

SCHOLARS' NOTES.

(From the International Lessons for 1878, by Edwin W. Rice, as issued by American Sunday-School Union.)

LESSON XVIII.

MAY 5.

THE CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH. [About 586 B. C.]

READ Jer. 52: 1-11. RECITE vs. 6, 8.

DAILY READINGS.—M.—Jer. 52: 1-11. T.—2 Kings 25: 1-12. W.—Ezek. 17: 11-21. Th.—Deut. 28: 47-58. F.—Lam. 1: 1-11. Sa.—Ezek. 24: 1-14. S.—Luke 21: 20-33.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; therefore she is removed.—Lamentations 1: 8.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—The rebellious are punished.

CONNECTED HISTORY.—Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem after a brief siege, B. C. 605, and dethroned Jehoiakim who was afterward restored to his throne as a vassal; but his treasures were carried off to Babylon and the vessels of the sanctuary used in the temple of Belus-Daniel and his three companions, with others, were carried into Chaldea. It is from this period that the commencement of the seventy years' captivity is usually dated. Eight years later a second detachment of Jews, numbering ten thousand of the chief people, were brought to Chaldea. [In this company came the prophet Ezekiel.] Finally, in 586 B. C. came the fall of Jerusalem, and the captivity which is the subject of our lesson. [This lesson agrees almost word for word in the Hebrew with 2 Kings 24: 18-25: 7.]

TO THE SCHOLAR.—Try to get a clear idea of the events which led to the Babylonian captivity. Read some Old Testament history, as Smith's or Blake's, if you can get access to any. Study the mutual relations of Babylon, Judah, and Egypt. Mark how, in God's providence, prophecy was fulfilled and divine justice executed upon the guilty nation.

NOTE.—Zed-e-ki-ah (Justice of Jehovah), last king of Judah, son of Josiah, brother to King Jehoiachaz, half-brother to Jehoiakim, and uncle to Jehoiachin. He did that which was evil, 2 Kings 24: 19; comp. 2 Chron. 36: 12, 13; Jer. 37: 2; Ezek. 17: 13-19; 21: 25; reigned 598-588 B. C. His capture by the Babylonians had been prophesied Jer. 38: 23; Ezek. 12: 13. Nebuchadnezzar, an older form, found only in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, for Nebuchadnezzar, the second king of Babylon; reigned 604-561 B. C.; distinguished for his military conquests and for his extension and adornment of Babylon. His name occurs about ninety times in the Scriptures, being found in the books of Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Bab-yl-on, the great capital of the Chaldean monarchy; contained Nebuchadnezzar's palace the wall of which was six miles in circumference; destroyed by Alexander the Great 325 B. C. Among the extensive ruins have been found many bricks stamped with the name of Nebuchadnezzar. Rib-lah, a city on the Orontes River, 200 miles north-east of Jerusalem. Land of Ha'-math a part of the great valley of the Orontes, or Cole-Syria, between the ranges of Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon.

EXPLANATIONS AND QUESTIONS.

LESSON TOPICS.—(I.) REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH. (II.) CAPTURE OF JERUSALEM. (III.) CAPTIVITY OF ZEDEKIAH.

I. REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH. (1.) ZEDEKIAH, see Notes; HAMUTAL, King Josiah's wife, whose home was at Libnah, five miles west of Elutheropolis. (2.) ALL THAT JEHOIAKIM HAD DONE, he was a very wicked man, oppressive and cruel, Ezek. 19: 5-7, covetous, unjust, luxurious, bloodthirsty, comp. Jer. 22: 13-17; 26: 20-23; 36: 23. (3.) REBELLED, he had taken the oath of allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar. 2 Chron. 36: 13; Ezek. 17: 13.

I. QUESTIONS.—Zedekiah's father? Mother? Brothers? Duration of his reign? Character? Give an account of some of the evil deeds of Jehoiakim. How was Jehovah's feeling indicated? What action of the king ensured his destruction? To whom had he taken an oath of allegiance? State the circumstances.

