

General Statement.

The wicked Jehoiakim, whose reign was referred to in the last two lessons, was slain—whether by his own people or by enemies is unknown—after a reign of eleven years. His son Jehoiachin succeeded to the throne, but sat upon it only a hundred days, for he was carried away captive by Nebuchadnezzar, and with him many of the nobles and best of the people. This was Nebuchadnezzar's second invasion of the land, B. C. 598. He placed upon the throne the uncle of the deposed king, who was the son of Josiah, and the brother of Jehoiakim. He took the name of Zedekiah, "the righteousness of the Lord," a name which seemed to show a desire to reign justly. He took an oath of allegiance to the great king of Babylon, and had he kept it all might the have been well. But in an evil hour he followed the counsels of the ambitious nobles around him, rejecting the advice of Jeremiah, and rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. He aimed for independence, relying upon the

hope of assistance from Egypt, and from the smaller states around, all of which were restless under the Babylonian yoke. Having chosen his course, he pursued it regardless of results. He threw Jeremiah into prison because of his opposition to his policy; he compelled the people to endure heavy burdens of taxation, and he prepared to defend his capital against the Chaldeans. But all was in vain, Jerusalem's hour had come. The city was besieged by the Chaldean armies for more than a year, while within its walls the people starved, and princes gave their gold for a crust of bread. When the walls were broken down, Zedekiah tried to escape, but he was seized, and taken before King Nebuchadnezzar. His children were slain in his sight, his eyes were put out, and in blindness he was sent to prison in Babylon. Thus fell the throne of David, which had stood with varying fortunes for four hundred and fifty years.

Explanatory and Practical Notes.

**Verse 1. In the ninth year.** Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, began to reign in 598 B. C.; so that the final siege of Jerusalem, which is here referred to, began in 590 B. C. **Tenth month.** Geikie gives the date of the investment, December 10, 591 B. C. This would make its fall take place in 588, instead of 587. **Nebuchadnezzar.** He was the son of Nabopolassar, the founder of the Babylonian Empire, and began to reign about 604 B. C. He was a great warrior, a great conqueror, and a great builder. Nearly all the bricks found at Babylon bear his name. He conquered all the lands from the Tigris to the Mediterranean; but his empire passed away soon after his death. **Babylon.** See note on verse 8, below. **And all his host.** Twice before had these stern Chaldean soldiers stood around Jerusalem, once in the reign of Jehoiakim, when Daniel and his friends were carried away; again when the young king Jehoiachin was taken to Babylon. **Against Jerusalem.** The cause of their invasion was the rebellion of Zedekiah, who had aimed to become independent of the great king at Babylon. **Built forts.** Towers for attack, from which the besiegers could hurl their missiles into the city. They were sometimes placed upon wheels and pushed up close to the walls.

**2. Unto the eleventh year.** The siege lasted for sixteen months; though it was interrupted for a time, while the Chaldean army was called away to repel an attack of Hophra or Aprie, the king of Egypt. The Jews rejoiced, thinking that they were now freed from their enemies. But the Egyptians were repelled and the Chaldeans returned, to press the siege with greater vigor.

**3. Fourth month.** This date is wanting in the text, and is supplied from the parallel account in Jeremiah 52. **The famine prevailed.** Fearful pictures of the famine are given in the prophecy and Lamentations of Jeremiah. Nobles, delicately brought up, were staggering through the streets, and dizzing with skeleton fingers in dung-heaps for a morsel of food. Mothers boiled and devoured the flesh of their own children. From the want of food, and the unburied corpses of the dead, a pestilence was engendered, which swept away multitudes. **The people of the land.** The city was crowded with refugees, who had sought its walls for safety from the Chaldeans. (1) *See what are the ways which Satan goes to those who serve him!* (2) *There is a hunger of the soul which leads to a worse fate than hunger of the body.*

