

# Bible Commentary

## JEREMIAH 1

General remarks. Jeremiah lived and wrote about a hundred years after Isaiah. The captivity of the ten tribes under the Assyrians had taken place over a century before, and that of the two tribes by the Babylonians was soon to occur. About all of the prophetic books contain some history although the books as a whole are classed among the books of prophecy. It will be necessary for us to be careful not to confound the parts that are intended as actual history with those that are predictions and yet may seem to be historical in their form of speech. Jeremiah is often called the "weeping prophet" because of his emotional and sympathetic interest in the misfortune of others. He was also a true patriot and had a deep love for his country. This accounts for his many sentimental passages, and his many repetitions of the same phrase with the apparent purpose of impressing his readers with the seriousness of his grief. He belonged to the priestly line, but it is not clear whether he was directly descended from Abiathar or Zadok. The genuineness and authenticity of his writings is beyond question, for he was quoted with approval in Matt. 2: 17 and 27: 9, there spelled Jeremy. This prophet wrote about the captivity, also he made predictions concerning the Gospel age of religion. In addition to writing prophecy and history, he, like Isaiah and the other prophets, wrote many severe passages of rebuke against the sinful nation, particularly its leaders, for which he was persecuted most shamefully by them. Many of the matters pertaining to Jeremiah will appear as the study of the book proceeds and will be commented upon in the order of their appearance.

Verse 1. *Land of Benjamin* refers to the district that was allotted to that tribe when Joshua divided the land among the 12 tribes (Josh. 18: 11-28). *Anathoth* was a city in this district of Benjamin but was not far from Jerusalem. It was the site of the homes and landed estates of the priests of the common order.

Verse 2. The date when Jeremiah began to write by the word of the Lord was the 13th year of Josiah, king of Judah. Josiah began to reign B.C. 639, which would make it B.C. 626 when

Jeremiah was inspired by the Lord and began his writing. This was 20 years before the Babylonian captivity began. He continued his writing about the same number of years after it began. We shall see near the close of the book that the date of the termination of his writings is somewhat obscure on account of the difficulties thrown around him by his enemies.

Verse 3. The preceding verse states the time when Jeremiah began to write, this one gives the date when he completed his work on the book that bears his name. The books of the Bible were thus not composed all at any one "sitting," but many of them were written just as the Lord would have something more he wished the writer to record. For instance, we have just seen that Jeremiah began to write in the 13th year of Josiah and concluded his writing in the 11th year of Zedekiah. But the work was not continuous through that period for this verse also tells us he wrote some in the days of Jehoiakim, another king of Judah who followed Josiah. It is interesting to note that the close of Jeremiah's writing came at the same time the city was taken into hands by the Babylonians and the people taken off into captivity. That fact doubtless will account for the termination of his writings; not that he personally was taken out of the land. But there will be more information on this subject before the end of the book.

Verse 4. Having given the important dates of the book of the prophet, this verse comes to some of the particulars regarding his "call" to the work of a writing prophet. Not all of the prophets in the Bible were writing prophets but many of them did their work orally only, while others both wrote and spoke in the name of the Lord, hence the distinction "writing prophet" just stated. In the beginning of this verse the pronoun *me* is used which, when connected with the statement in the first verse, shows definitely that Jeremiah is the author of the book. It is significant that Jeremiah began to write after the word of the Lord came to him which settles the question of his inspiration. It also agrees with the statement made in *General remarks* where the endorsement of the New Testament is cited.

Verse 5. God sees into the future with as much certainty as he does in the present. But he does not always determine what that future shall be; he never interferes with the personal responsibility of any as regards matters of right and wrong. Yet he does frequently decree certain facts that pertain to his great work, and one of such instances is that of Jeremiah. Before he was even conceived by his mother God *knew* him. The lexicon definition of the original Hebrew for this word *knew* includes, "To ascertain by seeing" and "designation." So God not only saw the fact of Jeremiah's conception and birth, but also designated (predetermined) that it should take place. Before he was born God *sanctified* him for the work of a prophet. That word is from QADASH which Strong defines, "A primitive root; to be (causatively) make, pronounce or observe as) clean (ceremonially or morally)." Since the word is here used in regard to Jeremiah as a prophet, the part of the definition that applies is "ceremonially." Foreseeing that Jeremiah was going to be born by divine decree, and that he would be personally a righteous man, God decided to have him for one of his prophets. *Nations* is from *gor* which has been rendered in the A.V. by Gentile 30 times, heathen 142, nation 373 and people 111. Jeremiah was a Jew and his work was primarily on behalf of his own people. However, the Jewish nation had more or less dealings with other nations, hence the prophets of God wrote about them and made predictions either of blessings or punishments against them depending on the circumstances. Not only did they write about them, but many of their predictions referred to the coming of Christ which was to be of interest to the whole world.

Verse 6. *Then* is an adverb of time and refers to the occasion when *the word of the Lord came first to Jeremiah*. The exact date of his birth is not available; Funk and Wagnalls Bible Dictionary says he was perhaps twenty when he received his prophetic call. At any rate his own statement in this verse indicates he was young at the time; we also have the information of the lexicon. The word *child* is from NAHAR and Strong defines it, "A boy (as active), from the age of infancy to adolescence." Jeremiah seemed to underestimate his qualification as a prophet due to his tender years. He

certainly overlooked the truth that inspiration does not need to rely on natural talents for its work since the power comes from Him who made all things.

Verse 7. *Say not I am a child* does not mean to dispute the fact of Jeremiah's age, but the thought is that he was not to consider that as an obstacle in the way of the work before him. There is nothing too hard for the Lord, and he who caused the dumb beast to speak (Num. 22: 28-30) can surely enable the weakest of man to do so. *I shall send thee and whatsoever I command* gives the explanation of how Jeremiah was to be able to speak regardless of his youthful age. But the ability to speak is not all there is of importance in this passage. *Thou shalt speak* indicates that Jeremiah will not be at liberty to say just what he might personally wish to say, but he must say what the Lord directs him to say. The same restriction is placed on the teachers in the kingdom of Christ. (2 Tim. 4: 2; 1 Pe. 4: 11.)

Verse 8. The word for *faces* is sometimes rendered "countenances" and that is the idea in this place. Jeremiah was destined to go up against people who would not like his teaching and who would give him many threatening looks. The Lord is assuring him of his support and that he need have no fear because of the threats of enemies.

Verse 9. The Lord sometimes resorts to literal actions, both by himself and through his servants, in bringing about certain results. This doubtless is for the effect of making a strong impression. In Jeremiah's case his inspiration was indicated by the hand of the Lord being brought into contact with his mouth. The action would especially denote his inspiration when speaking to the people.

Verse 10. It is evident that Jeremiah did not actually contact the institutions of the world to pull them down, hence the words are used in some indirect sense. A similar statement was made by Ezekiel (ch. 43: 3), and the marginal reading at that place is, "When I came to prophesy that the city should be destroyed." The same kind of rendering should be made in our verse. It means Jeremiah will be instructed to prophesy to the nations and kingdoms that God is going to cause the threatened calamities, or else bring the favorable events according to the circumstances of the case.

Verses 11, 12. The word *almond* is SHAQED and Strong's definition is, "The almond (tree or nut; as being the earliest in bloom)." *Hasten* is from SHAQAD which Strong defines, "A primitive root; to be alert, i.e. sleepless; hence to be on the lookout (whether for good or ill)." Here is an unusual coincidence of words. The two in italics have no similarity of meaning in the English, yet the originals are almost identical in meaning. The circumstance gives us one of the methods the Lord takes in his use of words that get their meaning from the characteristics of the objects bearing the names of said words. The almond is one of the earliest of trees to show up in the spring blooming season. Because of this fact the Lord chose the word in his descriptive prediction because it was practically the same in meaning as another word in the Hebrew vocabulary that specifically does mean to hasten or be on the alert. And the underlying reason for this peculiar phrasing was the truth that the things being predicted were soon to be fulfilled; not be on the list of happenings that were many years in the future. As a visual circumstance for the impressions on the mind of the prophet, God caused him to see a *rod* or limb taken from the almond tree. The event that was soon to occur was the Babylonian invasion that was to result in the captivity of the nation. Jeremiah began to write in the year 627 B.C., and the invasion came in 606 B.C., only 21 years later. This short interval of time would justify the prediction made by the imagery of the almond tree.

Verse 13. Again the Lord causes the prophet to see an object in his vision. It is a *seething pot* and the context indicates according to the original that it is seething or boiling because it is being fanned by a brisk wind. *Toward the north* is rendered "from the face of the north" in the margin and the lexicon agrees with it, also the next verse so renders it in the text. This seething pot which contains a hot mixture that is being made more intense by the brisk blowing, represents the Babylonian army that was soon to come against Jerusalem and the country in general.

Verse 14. This verse expressly predicts that the evil is to break forth *out of the north*. The map shows that Babylon was east and not north of Jerusalem. But the picture represents

the invasion as it will appear to the people of Palestine when they first see it. They will actually see that the Babylonian army is coming upon them from the north of the land of Palestine. This fact of history is explained by a lengthy note in connection with Isa. 14: 31 in the 3rd volume of this Commentary.

Verse 15. This is more along the same line as the preceding verses and is expressed in more direct language. The Lord told the prophet that he would call the people from the *north* as has been explained. At the time of the invasion there was to be but one government engaged in the movement, which would be the Babylonians. The terms *families* and *kingdoms* refer to the divisions of the army that were to operate in unison under the authority of the emperor. *Set every one his throne* or seat means these various units would fix their proper places in the siege against Jerusalem which was the capital of the Jewish nation. Of course at the same time the necessary attention would be given to the other cities of Judah to see that nothing is done to hinder the siege. The fulfillment of this invasion and siege is recorded in 2 Ki. 24 and 25 for the Biblical account. The historical fulfillment was quoted with the comments on Isa. 3: 1 in the 3rd volume of this Commentary.

Verse 16. *Cities of Judah* in the preceding verse is the antecedent of *them* and *their* in this. *Their wickedness* refers to the idolatrous practices that the people of Judah (the 2-tribe kingdom) had been following for so long. It has always been true that "no man can serve two masters." When the Jews took to serving idols it was after they had forsaken the true God. *Other gods and works of their own hands* refers to the different kinds of idolatrous worship. They worshiped the sun and moon and other things in the creation, and also formed idols by hand out of wood and stone and metal. Part of the idolatrous worship (even as was true of that rendered to God) consisted of animal sacrifices burned on altars erected for that purpose. In other cases it consisted of burning of incense to the gods. The latter is the form that is charged against the people in this instance.

Verse 17. *Gird up thy loins* is a figurative expression for the prophet to "Get hold of himself" or brace himself to meet the test. He is to meet the

corrupt people and rebuke them for their sins, and it will arouse their anger and bring forth many threats if not actual physical violence. The Lord bids him not to be dismayed at their *faces* which means their threatening countenances. The prophet is also placed under a threat from the Lord in case he shrinks from the struggle which is decreed he shall have. To *confound* means "to prostrate" or "break down" according to the lexicon definition of the original word. Should Jeremiah flinch before those unworthy people then he will get some of the wrath of God poured out upon him.

Verse 18. The pronoun *thee* stands for Jeremiah and the passage is a figurative assurance to him that he will be able to withstand the attacks of the enemy. As a *defenced city, iron pillar* and *brassen walls* would provide a condition of security in literal things, so Jeremiah was to be just that secure against the would-be thrusts of those wicked Jews. The itemizing of *kings, princes, priests* and *people* would indicate that the prophet was to be set against all classes in the nation, for all had departed from the Lord. However, while all classes as a whole had departed from the Lord, we will bear in mind that a few exceptions existed among them such as our prophet Jeremiah and other men like him in character.

Verse 19. *They* refers to the kings and other persons mentioned in the preceding verse. The prophet was not only warned to prepare for opposition, but he is now plainly told that it will come from these sources. Again the assurance is given him that his enemies will not prevail. The reason for that assurance is also stated, that it is because the Lord is with him. (See Rom. 8: 31.)

## JEREMIAH 2

Verse 1. The prophet frequently will tell us the source of his information, that it is the word of the Lord.

Verse 2. *Cry* means "to call out" and *in the ears* means to speak so that they will hear. Jerusalem was not the only place where the guilt of idolatry existed, but it was the capital of the nation and hence was of special importance. Being the capital it was where the kings resided and reigned. Also, the temple was there and hence the priests were concerned personally with the religious activities on behalf of the nation. In view of these facts

the guilt of idolatry was especially laid at their feet. As an aggrieved husband would remind a cool hearted wife of her original affection, so God reminds Israel of the time when she gave him the *kindness* of her warm devotions. *Espousals* (note the plural form) is from KĒLUWLĀH and Strong's definition is, "bridehood," hence it is not restricted to the period of engagement, but applies to the early days and years of marriage. It would especially apply to the honeymoon. During that period a bride is usually kindly disposed toward her husband and manifests a warm affection for him. In this passage the honeymoon is used in an illustration that applies to the journey *in the wilderness*. However, this bride was not as true during the honeymoon as fleshly brides usually are, for many times even in course of that period she became dissatisfied and complained to her husband of her lot. And after all, the illustration holds good even in this respect, for we have heard of instances where couples became involved in marriage difficulties that began as early as the days of the honeymoon and finally ended in divorce. But this husband was more lenient and patient and always heard the complaints of his bride. He sometimes gave her very earnest rebukes, but proceeded to supply the things that would make her more comfortable and happy.

Verse 3. *Israel was holiness* is rather a ceremonial term, meaning the nation had been accepted as a peculiar possession of the Lord. Firstfruits means she was regarded as the choice of products, even as a young husband will think his bride is the most desirable person in the world. Should anyone attempt to molest this bride he would be due some serious trouble. *Offend* is defined in the lexicon "to be guilty," and the person who would make any improper advances toward this bride would be deemed guilty and would be avenged by the husband.

Verse 4. *Jacob* and *Israel* refer to the same people, the former (whose name was changed to Israel, Gen. 32: 28) being an ancestor of the latter. This people is now called upon to hear the word of the Lord as delivered by the inspired prophet.

Verse 5. Sometimes a wife will listen to the counsel of her parents who are objecting to the husband even after years of married life. If those objections are made on a true basis it is well for them to interfere, but they



should be sure that such is the case before trying to dissolve the marriage. This husband demands to know what are the objections which have led to the coldness of the wife. That coldness had arrived to the extent that the wife was going off after others who offered her some of their possessions; she had gone *after vanity*.

Verse 6. A true wife will take pleasure in recounting the many acts of kindness and tender regard that her husband showed her in their honeymoon and the early years of their married life. But this wife of the Lord had ceased even to talk about those days, much less to be held in her devotion to her husband in the later years. Those acts of devotion were not mere displays of sentiment with little or no substantial value as is sometimes the case with fleshly husbands. Sometimes a honeymoon will have to be taken against the wishes of other members of the family, and there have been instances where actual danger to life had to be encountered in order to remain together. Under conditions like those a loving husband will not evade any danger necessary to protect his bride. That was the case with the Lord and his bride, for they had to travel together through a country that was filled with pits and deserts and where the shadow of death hovered over them. But through it all the husband remained steadfast and helpful and had a constant care for his bride.

Verse 7. This bride was brought safely through the honeymoon until she was conducted to the place that was to be her home. And what a great home it was that her loving husband had provided for her! An entire tract large enough to accommodate a country, and thriving with luscious fruits and everything one could reasonably desire. With such provisions it would be expected that a bride would be contented and happy, and satisfied with nothing short of wholehearted devotion to such a wonderful companion. Sad to say, this bride not only became coldhearted toward her husband who had provided her with such a wonderful home, but she began at once to corrupt this good dowry with wild plants and weeds of idolatry.