II. CAPTURE OF JERUSALEM. [This siege was prophesied by Ezekiel in his exile. Ezek. 21.] (4.) NEBUCHADNEZZAR, see Notes; PORTS, ramparts. (5.) UNTO THE ELEVENTH YEAR, the siege was sustained for 18 months. (6.) FAMINE WAS SORE, inhuman horrors were perpetrated in consequence, comp. Lam. 2: 20, 21; 4: 9, 10, and Stanley's "Jewish Church." This agreed with the prophetic announcements, Rev. 26: 29; Dent. 28: 52-57; Jer. 15: 2; 27: 13; Ezek. 4: 16, 17. (7.) KING'S GARDEN, at the mouth of the Tyropoon valley, the south-east corner of the city; BY WAY OF THE PLAIN, over the Mount of Olives, eastward, toward the Jordan valley.

II. QUESTIONS.—By whom was the city besieged? For how long? Give illustrations from the Lamentations concerning the terror of the famine. Predictions that this should be the result of apostasy. The flight was at what time? In which direction?

III. CAPTIVITY OF ZEDEKIAH. (8.) PLAINS OF JERICHO, the Arabah or great plain along the Jordan, seven miles wide at Jericho, twenty miles north-east of Jerusalem. (9.) RIBLAH... HAMATH, see Notes; GAVE JUDGMENT UPON HIM, as guilty of rebellion and perjury, Ezek. 23: 24. (11.) PUT OUT THE EYES, a common punishment in the East, fulfilling the prophecy of Ezekiel 12: 16.

III. QUESTIONS.—By whom was the fleeing king pursued? Where overtaken? Where carried? By whom judged? Fate of his sons? His own punishments? Prophecies fulfilled?

What does this lesson teach us as to—

- (1) The horrors of war?
(2) The fulfillment of prophecy?
(3) God's use of the world powers in accomplishing his purposes?

LESSON XIX.

MAY 12.

THE CAPTIVES IN BABYLON. [About 605 B. C.]

READ Dan. 1: 8-17. RECITE vs. 12, 15.

DAILY READINGS.—M.—Dan. 1: 8-17. T.—Dan. 1: 17. W.—Gen. 39: 1-6. Th.—Jud. 13: 4-14. F.—Prov. 31: 1-9. Sa.—Prov. 23: 1-8, 29-35. S.—1 Cor. 9: 19-27.

GOLDEN TEXT.—A good understanding have all they that do his commandments.—Psalm 111: 10.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—God honors them that honor him.

CONNECTED HISTORY.—Daniel and his companions were carried into Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar's first siege of Jerusalem, about 605 B. C., nearly 20 years before the final captivity of Judah, which was the subject of the last lesson.

TO THE SCHOLAR.—Mark what a good example Daniel was in piety, temperance, courtesy, studiousness, and wisdom.

NOTES.—Dan-i-el (God my Judge), a Jew of noble, and perhaps royal, birth; carried to Babylon probably when about fourteen years old. His name changed to Belshazzar (prince of Bel); occupied a high position in the court of three kings, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Cyrus; survived during the whole 70 years of the captivity, and reached the age of nearly ninety years, probably. Prince of the Eunuuchs corresponding to the Kistlar Aga, or chief of the eunuuchs, among the modern Turks. Mel-zar, not a proper name, but a word used with the definite article, and from its derivation meaning "overseer over the drinks"—i. e., the steward or chief butler. Han-an-ah (God is gracious), whose name was changed to Shadrach, from Rak, the sun-god. [Note that it was very common to give new names to captives. The Hebrew names signifying Jehovah were displaced by names in honor of the Babylonian gods.] Meshach (who is as God?) whose name was changed to Meshach, from Shak, the earth-god. Azar-babel (God a helper), whose name was changed to A-bed-ne-go—i. e., servant of Nego, the fire-god. Is. 46: 1.



ASSYRIAN STEWARD OR "PRINCE OF EUNUCHS" BEFORE THE KING. [From a sculpture of Nimroud.]

ILLUSTRATIONS.—An Assyrian steward or prince of eunuuchs is represented in a sculpture found at Nimroud as beardless and standing before the king, holding in his right hand a fan or fly-flapper, and in his other a salver, on which he has handed a cup of wine to his master. The salver has a handle carved in the form of a bird's head. Rabshakeh was also a "chief of the eunuuchs" as his name, "Rabsaris," indicates.

EXPLANATIONS AND QUESTIONS.

