

The Sunday School

BIBLE LESSON.

Abridged from Peloubet's Notes.

Third Quarter, 1905.

JULY TO SEPTEMBER.

Lesson X—September 3.—The Captivity of Judah—2 Chronicles 36: 11-21.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Be sure your sin will find you out.—Num. 32: 23.

EXPLANATORY.

I. THE WICKET AND FOOLISH KING.—Vs. 11-13. Stephen, in his powerful arraignment of the Jewish people (Acts 7), shows how, through all their history, even to the culmination in the crucifixion of Christ, they had resisted the Holy Ghost, rejecting their wise leaders such as Jeremiah, and deliberately choosing the way of ruin. "Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute?" Similarly, the chronicler, in closing his sad history with the exile, reviews the iniquities of rulers and people, and "justifies the ways of God to men."

II. ZEDEKIAH. This twentieth and last king of Judah, though no worse than many of his predecessors and better than some of them, followed in their path of wickedness, and his career is a sort of summary of all that had gone before.

WAS ONE AND TWENTY YEARS OLD. He was Josiah's youngest son, his mother being Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah (2 Kings 24: 18). Jehoahaz, Josiah's immediate successor, was his full brother; Jehoiaikim, however, was his half-brother, the son of another wife of Josiah (2 Kings 23: 26).

12. HE DID THAT WHICH WAS EVIL IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD. "The character of Zedekiah seems to have been weak rather than wicked. His chief recorded sins were: (1) His refusal to be guided in his political conduct by Jeremiah's counsils, while nevertheless he admitted him to be a true Jehovah prophet; and (2) his infraction of the solemn oath of subjection and allegiance which he had sworn to Nebuchadnezzar, either at his accession or soon afterwards." AND HUMBLED NOT HIMSELF BEFORE JEREMIAH. "Jeremiah consistently advised Zedekiah to submit to the Chaldeans; but the king, partly through fear of his princes partly through illusive hopes, could never bring himself to do this." SPEAKING FROM THE MOUTH OF THE LORD. "It was the special inspiration of the prophets that alone gave them authority. 'The prophet was a seer who saw what was to come, a man inspired, who, when he was true to realities, and eloquent and bold, held power over the nation which neither king nor priest could claim."

13. AND HE ALSO, IN ADDITION TO HIS REBELLION AGAINST GOD, REBELLED AGAINST KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR. After years of intriguing with Egypt, Zedekiah sent an embassy to seek an alliance and the plot broke out into

open rebellion. This, according to Josephus (Ant. X. 7. 3), was in Zedekiah's eight year. WHO HAD MADE HIM SWEAR BY GOD. This was on the occasion of Zedekiah's probably compulsory visit to Babylon in the fourth year of his reign (Jer. 51: 59). Ezekiel (17: 11-21) describes the oath, and expresses great indignation at the breaking of the covenant, which should have been held sacred no matter with whom it was made.

II. THE INQUITOUS PEOPLE.—V. 14. "The poor king," says Professor H. P. Smith, "paid the penalty of his weakness. The city over which he was nominal ruler was more to blame."

14. MORROWER. "Compare with this passage (vs. 14-17) the similar, but much longer justification of God's rejection of the Ten Tribes, contained in 2 Kings 17: 7-23." ALL THE CHIEF (R. V., "chiefs") OF THE PRIESTS. See 1 Chron. 1, 3-19. POLLUTED THE HOUSE OF THE LORD. Ezekiel presents a picture of Hebrew women in the temple courts waiting for the Babylonian god Tammuz (Ezek. 8: 14); of the seventy elders offering incense to representations of bestial gods pictured on the walls of cellars beneath the temple court (Ezek. 8: 7, 12); of sun-worshippers, with their backs to the Holy Place, bowing to the sun at the very door of the temple (Ezek. 8: 16).

III. GOD'S MESSENGERS DISPISED AND REJECTED.—Vs. 25, 26. The climax of the nation's iniquity was the fact that it sinned against abundant light.

