

his sin, vassalage to Assyria and duplicity.

2. Discuss the final downfall of Samaria and the reasons for it. Refer to ch. 18 : 9-12 for additional information from the records of Judah. The deportation of the people and the settlement of the Samaritans mark a new stage in history.

Having set forth the historical events, turn to the moral issues involved in them. Vs. 7-23 deal with the real reasons for the downfall of the Northern kingdom. It is a history of sin in its national aspects. There are some principles noteworthy, and these should be discussed in the fuller light of the New Testament : (a) The downfall was not the result of any special or individual sin, but was the result of continuous, persistent sin and rebellion, especially the sin of idolatry, vs. 7-12. Compare this with the fall of Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, and see Jesus' comment in Matt. 23 : 37. When does it become too late to mend ? (b) It was sin in the face of God's persistent love and warning, v. 13. For further illustration, see Jer. 2 : 5 ; 18 : 11 ; 25 : 5 ; 35 : 15. (Compare John 3 : 19.) (c) It came only when they absolutely refused to obey the will of God, vs. 14-17. For the general summary of the moral and spiritual factors in the downfall, consider vs. 21-23.

The Golden Text calls attention to the hand of God in history. Natural law is God's method in this world, and it is laden with blessing for the obedient, and retribution for the sinner. The point to emphasize is that God stands eternally opposed to sin and eternally in favor of holiness. Nations, society and individuals are all being made or marred, by the attitude they take towards God. Press the question, Are we for or against God in daily life ?

For Teachers of the Senior Scholars

We have come now to the downfall of the Northern kingdom. Who was the first king ? Who was the last ? The most of them were a bad lot. The wonder is not that the kingdom perished so soon, but that it lasted so long. It was a decline and fall from the first. Discuss :

1. *The Captivity*, vs. 1-6. Bring out, by questions and explanations, the character of

Hoshea, the means by which he gained the throne, his submission to Shalmaneser, and then his rebellion and imprisonment. Take up the interesting detail of Hoshea's application to So, king to Egypt, for help against his Assyrian master. Next, follow out the siege of Samaria, begun by Shalmaneser and completed by Sargon. Have the scholars note the time occupied in reducing the city,—a testimony to its strength and the courage and determination of its defenders. Talk over Sargon's account of the final capture of the city and of the number of Israelites taken into captivity. Bring out the reasons for Assyria's adopting the policy of deportation in dealing with conquered peoples, namely that their national spirit might be broken and that none might be left who were likely to stir up rebellion against their new masters.

2. *Causes Which Led to the Captivity*, vs. 7-12. Make it clear that sin was the great cause. The people of Israel lived like the heathen, they worshiped what the heathen worshiped. The cause of the captivity is made very plain in the Lesson. The people were taken captive by sin before they were taken captive by the Assyrians and led away to the strange land of Babylon.

Sin always leads into captivity. This is true of nations and individuals. Dwell upon this in the life of the individual,—the sin of carelessness, of irreverence, of greed, of drunkenness. We cannot live like the heathen without suffering like the heathen. A great teacher has said : "I never knew a person who once had the habit of church-going and gave it up, who did not degenerate in every way."

3. *The Efforts God Made to Save Israel from Captivity*, vs. 13, 14. Talk with the class about the hindrances which God put in the downward path of the Israelites. He sent His prophets to warn them of the danger, to entreat them to return, to assure them of His love (see Hos., ch. 14). It was all in vain. They would not hear. They hardened their necks. What a strange infatuation sin possesses !

Let the closing application be on what God has done to save sinners, and what He is doing, and the inexcusableness of those who despise His warnings and invitations.

For Teachers

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