Verse 8. One person cannot perform the duties of another in the service of the Lord, yet the degree of responsibility is not always the same with different men. God always charged the leading men in the nation more se-

verely than he did the common people. Hence this verse names several classes of persons who were chiefly guilty in the coldness against the Lord. The priests were the ones who had charge of the altars and the services pertaining thereto. They that *handle* means they who wield or execute or teach the law. *Pastors* is from *RAAH* and Strong's definition is, "a primitive root; to tend a flock, i.e. pasture it; intransitively to graze (literally or figuratively); generally to rule." The original has been rendered by various words in the Old Testament, but the book of Jeremiah is the only one that has *pastor*. The term refers to the men in the Jewish nation whose special work was to give instruction to the people. The prophets were of two classes as regards their work. One class may be designated "writing prophets," among whom were Isaiah and Jeremiah and others. However, these men were not restricted to writing, but God used them also to make oral predictions to the people. They also served to admonish and chastise the men and women of the nation for their many sins. The other class of prophets did all of their work orally and among such were Elijah and Elisha and others whose names and work appear along in the Bible. All of the men mentioned above had become indifferent toward the true God, but these prophets had not stopped at their coldness. They were *prophesying by Baal* which means they did their work in the name of this heathen god and pretended to believe that he would bring their predictions to pass.

Verse 9. The prophet seems to have dropped the illustration of bride and wife and now takes a direct form of language. In spite of all the unfaithfulness of the people, the Lord pleads with them and even promises to do so from generation to generation.

Verse 10. The Lord purposes to shame his people by referring them to others who have far less advantages as nations and yet have been more faithful to their gods. *Chittim* is rendered Cyprus (an island in the eastern Mediterranean) by many works of reference including Strong's lexicon. *Kedar* is a tribe of Arabians who were an unsettled kind of people. Such people as are referred to in these two places would ordinarily not be expected to display unusual qualities, yet a contrast is going to be made between

them and the people who had been favored by the Lord.

Verse 11. The question asked has the negative answer implied. These inferior nations had been true to their idol gods although in truth such objects were no gods. But God's people had forsaken the true God and replaced him (in their hearts) with *that which doth not profit*. We would condemn a man if he deserted a friend of some standing, even though the one for whom he deserted the first one offered greater favors than had been provided by the other. It would be regarded rather in the nature of a bribe. But the people of God had done worse than that. They had turned their backs upon a true friend and gone after one who could give them nothing.

Verse 12. All intelligent beings are meant by the expression *ye heavens*, and they are told to be astonished at the horrible thing that has been done. To *be afraid* does not mean that the false gods can do anything effectively against the works of the true God. The expression really means that the situation is appalling and dark.

Verse 13. One evil is enough to bring the condemnation of the Lord, but these people of his had committed *two evils*. One was to forsake the true fountain of living water. Had they stopped with that evil it would have been bad enough. But they did not pause in their unfaithfulness of leaving the true fountain. They pretended to provide themselves a better supply of water by hewing out their own cisterns which proved to be broken and unable to hold any water. In all ages of the world men have committed the same kind of folly that is described in this verse by the illustration of cisterns. They have become dissatisfied with the Lord's plan of salvation and implied that He did not know just what man needed. Then they have proceeded to invent ways of their own for the benefit of sinful man. The inconsistency of such conduct is so evident that it is today a matter also at which to be appalled. If an infinite God did not know what was best for his own created beings, it is extremely foolish for those very creatures to think they can better the situation with their innovations.

Verse 14. This verse is a prediction in question form of the calamity that was to come upon Israel in a few years. The passage means to humiliate the people by speaking as if they

were no better off than a servant or slave. *Spoiled* is rendered "become a spoil" in the margin which is correct. In a few years the Babylonian army will come against the capital and *spoil* or dispossess its people of their goods. The fulfillment of this prediction is recorded in 2 Ki. 24: 13.

Verse 15. Lions roaring and storming out of their thickets against a civilization is used to illustrate the invasion of the Babylonian army. *Cities are burned* took place in course of the siege and attack recounted in 2 Ki. 24 and 25. Most of the accounts of that campaign pertain to Jerusalem because it was the capital city. But the phrase *the mighty of the land* in 2 Ki. 24: 15 indicates that a general attack was made in the country; it was then the cities were burned.

Verse 16. Babylon was the country where the people of Israel were to be taken into captivity as a whole, but other places were permitted to make inroads and accomplish some gains. *Noph* (or Memphis) and *Tahapanes* were cities in Egypt and they are mentioned as having a share in the victories accomplished by their king Pharaoh. The record of this event is in 2 Ki. 23: 33-35.

Verse 17. This is a severe but just rebuke of the nation and lays the blame for the misfortunes of the people of Israel at their own door. They had been warned even as long ago as the days of Moses (Deut. 28) that such experiences would come upon them if they went after false gods.

Verse 18. *What hast thou* means to ask them what right they had to go to those heathen places to partake of what they had. They did not always literally go to those places, but in their hearts they turned in that direction, and in a few instances they made literal application to those heathen localities for favors. *Sihor* is another name for the Nile in Egypt, and *the river* means the Euphrates in Babylonia. The last place is called Assyria because at the time Jeremiah wrote, the land through which the great river flows was still in the possession of Assyria, though it was destined to be brought under control by the Babylonians by the time the Jews were to be taken to begin their long-predicted captivity of 70 years.

Verse 19. Sin often works its own rebuke on the principle that "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6: 8). This is especially

true in moral questions if the Lord takes an active part in the case as he was to do with these people of Israel. *It is an evil thing and bitter* means their conduct toward God was evil as it pertained to Him, and it would be bitter for them when they realized the punishment it brought them. This bitterness is predicted in terms of deep sadness in Psa. 137. *My fear is not in thee* refers to their lack of reverence for God and his law. For the fulfillment of the prediction in the first part of the verse, see the long note that shows their complete recovery from idolatry. It is given with the comments on Isa. 1: 25 in the 3rd volume of this Commentary.

Verse 20. The weakness of inconsistency was nowhere more evident than in the conduct of Israel through the long history of the nation. Time after time in the journey through the wilderness the people did wrong, felt sorry and promised to do better, then fell back into sin again. After reaching the promised land and being established in it as a nation of the Lord, the same old tendency to forget God showed up from time to time. The most outstanding sin was idolatry, and the evident explanation is that it was the most prevalent iniquity in sight. Man is inclined to be affected most by that which is nearest him. All of the nations near Israel were idolaters and produced a strong influence over the people of God. *Trees* in themselves are not evil things but are among the noble objects of God's creation. But the heathen nations had connected their idol worship so generally with the groves that the mere sight of even one *green* (living) tree suggested the erecting of an idol. If no means were available for making the idol, the devoted idolater would fall down before the tree and offer his worship. This practice led God to make laws regarding the planting of groves, especially near any altar of the true services. *Playing the harlot* is using the corruption in the moral world to illustrate unfaithfulness in the religious. The comparison is logical and not just a strict notion of God as his enemies might think. If a married person has intimate relations with some one besides the lawful partner, it is recognized by everyone as being wrong and receives the name of adultery. On the same principle, if a person who professes to be married or joined to the true God should have intimate religious relations with some

other god, it is like the unfaithfulness of the married partner. That is why God associated jealousy with the sin of idolatry in his law on the tables of the ten commandments (Ex. 20: 5).

Verse 21. Various things in the natural world are used to illustrate those in the religious or spiritual realm. In this verse the object chosen is a vine, and that doubtless is because it was one of the most familiar things in Palestine. The nation of Israel is compared to a *noble vine*. These words are not separate terms in the original but together come from *soregah* which Strong defines, "a vine stock (properly one yielding purple grapes, the richest variety)." The fundamental meaning of *strange* is something foreign or from the outside. In this verse the Lord has a plant doing that which nature alone would not do. Any vine might degenerate and become fruitless or fail to produce as good a crop as it should. But this "thoroughbred" vine had changed its breed into the kind that grew in the territory outside of the vineyard. The literal explanation is that Israel had reached out and absorbed the substance of the idolatrous territory surrounding the Lord's vineyard, and was producing wild fruit in the form of false religion.

Verse 22. *Nitre* is defined in the lexicon as "potash" which corresponds to lye. If both lye and soap are used on a surface without getting it clean, it is certainly very much defiled and the uncleanness would be deep seated. *Marked* is from KATHAM which Strong defines, "a primitive root; properly to carve or engrave, i.e. (by implication) to inscribe indelibly." It means the uncleanness is deeper than the surface and is engraved into the body of the object, hence mere cleansing articles such as lye or soap would have no effect on it. The application is to the iniquity of the nation of Israel, and means that nothing the people can do for themselves will remove the mark. This is another passage that might seem to conflict with others where the Lord exhorted his people to reform and make themselves "clean" and he would receive them. The apparent difficulty is explained by observing the difference between the nation as a whole, and certain individuals in it. There is a long note on this subject with the comments on 2 Ki. 22: 17 in Vol. 2 of this Commentary.

Verse 23. Sometimes a person will deny an accusation when the evidence of his guilt is displayed in full sight. Israel denied the guilt of idolatry but

the Lord pointed to signs of guilt that were unmistakable. *Baal* was one of the heathen gods that was also worshiped by the people of Israel. For more information on this word see the comments at Judges 2: 11-13 in volume 1 of this Commentary. *Way* is from a word that Strong defines, "A course of life or mode of action," and the Lord is pointing an accusing finger to the actions of Israel in the *valley*. This word is from *GAY* which Strong defines, "A gorge (from its lofty sides; hence narrow, but not a gully or winter torrent)." From this definition it may be seen the word refers to a dry depression in the earth that can be used for human activities. The conduct to which this verse refers is that of idolatrous sacrifices which the Israelites offered in this place. Incidentally, the name of one particular valley is the source of the word *GEHENNA*, one of the words translated "hell" in the New Testament. It will be well to give the reader some information from the lexicons on this interesting but much-perverted word. "The name *Geenna* . . . the narrow valley skirting Jerusalem on the south, running down from the west into the valley of *Jehoshaphat*, under Mount *Zion*. Here the ancient Israelites established the idolatrous worship of *Moloch*, to whom they burned infants in sacrifice; 2 Ki. 23: 10; Jer. 7: 31, 32; 32: 35; compare Jer. 2: 23 [our present verse]; 19: 6, 13." Robinson's Greek Lexicon. "*Gehenna*, properly the valley of *Hinnom*, south of Jerusalem, once celebrated for the horrid worship of *Moloch*, and afterwards polluted with every species of filth, as well as the carcasses of animals, and dead bodies of malefactors; to consume which, in order to avert the pestilence such a mass of corruption would occasion, constant fires were kept burning; hence, hell, the fires of *Tartarus*, the place of punishment in *Hades*. Matt. 5: 22, 29, 30."—Greenfield. With such practices as here described, and they being conducted so near the very capital of the nation, it was foolish for the people of Israel to deny their guilt of idolatry. *Traversing* means to travel or move back and forth, going over the same spots again and again. Comparing Israel to a *dromedary* (a young camel) is to indicate the greater activities in the practice of idolatry since a younger animal would be likely to be more energetic. In the beginning of this paragraph the reference was to *Baalim*, while the above quotations from the lexicon refer to *Moloch*.

That is the name of another heathen god, but the various false gods were so much alike, and the services offered to them had so many principles in common, that a person guilty of devotion to one was justly charged with devotion to the other.

Verse 24. In the preceding verse Israel (I use the word with its general meaning) is compared to a young camel. In this the comparison is to a wild ass spending her days in the wilderness. She has been in such surroundings so much that she is used to the experiences. *Sniffeth up the wind at her pleasure* denotes an independent attitude toward the things that will give her pleasure regardless of whether they are things worth while or not. *Who can turn her* is in question form, but it means no one can turn her from her determination to have her own way. Any male wishing her association might as well not bother to find her out there in the wilderness. *In her month* (meaning the mating time) she will show up prompted by her own desires at which time the male companion will easily have access to her. Likewise, Israel is interested only in her own pleasure and *in her occasion* (at her opportunity) she submits to mating with another wild (strange or outside) creature, the false god, with whom she will unite in intimate association.

Verse 25. The comparison to a wild ass continues, representing her as being without the benefits that could be provided for her, though on account of her own stubbornness. The owner bids her not go longer with unshod feet or with a thirsty throat, for he has been willing all the time to supply these needs. She replies "*there is no hope*"; as much as to say, "there is no use to talk to me for I am in love with creatures on the outside and will still go after them." This peculiar illustration literally means to predict that Israel will persist in her idolatry until she has learned her lesson and then she will be ashamed.

Verse 26. Yes, just as a thief is ashamed when he has been caught, so Israel was destined to regret her idolatry and will express her grief in humiliating terms, even including the kings and other leading men in the confessions of shame.

Verse 27. The thing of which the people of Israel will be ashamed is their silly devotion to dumb idols described in this verse. The first two clauses are not intended to be direct



quotations from the people, for they never actually said those things; the thought is their conduct logically said them. Certainly no being but one's creator would have the right to such devotion as they were giving to idols that were made of a stock (a tree) or a stone. Thus their service to such objects implied that they had been produced by them. *Have turned their back unto me* is a direct charge from the Lord against his people, and that was what justified the implied statements in the beginning of the verse. For all of this they were being punished or would be in a little while, and for it all they were to be heartily ashamed. The last clause is on that subject and the form of their expression of grief is well described in Psa. 137. The same is historically described in Ezk. 37: 11 about the dry bones.

Verse 28. The prophet resumes his chastising remarks against Israel in this verse and on to the end of the chapter. If the gods are worthy of devotion in time of peace, they ought to be able to help their devoted worshippers in time of trouble, and the prophet calls upon his people to apply to them for help. No excuse could be made on the ground that these gods were not available, either because they were busy or were too far away. No, they had them in every city and hence were in close contact with the people. *Judah* is named in this verse whereas *Israel* is mentioned in the chapter in the same connection. But at the present stage of the history the two names may properly be used interchangeably. *Israel* as a distinctive name of the 10-tribe kingdom has been in exile from the native land for over a hundred years. The 2-tribe kingdom known as *Judah* is still in Palestine. But both of these kingdoms were composed of the people of *Israel*, hence either term is proper and will continue to be, for the 12 tribes will not be divided again during and after the captivity.

Verse 29. *Wherefore will ye plead* is the Lord's way of telling the people they have no ground on which to make a plea for favor. *Ye all* would include the various classes in the nation. It is true the leaders were more to be blamed for the corruptions, but Ch. 5: 31 says the people loved to have it so. The principles of the Bible are that if a person takes pleasure (is satisfied or pleased with) in the actions of another it makes him a partaker of the same (Rom. 1: 32).

Verse 30. *Smitten your children* does not refer to the personal offspring

of any individuals. The second word refers to them as a nation and the third means the citizens of the nation. The phrase is a reference to past chastisements that God had imposed upon the nation but which had not caused it to repent. Even the prophets who dared rebuke the people for their sins were not spared from the murderous sword.

Verse 31. A *wilderness* is a place without the products of life and the question asked of *Israel* is a reminder that God had supplied all of her needs. For that reason she had no right to say *we are lords*. That phrase means they had no right to claim a dominion of their own; that was what they had been claiming.

Verse 32. This is another use of the marriage relation for an illustration. A fleshly bride will long remember her wedding formal and will take pleasure in looking at it and showing it to others. And if she is sincere, the mere sight of it will recall the man who stood beside her at the happy event. But this spiritual wife of the Lord had forgotten her husband *days without number*.

Verse 33. *Trimmed* is rendered "dressed" in Ex. 30: 7 about trimming the lamps. The thought is this wife was making herself attractive so as to interest another lover. She was not content to gratify herself with unrighteous practices, but induced others to do the same if she saw they were already inclined to evil.

Verse 34. *Skirts* is used figuratively, meaning *Israel's* garments were stained with the blood of innocent persons. *Secret* is not in the original as a separate word but is a part of the same word for *search*. It is *MACHTERETH* which Strong defines, "a burglary; figuratively unexpected examination." The thought is that God did not have to make any "lie test" kind of examination or try to "catch" the guilty people when they were not expecting it. *Upon all these* means the Lord saw the evidences of their guilt plainly displayed.

Verse 35. In spite of the many evidences of her guilt, *Israel* was so bold as to deny it and then ask God to take her word for it and be favorable toward her. But this false plea of innocence was to be an extra reason for the anger of the Lord. It is bad enough to commit sin, but it makes the degree of that sin greater when the guilty one denies it in the face of plain evidences.



