

Jewish monarchy might end, were it not for one great event, and one great person that is retained,—the fall of Jerusalem, and the prophet Jeremiah."

Josiah was succeeded on the throne by his youngest son by Hamutal, Jehoahaz (or Shalum), but he only reigned 3 months, being carried away captive into Egypt by Pharaoh Necho. There he died, according to the prediction of Jeremiah (Jer. xlii. 10-12; 2 Kings xiii. 34). The next king was Jehoiakim (or Eliakim), Josiah's eldest son, who was placed upon the throne, not by the people as in the case of his predecessor, but by the king of Egypt who had taken Jehoahaz captive, and who exacted tribute from Judah in an annual sum equal to about \$25,000.

The most important event of Jehoakim's reign, to us, is the beginning of the seventy years' captivity already alluded to. "In B.C. 607, the third year of Jehoakim's reign (Dan. i. 1, 2), Nebuchadnezzar, king of the new Babylonian empire, to recover the debt on which was placed by Pharaoh Necho, laid siege to Jerusalem as a capital of a part of those dominions. The city submitted in the following year, the fourth of Jehoakim (Jer. xlii. 2), the royal family, the princes (including Daniel and the 'three children') and many of the people being sent to Babylon. Jehoakim himself was also bound in fetters, to be carried to Babylon (2 Chron. xxxvi. 6), but he obtained his freedom, apparently by offering Nebuchadnezzar a 'part of the vessels of the house of God,' and became a tributary to Babylon instead of to Egypt" (2 Kings xlii. 1-2). Afterward Jehoakim succeeded, by rebellion, in obtaining a certain amount of independence; but Nebuchadnezzar again besieged Jerusalem with a regular army, but Jehoakim died (Jer. xlii. 18, 19; xxxvi. 30, 31) before the city surrendered the second time, which event took place very early after, Jehoachim's infant son, aged 8 years, being upon the throne, and *Nebuchadnezzar* the queen-mother being regent. With the plunder, and the "ten thousand captives" carried away was the child-king, who was put in prison, and, apparently,—part of the time in chains (Ezek. xxi. 9)—for nearly 40 years. After some time, however, Nebuchadnezzar seems to have relaxed his rigour, and permitted Jehoachim to marry: for we are told that he had eight sons, including *Saltathia*, through whom the royal succession was handed on to *Zerubbabel* (1 Chron. iii. 17, 18; Matt. i. 12).—*Blunt*. After the death of Nebuchadnezzar Jehoachim was restored to liberty and honour, but it is not recorded how long he lived to enjoy his freedom.—2 Kings xiv. 27-30.

Zedekiah (or *Mattaniah*) was made king by Nebuchadnezzar. "He was a mere viceroy, governing an impoverished and disorganized remnant of the ancient people of Israel, and sitting on the throne which did not rightly belong to him, in the midst of a half-ruined city, which the great conqueror had only not destroyed, because of the reverence which his dream (B.C. 603) had given him for the God of Israel, and of his friendship for some of the Jewish captives whom he had raised to high positions (Dan. ii).—*Blunt*. Zedekiah's reign witnessed a series of ineffectual efforts to break away from the Babylonian yoke, the king finally entering into an alliance with Egypt for that purpose, about B.C. 592. Jeremiah and Ezekiel both uttered their prophetic warnings against this course (Jer. xxvii. 12-22; Ezek. xvi. 16-21, etc.).

"This determined revolt against God and man, so that 'there was no remedy' (2 Chron. xxxvi. 6), brought on Nebuchadnezzar's third siege of Jerusalem, which began on the 10th day of the 10th month (about the middle of December) in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign (2 Kings xxv. 1; Ezek. xxiv. 1), that is in B.C. 590. In the beginning of the following year the prophet Jeremiah was sent to Zedekiah to predict—the total destruction of the city and of his kingdom, and

his own captivity (Jer. xxxii. 27-44), which led to the prophet's imprisonment by the king (Jer. xxxii. 1-3) where he still continued his prophecy."—*Blunt*.

During this imprisonment Jeremiah received the Divine message contained in our lesson of to-day.

The title given by the International Lesson Committee is unhappy. A more appropriate one would be *GOD'S MESSAGE CONCERNING HIS SOVEREIGNTY*. We then get the following divisions: 1st. *God's Sovereignty Declared*; 2nd. *God's Sovereignty Illustrated by His Purposes*, (1) of *Judgment*, and (2) of *Mercy*; 3rd. *God's Sovereignty magnified in the Result*.

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY DECLARED.—V. 1-3.

V. 1. Jeremiah was called to the prophetic office the 13th year of Josiah's reign. For an extended account of his life and writings, the teacher is referred to the selected article in another column of this paper. The second time. See chap. xxxiii. 1, etc. In the court of the prison, "or, 'the court of the guard,' a part of the king's palace (Neh. ii. 25), probably, where the royal guard had its quarters. There would no doubt always be a picket on duty in the guard-chamber at the entrance of the court, but in his own apartment Jeremiah was probably left unmolested."—*Sp. Com.*

V. 2. Thus saith the Lord. This expression gives always increased weight and solemnity to what follows. *The Maker thereof*—"rather, the *Door* of it, namely, that which Jeremiah is about to prophecy, the restoration of Israel, an act which is thought now impossible, but which the Almighty will effect."—*Fancutt*. That formed it,—that is, moulds *His purpose* into due shape for execution (Isaiah xxxvii. 26).—*Blunt*.

