

Josephus the king's wives and children were with him when he was captured. **Riblah.** There were two Riblahs; this was the place to which Pharaoh-necho had summoned Jehoahaz (2 Kings 23. 33). It is on the road between Babylon and Palestine, about two hundred miles from Jerusalem, in the midst of a fertile region. **Gave judgment upon him.** Commentators call attention to the fact that this was the trial of a common criminal; Zedekiah had forfeited his kingship by breaking his oath.

6. Slew the sons of Zedekiah. It was the refinement of cruelty to make the last scene the poor king's eyes beheld the death agonies of his sons. **Slew all the nobles.** They had been the king's chief advisers in his rebellion, and abundant opportunity had been given by Nebuchadnezzar's officers for the submission of all those who could be induced to submit.

7. Put out Zedekiah's eyes. Eastern people regarded a blind man as incapable of ruling. Already Zedekiah's daughters had been taken captive. **Bound him with chains.** Probably bound him hand and foot. A tradition says that when in Babylon Zedekiah was forced to work in a mill.

8. Burned the king's house. The palace. **The houses of the people.** That is, the better class of houses. **Brake down the walls.** Overthrowing the entire city. This was prophecy fulfilled. Ezekiel (12. 10-13) foretells that Zedekiah shall live and die in Babylon as a captive, but

shall never see the city; while Jeremiah (32. 3-5) declares that Zedekiah shall speak with Nebuchadnezzar and gaze into his eyes. He also (21. 10; 34. 2; 38. 18) foretells the destruction by fire of the king's house. The slaughter of the common people during this destruction of Jerusalem was fearful.

9. The remnant of the people. All who had not been taken to Riblah as ringleaders, or been murdered or taken possession of as the slaves of individual soldiers. **Those that fell away.** The deserters. Read 2 Kings 25. 13-17; Jer. 52. 17-24.

10. Left of the poor. Those who were unable to revolt.

No sufferer from the seige of Jerusalem felt more acutely the sorrows of his nation than did Jeremiah. Strangely enough, the downfall of his nation was an occasion of personal relief to him. By order of the Babylonian commander, Nebuzaradan, he was set free from the punishment which he suffered under King Zedekiah, and though in one text he is represented as having been taken to Ramah in chains with the main body of captives, it is plain that the Babylonian feeling toward him was in the main friendly. This was, humanly speaking, the result of the prophet's constant pleading with the Hebrew king to make peace with Nebuchadnezzar; and there are indications that the hatred with which the ungodly Jews regarded him continued throughout his life. Where he died is not certainly known.

CRITICAL NOTES.

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An interesting question of textual criticism is connected with the first fourteen verses of this chapter. An unhappy division of chapters places the first sentence at the close of chap. 38; verses 1 and 2 then come in awkwardly, and have to be put in parentheses, as is done in the Revised Version; the name of Nergal-sharezer is written twice in verse 3, and again in verse 13, and the whole passage is identical in substance with chap. 52. 4-16, and 2 Kings 25. 1-12. Verses 4-13 are wanting in the Septuagint version. For these reasons not a few eminent critics have concluded that verses 1 and 2 and 4-13 are an interpolation. If we thus amend the text, retaining verse 3 (revised by help of verse 13, which seems to have been torn apart from it) and connecting it with verse 14, and begin the passage with the closing words of chap. 38, we read consecutively as follows: "And it came to pass when Jerusalem was taken, that all the princes of the King of Babylon came in and sat in the middle gate, Nebuzaradan, chief of the guard; Samgar-nebo, prince of the swordsmen; Nebushasban, chief-eunuch; Nergal-sharezer, chief-magician; and all the rest of the

princes of the King of Babylon, and they sent and took Jeremiah out of the court of the guard, and committed him unto Gedaliah," etc., as in verse 14. It is not improbable that such an interpolation might have become incorporated with the text, and the emendation proposed above restores a simple and continuous narrative without appropriating other portions of the book. But whatever the real facts of the history of the text, this passage contains an account of the capture of Jerusalem and the fate of Zedekiah not inconsistent with what we elsewhere read on this subject, and apparently compiled from the sources named. The devout student should have no fear of the results of scientific criticism. No fact or doctrine of any importance to our faith would be imperiled by ascertaining that such a passage as that stricken out by the emendation made above was no portion of the genuine Scriptures. As God has given us his word in the language and style of men, such as is found in other books, so he has left the sacred books to be transmitted from generation to generation, subject to the same kind of corruptions of text as that which is common to all ancient literature.