Verse 36. *Gaddest* is from *AZAL* and Strong's definition is, "A primitive root; to go away, hence to disappear." *Way* is from a word that means "a course of life or mode of actions." We know the general opinion of a wife who is seldom in her home, for she may be suspected of seeking indulgences that she cannot have in her home. (See Titus 2: 5.) The wife of the Lord was frequently "gone from home" in search of someone with whom to enjoy unlawful pleasures and to receive from him some favor. Among the ones she thus flirted with were Egypt and Assyria. The Lord warns her that she will be ashamed of such paramours.

Verse 37. *Him* refers to the unlawful lover with whom the unfaithful wife had been intimate. *Hands upon thine head* is a gesture of shame for some humiliating event that has taken place, like the action of Tamar in 2 Sam. 13: 19. The difference between the cases, however, is that Tamar was not to blame; but the shame was there and it was indicated by placing her hand upon her head. Israel was at fault in this unlawful intimacy, but she was destined to realize it and would feel the shame as much as did the innocent Tamar.

### JEREMIAH 3

Verse 1. *They say* is rendered "saying" in the margin, and the American Standard Version and Moffatt also translate it thus, making it a continuation of the preceding chapter. The words from *if* through *polluted* are a quotation of what the unfaithful wife was saying in her awakening of shameful realization of her unworthy conduct. She is represented as admitting that if a fleshly wife is untrue to her husband he will not live with her again, because to do so would pollute the land. But in spite of such a well-established principle the Lord is willing to take back his unworthy wife. In so doing He shows himself to be more lenient than a wronged fleshly husband. This case is even worse than an ordinary one in that the wife has been intimate with *many lovers*.

Verse 2. The comparison between idolatry and adultery is a familiar one and it is continued in this verse. When any particular subject or fact is selected for the purpose of illustration, the terms used will generally be those that are literally true of the illustration, even though the writer means the subject being illustrated. Thus the Lord calls attention of his unfaithful

wife to the many *high places* (spots where idols were erected) where she has committed spiritual adultery. An Arabian wanders in territories where there are not many people, and if a woman desires the unrighteous experience there she will sit down and wait for a chance passer-by, so eager is she for the corrupt act.

Verse 3. The prediction was made in the preceding chapter that Israel would come to be ashamed of her harlotry. This verse is not a prediction but is a charge as to her condition of mind at the time of the writing. The withholding of rain and other natural blessings had been threatened many years before. (See Lev. 26: 19, 20.)

Verse 4. The comparison is changed in this verse to the relation of father and offspring. Israel is admonished to remember who it was that guided her all her life. All the good things she has ever enjoyed were provided by this kind Parent. But Israel has been acting the part of a child that was over-indulged, and seems to think there will be no limit to the patience of her Father.

Verse 5. These questions are asked by this Father in a way that implies a negative answer. Israel had *spoken evil things* as she had opportunity, and the divine patience was about exhausted.

Verse 6. The books of the Bible were not written at any continuous period, but different parts of them were composed whenever the Lord was desiring something to be put in writing. I wish the student would now read again my comments on ch. 1: 3. The present verse starts one of the passages referred to above. *Me* refers to Jeremiah since he is the writer of this book, and he is telling us some things the Lord said to him in the days of Josiah. It was in the reign of this king that Jeremiah began his great book, but the verse of this paragraph and several that follow contain a severe complaint against Judah. The significant thought in these verses is the condemnation of this kingdom based on the contrast between it and the 10-tribe kingdom of Israel. But the contrast will not be appreciated unless we know how bad was the kingdom with which Judah is to be compared. Israel (the 10-tribe kingdom) had been in exile over a hundred years as a punishment for her idolatry. But the Lord recounts to the prophet the great and many instances of the sins of that nation. *Every mountain* and

every green tree had been used by that backsliding people as a place for the practice of idolatry, here called harlotry. For this sin Israel had been given over to the Assyrians, and Judah as well as the world knew about that fact of history.

Verse 7. Israel as the 10-tribe kingdom is the subject of this verse and refers to the many admonishments that God gave it but all in vain. All of this was known to Judah (the 2-tribe kingdom) and it should have been a lesson to it.

Verse 8. In verse 4 the relation of father and offspring was used for an illustration. In keeping with that the two kingdoms of the people of God, Israel and Judah, are spoken of as sisters in a few of the verses. The former sister persisted so long in her spiritual adultery that her husband finally put her away with a bill of divorce. Even this severe chastisement did not influence the other sister for good, but instead she went and committed the same unfaithfulness for which the other had been divorced.

Verse 9. The sister, Israel, is being spoken of yet and the extent of her sins is described. *Lightness* is from qol which Strong defines, "From an unused root meaning to call aloud; a voice or sound." In the King James translation it has been rendered by aloud, bleating, crackling, cry, fame, claim and proclamation. The thought of the writer is that Israel was so bold and unreserved in her spiritual adultery that the land became disgraced. *Stones* and *stocks* (trees) were materials with which the spiritual adultery was committed.

Verse 10. An extreme case of bad conduct that becomes known all over the land will generally cause others to be admonished, but this did not prove so with Judah when she saw how awful was the corruption of her sister. Judah is called *treacherous* because the word means to cover or act secretly. So the Lord charges her with ignoring the example of her sister and with being insincere (*feignedly*) in her service to Him.

Verse 11. This verse must be understood on the principle that men are held responsible according to the opportunity they have, and part of the opportunity consists of their knowledge of right and wrong. Judah had the information direct from God that idolatry was wrong and would bring the wrath of God on the guilty. Israel had that direct information also, but

she did not have that knowledge confirmed by the actual experiences of others whose career was everywhere recognized. Judah did have that advantage by observing the history of Israel. This increased her responsibility greatly and caused God to make the statement of this verse. In the actual performances of idolatry Judah did not go as far as Israel, and also in actual good qualities there was more to be said in favor of Judah than of her sister. Judah had at least a few kings who were free from the guilt of idolatry, but Israel did not have a king who was not an idolater. However, in view of the above considerations Judah was far more guilty in the Lord's sight than Israel.

Verse 12. At the time of this writing, Israel (the 10-tribe kingdom) was in exile in the land of Assyria. The prophet is instructed to *go and proclaim* some words to that people. This was done evidently to provoke Judah to jealousy, for we know the Lord sometimes uses such methods to accomplish his purposes. (See Rom. 11: 14.) However, while the immediate purpose was to provoke such reaction from Judah, the predictions that will be made throughout the remainder of the chapter will have special reference to Judah. Mention is made of the *north* which might seem confusing in view of the actual direction of Assyria from Palestine, but this circumstance is explained in connection with the comments on Isa. 14: 31 in Vol. 3 of this Commentary. There is no deception in this passage, for what will be true of Judah will also be true of Israel when the time comes for the end of the captivity. At that time the 12 tribes will have been in practically the same territory, and all will share in the favors that appear to be promised especially to Judah.

Verse 13. God calls upon his people to acknowledge their guilt and thus show a proper spirit regarding their great unfaithfulness toward Him. The ten tribes are already in exile at the time this is being written and the two tribes are very near the time of their captivity. Moreover, nothing can be done to prevent the awful event, yet it is always best to acknowledge a sin and thus become more worthy of the favor when the time comes to be released from an unpleasant situation. In the governments of men a prisoner will be required to "serve time" for his misdeeds, yet often when the term of his sentence is being regulated he may

be given more consideration if he has been a "model prisoner."

Verse 14. In verse 8 the people of God are said to be divorced from him while here it is said that God is married to them. The word is from BAWAL and Strong's first definition is, "A primitive root; to be master." Being their master the Lord will be able to do by and with them as he sees fit, hence he makes the prediction that he will come to their rescue at the proper time. *One of a city and two of a family* is the familiar prediction of the "remnant" that was to be saved from the captivity. See 2 Sam. 24: 9 and Ezra 2: 1, 64 and note the decrease in their number. It will be seen that the proportion is practically that which is indicated in the italicized words.

Verse 15. See the comments at ch. 2: 8 for the meaning of *pastors*. The prediction in this verse was fulfilled according to Neh. 8: 7, 8.

Verse 16. Many things written by the prophets had a twofold bearing, applying in some sense to both fleshly and spiritual Israel and this verse is one of them. When God's people get back into their own land they will be so happy over their escape from the Babylonian captivity they will cease to repine for the ark of the Lord which then will have been lost. All this was true of the Jews as may be seen in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. But the "telescope" (see illustration offered in "General Remarks" at Isa. ch. 1) is here extended and the prophet sees into the time of the reign of Christ. The ark represents the Jewish Dispensation which will be replaced by that under Christ. When that time comes spiritual Israel will not be calling for the ark (containing the 10 commandments issued at Sinai), but all attention will be centered in the law of Christ that will be issued at Jerusalem. *Neither shall they remember* it does not teach that Christians should literally forget all about the Old Testament law, for Rom. 15: 4 and 1 Cor. 10: 11 teach that they are expected to remember its history. The meaning is that the people under Christ will not be longing to go back to the old law for guidance, for to do so will cause them to lose the favor of God. (See Gal. 5: 4.)

Verse 17. When spiritual Israel comes into being the people of God will regard Jerusalem (not Sinai) as the place from which their law was given. *All nations* is a prediction that the Gentiles as well as the Jews will

be included in the new system of salvation. This is what Peter taught by "all flesh" in Acts 2: 17 and "every nation" in Acts 10: 35.

Verse 18. *Those days* refers to the time of return from the captivity. When *Judah* and *Israel* are named in one connection it means the 2-tribe and 10-tribe kingdoms. When the return from exile takes place both of these kingdoms will have been there in the same territory that was ruled by the Babylonians, and will all be released as one people. This prediction refutes the notion so long held by some that the ten tribes were lost while in captivity. The inspired prophet saw all twelve tribes returning to their native land *together*. For the explanation of *the north* see the comments on Isa. 14: 31 in Vol. 3 of this Commentary.

Verse 19. *How shall I put thee among the children* is the same as asking on what basis the Lord can receive back the wayward nation as his people, when it has been so unmindful of the goodness bestowed upon it. We can give the answer in the light of other passages; it is because of the divine compassion. Yes, these unworthy people will again look upon God as their father and will not again commit the national idolatry.

Verse 20. God did not wish his people to forget the reason they were to be so bitterly chastised. Even in the midst of passages predicting their return to divine favor, they were often reminded of their shortcomings. Various things and relations in human life are used as illustrations. In one verse it will be the relation of parent and offspring, then perhaps of husband and wife. The latter is used in this verse although the word *husband* is rendered "friend" in the margin, which is also the definition in the lexicon of Strong. But there is no conflict in the rendering, for a husband should be considered the best earthly friend a woman can have. This wife (the house of Israel) had been unfaithful to her husband and had tried to do so secretly, which is the meaning of doing it *treacherously*.

Verse 21. A *voice* means the voice of the people of Israel in their idolatrous worship, calling on the gods to hear them. *High places* means the hills and other spots where altars were erected for the services of heathen gods. *Perverted their way* denotes the corruptions that Israel had injected into the way of life. When

men go after things that are contrary to the right way it is evident that they *have forgotten the Lord their God* which is here charged against Israel.

Verse 22. In some of the passages containing admonitions to reform, the dates are applicable to the conditions in force before the captivity. In such cases the subject should be considered in the light of the comments at 2 Ki. 22: 17 in Vol. 2 of this Commentary. But the present verse is a prediction of conditions that are to be true at the conclusion of the captivity, for Israel is represented as saying *we come unto thee*. This predicts the actual state of mind of that people after they have had the chastisement of the captivity. They will then have repented of their backsliding, which includes their complete cure from idolatry. The historical confirmation of this prediction is quoted in connection with Isa. 1: 25, vol. 3 of this Commentary.

Verse 23. The people are again reminded of the uselessness of idolatry. *The hills* is a reference to the "high places" where idol gods had altars erected for their worship. The long period of the captivity caused the Jews to reflect upon their experiences in the home land with reference to the idol worship. After many centuries of this devotion to idols they were finally brought to national humiliation, and this verse is an acknowledgement of their failure. They also confess their belief in the Lord God as the only true source of salvation.

Verse 24. The Jews became ashamed of their past conduct and the humiliating situation to which it brought them. The fruit of their labors had been taken over by the enemy and they were reduced to a low estate.

Verse 25. This is more along the same line of the state in which Israel was to find herself as a punishment for her iniquity. I believe I should again remind the reader that although the form of language is in the past or present tense it is generally a prediction. The Jews came to realize their sins and acknowledged them which is the prediction in this verse.

### JEREMIAH 4

Verse 1. Jeremiah began to write in the days of Josiah and God had told that righteous reformer that nothing he could do would prevent the captivity. Hence we should understand the exhortations of this and several verses that follow in the light of advice to individuals to reform their lives. The

reader is requested to see the note in connection with 2 Ki. 22: 17 in Vol. 2 of this Commentary.

Verse 2. *Thou shalt swear the Lord liveth* is a contrast with the practice of swearing by the name of the false gods as the idolaters were doing. Under the Jewish Dispensation the people of God were permitted to make oaths but Christians are forbidden to do so (Matt. 5: 33-37; Jas. 5: 12). If the Jews professed to swear by the Lord it would not avail them anything unless they were doing so in truth and justice and with a righteous motive. *Nations shall bless themselves* means that if the people (one definition of *nations*) will base their oaths on the Lord they will be blessed and glorified.

Verse 3. *Men of Judah and Jerusalem* is said because that city was the capital of the kingdom of the two tribes, the ten having been in exile more than a century. The verse is still an exhortation on the principle of the note referred to in verse 1. *Break* means to cultivate and *fallow ground* means ground that is ploughed and gleaming with richness. The clause denotes the wisdom of using the good soil for their seed and not waste it by sowing it among thorns. Of course it is figurative and means they should sow their lives to the true God and not to idols. (See Gal. 6: 7, 8.)

Verse 4. When *circumcise* is used figuratively it means to cut off the deeds of unrighteousness and be consecrated to God. *Lest my fury come* does not mean the national captivity might be prevented, but God's wrath against individual sinners is based upon the phrase from the standpoint of their personal conduct. If we consider the captivity then *lest my fury come* means for the individuals to reform before that fury comes. All who did so fared better even though they had to share in the national disgrace of the captivity. Here is another place where the reader should see the note and comments at 2 Ki. 2: 17 in Vol. 2 of this Commentary.

Verse 5. *Blow ye the trumpet* is a call for a general reformation in the conduct of life. A trumpet was an instrument that was used when any important event was at hand that pertained to all the people. (See Ex. 19: 13; Lev. 25: 9.)

Verse 6. Zion was the principal spot in Jerusalem where the Law of God was recorded. The Jews are here admonished to recognize that lawful standard and not continue to serve



false gods. The evil from the north is explained at Isa. 14: 31.

Verse 7. *The lion is come up from his thicket* is a figurative prediction of the roaring army of Babylon coming up to invade the land of Palestine. There is an interesting explanation of this statement in secular history which is as follows: "The propriety of this will appear, when it is known that in ancient times the river Jordan was particularly infested with lions, which concealed themselves among the thick reeds upon its banks. Let us then imagine one of these monarchs of the desert asleep among the thickets upon the banks of the river. Let us further suppose him to be suddenly awakened by the roaring, or dislodged by the overflowing of the rapid, tumultuous torrent, and in his fury rushing into the upland country; and we shall perceive the admirable propriety and force of the prophet's allusion. 'After having descended,' says Maundrell, 'the outermost bank of Jordan, you go about a furlong upon a level strand before you come to the immediate bank of the river. This second bank is so beset with bushes and trees, such as tamarisks, willows, oleanders, etc., that you can see no water till you have made your way through them. In this thicket anciently, and the same is reported of it at this day, several sorts of wild beasts were wont to harbor themselves; whose being washed out of the covert by the overflowing river gave occasion to that allusion, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan.'" Horne, Introduction, vol. 1, p. 368, and note. This overflowing of Jordan took place at the season of harvest according to Josh. 3: 15. *Gentiles* is used in the general sense of nations, for the Babylonian Empire had subdued all other important nations in its grasp for power. The verse is a prediction of the invasion of the Babylonian army which was followed by the destruction of Jerusalem and other cities of Palestine. The Biblical fulfillment of this prediction is shown in 2 Ki. 24: 10-16.