**4. The city was broken up.** A breach was effected in the walls, through which the besiegers poured in, and penetrated to the heart of the city, while the princes of Nebuchadnezzar took their seats in state at the entrance of the deserted temple. **The men of war fled.** Zedekiah, his family, and a few soldiers escaped by night on the side opposite to that by which the Chaldeans had entered. **Between two walls.** Probably those on the east and west of the Tyropoeon Valley. **By the king's garden.** This may have been in the district known as Ophel, south of the temple. **Toward the plain.** His aim was to reach the Jordan valley near Jericho, and escape to the mountains of Gilead on the east of the river. (3) *Those who place themselves under God's care are safer than behind hosts of men.*

**5. Pursued.** The alarm was given, and detachments were sent by the only two roads over which the king

might escape. **Overtook him.** Josephus says that the king was recognized and betrayed to the Chaldeans by some Jewish deserters. **Plains of Jericho.** At the widest part of the Jordan valley, near the Dead Sea. **Army was scattered.** "Save himself who can!" said Napoleon, after the battle of Waterloo. Each man looked after his own safety, leaving the king to his enemies. (4) *The wicked are selfish, and care for themselves alone.*

**6. They took the king.** The Chaldeans at last seized their prey. **To Riblah.** A city in the valley of Lebanon, thirty-five miles north of Basbece, and ten days' journey from Jerusalem. With what misery did Zedekiah travel up the steep hills toward his doom! **They gave judgment.** Josephus relates that Nebuchadnezzar reproached Zedekiah bitterly for his ingratitude and perfidy to his promise, and then gave him his cruel sentence. (5) *Sin is sure to find out the sinner.* (6) *God uses the cruelty of one wicked man to punish the sins of another.*

**7. Slew the sons.** The last glance of the hapless king was cast upon his own children, slaughtered for his crimes. (7) *So now the innocent children of the drunkard and the wrong-doer are the heaviest sufferers by their sins.* **Put out the eyes.** Probably by piercing them with javelins; perhaps by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar himself, as monuments show to have been the custom of Assyrian kings. **Bound him.** From Ezek. 19. 9. (Rev. Ver.) it has been supposed that he was dragged by a hook through his lips, and placed in a cage, just as may be seen on the Nineveh bas-reliefs. **Carried him to Babylon.** Jeremiah had prophesied (32. 4) that Zedekiah should see and speak with the king of Babylon; Ezekiel had predicted (12. 13) that he should be brought to Babylon and die there, but should not see it, and both predictions were fulfilled. He died in prison, but his obsequies were celebrated with the honors befitting a king. Jer. 34. 4, 5. (8) *God, who fulfills his warnings, is equally sure to keep all his promises.*

**8. In the fifth month.** After its capture the city stood for a month awaiting orders from Nebuchadnezzar. **Nineteenth year.** As Zedekiah was no longer king, the date is given from the accession of Nebuchadnezzar, which was in 604 or 605 B. C. **Babylon.** One of the most ancient cities of the world, founded by Nimrod, and standing on both sides of the river Euphrates. For many centuries it was overshadowed by and subject to the younger city of Nineveh, but became independent about B. C. 625, and soon supplanted its rival in the empire of the East. Under Nebuchadnezzar it rose to vast size and great beauty. It was surrounded by walls three hundred and fifty feet high, eighty-seven feet thick, pierced by one hundred gates. Within it were the temple of Bel, and the famous hanging gardens on an artificial hill, commanding a view of the entire city. It was captured by Cyrus B. C. 539, and again by Darius Hystaspes, who despoiled it, after which it gradually sank into ruin, and has long been unoccupied. **Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard.** Literally, "Chief of the executioners." He was the officer to whom was intrusted the destruction of the city.

**9. 10. Burnt the house of the Lord.** The temple, which had been standing for more than four hundred years. **The king's house.** This probably stood near the temple, perhaps on its southern side. **All the houses.** The Rev. Ver. reads, "All the houses of Je-