hour, but no one thought it long. Upon taking his seat he said, "there is now liberty for all the brethren and sisters, and I hope every one will have something to say for the Lord, if it is no more than the psalmist said,—"The Lord is my light and my salvation." Nor were the brethren and sisters slow to avail themselves of the liberty thus given. Nearly every member of the church, together with several Methodist brethren who were present, arose and spoke; some of them with very great earnestness and fervor, and at considerable length. The meeting continued through about three of the hottest hours of a very hot day, yet none seemed weary, but all, even outsiders seemed to regard it as a very solemn, profitable, and pleasant time.

This manner of conducting public worship, strange as it may seem to you, was not an exception, but the general rule.—Yet, as you rightly observe, the practice was attended with some inconveniences even then. Now it would of course be altogether intolerable. But before deciding upon the propriety or otherwise of the order of these early churches we must take into consideration the circumstances of the time. It would be very unfair to judge them by our standards. The circumstances are greatly changed. The churches of the present day are duly and fully organized with all necessary officers and assistants; supplied with an abundant Christian literature and all suitable means of instruction and advancement; and especially with efficient pastoral oversight. Nearly all these were wanting fifty years ago. Our only Christian literature was the Bible; while the pastoral relation was unknown among us. We had Elders, but not pastors. Our Elders were ordained to the work of the ministry, but to no particular charge. They were in the receipt of no stipend, or salary. They were generally farmers, cultivating their own lands, and depending thereon for their support, and the support of their families. They ordinarily wrought in the field as many days in the week, and as many hours in the day, as any of their members. During slack seasons; between crops, or in winter, when farm duties were not pressing; or when their sons were grown up so as to be able to supply their places at home, these men often took long journeys to supply little destitute churches, or to plant the gospel in new settlements where it had not before been established. When at home, the Elder was expected, as a matter of course, to preside in all the meetings of the church, whether for worship or business, and to preach once on Sunday. But to undertake pastoral duties in the ordinary meaning of the term, you must perceive was entirely out of the question. Under these circumstances, the practice we have alluded to was not only allowable, but perhaps on the whole, most useful. Persons who thus so frequently and so openly became committed to a Christian life, could not fail to feel themselves under a constant obligation to observe its rules, and would be more likely, on that account, to increase in piety and grow in grace.

Thus far I have endeavoured to present to

you a faithful picture of early times. I am aware that I have omitted many things, the memory of which it might be well to preserve, and there remain many others which we have not been able to reach. If, at some future time, we shall be permitted, in the presence of God, to renew these interviews, I may perhaps resume the subject and bring my narrative down to the time when the past begins visibly to melt into the present, and the old gradually gives place to the new. For the present, however, our pleasant interview must be suspended; and it only remains for me, after thanking you for so long and so patiently listening to the well meant but imperfect,—perhaps incoherent narrations of a garrulous old man; to bid you an affectionate adieu.

Sunday School Department.

International Bible Lessons, 1878.

STUDIES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH.

SECOND QUARTER.

SUBJECT	GOLDEN TEXT.
1 Josiah's Early History, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 1-13.	Ecd. iii. 1.
2 The Scriptures Found and Searched, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 14-29.	John vi. 45.
3 Jeremiah in Prison, Jer. xxxix. 1-10.	Jer. xlv. 3.
4 The Reformation, Jer. xxxv. 1-19.	Jer. xxxv. 13.
5 The Captivity of Judah, Jer. li. 1-17.	Lam. i. 1.
6 The Captives in Babylon, Dan. i. 1-17.	Psalm cxli. 10.
7 Nebuchadnezzar's Dream, Dan. ii. 1-45.	Dan. ii. 38.
8 The Fiery Furnace, Dan. iii. 1-27.	Dan. iii. 77.
9 The Handwriting on the Wall, Dan. v. 1-31.	Dan. v. 27.
10 Daniel in the Lion's Den, Dan. vi. 1-16-23.	Dan. vi. 25.
11 Messiah's Kingdom, Dan. vii. 9-14.	Psalm 20, 6.
12 The Decree of Cyrus, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 22-23.	Isaiah xli. 21.
REVIEW.	Isaiah xli. 19.

Prepared for the CHRISTIAN HELPER.

APRIL 21.—**Jeremiah in Prison.**—Jer. xxxix. 1-19. B.C. about 590-588.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not." Jer. xxxix. 2.

INTRODUCTION.

An interval of about 34 or 35 years intervenes between the date of our last lesson and this; and the history of this intermediate period should receive a more very brief attention.

After renewing the Covenant between God and His people (2 Chron. xxxiv. 29-33), and celebrating a solemn Passover which had not been held since the days of its first institution (2 Kings xxi. 23; 2 Chron. xxxv. 1-19), good king Josiah does not seem to have carried his work of reformation any further;—and his reforms certainly did not affect the heart of the nation, which continued utterly corrupt.

The circumstances of the death of Josiah are recorded in 2 Kings xxxv. 29, 30, and 2 Chron. xxxv. 20-27; and within four years afterwards Judah was made tributary by Nebuchadnezzar (B.C. 606), though the final destruction of Jerusalem and the kingdom, did not occur till B.C. 587. The date of the *seventy years' captivity* is usually placed at B.C. 606, when Daniel and his companions were among those carried away to Babylon (Dan. i. 2; Jer. xxv. 1, 11, 12; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 6, etc.).

Dean Stanley says:—"Josiah was the last royal hero of Israel." With his death the history of the