Verse 8. *Gird you with sackcloth* is a prediction of the sadness and humiliation that was to come upon the nation as a result of the invasion and captivity. *Anger is not turned back* means the captivity was inevitable in spite of all the reformative work of Hezekiah and Josiah.

Verse 9. *Heart shall perish* refers to the disheartened state of mind that would be experienced by the king and

citizens in Jerusalem when they saw the Babylonian forces.

Verse 10. *Greatly deceived this people* will confuse us if we do not carefully consider the subject in the light of other passages. We know that God never causes a good man to become a bad one, nor does he directly mislead a worthy person who sincerely wishes to go in the right way. But if a man persists in going in the wrong path or shows a determination to follow false teachers, the Lord will deliver him over to his own ways that he may learn "the hard way" a lesson he is not willing to learn directly from the true source. (See Ps. 81: 11, 12; Ezk. 20: 25, 39; Rom. 1: 24, 28; 2 Thess. 2: 11, 12.) The false prophets of Israel had promised peace to that disobedient people (ch. 6: 13, 14) in spite of the warnings of God that trouble was in store for them. Since they preferred the words of their false prophets to those of the Lord, he just let them take their own unwise course. In this way it was true that the Lord indirectly deceived the people by suffering their false prophets to lead them into a false sense of security.

Verse 11. *At that time* refers to the time of the sword mentioned in the preceding verse. The march of the Babylonian army from the wilderness is compared to a wind, but it is not for the purpose of fanning or threshing grain in a desired sense. Instead, it is a *dry wind* which means a hot blast that will have a withering effect.

Verse 12. This blowing of the high wind will be according to the sentence of God, that his unfaithful people might learn a lesson by the chastisement.

Verse 13. *He shall come up* refers to the king of Babylon who will come up against Jerusalem by means of his army. In a previous verse this army is compared to a withering blast and in this it is called a whirlwind which means a storm or tempest. The lexicon definition of the original is "a hurricane," which indicates it will sweep everything before it. That was true of the Babylonian invasion as may be seen in the history of 2 Ki. 24 and 25.

Verse 14. *Wash thine heart . . . mayest be saved* may be considered from two viewpoints. In its immediate application it is an exhortation to individual reformation of life, explained in the note on 2 Ki. 22: 17 in Vol. 2 of this Commentary. In another application it is a prediction of the cleansing



effect of the impending captivity on the nation as a whole. The evidence is that Israel was completely cured of idolatry after the period of the captivity. (See Isa. 1: 25 in Vol. 3 of this Commentary.)

Verse 15. *Dan* was one of the ten tribes and *Ephraim* was often used to mean all the ten that formed the kingdom of Israel. That kingdom had been in exile more than a century when Jeremiah wrote this verse. *A voice declareth* is a figurative way of telling Judah to take a warning from the fate of her sister kingdom.

Verse 16. *Mention to the nations* means for the prophet to make a prediction that may be heard by the peoples of the world. He was to predict that *watchers* (besiegers) were to come from a far country (from Babylon) who would denounce the cities of Judah. These movements preceded the taking of Jerusalem and the carrying away of its people into captivity.

Verse 17. A man set to keep guard over a field will watch that nothing therein shall escape. Likewise the Babylonian army was predicted to besiege Jerusalem to see that the people might not flee from it. The Lord was to suffer this calamity to come upon the city because *she hath been rebellious*.

Verse 18. *Way* means a course of life as a whole and *doings* refers to the individual acts in that way. The language is present tense in form but is a prediction of things soon to happen to Judah. She is told that all of her *bitter* and *heartfelt* experiences will have been brought on by her own conduct.

Verse 19. Jeremiah took an intense personal interest in the experiences of his countrymen which he indicated by the use of the word *bowels*. That word is from an original which Strong defines, "A primitive root; to fondle; by implication to love, especially to compassionate." The inspired writers of both the Old and New Testaments used words as they were understood by the people for whom they were writing, and did not stop to inquire whether such was based on some erroneous theory; such was the case with the word in question here. In his Greek-English lexicon, Thayer says this of the word for bowels; "In the Greek poets the bowels were regarded as the seat of the more violent passions, such as anger and love; but by the Hebrews as the seat of the tenderer affections, especially kindness, benevolence, compas-

sion." In other words, the ancients thought the intestines were the seat of the mind and emotions, while we consider the brain in that light. By adding the word *heart* to his statement the prophet means to emphasize the intensity of his feelings, because the word means the center or most important part of anything. *Thou hast heard*; the prophet addresses himself and as an inspired man he can hear the war cry and alarming sounding of the trumpets of the Babylonian army coming to besiege his beloved city.

Verse 20. The prediction of the Babylonian invasion continues and the repetition of *destruction* is for emphasis. *Land* is spoiled is a reference to the loss of various items of property, and *tents* and *curtains* are terms for the dwelling to be demolished.

Verse 21. All scripture is inspired of God and when anything is said it is from that source. But Jeremiah is so impressed personally with the condition of his people that he speaks for the Lord in the first person much of the time. The *standard* and *trumpet* refer to the war signals of the Babylonian army.

Verse 22. *Foolish* and *sottish* have the same meaning which refers to the lack of judgment shown in the conduct of the people. Not that they are lacking in natural intelligence, for it is expressly said that they are *wise*, but they are using the wisdom for evil purposes instead of that for which the Lord gave it to them.

Verse 23. Figures of speech are based on literal truths, and when a writer selects any particular subject for his illustration he continues his discussion with the various terms of that subject. In this and several verses the prophet uses the realm of natural creation to illustrate the political and national institutions of the Lord's people. As in the beginning there was darkness, so the prophet sees his beloved country darkened by the inroads of the enemy.

Verse 24. An earthquake would cause the mountains to shake, so likewise the Babylonian invasion will cause the cities and homes of Judah to be shaken.

Verse 25. At the start of the physical creation there were no men or other living creatures. And in the picture of conditions that the invading army would bring the prophet sees the country's loss of men. (See the fulfillment in 2 Ki. 24: 14.)

Verse 26. The figures of speech are

discontinued and the prophet sees the country actually in a ruined condition. *At the presence of the Lord* means the Babylonian forces are coming against the land at the decree of the Lord to punish its people.

Verse 27. *Whole land shall be desolate* is a summing up of the conditions and it is literal. *Not make a full end* is the oft-repeated promise that God would not let the enemy completely destroy his people although they will be greatly reduced. The amount of this remnant after the captivity is stated in Ezra 2: 64.

Verse 28. About the same time that Jeremiah was writing his predictions, the historian was also writing about the great reformatory efforts of Josiah. In spite of that good work the nation had to go into captivity (2 Ki. 23: 26, 27).

Verse 29. The complete subjugation of the land of Judah is the prediction made in this verse. The Biblical fulfillment is recorded in 2 Ki. 24 and 25. The historical fulfillment is cited at Isa. 3: 1 in vol. 3 of this Commentary.

Verses 30, 31. There was no remedy for the undone conditions of the people of God short of the captivity. Josiah and other good men worked diligently to reform the character and conduct of the people, and doubtless won many individuals over to a better way of life. All such were to receive the blessings of God even in the midst of their misfortunes. But all of these individual cases of improvement were insufficient to head off the national calamity. This paragraph describes the state of discouragement that would overcome the people when they see the distressful condition upon them. This terrible situation had been predicted in doleful terms by David in Psa. 137 hundreds of years before. Now as Jeremiah writes the time is near for the awful event to take place which will begin with the captivity in the land of Babylon.

### JEREMIAH 5

Verse 1. When God was threatening to destroy Sodom (Gen. 18: 26) he promised Abraham he would spare the city provided certain conditions could be found. He knew those conditions did not exist and hence was determined to go ahead with his plan for the destruction of the wicked place. Likewise the Lord puts the case of Jerusalem (capital of Judah) on a proviso, which is that a man can be found that executes judgment or ad-

ministers justice. It is true that some individual, unofficial men were there who were righteous, but the city in its official conduct was corrupt. The last word of the verse is a pronoun and refers to Jerusalem, meaning that if the city could produce the characters described the Lord would pardon it, the city.

Verse 2. Mere professions of respect for God do not count for anything. The people of Judah were outwardly very liberal with their compliments even as they appeared to be very active in the sacrificial services. But God knows the heart and he declares the professions of his people are false.

Verse 3. This verse specifies the false professions referred to in the preceding verse. Every statement is the truth but it was not made with sincerity.

Verse 4. The prophet incidentally tells us what constitutes a poor and foolish man; it is one who knows not the way and judgment of God. And that does not mean one who is thus ignorant because of circumstances beyond his control. The Lord has offered full information on these subjects in his law and all have the privilege of learning it for it has been composed in language adapted to man's understanding.

Verse 5. According to Strong the original for *great* means "great in any sense." It is like the teaching of Jesus in Matt. 5: 19, that keeping the commandments of the Lord constitutes true greatness. The leaders in the kingdom could have been great men in this good sense had they been obedient to the law of God. They were disobedient and hence incurred the wrath of God. On the other hand, there were some of the common people who were respectful toward the divine statutes. *Get me unto* means the Lord would look with favor upon the humble folks. This great truth is a divinely established principle and is taught in Isa. 66: 2. The pronoun *these* refers to the disobedient leaders described in the first of this paragraph. But in thus classifying the leaders we should not restrict the subject to them personally. They were chiefly to blame, but since the people generally "loved to have it so" (v. 31), almost the entire nation would come under the same condemnation.

Verse 6. Some figurative language is again used and the wild animals named refer to the Babylonians. The *forest* means the territory in the re-

glion of the Euphrates River. God was going to suffer these enemies to come against his people *because their transgressions are many*.

Verse 7. *Thee* means the nation of Judah and the *children* are the individual citizens of the kingdom. The captivity could not be avoided because nothing else was able to purify them from their love of idolatry, and until they are thus purified the Lord would not pardon them. Idolatry is again compared to adultery because in both evils a companion proves untrue to the one who is the rightful partner. *When I had fed them* is significant and portrays the ingratitude that is often shown by a fleshly wife. She will make full use of the home and support her husband provides for her, then turn her attention to the unlawful admirer to whom she is under no obligation either morally or socially. *Troops* has no word in the original, but the clause means the people of Judah assembled in the houses (temples) of harlots or the false gods.

Verse 8. Idolatry is illustrated by different figures. Sometimes it is a human being betraying his true love companion by an unlawful affair with a stranger. In this verse the comparison is drawn from the conduct of a horse that is full of vim from a plentiful supply of feed, then seeks to give vent to that energy by spending it on the creature that the owner intends to mate with another.

Verse 9. Strong's definition of the original for *visit* is, "A primitive root; to visit (with friendly or hostile intent)." It is used in the latter sense because God was determined to show his disapproval of his people by delivering them into captivity. In treating the nation thus the Lord would obtain vengeance against it, and it would be righteous vengeance because that authority belongs to Him. (Rom. 12: 19.)

Verse 10. God's feeling of compassion never ceases, and usually it will be expressed even in the midst of severe threatenings. It is predicted that the walls of the people were to be mounted and destroyed, *but make not a full end*. This is a reference to the "remnant" that has been mentioned frequently and fulfilled in Ezra 2: 64.

Verse 11. *Israel* often means the whole nation of the Jews or any part of it; however, when used in connection with Judah it means the ten tribes. *Dealt very treacherously* means they have been deceitful and acted as

if they believed they could mislead the Lord into accepting their professions of devotion. Israel has been in exile more than a century and Judah is soon to suffer a like experience. Both kingdoms were guilty of the same iniquity which was the worshiping of idols.

Verse 12. To *belie* one means to accuse him of falsehood, and the houses of the Jews had acted as if the Lord did not mean what he said. *Not he* was a short way of saying that if evil should come it would not be the Lord who brought it. And since the Lord would not bring evil upon his people (as they thought) they need not fear that any will come; such was the false reasoning of the nation.

Verse 13. *Prophets shall become wind* denotes that the unrighteous prophets will be proved to have been false in promising peace to the nation, and all people will see that they were not speaking by the word of God.

Verse 14. The singular pronouns *ye* and *thy* refer to Jeremiah who was a true prophet and spoke *this word* which came from the Lord. *Fire* and *wood* are used figuratively and refer to the severe predictions which the prophet was inspired to make. His fiery threatenings were to be against *this people* who had been so unfaithful to God. This suggested the figure of *wood* because the unrighteous people will be as fuel for the burning wrath of God.

Verse 15. The figures are dropped and the prediction is made of a literal fact to be enacted. *House of Israel* is used in its general sense although it is Judah who is specifically meant. The *nation* that was to be brought upon Israel was that of the Babylonians, and it would be *from far* since that kingdom was located beyond the Euphrates River. This nation did not use the language of the Jews hence it would be strange to the people who were to be the victims of this *mighty* and *ancient* nation.

Verse 16. A quiver is a case for carrying arrows, a common weapon in ancient times. *Open sepulchre* is figurative and means the Babylonians will be so successful in their war activities that the narrow case may be compared to a tomb for the dead.

Verse 17. This verse is almost literal in that it predicts what was done by the Babylonians in taking possession of the property in Palestine. The last chapter of 2 Kings gives a history of the final invasion wherein the country was taken over.

Verse 18. *Not make a full end* is a prediction referring to the remnant that was to be spared from the captivity or from its destructive effect. Ezra 2: 64 states the number as 42,000 whereas the previous population was about three million.

Verse 19. A spirit of inquiry will naturally arise as to why the Lord would thus deal with his people. The answer is given by reminding them of their unfaithfulness in going after *strange* or foreign gods. *Shall ye serve strangers* predicts that during the captivity the Jews were not permitted to practice the service required by their law. One thing that was to be accomplished by that period of chastisement was the cure of idolatry. Being compelled to continue in idolatrous worship would help serve that end in that they would thus realize the folly of such a system.

Verse 20. The Lord directs the prophet to declare this prediction in a public manner. *Jacob and Judah* refer to the same people but from different standpoints. The first was the common ancestor of all the tribes, the second was that portion of them that made up the kingdom of Judah.

Verse 21. There is no one as blind as a man who will not see, nor as deaf as one who will not hear. The ignorance of the people was not due to any lack of intelligence but it was because they failed to use that faculty in connection with the word of the Lord. The prophet Isaiah (ch. 1: 3) explains their ignorance by saying it was because they "doth not consider." The sad experiences in Babylonian captivity was intended to open their eyes to see the truth of all the divine warnings.

Verse 22. The foolish people are asked to consider the might of God as it is demonstrated before their own eyes. The boundless sea even is limited by His power so that it cannot pass beyond the decreed limits. Certainly a Being so great deserves the most respectful attention of mortal man who is powerless before those wild billows. They were unwilling to show proper regard while their way seemed prosperous in the homeland, therefore the captivity was decreed to force that impression on them.

Verse 23. *Revolting and rebellious* are about the same except as to the degree of their unfavorable attitude. The latter refers especially to the state of mind and the former means the act of leaving due to that attitude. The

people had not gone away literally but had done so in conduct, hence the Lord decided to send them out of the land bodily and as a nation into the territory of another.

Verse 24. Ingratitude is one of the most outstanding shortcomings of man. The people of Israel were enjoying the blessings of God in their seasons and harvests yet they failed to remember it. Instead, they were using part of those very blessings in service to false gods that could give them nothing.

Verse 25. The leaders had such a power over the people that most of the good things of life were appropriated to themselves and the common people were defrauded.

Verse 26. The *wicked men* were leaders so frequently mentioned who took advantage of the people. The *snares and traps* were the deceptive means they used to make them think they were being favored.

Verse 27. A *cage full of birds* is a figure to describe the completeness of the oppression suffered at the hands of these wicked leaders. *Waxen rich* gives the key to the deceptive procedure of these evil men. The love of money is not a corruption that was restricted to the days of Paul but was prominent in those of ancient Israel.

Verse 28. *Overpass the deeds of the wicked* is rendered "overpass in deeds of wickedness" in the American Standard Version. The phrase is intended to state the degree of wicked zeal shown by these covetous leaders. *Judge not the cause* means they were not concerned to see that justice was done for the poor and unfortunate people.