V. 3. Call unto Me. "Jeremiah, as the representative of the people of God, is urged by God to pray for that which God has determined to grant, namely, the restoration. God's promises are not to slacken, but to quicken the prayers of His people."—*Blunt*. Mighty things, or *Admirable things*, as in the margin—things beyond man's comprehension.

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY ILLUSTRATED.—V. 4-8.

1. *By His purposes of judgment*.—V. 4, 5.

V. 4. Houses "thrown down by the mountains." In ancient sieges, as the works of the enemy approached the walls, it was usual to build inner fortifications, and for this purpose houses were pulled down, both to give the vacant space necessary and also to supply materials. Compare Isaiah xlii. 10.—*Sp. Com.* By the sword. In Ezekiel xxvi. 9, the word here translated *sword* is there translated *axe*, and they were used for breaking down the towers.

V. 5. They come,—that is, *the Jews come* (V. 6). They come,—that is, *the Jews come* (V. 6). To fill them,—that is, *the Jews come* (V. 6). I have slain. "The enemies' sword was His sword, and their anger His anger. But it seems the men that were slain were generally such as had distinguished themselves by their wickedness, for they were the very men for whose wickedness God did hide Himself from this city; so that He was just in all He brought upon them."—*Matthew Henry*.

2. *By His purposes of mercy*.—V. 6-8.

(a) *In temporal good*.—V. 6, 7.

V. 6. I will bring it health and cure,—that is, "this city" (V. 5). I will cure them. "The first clause promised that the ruins of the city should be repaired; this gives similar comfort to the inhabitants. The sudden change from *it*, i.e., the city, to *them*, i.e., the people, is common in Hebrew."—*Sp. Com.* Truth, "i.e., stability; I will bring forth for them abundant and permanent peace,—that is, *prosperity*."—*Fancutt*.

V. 7. The captivity of Judah and the

captivity of Israel. "This must respect the latter times, for the *ten tribes* did not return with the Jews at the termination of the seventy years."—*Adam Clarke*.

(b) *In spiritual good*.—V. 8.

V. 8. I will cleanse.—See Zechariah xiii. 1; John i. 7; Rev. i. 5; Eph. i. 7, etc. I will pardon.—See chap. xxxi. 34; 1 Micah vi. 18-19; Isaiah lv. 7, etc.

DIVINE GLORY.—V. 9.

V. 9. And it—the city, as in verse 6. To Me a name of joy, a praise, and an honour before all the nations of the earth which shall hear all the good that I do unto them.

PRACTICAL LESSONS.

1. No confinement can shut up God's people from His presence.—v. 1. Examples: Daniel, Paul, Bunyan.
2. In the gloomiest hours, the believer may be comforted with thoughts of the sovereignty of Jehovah.—v. 2.
3. God is able to do for us, in answer to prayer, far more abundant things than we can either ask or think.—v. 3.
4. God is angry with the wicked every day. His judgments are abroad in the earth.—v. 5.
5. God is merciful as well as righteous.—v. 6, 7. (See Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7).
6. Sin is like a disease, working misery and death. Righteousness is like health, imparting peace and life.—v. 6-8.
7. God has provided cleansing blood for guilty sinners, in the Lamb of God (John i. 29), and pardons the transgressors whose iniquities have been thus washed away.
8. The Divine glory is the work of redemption, v. 9.

APRIL 25.—The Rechabites.—Jer. xxxv.

12-19. B.C. 606.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Go and tell the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, I will yet receive instruction to hearken to my words! saith the Lord."—Jer. xxxv. 13.

INTRODUCTION.

"One of the most singular facts in the history of Israel is the continued existence in the heart of the nation of a nomad race; partakers of its privileges, sharers of its worship, yet never wholly identified with the community. The origin of this strange connection between the chosen people and the Arab (or it might almost be called *Hyksos*) tribe, was the marriage of Moses with Zipporah, from the land of Midian. Her father Jethro came to the aid of Moses almost immediately after the exodus. (Exod. xviii), and her brother Hobab rendered important service to the Hebrew leader through the forty years' wandering. The encampment of the Kenites, as the tribe was called, was near to that of Israel, although separate. (Num. x. 29-32; xxiv. 21). After the settlement in Canaan, the association continued. The Kenites pitched their tents in the south country, in the wilderness of Judah; also in the north, where the wife of Heber the Kenite slew the fugitive Sisera, (Jud. i. 16; iv. 17-22). In the days of Agge, we find Kenites among the Amalekites, and they are warned by Saul to depart lest they should be involved in the destruction of that heathen tribe (1 Sam. xvi. 6). The Kenites of the wilderness of Judah, are told in the genealogies, came of one Hemath, the father of the house of Rechab. The word 'Rechab,' according as it is variously pointed, means 'Rider' or 'Chariot,' may stand either for a name or a symbol. When we read that Rehobaiab the son of Rechab, was an abettor of the overthrow of Ahab's house, (2