

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

Verse 25. Then. After the Jews have been restored to Palestine. **I. God. Sprinkle clean water upon you.** The ceremonial system of Moses used the sprinkling of clean water as a symbol of spiritual cleansing, and some have believed that this usage was connected with the origin of the Christian regulation of baptism. **Ye shall be clean.** The spiritual-minded Hebrew understood such a ceremony to be merely typical, just as the spiritual-minded Christian understands baptism not to work of itself any change in the human soul, but to symbolize that change. **Filthiness . . . idols.** The moral corruption of the Hebrew nation was thoroughly interwoven with the idolatrous systems that they adopted from surrounding nations. The bitterness of the prophets against idolatry becomes additionally reasonable when we recognize the foul rites of the ancient religions. **Will I cleanse you.** God used the captivity as the means for cleansing the Hebrews from idolatry. They were taken far from their own land, and from other nations which shared their idolatrous practices, and in suffering and privation were drawn nearer to the God they had forsaken.

26. A new heart. A new spring of life, a new center of force, a new principle of action. **Stony heart . . . heart of flesh.** In other places a fleshy heart is used to indicate carnal, unworthy desires; but here the contrast is between a man whose heart has become petrified, and one whose heart is full of living force and attending to its vital functions. The sinner's heart is impervious to God's gracious influence, a dead soul in the midst of physical life.

27. I will put my Spirit within you. God himself will dwell in the human heart and furnish a new motive for every action, so that good deeds shall be the natural fruitage of the life. **Ye shall keep my judgments.** It will be natural to them to do so, because God has given them a new nature.

28. Ye shall dwell in the land. God's plan of revelation was not yet completed, and it was necessary for the Jews to remain in the land that God gave to their fathers until the scriptural revelation was finished. Always their security in Palestine was conditioned on their faithfulness to him.

29. All your uncleannesses. Back of the captivity of the Jews and their accompanying disaster lay the awful fact of sin, and before peace could be established between them and God, and prosperity be resumed, their "uncleanness" must be purged. This is the case with every sinner today. **I will call for the corn.** Very beautiful is this figure which makes the grain of the field

the servant of God, and represents him as calling for it as a man might call for his servant.

30. I will multiply. Food shall be in abundance. **No more reproach of famine.** This phrase and that of the twenty-eighth verse, "I will be your God," both point to the singular religiousness of the ancient world. Thoroughly corrupt as it was, it was nevertheless intensely religious, and when a nation experienced calamity, all the nations about reproached it because of the feebleness of its god, who was expected to defend it. The Jews reproached their heathen neighbors, and they in turn reproached the Jews, because Jehovah seemed not to be able to compete with the heathen gods. From their point of view famine was as much a cause of reproach as defeat on a battle-field.

31. Then shall ye remember. Recall their former history, and for the first time see its exceeding sinfulness. **Loathe yourselves in your own sight.** It is easy to hate the sin of the man who lives across the street. It is easy to hate a sin committed by ourselves if we can in any way separate it from our present responsibility. But when a man loathes himself "in his own sight" for his iniquities he is a truly repentant sinner.

32. Not for your sakes. You did not merit this. Two great truths are wrapped up in these sentences: (1) No sinner deserves the salvation that God graciously offers; (2) The Jews were unconsciously working out God's great plan of revelation and redemption, and the continued and exceptional mercies vouchsafed their nation were based on this.

33. In the day that I shall have cleansed you. Here recurs again the truth that all their prosperity pivoted on their purity of heart. We have larger views of life than the Hebrews could have had. We know that it does not end with the funeral and the grave, and that true prosperity can only be measured when eternal life is taken into account. With this truth in mind, it is safe to say that to-day prosperity as really hinges on purity of heart as it did then. Besides, there is a force which even skeptics have recognized in all civilizations, which "makes for righteousness;" righteous living tends to prosperity in the long run, even in this world.

34. The desolate land. One has to go to Palestine, or at least to familiarize himself with its condition by careful study, to understand how desolate a land may become—miles and miles of broken stone, undulating over the hills and into the valleys, here and there varied by a fill which becomes a torrent in the rainy season and dries in the heat of summer. But the river-bed and the