Verse 29. To *visit* means to bring some form of vengeance on the nation, which was to come in the way of the Babylonian captivity.

Verse 30. This verse is a general description of conditions that existed at the time Jeremiah was writing; the situation will be itemized in the next verse.

Verse 31. The citizens of the nation are put in three classes, the *prophets, priests and people*. The duty of the first is to teach the law of the Lord, that of the second to *bear rule* or execute that teaching, and the third to be regulated in their conduct by the leadership of the others. But the principle of responsibility is never confined to any one person or group of persons. This verse is very fundamental in its portrayal of God's requirement of his



servants. The degree of responsibility is not always the same, but no one can bear that which belongs to another. (See Gal. 6: 5.) The leaders (prophets and priests) were chiefly to blame for the evils of the nation and hence are usually condemned in especially severe language. But the common people also were at fault because they agreed to the corrupt leadership. A man does not have to take active part in a sinful practice to share in its guilt. This verse and the one in Rom. 1: 32 reveals the truth of God's law on the subject. If a man is merely favorable towards the wicked teaching and practices of another it makes him a partaker of those evils.

### JEREMIAH 6

Verse 1. The kingdom of Judah was composed of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The latter was one of the least and had its possession adjoining the former on the north. It is not commonly mentioned separately by the writers but does receive special notice in this verse. *Gather yourselves to flee* is a form of prediction that the people of that part of the kingdom were going to be taken away from their homes and from Jerusalem their capital city. *Blow the trumpet* is an allusion to the ancient practice of notifying the public that some move of importance was about to be made. *Set up sign of fire* was another practice for the same purpose (Judges 20: 38). The towns named were in the territory of Judah, but being near Jerusalem they were significantly mentioned in connection with the exile from the capital. Out of the north is explained by the historical quotation at Isa. 14: 31, Vol. 3 of this Commentary.

Verse 2. *Daughter of Zion* is a figurative reference to Jerusalem and the expression occurs some 18 times in the books of Isaiah and Jeremiah. In the present passage the city is further compared to one who is beautiful and likely to attract strangers.

Verse 3. The comparison is continued in order to account for the literal prediction that is to be made soon. This *daughter* is so attractive that the shepherds will bring their flocks to be near her so they can attend to their duties at the same time they are paying attention to her.

Verse 4. The language is becoming more literal in that it predicts war against her (Jerusalem). *Prepare ye* is the divine order for the shepherds (the Babylonians) to come against the

city. The figurative terms of the verse are *noon* and *evening*. The shepherds are represented as bewailing the shortness of time they have left. The meaning is that the siege by the Babylonians is near at hand.

Verse 5. The "day of grace" was gone and the "night" had come when the invasion and siege would begin. The figure was literally true for when Jeremiah began to write there were only about 20 years until the first attack from the Babylonians was to take place, and much of that time was past when this passage was written.

Verse 6. An inspired prediction is often made in the form of a command for the thing to be done. In fact, the Lord did decree that the Babylonian army should come against his beloved city although it did not realize that it was carrying out such an edict. A *mount* is a military position prepared for conducting a siege. Such a position needed to be supported by a rampart and that called for the trees, hence the prediction *hew ye down trees*. *She is wholly oppression* refers to the injustices that Jerusalem (through her leaders) had committed against the people, and for which the siege and captivity was to be a punishment.

Verse 7. The Lord tells us the meaning with which he uses the word *fountain* by the other word *continually* in the same connection. It is bad enough for one to do wrong once or just occasionally, yet it might be through forgetfulness and the common weaknesses of the flesh. No such explanation can be offered for one who does wrong *continually* for he is bound to be doing so deliberately and by his own choice. Thus the very appropriate illustration of a *fountain* is used in reference to the conduct of Jerusalem. A jet would discharge the water occasionally while a fountain is *continually* flowing. The *grief* and *wounds* means the injustices imposed on the common people by the leaders who took advantage of their authority or position as teachers.

Verse 8. *Let my soul depart* and *lest I make thee desolate* would ordinarily mean for Jerusalem to be instructed in order to prevent those misfortunes. We know it cannot have such a bearing here on the nation as a whole, for the teaching all along is that nothing can be done to avoid the captivity. So if the phrases are applied to the whole nation the meaning is to be prepared in mind for the instruction that the captivity will give.



If the application is made to individuals the explanation may be seen in the long note offered in comments on 2 Ki. 22: 17, Vol. 2 of this Commentary.

Verse 9. The vine industry is again used as an illustration. After a man has gathered the main crop of grapes he will go back over the vines to see if he has overlooked a cluster here and there and he will probably find one. But in the case of the nation of Judah it has become so corrupt that a gleaner will not be able to find a man (among the leaders) who is true to the Lord.

Verse 10. *To whom shall I speak* is a continuation of the thought in the preceding verse. The leaders have gone so far away in their iniquity that they would not listen if the Lord would speak a warning word to them. *Ear is uncircumcised* means they are unconsecrated to the Lord. Logically such an ear cannot *hearken* to the words of God. The further reason for their attitude is given in the words *have no delight in it*. If a man finds no delight in a thing he certainly will not consecrate or devote himself to it. That is why David pronounces the blessing on the man whose "delight" is in the law of the Lord (Psa. 1: 2).

Vers 11. Every word in the Bible is the word of the Lord and as such it may be in the form of the first person grammatically in some passages. In others the writer will assume the first person in his speech and that will place the Lord in the third person. In this verse the prophet expresses his personal interest in the situation. *Weary with holding in* indicates the intensity of feeling the writer has and serves as a warning against the corrupt people regarding the fate soon to come upon them; when it does there will be no sparing of any classes of society.

Verse 12. This has direct reference to the Babylonian invasion into and capture of Judah whose fulfillment is recorded in 2 Ki. 24: 14-16.

Verse 13. The main reason why the Lord caused the captivity is stated in this verse. The same statement was made and commented upon in ch. 5: 31.

Verse 14. The pronoun *they* refers to the *prophet* and *priest* in the preceding verse. *Healed the hurt slightly* is a figure of speech drawn from the act of relieving a wound or disease. A mother may soothe a child's hurting by some reassuring words that the place "is not very bad and will soon be

all right," even though the case may be serious and soon is destined to overcome the child. Thus the false prophets and other leaders calmed the corrupt people into believing that nothing much was wrong and that the present appearances of danger would soon be gone. The greatest harm from such teaching was from its evil effects upon the people. While they believed it they would not be inclined to repent of their sinful practices nor listen to God.

Verse 15. *They* still has special reference to the prophets and priests who were encouraging the people in their idolatrous practices. *Were not ashamed* means they were stubborn and bold in their false teaching and did not seem to regret the evil influence they were having on the common people. *Fall among them* that *fall* denotes that no special favors will be shown to them when the siege and capture takes place. Their position as *prophet* and *priest* will be ignored and they will have to go along with *them* that *fall* which means the citizens in general.

Verse 16. *Old paths* being plural refers to the two items that are mentioned separately in Isa. 35: 8. The comments and definitions of the original words are given at that place which is in the third volume of this Commentary. When these unfaithful men were exhorted to follow in the pathway of righteousness they not only refused to do so, but defiantly declared that they would not.

Verse 17. Many ancient cities were walled for protection and on the walls were towers. These were called watch-towers in which were stationed men whose duty was to be on the lookout for any enemy that might be approaching. Being in that position they would be able to see farther from the city than the citizens on the streets and they were to sound an alarm when any danger appeared. The *watchmen* referred to in this verse were the faithful and inspired prophets who were able to see into the future and behold an enemy when the people were not able to see him. But they not only refused to heed the warning given by these *watchmen* but boldly declared they would not.

Verse 18. The English word *nations* generally conveys the idea of organized governments as units of society, and yet at the time Jeremiah was writing God had only one nation in Palestine. But the warning announcement to be made was intended as information for the nations of the world.

Verse 19. *Hear, O earth* is similar to *hear, ye nations* in the preceding verse and is to have the same comments. *Fruit of their thoughts* reminds us of Paul's statement that "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6: 6). These people of God had turned their thoughts to idols and were following idolatrous practices. They were thus to reap the fruit of such a sowing which was to be the captivity in a strange land. The prediction was made by the inspired prophet and recorded, giving an opportunity for all nations of the earth finally to know about it.

Verse 20. At the same time that the people of Judah were devoting themselves to the service of idols they were professing belief in the true God and were offering incense and animal sacrifices to Him. But it has always been true that "No man can serve two masters." After they became so corrupt in their general way of life, the ritualistic acts they performed that even were a part of the divine law became objectionable to God. (See the long note on this subject with the comments at Isa. 1: 10 in Vol. 3 of this Commentary.)

Verse 21. The central meaning of a *stumblingblock* is something that will cause one to fall; it does not always mean to fall in sin. If a man were headed toward a precipice a thousand feet deep and only a few yards ahead it would be a favor to stop him by any means possible. If he would not hearken to the warning shouts of a friend, then it would be a favor to trip him and cast him down. It would be better to cause him to suffer a comparatively short fall of his body's length than to go on and plunge down the chasm that would completely crush him. So it would be better for Judah to fall nationally into Babylon than to be allowed to remain in the home land and fall into total spiritual ruin toward which the national corruption of idolatry was heading the people at the time the prophet was writing.

Verse 22. We know this is the meaning the prophet puts into his use of *stumblingblocks*, for this verse which follows immediately begins with the word *thus* which is a word of comparison. He then makes a literal prediction of what that obstacle was to be; it was the invasion of some people from the north. (See the explanation of that last word in a note at Isa. 14: 31 in Vol. 3 of this Commentary.)

Verse 23. This entire verse is a prediction of the Babylonian siege, with a

description of the kind of people who compose that army. *Lay hold on bow and spear* refers to some of the weapons that will be used against the men of Jerusalem and Judah. The bow was used to shoot arrows and the spear was a larger dart that was cast by hand. The Babylonians are described as being cruel and merciless and secular history bears out the description.

Verse 24. *We have heard* was true both prophetically and historically. The fame of the Babylonians was so great that all had heard of it, and the prophet could hear it with his inspired ears. *Hands was feeble* refers to the state of fear and disappointment that the people of Jerusalem will feel at sight of the Babylonian army.

Verse 25. The people of Jerusalem were advised not to try fleeing from the king of Babylon, for it would be in vain. It was the will of God for him to take over the sinful city and to undertake escaping from him would be like fleeing from God. The last king in Jerusalem with his army ignored this advice and fled out of the city, but he was taken and his army was dispersed (2 Ki. 25: 4-5).

Verse 26. *Daughter of my people* is a phrase of close relationship that is found frequently in the prophetic writings to designate the nation of the Jews. Sackcloth and ashes were used in ancient times in conditions of great anxiety or grief or humiliation. This passage is a prediction of the sorrow that was about to come on Jerusalem and her people because of the iniquities practiced by them through the years. *The spoiler* refers to the Babylonians with their army that would soon come against God's people and take their possessions away.

Verse 27. We here have the pronoun *thee* and the antecedent is Jeremiah, for the things said of this person were true of the prophet only. The word *tower* is from BACHOWN and Strong's definition is, "An assayer [tester] of metals." *Fortress* is from an original that means "defender," and Jeremiah was to test his people as to their faithfulness and defend them as the circumstances might suggest and justify.

Verse 28. The Lord gave Jeremiah "advance information" on what the test would prove; that the people were grievous revolters. *Walking with slanders* means they were associating with falsifiers and talebearers. *Brass and iron* are inferior metals (if compared with silver and gold) and are men-

tioned to illustrate the inferior quality of character that the people of Judah displayed. *Corrupters* is from SHACH-ATH and Strong defines it, "A primitive root; to decay, i.e. (causatively) ruin (literally or figuratively)." The leaders in Judah not only practiced sin personally but influenced others to do the same. That is the thought in ch. 5: 31 which declares that "the people love to have it so."

Verse 29. An illustration is drawn from the work of a smelter or refiner of metal. In that process a hot flame is produced by a bellows or other means and the heat is supposed to melt the mass taken from the mine. The better part of it will run out and leave the dross or coarse part so that the two can be separated. The Lord represents his people as being so completely evil that when the mass is melted there is still no separation between the ingredients for they are all as dross. *Bellows are burned* means that a fire is made to glow with intense heat, yet nothing is accomplished because of the condition of corruption in the materials.

Verse 30. This verse continues the illustration of the refiner except that a change is made in the kind of ore to be refined. The result, however, is the same as it was with the lead ore. After the heat has done its work the metal will prove to be *reprobate* which means worthless. If a refiner should have such an experience with a quantity of silver ore he would just abandon the whole mass. A spectator would conclude that the smelter was dissatisfied with the whole mass since he had gone away and left it. That explains the verse of this paragraph as it shows the men saying the silver is worthless and rejected by the Lord.

### JEREMIAH 7

Verse 1. This verse tells of one of the times when the Lord called upon his prophet to "take dictation" again. (See the remarks on this thought at ch. 1: 3.)

Verse 2. *Gate* is from a word that is defined, "An opening, i.e. door or gate," in Strong's lexicon. Since the passage concerns the temple in Jerusalem the word should take the former of the two in the definition. The temple was the place where the national worship took place, hence the priests and other leading men of Judah would frequently be met at that place. It was very appropriate, therefore, that the prophet be instructed to take up

his position there to declare the important message.

Verse 3. We do not believe there are any contradictions in the Bible, and what seems to be such may be made clear by considering all of the facts and truths involved. In this verse the people were exhorted to correct their ways and they would be permitted to dwell in the land. In other passages they were plainly told that nothing they could do would avert the captivity. The main key to this question is a distinction between the kingdom as a whole and certain individuals in it. Another thought to consider at such a place as the present verse, is that the statement means that had they made the amends suggested at the proper time they could have saved themselves from the shame and distress of the captivity. For a more extended explanation of this subject see the note and comments at 2 Ki. 22: 17 in Vol. 2 of this Commentary.

Verse 4. The *lying words* against which the people were warned were those of the false leaders who had been calming the citizens by false assurance of peace. (See ch. 6: 14.) These corrupt priests would profess to be interested in the *temple of the Lord* but they were not sincere. Though they entered the temple at times to officiate in the services appointed for that place, their heart's real interest centered in the vain worship of false gods.

Verse 5. *Thoroughly amend your ways* indicates the reformation that might have avoided their downfall had they produced it at the proper time.

Verse 6. The reformation that was mentioned in general terms in the preceding verse is given specific notice in this. It requires that justice be shown all unfortunate classes of citizens, and that they discontinue the worship of false gods.

Verse 7. *Cause you to dwell* is explained at verse 3. *For ever and ever* literally means "to the end of the age." The term *for ever* always means "age lasting" or "agelong," regardless of whether the age being considered is a short or long or endless one. Had Israel been true to God her national sun would not have gone down till the end of the Jewish age or dispensation. But the sin of the nation in following after idolatrous practices brought upon it the calamity of the captivity which put out the light of national life. That misfortune occurred in 606 B.C. and hence that

many centuries before the Jewish age or dispensation came to its divinely-appointed end.

Verses 8-10. This completes the line of thought pertaining to the inconsistency of the people of Judah. After committing all the abominations mentioned in the preceding verse, they had the boldness to come into the temple of the true God for worship. They were not coming for the purpose of making atonement for their many iniquities, for that would have been very appropriate. Instead, they even declared they were *delivered to do these things* which means they were justified in doing them.

Verse 11. *Is this house* seems to be another question but it really is a direct accusation against a very corrupt nation. God charged that his house, called by his name, had become a den of robbers. *In your eyes* denotes that all of the evils named were being committed under the eyes of these very people.

Verse 12. *Shiloh* was the first location of the tabernacle after the Israelites were ready to pitch their camp in the land of Canaan. (See Josh. 18: 1.) The people whose headquarters were at that place committed sin in those days and received the chastisement of God for it. This verse refers to that history for the purpose of warning the ones living in the days of Jeremiah not to make the same mistake their fathers made and thus incur the same kind of misfortune at the hand of the Lord.

