

scholars, remind them of the dates of the captivity, and return of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Isaiah lived at Jerusalem in the early part of his prophetic life and probably he never lived far from that city.

The prophets Jonah, Hosea, and Micah lived in his time.

In the days of Isaiah "public morals were corrupted, and the fear of the Lord was forgotten. Luxury and vice prevailed, and idolatry took the place of the worship of the true God." Hezekiah sought to reform abuses, and to bring the people back to God; but it seemed to be only a temporary reformation. — *Peloubet*. The kingdom of Israel was broken up, and its people carried into captivity by the Assyrians B. C. 722. The kingdom of Judah was rapidly ripening for the Babylonian captivity.

Isaiah's character stands before us as one of almost superhuman elevation. When we think of him during those 60 years, discharging so many varied offices, expostulating, reproving, expounding, comforting, doing all with deepest resignation and unflinching faith towards God, and with serene dignity towards men, we seem to be contemplating one who, while retaining all purely human sympathies, has a portion of seraphic nature communicated to him. — *Cook*.

"The natural and obvious division of Isaiah is into two parts, the first of which closes with the 39th chapter, and the latter of which comprises the remainder of the book. The main drift and scope of the latter part is to portray events to come—the certain deliverance of the Jews from the bondage in Babylon, and the higher deliverance of the world under the Messiah, of which the former was the *augurer and emblem*." — *Barnes*.

The writings of Isaiah are full of the sublime figures and the most beautiful ornaments of poetry. Jerome says that Isaiah is more evangelist than prophet. It seems sometimes as if he were writing a history of the past rather than a prophecy. The beauty of the style is partly lost in translation. There are in the New Testament many quotations from Isaiah, some of them literal. Teachers that like to give exercises for the following Sunday to their classes might ask them to find some of these quotations.

CONTEMPORARY HISTORY.

Isaiah lived in a *forming* period. During his life Assyria waned; its destroyer Babylon, was firmly established. Rome was founded 753 B. C.; and the Macedonian dynasty, B. C. 750 by Caranus. Syracuse, a Corinthian colony founded by Archias, B. C. 734.

EXPOSITION.

V. 1. Behold my servant. Of the whole passage, Bishop Lowth says: "St. Matthew has applied it directly to Christ; nor can it, with any justice, or any propriety, be applied to any other person or character whatever." See Matt. 12: 18-21. Christ, though "being in the form of God," yet "took upon Him the form of a servant." "Being upheld by the Divine power, in His human nature, He finished the work which was given Him to do." — *Scott*. Mine elect. The one I have chosen to fulfill my great purposes. Selected because of His fitness, His peculiar excellence. — *Doligeth*. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." I have put my Spirit upon Him. "For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him." Christ was divine, yet when He became flesh and dwelt among men, He was the recipient of the Holy Spirit without measure. "No mere human intelligence could be thus receptive of the Holy Spirit of God." — *Afford*. Judgment to the Gentiles, or "make known to them the truths, precepts, and ordinances of God, that they may become accepted believers." — *Scott*.

V. 2. He shall not cry nor lift up His voice. This refers to the quiet and unostentatious ministry of our Lord.

V. 3. A bruised reed etc. "The word 'reed' means the cane or calamus which grows up in marshy or wet places." — *Barnes*. A reed is a very frail thing, easily bent, easily broken, yet in the bruised reed, there is some feeble life still, and that will not be extinguished. And though such a reed be the emblem of our spiritual condition, yet there is hope for us in God. Barnes quotes from Luther: "He doth not cast away, nor crush, nor condemn the wounded in conscience, those who are terrified in view of their sins, the weak in faith and practice, but watches over and cherishes them, makes them whole, and affectionately embraces them." Smoking flax, or the weak made from flax. "The word rendered 'smoke' means that which is weak. Small, thin, feeble; then, that which is just ready to go out, or to be extinguished; and the phrase refers literally to the expiring wick of a lamp." The least spark of true religion in the heart, will not be extinguished, but will be nurtured into a glowing flame. This is not written to encourage a low state of piety, or to teach us that we may remain in passive indifference without censure. But it is written to encourage all who, conscious of the feebleness and dimness of their faith, long for a stronger and clearer light. "The word *smoking* shows that he maintains and cherishes, not *darkens* what sparks, though feeble and hardly perceptible." — *Calvin*. Judgment—the true religion. Unto truth Unto victory, Matt. 12: 29.

