

him. (e) But they let him down into a deep miry pit, where, unknown to the people, he must soon starve to death.

### III. *Jeremiah Restored to Life* (verses 7-13).

But (a) Ebed-melech, one of the eunuchs of the king's palace, an Ethiopian, heard of Jeremiah's fate. (b) He knew that each day at a certain hour the king sat as judge in the gate of Benjamin. (c) Ebed-melech hastened from the palace, where he might have seen the king in private, to the gate of Benjamin, where crowds were sure to be gathered, so as to secure popular feeling on his side. (d) He

boldly attacked the four princes, and pathetically described Jeremiah's slow death by starvation in the miry pit. (e) The king directed Ebed-melech to take thirty men (soldiers, probably of the royal bodyguard), and hasten to the pit in the prison court and release Jeremiah. (f) Ebed-melech took the soldiers, but first proceeded to the king's palace for old clothes. (g) With these old clothes wrapped about the cords he tenderly raised Jeremiah. (h) Thereafter, till the capture of the city, Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison, confined, but cared for.

## The Lesson Word Studies.

*NOTE—These Word Studies are based on the text of the Revised Version.*

**INTERVENING EVENTS.**—The death of Jehoiakim is veiled in mystery. According to the prophecy of Jer. 36. 30 his dead body lay unburied outside the walls of Jerusalem. With regard to the manner of his death we may conjecture that he was either killed in an attempt to flee from the city, or, what some consider more probable, that he was assassinated by his indignant subjects. He was succeeded on the throne by his son, Jehoiachin, or Coniah, the latter being his real name. After the short reign of three months he was forced to surrender to Nebuchadnezzar, then personally in charge of the besieging army. In his place Nebuchadnezzar placed on the throne Zedekiah, the youngest son of Josiah, and full brother to Jehoahaz. Compare 2 Kings 23, 31; 24, 18.

**ZEDEKIAH.**—Zedekiah's real name was Mattaniah. The period of his occupancy of the throne has been called the "last sign of the expiring Davidic dynasty." It was a mere incident in the struggle of Egypt and Babylon for mastery in Syria. The most conspicuous characteristic of the king was his weakness. In matters of religion he seems to have been inclined to follow the advice of the prophet with whom he consulted secretly at different times. The only instance of his having exerted any personal authority was when he mitigated the severity of Jeremiah's imprisonment (Jer. 37. 21), and later sanctioned his rescue from the dungeon (38, 10). In matters of national policy he was but a tool in the hands of the ruling faction among the princes. These princes relying on promised help from Egypt finally persuaded the king to rebel against Babylon, but this step, as the prophet had foretold, proved futile and suicidal to Judah. The Egyptian king, indeed, advanced with an army to rescue his besieged ally in Jerusalem, but this only delayed for the moment the capture and destruction of the city. On the ninth day of the fourth month in the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign the besieging army took the city. Zedekiah attempted to escape but was over-taken and, after having been forced to witness the slaughter of his children, his eyes were put out and he was led a blind captive to Babylon, where in all probability he did not long survive his misfortunes.

**Verses 1.** Jeremiah had been thrown into a dark, unhealthy prison, but upon appealing to the king had been permitted to leave the inner prison and remain "in the court of the guard." Here it was possible for princes and others in authority to see and converse with him, and here apparently he reiterated his unwelcome message of impending national disaster.

**Shephatiah, . . . Gedaliah, . . . Jucal, . . . Fashhur.**—Four princes having great influence with the king.

**2. He that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live.**—These words of the prophet considered from a narrow political standpoint could not seem otherwise than reasonable. Viewed from the religious standpoint they reveal a profound insight into the actual state of affairs and the causes which had produced that state. The prophet saw in the impending doom of a just punishment for the apostasy of the nation.

**His life shall be as to him for a prey.**—A booty taken by stealth. These proclamations of the prophet doubtless greatly increased the number of the desertions to the enemy, and for thus "weakening the hands of the men of war" the princes rightly held Jeremiah responsible.

**3. He shall take it.**—The prophet holds out no ray of hope to the people. It is too late even for repentance. As a matter of fact, the people did for the moment repent, but when the siege of the city was temporarily raised—Nebuchadnezzar having gone to meet the king of Egypt—their repentance proved shallow and unavailing.

**4. The princes.**—Those mentioned in verse 1. **The men of war that remain.**—Apparently a large number had deserted to the Chaldeans, a fact implied by the words of Zedekiah, verse 19: "I am afraid of the Jews that are fallen away to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hands and they mock me." The