Verse 13. This verse accuses the generation in the days of Jeremiah with being guilty of the same sins as was that in the days of Shiloh. And all of it was in spite of the many admonitions from the Lord.

Verse 14. Because the men of the present days are as guilty as were those at Shiloh, God will punish them as he did the others.

Verse 15. This verse is a direct prediction of the captivity of Judah. *Ephraim* was frequently named to represent the kingdom of Israel (Isa. 7: 9). That kingdom had been taken into captivity more than a century before the time of Jeremiah and it was for the same abomination of which Judah was guilty. Now the Lord warns Judah of what is soon to be done for her.

Verse 16. There is no use to pray for something that is impossible or that has been positively denied by the Lord. He had already decreed that Judah

should be sent out of the land into captivity, hence it would be vain to pray for any favors that would interfere with that decree. However, this does not mean that no prayers or other efforts should be made for any individuals in that nation. (See the note at 2 Ki. 22: 17 in Vol. 2 of this Commentary.)

Verse 17. The Lord addresses the prophet, calling his attention to the evil practices of Judah. They were so bold as to do these things in the streets of Jerusalem which was the capital of their country.

Verse 18. All the members of the families participated in the abominable worship of idol gods. In the service of sacrifices it was necessary to have fire and that made it necessary also to obtain wood. This called for the services of the children who would not be able for more responsible activity. The fathers were more developed in years and experience and so they could build the fire. In the service of altar performances both animals and vegetable objects were offered. The latter was in the form of cakes which brought forth the work of the women. *Queen of heaven* pertains to idolatry or the worship of the planets. It has special reference to the moon as the feminine associate of the masculine sun. The planets were worshiped as deities by the heathen and God's people took up the practice. Smith's Bible Dictionary says the following on the subject: "Queen of heaven, Jer. 7: 18; 45: 17, 18, 19, 25, is the moon, worshiped as Ashtarothe or Astarte, to whom the Hebrew women offered cakes in the streets of Jerusalem." *Drink offering* means the offering of something that could have been useful for drink. When it was so used it was either poured out on the ground before some idol or poured over the larger sacrifice on an altar, and it was done as a religious performance to the god. A motive for the idolatrous practice is indicated by the words *that they may provoke me to anger*. The word *provoke* is not in the original as a separate word but is taken from the same one as *anger*. The Hebrew word is *KAAC*, which Strong defines, "A primitive root; to trouble; by implication to grieve, rage, be indignant." Moffatt renders the word as "spite," and the context justifies the thought. The people thought they would "spite" the Lord by their worship of idols.

Verse 19. Many times a man's acts intended as an injury to another will



rebound against himself. The Lord declared that in committing idolatry they were spiting themselves. It was like a patient who would swallow poison in order to spite the physician who had prescribed wholesome medicine. The people of Judah were told that their foolish conduct would result in their own confusion which referred to the shame or humiliation that the Babylonian captivity would bring upon them.

Verse 20. The preceding verse does not mean that God would not be angered by the vain worship to false gods for he was; but that anger was to react against the guilty nation and its country. The things threatened referred to the general work of desolation the Babylonian army was to produce upon its invasion of Palestine. *Shall not be quenched* is a prediction that nothing the people could do would cause the Lord to hold off the threatened captivity.

Verse 21. This verse means the same as if it said: "Get all of your sacrifices together and consume them upon yourselves, for I will have nothing to do with them." Many things the people of Judah were doing had been commanded by the Lord, but they became objectionable to him when they were performed as a mixture with so much abomination of idolatry. This thought is discussed at length in the note and comments on Isa. 1: 10 in Vol. 3 of this Commentary.

Verse 22. The rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic system were not mentioned to the Israelites when they first were told to flee from Egypt; the Lord was not ready for that form of service yet.

Verse 23. Outward or physical acts are the visible signs of the faith that is supposed to be in the heart of the performer. A man's service to God (in whatever dispensation he lives) begins with faith in Him. (Heb. 11: 6.) If that faith exists and will become active, then the man possessing it will prove it by performing what the Lord commands, whether that consist of animal sacrifices, burning of incense, baptism in water, or prayer and song, or any other act commanded through inspired teaching. So this verse holds out the idea that had the Israelites been true to the faith they professed they would never have stooped to the adominable worship of idols.

Verse 24. *Inclined not their ear* indicates not only failure to observe the commands of the Lord, but it shows

they were not even interested to the extent of listening to see what was expected of them. *Walked in the counsels* means they followed the opinions of their own hearts regardless of the divine law. The popular theory of man is that the inventions he has produced in religion indicates progress forward, but the people are told here that the evil productions of man are a back-sliding instead of a move in the right direction.

Verse 25. The record of unfaithfulness in the nation goes back to the beginning of its existence, for it had its start when Moses led them out from Egyptian bondage. Through all of the centuries God was patient and watchful over his people. The *prophets* whom He sent to his people were the inspired men in general, not only those who made predictions. It was the duty of these men to admonish and instruct the people and try to influence them into the proper way of life.

Verse 26. For comments on *hearkened and inclined* see those on verse 24. *Hardened their neck* is a figure of speech and refers to the stubbornness of the people.

Verse 27. Jeremiah was told to speak to the people and yet he was warned that his words would not be received. This apparent contradiction has been explained a number of times. The reader will find the original note on the subject with comments at 2 Ki. 22: 17 in Vol. 2 of this Commentary.

Verse 28. After offering the law of God to the people it will be fair to chide them for their rejection of it. This conclusion is true even though the prophet had been told beforehand that such would be the outcome. Again I request the reader to see the note referred to in the preceding verse as to the apparent contradiction.

Verse 29. Jerusalem has been referred to in the figure of a woman and the comparisons would hence be made from that viewpoint. A woman's hair is one of her main adornments (1 Cor. 11: 15) and the absence of it, especially if it has been removed by or because of an enemy, would indicate a situation of shame. (See Isa. 50: 6.) That is why Jerusalem was told to cut off the hair and throw it away; it was a token of the humiliation that the Lord was going to impose on the unfaithful city.

Verse 30. Sometimes Judah and others Jerusalem is named in the passages, and that is because the latter was the capital of the former. In the



phrase, *children of Judah*, the last word means the kingdom and the first is the citizens. They not only committed idolatry but introduced its tokens into the temple that had been honored by being called by the name of the Lord.

Verse 31. *Tophet* was a spot in the famous valley of Hinnom near Jerusalem. This place had been used as a disposal plant for the waste materials of the city and for that reason there were fires kept continually burning. The idolatrous worshippers were using the place for their adominable practices until Josiah defiled it in his great reformatory work (2 Ki. 23: 10). The people of Judah went so far as to use their children as sacrifices to the false gods that were represented in this valley.

Verse 32. *No more be called Tophet* does not mean the name will be forgotten, but the place will not be referred to merely as one that was known by such a name. But the great work of the Lord in destroying the enemies of righteousness who assembled in that place will be so outstanding that it will be remembered and mentioned because of such a great slaughter.

Verse 33. The idolaters who were slain and cast down in this place will not receive any honorable burial. When the fowls and beasts come to devour the decaying bodies the Lord will see that no one will be allowed to fray (oppose) them away from their gruesome feast.

Verse 34. This verse is a literal prediction of the carrying away of Judah into the Babylonian captivity. After that was done the natural result was that *the land shall be desolate*. The Biblical fulfillment of this prediction is in 2 Ki. 24 and 25.

### JEREMIAH 8

Verse 1. *That time* means the time of the Babylonian invasion referred to in the close of the preceding chapter. It was known that kings and other men of importance had their personal belongings buried with their bodies. The looting of these tombs would hence have the motive of material gain as well as that of showing dishonor toward the persons whose land the victorious Babylonians will have taken over.

Verse 2. The pronouns in this verse have three antecedents implied and I shall express the passage as follows: "And *they* (the Babylonians) shall

spread *them* (the bones) before the sun . . . whom *they* (kings and other idolaters) have loved, etc." The dishonor will be further shown after having dragged the bones from the tombs, by refusing to reinter them even after having secured the valuables that had been buried with them. *Shall be for dung* is used figuratively here and in many other passages in the Bible. Dung is and has been regarded as a valuable substance, both as fuel and fertilizer. Its use in a bad sense, therefore, is due to its being the refuse of other articles or bodies of living beings, and to the further fact that it is scattered out and made to disappear from view.

Verse 3. There are some things worse than death such as physical or mental torture. The Babylonians were a harsh people (ch. 6: 23) and their cruel treatment of the people of Judah would cause them to wish for death.

Verse 4. The Lord bids Jeremiah remind his people of their persistence in wrong doing. It is reasonably expected that though a man falls he will rise again, at least on behalf of his own interests. The men of Judah were "challenged" to make amends for their evil record and return to the right way of living.

Verse 5. This verse is another which seems to exhort the people to reform so as to avert the calamity of the captivity, and this in spite of the decree that nothing could be done about it. The explanation lies in the distinction between the nation as a whole and certain individuals in it. (See the note at 2 Ki. 22: 17 in Vol. 2 of this Commentary regarding this apparent contradiction.)

Verse 6. This is another comment on the persistence of the people in rejecting the Lord's counsels and warning of the dangers ahead.

Verse 7. In the beginning of the book of Isaiah the ignorance of God's people was emphasized by reference to some dumb beasts (ch. 1: 3). In our verse the same thing is done by referring to some smaller dumb creatures. *Stork knoweth her appointed times* might be misunderstood because of a popular notion connecting this bird with the birth of children. Smith's Bible Dictionary says the following about this creature: "It was believed that the young [of the stork] repaid the care of their parents by attaching themselves to them for life, and tending them in old age. That the parental attachment of the stork is very strong

has been proved on many occasions. Few migratory [wandering] birds are more punctual to the time of their appearance than the white stork." The word *appointed* is from *mo'adah*, which Strong defines, "Properly an appointment, i.e., a fixed time or season." The idea is that although the stork is a roving sort of bird, yet because it is permanently committed to the care of its parents, it does not forget when it is time to return to the home nest to see after the welfare of the parents. The illustration is that this dumb creature is more thoughtful and aware of its obligation to its parents than Judah was of the Lord.

Verse 8. *The law of the Lord is with us* means they assumed that they could be a law unto themselves; that the writing of the scribes was worthless and not binding.

Verse 9. *The wise men* refers to these corrupt leaders who considered themselves wise enough not to need the word of the Lord. Such self-assumed wise men were destined to be brought to shame for their rejection of the word of the Lord.

Verse 10. This verse specifies the particular classes among the people of Judah whom God was condemning. The *prophets and priests* thought they were above being dependent on the word of the Lord. Their motive in turning away from the divine law was their desire to increase their own gains by false dealing with the common people.

Verse 11. This verse takes the same comments as ch. 6: 14 which the reader is requested to read again very carefully.

Verse 12. Sin is always to be condemned but it is worse when done brazenly and when the doers of it show no regret. *Fall among them that fall* means the leaders will fall when the people in general are taken captive out of the land; their position as leaders will not save them from the downfall.

Verse 13. *No grapes and no figs* might suggest that not even a remnant will be left after the great calamity is over that is being predicted. Yet the promise has already been made that a remnant would be saved and we are sure the Bible does not contradict itself. The matter will be clear if we observe that God is here talking about the wicked leaders who have brought the nation into such an evil state by their corrupt teaching. It was true that all such characters were expelled;

not a "grape" or "fig" survived when the flood of God's wrath was poured out upon the nation.

Verse 14. *Why do we sit still* is the language of the people. They have been informed by the prophet that nothing they can do will stop the enemy from invading the land. Therefore they seek to bestir themselves to "make the best of it" by entering into fenced (walled) cities and there *be silent*; that is, make no active resistance but await, as calmly as the bitterness of their situation will permit, the attack of the foe. They now seem to realize that their bitter state is because of their sins.

Verse 15. *We looked for peace* was because they listened to the false prophets who cried "Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (ch. 6: 14). Now they are aware of the false nature of the assurances because instead of peace they are having trouble.

Verse 16. *Was heard* is prophecy and means the snorting will be heard. Dan was a city at the northern boundary of Palestine, and the language means the horses drawing the war chariots of the Babylonians will cause their snorting to be heard as they enter the country. *Are come and have devoured* is still in the future, being predictions of the calamity soon to come upon the nation. *The city* means Jerusalem which was the capital of the kingdom of Judah.

Verse 17. The pronoun *I* means the Lord who is going to use the Babylonian army to chastise the unfaithful people. This army is represented by the figures of poisonous reptiles in order to make use of the additional figure of not being *charmed*, as was believed that serpents could sometimes be. The literal meaning of the prediction is that nothing can be done to persuade the Babylonians to lift the siege.

Verse 18. The words of the prophet may always be regarded as those of the Lord also, but sometimes the prophet expresses the passages as his personal view as well as that of God. Such is the case in this verse and so on to the end of the chapter.

Verse 19. *Daughter of my people* is an affectionate way of referring to the citizens of Judah. Their cry is *because of them that dwell in a far country* which means the Babylonians who were about to come against the city of Jerusalem. The Lord is in Zion, the capital of the kingdom, and yet the nation has a king on the throne. This

leaves them without any pretext for needing the assistance of man-made gods.

Verse 20. But it is too late now to expect further leniency from God. He has pleaded and instructed and warned them for many years but all of the offered instruction has been rejected. In just a few more years the nation will be overthrown and given into the hands of a foreign power. All these facts and truths bring the guilty people to make the noted statement of this verse. I say noted because it has long been a favorite quotation in the mouths of public speakers when exhorting sinners to make preparation to meet God before it is too late. Such an exhortation is proper and it is proper also to refer to such instances as the one before us as a lesson. Further than that the verse has nothing to do with individual responsibility to God today. It was written as a picture of Judah at the time of her national downfall which was near. The figures of the passage very impressively illustrate the long continued neglect of the nation to correct itself before the Lord made his decree to reject it. The *harvest* and *summer* means the period of Judah's reign in Jerusalem, during which time she could have developed a national character of religious devotion to God that would have been a sure protection against all enemies. But now it is too late; all of the time for such a work is gone and the nation is *not saved* but must suffer national death in Babylon.

Verse 21. Jeremiah is again "taking it to heart" about the sad prospect of his countrymen. *I am black* is figurative and means he is in mourning for his people.

Verse 22. Gilead was an extensive region just east of the Jordan and opposite the northern part of Palestine. Gilead was specially noted for its balm from "balm of Gilead" trees, which was worth twice its weight in silver. Funk and Wagnalls Bible Dictionary says of this balm that it was "used for the treatment of wounds." Jeremiah uses the word figuratively and in a plaintive strain asks if there is no physician in Gilead who could heal his people.

## JEREMIAH 9

Verse 1. The "weeping prophet" again expresses himself on behalf of his people because of the misfortunes soon to come upon them. The reference to *waters* and *fountains* is figura-

tive and indicates the intensity of his grief.

Verse 2. The deep grief of Jeremiah was not the kind that caused him to excuse the sins of the people. It was not mere sentiment or a fellow feeling for them in the suffering he knew they were destined to undergo, although he doubtless had that kind of grief also. But the chief motive for his sorrow was his disapproval of their sinful course. He was so disgusted with them that he wished he could get away out of their presence. So earnest was this feeling that he would have been willing to stay in a public lodging house in the wilderness in order to get away out of their sight. Overindulgent parents sometimes allow their personal feeling to cause them to excuse or try to explain away the mistakes of their children. Such was not the case with Jeremiah for he used strong language in describing and condemning the conduct of the people of Judah. *Bend their tongues* is a figure of speech based on the use of a bow. If one were eager to shoot an arrow to some distant point he would bend or pull back the bow in order to send the arrow on its mission of destruction. In like manner the people (especially the leaders) were so eager to use their tongues for sending lies that the illustration is drawn from the act of pulling back a bow in preparation for the discharge of a deadly weapon. *Valiant* means strong and the prophet describes the inconsistency of his people by the illustration just mentioned. Continuing the figure of a bow he shows them exerting themselves enough to pull back the instrument when an arrow of falsehood was to be discharged, but they would not use enough strength to bend it to send forth a truth. *From evil to evil* means they would go from one sinful practice to another; they were so devoted to the abominable way of life which they had adopted under the system of idolatry. *Know* is used in the sense of "recognition," and the phrase *know not me* means the people of Judah were interested in the false gods of the heathen but refused to recognize the true God.