14. THE LORD GOD OF THEIR FATHERS. A reminder of God's long patience and his repeated benefactions through the centuries. SENT TO THEM BY HIS MESSENGERS. His prophets (compare 2 Kings 17: 13), such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel. RISING UP BY TIMES (R. V., "early") AND SENDING. Manifesting an eager zeal for their salvation, as a man rises early to prosecute some enterprise on which he has set his heart. BECAUSE HE HAD COMPASSION. Understanding the depth of the misery which sin would bring to the nation. "Contrast the Chaldeans (v. 17), who had no compassion."

16. BUT THEY MOCKED THE MESSENGERS OF GOD. "Jeremiah was imprisoned, beaten, and threatened with death; Urijah (Jer. 26: 20-23) was put to death. Of the fate of Habakkuk (who also lived during the Chaldean period, Hab. 1: 6) nothing is known." AND MISUSED HIS PROPHECIES. R. V., "scoffed at," verbal mockery, as distinguished from bodily harm. TILL THERE WAS NO REMEDY? Hebrew, healing. Josiah's reformation and Jeremiah's admonitions and warnings were all in vain, what more could be done? Every disease, if allowed to advance beyond a certain point, becomes incurable.

IV. THE DESERVED PUNISHMENT. As the water heaps up behind the dam, the reservoir of wrath must break. God was very patient with his people, but for their good at last, as well as for the satisfaction of his justice, they must be made to taste the bitter penalty of sin.


17. THEREFORE. Because of this long rebellion, culminating in the iniquities of idolatry and rejection of truth under Zedekiah.

What follows in the chronicle is a summary of events after the capture of Jerusalem. SLEW THEIR YOUNG MEN. IN THE HOUSE OF THEIR SANCTUARY. In the courts of the temple itself, where they had taken refuge. See Ezek. 9: 6, 7; Lam. 2: 7, 20.

18. ALL THE VESSELS OF THE HOUSE OF GOD. All that remained after the spoiling of the temple in the days of Jehoiaikim (2 Chron. 36: 10). Most of them seem to have been of brass; see the list in 2 Kings 25: 13-17; Jer. 52: 17-23. GREAT AND SMALL. What became of the ark? In the second book of Maccabees (2: 5).—a book which Plumptre says was "probably written to meet a demand for the marvelous,"—it is said that Jeremiah hid in a cave "the tabernacle, and the ark, and the altar of incense." At this point the ark disappears from history.

19. AND THEY BURNED THE HOUSE OF GOD, etc., Ezekiel (10: 2) pictures God's angel with both hands full of fiery coals, scattering them over the city, and Jeremiah had often prophesied this (Jer. 7: 14, 15; 21: 10; 24: 2, 22; 38: 18, 23). AND BROKE DOWN THE WALL. Thus effectually destroying the power of the city, and rendering future rebellions unlikely.

20. AND THEM THAT HAD ESCAPED FROM THE SWORD. Including (2 Kings 25: 21) the inhabitants of Jerusalem that had survived the siege, and those that during the year and a half of siege had deserted to the enemy. CARRIED HE AWAY TO BABYLON. Jeremiah (52: 28-30) estimated the number at 745, which, with the 3,023 of the first captivity and the 832 of the second, made a total of 4,600 in exile,—the wisest, wealthiest, and strongest of the land. WHERE THEY WERE SERVANTS. Slaves. TO HIM AND HIS SONS. His successors who were three; his son, Evil-Merodach, and two usurpers, Neriglissar, his son-in-law, and Nabonidus. Then came the reign of the kingdom of Persia, founded by Cyrus the Great, who, B. C. 539, conquered



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Nabonidus and became king of Babylon.

V. A GLEAM OF HOPE.—Vs. 21, with the rest of the chapter. The sad history closes but not without a gleam of hope. "Israel had as it were gone down to its grave, but not without the prospect of resurrection to a new life." "The flame that had consumed Jerusalem was for Judah a purifying fire; from the seed-field of the exile sown in tears was to spring up a precious and immortal harvest."