LESSON TOPICS.—(I.) DANIEL'S PURPOSE. (II.) HIS PROPOSED TEST. (III.) THE DIVINE APPROVAL.

I. DANIEL'S PURPOSE. (1.) DANIEL, see Notes; PURPOSED, determined, unlike many in captivity, compare Hosea 9: 3, 4; DEFILE HIMSELF, by eating that which was ceremonially unclean, or of which portions had been offered to the idol-gods of Babylon, compare Acts 10: 14; 1 Cor. 8: 7, 10; 10: 18-21, 28. (10.) WORSE LIKING, looking more gloomy and less healthy, comp. Matt. 6: 16; OF YOUR SORT, your circle in age and rank; ENDANGER MY HEAD, death was the penalty for disobedience, and the passionate and bloody Nebuchadnezzar would be likely to inflict it.

I. QUESTIONS.—Date of the events? Persons carried to Babylon? For what purpose? v. 4. Hebrew names of the four chief ones? Babylonian names given? Signification of each? Daniel's determination? How might he defile himself? The New Testament rule as to things offered to idols? How was Daniel regarded? v. 9. Fear of the prince of eunuuchs? Grounds for such fear?

II. HIS PROPOSED TEST. (11.) MELZAR, see Notes. (12.) PULSE TO EAT, "of the seed-fruits"—i. e., a vegetable diet in general; compare Ezekiel 4: 9; for some of the vegetables; WATER TO DRINK, instead of wine. (13.) OUR COUNTENANCES, our general physical appearance.

II. QUESTIONS.—To whom did Daniel make his proposition? His office? For how long a time was the test to continue? What were they to eat? Meaning of "pulse"? Mention some of the vegetables grown in Babylon. What was their drink to be? Other Scripture examples of total abstinence from wine and

liquor? [Deut. 29: 6; Samson, Jud. 13: 5; compare Num. 6: 3; John the Baptist, Luke 1: 15] By what comparison was the result to be determined? How was the proposal received?

III. THE DIVINE APPROVAL. (15.) FAIRER AND FATTER, not only their faces, but their bodies generally. (16.) TOOK AWAY, no more gave. (17.) ALL LEARNING AND WISDOM, this is God's gift, bestowed also upon Bezaleel, Ex. 31: 3, Solomon, 1 Kings 3: 12, and promised to those who ask for it, James 1: 5; VISIONS AND DREAMS, comp. Num. 12: 16; Joseph had a like wisdom, Gen. 40: 12; 41: 15, 38.

III. QUESTIONS.—How long was the test continued? Appearances of their countenances? Effect upon the steward (Melzar)? What was given by God to the four? What especially to Daniel? Similar wisdom in Joseph? How may we get wisdom from the same source? Do you ask for it? How often and how earnestly?

What facts in this lesson teach us— (1) That temperance is healthful for body and soul? (2) That one may be godly in the midst of ungodly surroundings? (3) That wisdom is the gift of God?

LESSON XX.

MAY 19.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM. [About 603 B. C.]

READ Dan. 2: 36-45. RECITE vs. 44, 45.

DAILY READINGS.—M.—Dan. 2: 36-45. T.—Dan. 2: 24-35. W.—Isa. 41: 21-29. Th.—Jer. 27: 5-11. F.—Luke 1: 68-80. Sa.—Rev. 11: 15-19. S.—Psalm 72.

GOLDEN TEXT.—There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets.—Dan. 2: 28.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—The Lord rules in the kingdoms of men.

CONNECTED HISTORY.—The events of this lesson took place very soon after Daniel and his companions had completed their three years of training and shown their wisdom before King Nebuchadnezzar.

TO THE SCHOLAR.—Form as clear a conception as possible of the various parts of the image seen in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and from your secular histories learn something of the four great world-kingdoms indicated, with their territory, characteristics, duration, and preparation for the Messiah's kingdom.

EXPLANATIONS AND QUESTIONS.

LESSON TOPICS.—(I.) NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S KINGDOM. (II.) THREE SUCCEEDING KINGDOMS. (III.) MESSIAH'S KINGDOM.

I. NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S KINGDOM. (36.) WE, Daniel and his three companions, v. 17: INTERPRETATION, comp. Gen. 41: 18. (37.) KING OF KINGS, the general title of the Oriental sovereigns of the great kingdoms formed by subduing many weaker kings. Ezra 7: 12; Ezek. 26: 7; (38.) RULER OVER THEM ALL, God gave man dominion over all creatures, Gen. 1: 26; Ps. 8: 6-8; Heb. 2: 7, 8; THIS HEAD OF GOLD, you, as the king and representative of Babylon, "the golden city." Is. 14: 4.

I. QUESTIONS.—Whom did Nebuchadnezzar first call upon to interpret his dream? Dan. 2: 2. Their reply? Punishment threatened? Order for their death? Daniel's prayer? Description of the image? vs. 31-35. Nebuchadnezzar's title? From whom had he received his kingdom? How far did it extend? Over what creatures? What part of the image did he represent?

II. THREE SUCCEEDING KINGDOMS. (39.) ANOTHER KINGDOM, secular history shows that this was the Medo-Persian kingdom, which overthrew Babylon twenty-five years after Nebuchadnezzar's death; it extended from Asia Minor to the Indus, and included Egypt on the south; INFERIOR TO THESE, in antiquity, unity, stability, wealth, and magnificence, although not in territory and duration; THIRD KINGDOM OF BRASS, the Macedonian kingdom, by which, under Alexander the Great, the Persian kingdom was overthrown, 321 B. C.; after Alexander's death this was separated into different divisions; RULE OVER ALL THE EARTH, Alexander desired to be called "king over all the world," and wished there were other worlds to conquer. (40.) FOURTH KINGDOM (comp. Dan. 7, 8), commentators differ as to this. Three views have been held—(1) That the fourth kingdom was the Roman (this is supported by the majority of commentators); (2) that it was the Macedonian kingdom under the successors of Alexander, Egypt under the Ptolemies, and Syria under the Seleucids; (3) that the fourth kingdom is yet to come. (42.) PARTLY BROKEN, brittle as earthenware. Comp. Ps. 2: 9; Rev. 2: 27. (43.) MINGLE THEMSELVES... WITH MEN, a great variety of nations and races were mingled in the Roman empire by marriage, conquest, and alliance, but they were not homogeneous, did not cleave one to another.

II. QUESTIONS.—The kingdom arising after the Babylonian? Its extent? The third kingdom? Under what king? Its extent? Duration? The fourth kingdom? State the three opinions. Which view is sustained by the majority or commentators? Characteristics of the fourth kingdom? Two-fold composition? What denoted by iron? What by clay? Extent of the Roman empire when Christ came?

III. MESSIAH'S KINGDOM. (44.) THESE KINGS, of the fourth kingdom: GOD... SET UP A KINGDOM, the Messianic kingdom of his Son Jesus Christ; SHALL NEVER BE DESTROYED, Dan. 7: 14, 27; Luke 1: 33; 1 Cor. 15: 24; Ps. 43: 6; Heb. 1: 8; Is. 9: 7; Rev. 11: 15. [Notice that this kingdom is (1) of divine origin, (2) of universal extent, (3) of eternal duration.] (45.) THE STONE, v. 34; Is. 28: 16; Matt. 21: 42, 44, Acts 4: 10, 11; THE

MOUNTAIN, Mount Zion, Is. 2: 2; Mic. 4: 2; CERTAIN, prophetic and will be fulfilled. Dan. 8: 26.

III. QUESTIONS.—Who would set up a kingdom? How long to continue? Give Scripture references showing that it shall endure forever. Its relation to worldly kingdoms? What is referred to by "the stone out of the mountain"? What was broken by it? Do you not wish a part in this everlasting kingdom of God? How may we all obtain it? How are we taught in this lesson—

- (1) That only God can reveal future events?
(2) That the world-kingdoms, in spite of themselves, help forward the kingdom of God?
(3) That Christ's kingdom will be everlasting?
(4) That those who have their part in it will enjoy everlasting life?

THE DELAY in receiving our campaign map from the hands of the lithographers has occasioned considerable delay in the mailing of the last two numbers, and, even to the present, there are some subscribers to whom the maps have not been sent. With this issue, however, we expect that every subscriber will have received a copy of the map, which, we hope, will prove of value to him. We also will have got up to date in the issuing of the Sunday-school lessons, and will secure their arrival at least a week before they are to be taught in the school.

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