Verses 3, 4. The corruption of the people was so general that no confidence could be had in anyone, hence the warning advice of this verse. The motive for the state of iniquity was twofold; fleshly indulgence (v. 2) and desire for material gain (ch. 8: 10). It seems that such a disposition of selfishness has been characteristic of the

Jews all through ancient times. (See Matt. 10: 21.) *Walk with slanders* indicates an association with those who lie against others in order to get some advantage of them.

Verse 5. Mutual mistrust and false dealing is still the subject of the prophet. The people not only dealt in falsehood but cultivated it for it is said they *taught their tongue to speak lies*. *Weary themselves to commit iniquity* means they were so persistent in their work of wickedness that they became tired over it.

Verse 6. The various terms used in these verses are for the purpose of describing the depth of Judah's iniquity. *Deceit* denotes fraud in their dealing with each other. Their practice of this wickedness was so constant that the Lord called it their habitation. Good and evil never dwell together, hence the Lord accused the people of ignoring him so they could give their attention to the fraudulent practices.

Verse 7. *Melt* is from a word that means to refine such as the work of a smelter of ore. It was a prediction of the captivity that was near at hand which was destined to refine them by curing them of idolatry. *For how shall I do* means "For thus shall I do," because nothing short of the captivity would refine them.

Verse 8. An arrow is sharp, swift in flight, and strikes one before he is aware of its existence. In many instances the arrow was pointed with a deadly poison so that the victim not only suffered from the mechanical wound, but would have to take the effect of the poison into his body. Such an instrument was referred to as an illustration of the falsifying tongues of these people.

Verse 9. *Visit* means to inflict some punishment of a severe character and the Lord declared that he would do so to *such a nation* as Judah had come to be. In making this *visit* the Lord declared he would be avenging his soul on the sinful nation. There would be nothing wrong in that because Paul has declared that vengeance belongs to God (Rom 12: 19), and He always does the right thing with that which is his own.

Verse 10. This passage refers to the wasted condition in which the land was to be left after the Babylonian invasion. *Burned up* was not literal but the territory was so ruined that all inducement for occupying it was removed.

Verse 11. The preceding verse has

to do with the country in general while this one is concerned with Jerusalem especially because it was the capital of Judah. *Heaps* is from a word that is defined "ruins" in the lexicon, and it is a prediction of the disorder that will be wrought in the city by the enemy. The desolated condition in which the cities were to be left is the reason for mentioning the wild creatures that would live there. The Biblical account of the fulfillment is in 2 Ki. 24: 10-16.

Verse 12. This verse is in the form of a question which implies that inspiration was necessary to enable a man to see what was coming on the nation. The people in general and even its leaders such as the priests and regular prophets (teachers) did not realize what was to be the fate of the country. The Lord therefore sent the spirit of divine foresight unto Jeremiah and other prophets like him that the predictions might be made. One purpose for making the predictions was that certain worthy individuals might be induced by the warning to repent of their part in the iniquity of the country. Should they do so they would be spared much personal humiliation even though they have to take their share of the national misfortunes. (See the note at 2 Ki. 22: 17 in Vol. 2 of this Commentary.)

Verse 13. The Lord always has a reason for what he does though he does not reveal it to man in every case. In the present one, however, the reason is stated and has been many times. It was because of their rejection of God's law that he was determined to expel his people out of their own land and cause them to languish many years in a foreign country.

Verse 14. It is wrong to disobey the word of the Lord even once, but it is much worse to *walk after* such a life, and that is what the people of Judah did. *Imagination* is rendered "stubbornness" in the margin and the lexicon defines the original word as "obstinacy," and both renderings truly describe the spirit and conduct of the people of Judah. The specific thing which their stubbornness led them to do was to worship the idolatrous gods of Baalim. They accepted the instructions and followed the example of their fleshly ancestors instead of obeying their spiritual Father.

Verse 15. *Wormwood* and *gall* are used figuratively to represent the awful experiences the people of Judah were to have in Babylon. Of the first



word Smith's Bible Dictionary says the following: "The word occurs frequently in the Bible, and generally in a metaphorical [figurative] sense. In Jer. 9: 15; 23: 15; Lam. 3: 15, 19, wormwood is symbolical of bitter calamity and sorrow; unrighteous judges are said to 'turn judgment to wormwood.' Amos 5: 7. The Orientals [people of the East] typified sorrow, cruelties and calamities of any kind by plants of a poisonous or bitter nature." *Gall* is from rowsh, which Strong defines, "A poisonous plant, probably the poppy (from its conspicuous head); generally poison (even of serpents)." In the King James version the word has been rendered by gall, hemlock, poison and venom. The sorrowful existence which the people of God went through while in captivity was certainly very bitter and might well be likened to poison for it just about killed their morale. (See Psa. 137 and Ezek. 37: 11 for a description of their suffering.)

Verse 16. Some of the bitterness predicted in the preceding verse came upon the people while yet in their home land. This verse has more direct bearing on the captivity in Babylon which was accomplished in part by the use of the sword.

Verse 17. Josephus mentions "hired mourners" who were employed in ancient times by unfortunate people who thought their circumstances were unusually distressing. It was in allusion to this practice that Jeremiah mentioned the *mourning women*, though he uses it figuratively and in prediction of the sad state of affairs soon to come upon the nation. *Cunning* is from CHAKAM, which Strong defines, "wise, (i.e., intelligent, skillful or artful)." The idea is that the condition awaiting the nation will be so pitiable that it will require a wise person to describe it fully.

Verse 18. *Make haste* means to be prompt in forming a wailing for the people for the captivity is but a few years in the future. The reference to *tears* and the *eyes* is just another figurative prediction of the distress about to come.

Verse 19. *Voice of wailing is heard* is present tense but is a prediction of things to come though not very far off. *Have forsaken* and *have cast* is past or present tense but refers to the exile soon to happen to the kingdom of Judah.

Verse 20. *Yet* is used in the sense of "also, furthermore," etc., meaning a

call to attention of these "mourning women." They made a profession of their mourning exercises, but they were admonished to hear the word of the Lord and then make their mourning a genuine expression of grief. They were also told to pass the sorrowful word on to their daughters and neighbors.

Verses 21, 22. *Windows* is used figuratively to indicate the activity of death at invading the homes. It will not wait for an open door to admit the black monster but will come through the perforations (which was the kind of windows they had in ancient times) of these openings to the houses.

Verse 23. All human accomplishments and talents are failures when the might of the Lord is turned against them. The most influential men in the kingdom of Judah had been dominating the common people for many years and they had led them into sin. Now they themselves were destined to feel the wrath of God whose law they had broken.

Verse 24. The man who trusts in God and respects his laws may be considered very ordinary in the opinion of human beings, yet even his weakness will prove too much for the unrighteous oppressor if he puts his reliance in divine support.

Verse 25. God often used heathen nations as instruments with which to punish his own people. But he likewise chastised those heathen groups because of their cruelty upon the unfortunate nation, and because of the personal satisfaction they took from the service. Hence the prediction in this verse threatens vengeance upon the various nations whom God had been using and intended yet to use. The terms *circumcised* and *uncircumcised* are used to classify all of the peoples to be involved in the chastisement of the Lord; the first of the terms refers to the Jews.

Verse 26. This verse groups all of the people together that were involved regardless of race or nationality because all of them were uncircumcised in one sense or another. The foreign nations were uncircumcised physically and the people of Israel were uncircumcised (unconsecrated) spiritually.

## JEREMIAH 10

Verse 1. *House of Israel* was used in the general sense although the kingdom of Judah was specifically meant. The kingdom of Israel (the 10 tribes) had been in exile more than a century,

Verse 2. Idolatry was the greatest corruption of Israel and for which the nation was destined to be driven out of the home land. Idol worship was of three kinds that might well be termed as natural, artificial and imaginative. The first was the worship of the planets, the beasts, the trees and the rivers. The second was that of images made by hand out of wood, stone and metal. The third was some invisible god such as Baal and Ash-taroath. This verse deals with the first because *signs* is the same word as that in Gen. 1: 14 where we know it means the sun and other heavenly bodies. God is admonishing his people not to be in dread of these planets for to do so would make them as foolish as the heathen.

Verses 3-5. These verses should form a bracket and the subject is the weakness of idolatry. *Customs* refers to the practices of the idolaters which are so foolish and inconsistent. The most ordinary intelligence would enable a man to conclude that a god worthy of being worshiped should be greater and stronger than the worshiper. But in the case of these man-made idols (number 2 of the forms of idols noted in the preceding verse) the entire object to be worshiped is the work of the worshiper. It is true that a man might make an instrument that could perform some mechanical feat which he could not do with his bare hands. In such a case, however, the praise for the instrument would be given to the one who made it. But the matter of this form of idolatry is just the opposite to that. After the god has been taken out of the forest, shaped into the desired form, decorated to taste and placed in the desired location, it is as helpless as a standing tree. If the worshiper wishes the god to occupy some other place he must carry it to that location since it is unable to move an inch. It is strange that any human being could be so foolish as to engage in such a practice, especially for the Jews to do so when they had so much information about the true God. But it proves the truth of an old saying that "There is only one step from the sublime to the ridiculous."

Verse 6. Having described the emptiness of idolatry the prophet turns his speech into praise for the God of the Hebrews. There is no one like unto Him, for he is the one who created the materials from which the idolaters obtained the images they worship.

Verse 7. Not only are the dumb

things of creation such as the trees the work of the Lord, but He is greater in might than the greatest and wiser than the wisest among all the nations of the world. *To thee doth it appertain* means that fear or reverence is due to be given to the Lord because he truly is the *King of nations*.

Verse 8. *They* refers to the wise men of the nations mentioned in the preceding verse. *Altogether* denotes that all of these "wise" idolaters are in one class and that they are *brutish* (stupid) and foolish.

Verse 9. This verse is similar to the bracket of verses 3-5 in that it portrays the weakness of idolatry. Every material advantage is given the idol gods. The silver brought from Tarshish and the gold from Uphaz were among the best in fineness, and from these metals the images were formed. After the idol forms were made they were decorated with blue and scarlet fabrics which were among the most beautiful materials. And yet with all of this arrangement the most that can be said of them is that *they are the work of cunning men*.

Verse 10. The attractive appearance which the idolaters gave to their image did not make it able to show even any signs of life, much less enable it to do anything. On the other hand the Lord of Israel is the *living God*. He not only is a king but an *everlasting king*. Instead of being made out of earthly materials as was the idol god, the earth is altogether within the power of this living God. The heathen nations merely offer foolish and ineffective service to their material god, while they tremble at the wrath of the God whom Jeremiah worshiped.

Verse 11. *Thus shall ye say unto them* is the instruction of the Lord, telling Jeremiah what he should say to the people of his nation. They are to be told that their idol gods will cease to be and hence it will be seen all idols are powerless.

Verse 12. *He* refers to the Lord who was named in verse 10. Three important qualifications are possessed by Him and were used in the formation of the universe; *power, wisdom and discretion*. The first made it possible for him to do the work, the second furnished him with the general information as to how it should be done, and the third suggested the most useful or practical plan of the whole arrangement.

Verse 13. This verse is simply a statement of God's control over the ele-

ments in the universe. Moisture goes up from the earth and is condensed into rain and produces even such quantities of it that a *multitude of waters* results. (Gen. 7.)

Verse 14. In view of God's power over the whole earth, the men who pretend to worship the images which they make out of a mere speck of this great universe are *brutish* (stupid). When the wooden or metal image is put to the test the maker and worshiper of it will be *confounded* or confused. He will learn to his sorrow that these breathless images can accomplish nothing for him and that all expectations offered to him by the idolatrous prophets were *falsehood*.

Verse 15. *They are vanity* means that idols are useless and can accomplish nothing. *Work of errors* denotes the whole system of idolatry is a mistake. *Time of their visitation* signifies that when the gods of the heathen are put to the test they will be proved a failure, and they who worshiped them will be put to shame.

Verse 16. The original for *portion* is defined "allotment" in the lexicon and refers to the favors that Jacob or the people descended from him will enjoy. *He* is a pronoun for God who is *the former of all things* and who can bestow actual blessings on his people. *Hosts* is from TSEBA'AI and Strong defines it, "A mass of persons (or figuratively things), especially regularly organized for war (an army)." *Name* is from SHEMA, which Strong defines as follows: "A primitive word . . . through the idea of definite and conspicuous position. An appellation [name], as a mark or memorial of individuality; by implication honor, authority, character." A *name* that signifies all these important characteristics is certainly one that is properly given to Him who made and rules the universe.

Verse 17. *Gather up thy wares* is like telling a person to get his personal belongings together and be ready to leave. It is a prediction that the inhabitants of the *fortress* which is Jerusalem will soon have to leave.

Verse 18. The same prediction is continued but in more direct terms. To *sling out* means to expell with force and *at this once* signifies that the hour of departure is at hand. That was literally true for Jeremiah began to write less than 20 years before the Babylonian captivity started. *Distress* is from a Hebrew word that is defined "to cramp" in the lexicon, and is used

with reference to the Babylonian captivity for the people of God certainly were cramped when they were huddled in that country. *Find* is from MATES and Strong defines it, "to come forth, i.e., appear or exist; transitively to attain, i.e., find or acquire." The gist of the clause is that Judah was to be shut up in Babylon in order to *find* by experience what it means to disregard the law of the Lord.

Verse 19. The prophet speaks in the first person but is really concerned about the *hurt* of the nation. The hurt refers to the downfall that his people are soon to suffer from the enemy. *I must bear it* corresponds with the decree that nothing could be done by any man to avoid the captivity.

Verse 20. *Tabernacle* and *cords* are used figuratively because the nation had not used that structure since the days of Solomon. The clause means the temple was about to be demolished and 2 Ki. 25: 9, 10 records the fulfillment of that prediction. *My children* has reference to the citizens of Jerusalem who were taken by the Babylonians and 2 Ki. 24: 14 shows its fulfillment. *Tent* and *curtains* are used in the same sense as *tabernacle* and *cords* in the beginning of the verse.

Verse 21. *Pastors* is from a word that means rulers and feeders, and applies especially to the priests to whom was given the twofold duty of ruling, and feeding spiritual knowledge. (See ch. 5: 31 and Mal. 2: 7.) But these pastors who were expected to acquire and teach knowledge had become *brutish* which is defined "stupid" in the lexicon. A pastor or shepherd who becomes uninformed or stupid will not be aware of approaching danger and as a result his flock may be scattered from him. Such was soon to be the lot of these pastors in Judah, for the Babylonians were going to take possession of the flock (citizens of Jerusalem) and drive it away to a strange fold beyond the Euphrates River.

Verse 22. *Bruit* is now an obsolete word in the English language. In this verse it is from SHEMAWAH and Strong defines it, "Something heard, i.e., an announcement." It represents the prophet as hearing a sound or rumor that is not favorable for his people, for it is the sound of the army of Babylon that soon will be marching down upon the country. The sound is coming from the *north*, which is explained by the note and comments at Isa. 14: 31 in Vol. 3 of this Commen-

tary. Making the cities a *den of dragons* refers to the unthinkable condition they will be in after the captivity.

Verse 23. The prophet is much impressed at the helplessness of man, especially as it pertains to questions of proper living. Had his fellow countrymen realized that truth and acted accordingly the war clouds now approaching would never have arisen.

Verse 24. Jeremiah personally was righteous but the prayer he utters is on behalf of the people of Judah. And the prayer is a kind of prediction that the nation is to be *corrected* in a foreign land *but with judgment*. *Not in thine anger* is not absolute for other passages tell us that God's anger was kindled against his people which caused him to decree the captivity upon them. The idea is that a limit would be observed in the treatment administered so that a remnant would be saved and the nation would not be *brought to nothing*.

Verse 25. Jeremiah personally doubtless felt incensed against the heathen nation that was soon coming against his beloved country, but the passage is also a prediction of the vengeance that God would take on the very instrument that he had chosen by which to chastise his disobedient people, because of the cruelty with which they did their service and because of the satisfaction they got from the sufferings of Judah.