21. TO FULFILL THE WORD OF THE LORD BY THE MOUTH OF JEREMIAH. Who had prophesied a seventy years captivity. See Jer. 25: 11; 29: 10. UNTIL THE LAND HAD ENJOYED (OR "made good") HER SABBATHS. In Lev. 25: 1-7 in the wise provision that the land should lie fallow every seventh year,—a principle recognized by every prudent farmer. In Lev. 25: 1-7 is the warning that neglect of this command will be followed by exile and an enforced rest equal to the years that have been omitted from the observance. The kingdom had lasted (from David) about 490 years, that is, 70 x 7, and thus 70 years of exile would be required, if the Levitical command had been violated all the time. Perhaps the violations of the command were reckoned from the days of Moses. TO FULFILL THREEScore AND TEN YEARS. "It was just about seventy years after the battle of Carchemish, which really decided the fate of Palestine and its subjection to Babylon, that, like the priests' silver trumpet at morn in the temple, the voice of Cyrus announced the dawn of morning after the long night of exile, and summoned the wanderers from all lands to the threshold of their sanctuary."

TAKING OFF HIS HAT TO NATURE

One day in the early spring a Scotchman was walking along the side of a mountain in Syke, when he came to a hut in which lived an old man he had known a great many years. He saw the old man with his head bowed and his bonnet in his hand. He came up and said to him after a bit: "I did not speak to you, Sandy, because I thought you might be at your prayers."

"Well, not exactly that," said the old man, "but I will tell you what I was doing. Every morning for forty years I have taken off my bonnet here to the beauty of the world."

Beauty, wherever it is seen, is a reflection of God's face, the shining of heavenly light down upon the earth. Wherever we come upon it, it should touch our hearts with a spirit of reverence. God is near: we are standing in the light of His countenance.

God hath a thousand keys to open a thousand doors for the deliverance of his own when it has come to the greatest extremity. Let us be faithful and care for our own part, which is to do and suffer for him, and lay God's part on himself, and leave it there; duties are ours, events are the Lord's.

When our faith goeth to meddle with events and to hold a court (if I may so speak) upon God's providence, and beginneth to say, "How wilt thou do this or that?" we lose ground. We have nothing to do there. It is our part to let the Almighty exercise his own office and steer his own helm. — Samuel Rutherford.



SYNOPSIS OF CANADIAN NORTH-WEST

HOMESTEAD REGULATIONS.

ANY even numbered section of Dominion Lands in Manitoba or the North-west Provinces, excepting 8 and 26, not reserved, may be homesteaded upon by any person who is the sole head of the family, or any member of a family, or any male over 18 years of age, to the extent of one-quarter section, of 160 acres, more or less.

Entry may be made personally at the local land office for the district in which the land to be taken is situated, or if the homesteader desires he may, on application to the Minister of the Interior, Ottawa, the Commissioner of Immigration, Winnipeg, or the local agent for the district in which the land is situated, receive authority for some one to make entry for him.

HOMESTEAD DUTIES: A settler who has been granted an entry for a homestead is required to perform the conditions connected therewith under one of the following plans:

(1) At least six months' residence upon and cultivation of the land in each year during the term of three years.

(2) If the father (or mother, if the father is deceased) of any person who is eligible to make a homestead entry under the provisions of this Act, resides upon a farm in the vicinity of the land entered for by such person as a homestead, the requirements of this Act as to residence prior to obtaining patent may be satisfied by such person residing with the father or mother.

(3) If the settler has his permanent residence upon farming land owned by him in the vicinity of his homestead, the requirements of this Act as to residence may be satisfied by residence upon the said land.

APPLICATION FOR PATENT should be made at the end of three years, before the Local Agent, sub-Agent or the Homestead Inspector.

Before making application for patent the settler must give six months' notice in writing to the Commissioner of Dominion Lands at Ottawa, of his intention to do so.

W. W. CORY,

Deputy of the Minister of Interior.



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