V. 4. We shall not fall nor be discouraged. Barnes says of the word translated 'fall': "There may be an allusion here to that which is applied to the flax." We may be disheartened and feeble. He never falls nor is discouraged, and He will carry on His glorious work unflinchingly to a triumphant completion. The isles shall wait. Missionaries have sometimes found the heathen dissatisfied with their own religions, and vaguely expecting some new system. This is said to have been the case in the Sandwich Islands. His law. "Law" in Scripture sometimes stands for the whole revelation of God in His word.

V. 5. This verse introduces an address to the Messiah. God has been speaking of Him, He now speaks to Him. The introduction is a description of God's creative and sustaining power. The heavens, the earth, everything on the face of the earth, the people dwelling upon it, and the breath and life of all, have come from God in the first place, and continue to exist only through His power. The sustaining power of God is but a continual repetition of the creative act.

V. 6. It is this great God that has called Christ to His peculiar work for men, and He is able to sustain Him in it. A covenant—that is, as the mediator of the new covenant. A light. He is the light of the world, bringing light for all, Jews and Gentiles. We know that, until He came, the Gentiles sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death.

V. 7. He hath called His people "out of darkness into His marvellous light," and released those who were "bound in affliction and iron," who were in the snare of the devil, and "taken captive by him at his will."

V. 8. I am Jehovah. An address now to the people. This solemn name denotes essential eternal being. This name distinguishes Him from all false gods. See Ps. 83: 18; Ps. 96: 5. In the latter passage, it will be seen that the word translated *Lord* is *Jehovah*. My glory will I not give, etc. See Ex. 20: 3, 4, 5.

V. 9. Former predictions by the mouths of the prophets had been fulfilled. That was a guarantee that "the new things" also would come to pass. See Is. 37: 7; Is. 38: 5.

V. 10. A new song. The great deliverances wrought for Israel by the Lord were often celebrated by new songs made for the occasion, as the Song of Moses, and Song of Deborah. All the inhabitants of the earth are here called upon

to sing a new song, for the deliverance Christ should accomplish, not for the Jews only, but also for the Gentiles.

REMARKS.

1. How kind, how gentle, is the hand of Christ. The bruised reed is not broken by its touch. The wounded spirit can bear that healing hand to be laid upon it. Let us not fear to approach Christ with our complaints. There is none other who will deal so tenderly with us. We need not hope for better comfort anywhere.

2. Those who will not take God for their master, are not free for all that. They are slaves of sin, captives of Satan. And he may give his servants a loose rein now, yet they are every day more firmly bound, and in the end Satan and sin will have unhindered control of them.

3. The name *Jehovah* was and is regarded by the Jews with peculiar reverence. Fear of taking it in vain caused them to refrain from all use of it. At last its pronunciation was forgotten, and it was referred to as "The Name." It was thought that the utterance of it would shake heaven and earth, and as it could not be denied that miracles were really wrought by Christ, it was thought that He performed them by using this name. The writing of the name was done with the utmost care, and a few would not tread on a fragment of paper on the floor, lest it might have the sacred name upon it.

There is an old synagogue in the City of Prague, whose inside walls are black with the accumulations of many years. It has remained for generations unwarmed, because it is said the name *Jehovah* was somewhere written upon it, and as the spot is unknown, no one would wash the wall for fear of erasing the holy name. We may think this undue reverence, let us be careful not to err in the opposite and more dangerous extreme.

PRIMARY LESSONS.

For the quarter commencing Apr. 6, 1890.

Prepared by Mrs. J. C. Yule.

Apr. 6.—Sanctified Affliction.—Job 33: 14-30.

Golden Text.—Hebrews 12: 5.

WHEN? WHERE? WHAT?

LESSON BASIS.—The five W's.

SKETCH.

The when, where and by whom of the Book of Job are absolutely unknown—the things it teaches and why they are taught can be clearly discovered only by patient and careful study of the book itself. Job, the afflicted man of God, is represented