### JEREMIAH 11

Verse 1. The Lord is going to make another revelation to Jeremiah which is to become a part of his book. Not necessarily new subject matter but a special reference to a subject that was delivered from the Lord before this time.

Verse 2. *Hear* is addressed to Jeremiah and he is having his attention called to an important document which the Lord calls a *covenant*. A few lines later in the chapter it may be seen that the document referred to is the so-called ceremonial law given by Moses. We therefore have the information that the commandments on the tables of stone did not constitute the *covenant* exclusively. *Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem* were the same except as to the extent of territory included. Jerusalem was the capital of the kingdom of Judah.

Verse 3. The second half of this verse is almost identical with Deut. 27: 26 which is directly connected with the "ceremonial law" and which is

called a *covenant* in the preceding verse in our chapter.

Verse 4. No written law had been given the Israelites previous to their release from Egyptian bondage. *The day* therefore refers to the period in their history when they were able to leave Egypt and receive a law by which they could be governed as a separate people. During the 430 years of their sojourn they were merely a race with no national standing. When the chains of slavery were broken off of them they were in a position to be ruled by whatever law would be placed over them by the One who had given them their freedom. Hence they were told that if they would obey their great Liberator they could become a *people* which was used in the sense of nation and not a race only.

Verse 5. The Lord is still speaking to Jeremiah and repeating to him the words he said to the Jewish fathers in the day they were led out of Egypt. God told that generation that he had sworn to their fathers (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) to give unto their descendants a good land for a possession. But that promise was made on condition that they obey the divine law, and it was on that basis that He would bless the people of Jeremiah's day. This was the message the prophet was directed to tell his people that they might learn a lesson from the history of their forefathers. Jeremiah now writes in the first person to tell the reader of this communication from God and to let it be known that he favored and accepted it. He expresses his endorsement by the three words *so be it* according to the King James translation. It is interesting to know that these words are from the Hebrew word AMEN and Strong defines it, "Sure; abstractly faithfulness; adverbially, truly." In the King James translation the word has been rendered amen 27 times, truth 2, so be it 1.

Verse 6. Having received the favorable response from the prophet, the Lord told him to go to the people of Judah (the kingdom) and Jerusalem (the capital) and proclaim the words of the covenant to them. Not only was he to let the people *hear* them, but he was to exhort them to *do* them.

Verse 7. Through all the history of the nation from its escape from Egypt to the present time, God had never ceased to admonish and insist on obedience to his law. Their corrupt walk, therefore, was not due to any lack of



information; it was due to their disregard for it. (See this thought in Isa. 1: 3.)

Verse 8. The people not only fell short of obeying the law, but they were not even *inclined* nor willing to show a favorable attitude toward it. *Imagination* is from a Hebrew word that Strong defines as "obstinacy." It is the same thought that is elsewhere expressed by the word "stiff-necked." *Bring upon them the words of this covenant* means that part of the covenant that threatened the disobedient ones with severe punishment for their rebellion. (See this part of the covenant in Deut. 27.)

Verse 9. It is bad enough for one man to commit sin independently of any others, but it is worse when he forms an alliance with other persons for the purpose of doing wrong. This principle is recognized by the laws of civilized nations and penalties for such misdeeds are severer than for other kinds. Even the daughters of Zelophehad understood it and gained a point with the Lord and Moses on the basis of it. (See Num. 27: 3.) The men of Judah had conspired together for wrong and God's wrath was kindled against them which is here being threatened through the prophet's words.

Verse 10. The motive for the conspiracy was to take up the sinful practice of the forefathers. While on the subject the Lord included his charge against his people in general. *House of Israel* means the 10 tribes and the *house of Judah* is the 2-tribe kingdom now in authority in Jerusalem at the time Jeremiah wrote. The former has been in exile already for more than a century and the latter is due to be taken very soon.

Verse 11. The *evil* which the Lord said he would bring on his people was the Babylonian captivity and it was only a few years in the future when this was written. *Not be able to escape* means his people cannot escape being taken into captivity; not that they never would be released from it, for they were.

Verse 12. *Then* is an adverb of time referring to the conditions that will come in Palestine as a result of the captivity. The people having turned away from God and gone to idols, He will turn away from them and bid them go for help to those dumb things. When that takes place they will realize as never before just how useless are the false gods.

Verse 13. Baal was one of the masculine gods in the class of invisible ones that was explained at ch. 10: 2. The people had become so devoted to idolatry that they had some one of the gods represented in every city. They were not satisfied at having a god in each city, but increased the iniquity by desecrating the capital city of Jerusalem in a special manner. They used every street as a place to erect an altar for the purpose of sacrificing to their god.

Verse 14. *Pray not thou for this people* seems to be a severe way for them to be treated, but it refers to the nation as a whole, not to every individual in it. (See the note at 2 Ki. 22: 17 in Vol 2 of this Commentary.)

Verse 15. *Lewdness and flesh* are literal terms and primarily are involved in fleshly immorality. They are used to apply to spiritual fornication which the people of Judah were committing in going after false gods. The question is, what business does such a people have in the house of the true God? The people not only practiced this great evil but took satisfaction from each instance of the abominable service.

Verse 16. The olive was one of the most important trees grown in Palestine, both because of the use made of the wood and for the fruit. The oil extracted from the olive berry was used for medicine, food and light. Hence the Lord likened his people to a green (living) olive tree and would have received their services as the most desirable fruit had they been true to their illustration. But since they were not the Lord caused a tumult (by the Babylonian army) to come against the tree and burn it to the extent that the *branches were broken off*. Note that the entire tree was not destroyed, which agrees with other predictions that the captivity was not to make a complete destruction of the nation.

Verse 17. Although the *house of Israel* (the 10 tribes) had been in exile many years before Jeremiah's time, it is frequently mentioned along with the *house of Judah*. The reason for it is that the Israelite race as a whole became corrupt by the same evil which was idolatry. The significant thought in this verse is that in committing this evil it was *against themselves*. When man commits sin he injures himself more than anyone else. He cuts himself off from the Lord and all of the benefits that would come from Him upon faithful service as commanded.

Verse 18. Every word in the Bible is inspired but the writers sometimes compose their passages in the first person and at other times they use another form. At times it will seem as if God is speaking directly and we almost forget that a prophet is speaking or writing the words all the time. After the language runs along in that line for a while, the writer will change his form and refer to himself in his relation to God or to the people. We have one of these instances in this verse. The prophet even brings in the Lord under both the second and third persons. First he tells the reader that the Lord had given him knowledge of conditions, then he addresses himself to the Lord and acknowledges that *thou showed me their (Israel's) doings*.

Verse 19. Jeremiah became the target for the shafts of persecution from the wicked people of the nation. By glancing ahead to verse 21 we can see that the foregoing statement is correct. This came immediately after the statement that God had revealed to him (Jeremiah) a knowledge of the wickedness of the people. That caused them to hate him and to persecute him almost to the extent of death. People have a dread of any man whom they know to have "inside" information about their corrupt practices and they will conspire against him. But Jeremiah did not know this for a time, hence he went along from day to day not realizing the danger he was in. It is compared to the situation of an ox or a lamb that goes on toward the place of slaughter not realizing the danger ahead. The illustration of the olive tree is now transferred from the nation to the prophet, and the destruction which his enemies would bring on him was more complete than the Lord threatened to impose on the nation as an olive tree. He would break off the branches only while the prophet's enemies would destroy both the tree and its fruit. Not only that, but they would wipe out all sign that such a tree had existed so that it would be forgotten.

Verse 20. In his distress Jeremiah appealed to the Lord because he believed that he could thus receive righteous judgment. There is not much difference between *reins* and *heart*, but when used as distinct terms the first means the intellect and the second means the motives for applying it. Since God makes righteous tests of these matters the prophet longed for

him to bring vengeance upon these personal enemies.

Verse 21. Anathoth was a city near Jerusalem and was known as the unofficial headquarters of the priests. The other citizens of that place did not like the teaching of Jeremiah and even threatened his life. This is the thing referred to in verse 19 but of which the prophet was unaware for a time. But their dangerous attitude toward him finally became so outspoken that he heard of it, and then made the plea to God which we have just read and to which an answer of assurance was given.

Verse 22. In answer to the prayer of Jeremiah the Lord promised him protection. Not only was he to be shielded from death but his would-be destroyers were to be destroyed. Their men of military age were to die in battle and the remaining members of their families were to die by famine.

Verse 23. The vengeance to be brought upon the men of Anathoth was to be so complete that nothing would be left by which their names would be remembered.

## JEREMIAH 12

Verse 1. The prophet does not question the judgment of God in deciding on the prayer he makes, only he desires to discuss the matter with Him. *Wherefore* means "why is it" or "how does it come" that the way of the wicked prospers? Jeremiah seems confused that treacherous men are happy whereas they have no right to happiness.

Verse 2. *Thou has planted them* means the good things possessed by these treacherous dealers were all received from the Lord. It is on the principle of impartiality which God maintains toward both good and bad men. (See Matt. 5: 45.) *Near in their mouth and far from their reins*. The last word is from a Hebrew original whose central definition is "the mind." The clause means the people would say favorable things about God but their mind or heart would not be in it. Jesus made the same accusation against some pretenders in his day. (See Matt. 15: 8.)

Verse 3. Jeremiah does not class himself with the unrighteous men of his day. He believes his faith has been tried and that it has stood the test. *Pull them out*, etc., is a prediction that God would pull them out which means to separate these evil men (chiefly the leaders) from the rest of the flock

(the congregation) and reserve them for the day of slaughter which means the captivity.

Verse 4. Jeremiah laments the sad condition of the land in his day and makes a personal complaint of it to God. Many of the terms used in the verse are figurative but truly represent the deplorable conditions. To a good man like the prophet it might seem as if matters had come to the limit of confusion and that it could not get any worse. But the Lord will soon show him that it could be worse, which will be the thought in the next verse, figuratively expressed.

Verse 5. The terms used in this verse are figurative also and are for the sole purpose of comparison. The literal subject under consideration is the condition of distress which Jeremiah's personal enemies were inflicting upon him. The former is compared to a race with footmen, the latter with running against horses. And then, comparatively speaking, the prophet was living in a land where peace still existed (since no foreign enemy had as yet intruded), while soon the same land will be shaken by the foreign invasion referred to by the *swelling of Jordan*. That phrase is based on an event in the seasonal history of Palestine. There is an interesting quotation from history on this subject in connection with comments on ch. 4: 7. To save space I shall request the reader to see that place for the history quoted.

Verse 6. The Lord explains what he had been talking about by referring to the mistreatment that Jeremiah was suffering from his own countrymen.

Verse 7. This verse through the 13th should be marked as a bracket and labeled "the captivity," then consider the comments on the several verses in their order. The captivity had not yet taken place but the Lord had actually forsaken his people and abandoned them to the enemy. It only remained for Babylon to carry out the program by coming against Jerusalem, and that great event was about due when this prediction was being written.

Verse 8. *Heritage* means possession and the term is applied to the Jewish nation as something that belonged to the Lord. *A lion in a forest* would be unrestricted and free to exert violence against any creature that came within his sight. God likened his people to this wild creature because they were wildly reproaching Him for his condemnation of their abominable lives.

Verse 9. A *speckled bird* would attract other birds and she would be regarded as a bird of prey. God compared his people to such a creature and predicted such an event would happen to them. The other birds refers to Babylon and her allies who were soon to attack Judah. *Come ye*, etc., is a prediction in the form of an invitation for the creatures or *beasts of the field* (nations allied with Babylon) to come and *devour* (take possession of) the kingdom of Judah.

Verse 10. The *pastors* were the men in Judah whose duty it was to feed the people with knowledge. But they had become corrupt and taken advantage of the people in their greed for gain and in their desire for sinful gratification. This situation was part of the reason for the Lord's determination to abandon his people to the enemy.

Verse 11. The spiritual condition at the time Jeremiah was writing was desolate, but the physical result of the invasion and captivity was the thing to come next and this is a prediction of that. The language is present or past tense in form but it is a prediction in meaning. *No man layeth it to heart* indicates the indifference which the people in general and the leaders in particular manifested in the matter.

Verse 12. *The spoilers* refers to the Babylonians who were coming against the land and capital city of Jerusalem. 2 Ki. 24: 13 and 25: 11-16 shows the fulfillment of this spoiling. *Sword of the Lord* means the sword of the Babylonians since that army was performing in this action according to His decree.

Verse 13. The first clause might seem to contradict Gal. 6: 7 which declares that "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." But it will not when all the factors in the context are considered. Instead of its being a contradiction, it is similar to the case in Matt. 13: 26, 27 where tares came up after a man had sowed wheat. Verse 25 tells that another person sowed the bad seed from the one who had sowed the good. It is the same in our passage that the Lord will be the one who will sow the seed for thorns in the place where the people had sowed wheat. But it will be just to prevent the people from reaping a good crop in order to punish them for their unfaithfulness to Him. He will cause the disappointment by sowing the *thorns* consisting of the devastating work of the Babylonian army. *Put*

themselves to pain is as if it said they had taken the pains or trouble to put in a good crop but would not be allowed to reap from it. *They shall be ashamed* is rendered "ye" in the margin and the connection agrees with it. Logically the people who have engaged in the unlawful business are the ones who will be ashamed when the anger of the Lord is poured out upon them.

Verse 14. God has made use of various agencies to accomplish his purposes. He has not always used those whom we would consider righteous persons from a moral or religious standpoint, but they would be such as best served the Lord's purpose. He used the heathen nations to chastise his people for their idolatry; the Assyrians to punish the 10 tribes and the Babylonians to chastise the 2 tribes. But in all of such cases he never tolerated any personal satisfaction the heathen instrument of his plans took from their experience. After the Lord's people had been dealt with according to plan, then the heathen in turn would have to feel the hand of God. Such is the meaning of this verse, for it speaks of the heathen as *mine evil neighbors*, referring to the nations beyond the Euphrates River. *I will pluck them* is general and applies to all of the tribes in captivity. *Pluck out the house of Judah* is specific and doubtless is named because that kingdom was still in control in Jerusalem at this writing but was destined to be overthrown in a few years.

Verse 15. This verse is a prediction of the return from captivity of the Jews and their reestablishment in the home land. The Biblical account of the fulfillment of this prediction is given in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The historical account of it was quoted at Isa. 14: 1 in Vol. 3 of this Commentary.

Verse 16. The promises and conditions stated in this verse were to be in force after the return from captivity. *They* and *my people* are named in a way that might lead us to think it has reference to different races. Such is not the case, but *they* means the individual man (referred to as *every man* in the preceding verse), while *my people* means the nation as a whole. However, the conditions on which the individual men might dwell in the land also applied to the nation as a whole. This combined responsibility must be borne in mind as we approach the next verse.

Verse 17. Idolatry was the chief corruption of the nation and for which it had to go into captivity. It was cured of that evil and never had a "relapse" of it. But there were other matters of conduct required by the law and Israel is warned not to disregard them after their return from captivity. Should the nation again prove unfaithful it will not be "let off" with a "prison term" of captivity, then be restored to its place as a nation. Instead, it will be *utterly plucked up and destroyed*. This threatening warning might well be regarded as a prophecy, for the nation was indeed overthrown by the Romans in 70 A.D. and has never regained its original place and extent among the nations of the world. There is much that may be said on this subject, both by way of comments and by citation to secular history, both ancient and present-day. But this is not the most advisable place to go into it in full; I shall reserve that for comments on several passages in the book of Daniel.

### JEREMIAH 13

Verse 1. On various occasions the Lord has required his prophets to go through what I have termed some "acting." This subject was introduced at 1 Ki. 20: 35 in Vol. 2 of this Commentary; one of those instances is the present verse. Linen was a material commonly used for the making of clothing hence the instruction to get a *linen girdle*. It was to be worn next to the body but was not to be removed at any time for cleansing in water.

Verse 2. The prophet obeyed the instructions and it is important that what he did was *according to the word of the Lord*. Inspired prophets were subject to divine regulation notwithstanding their special qualification.

Verse 3. It has been stated previously (ch. 1: 3) that the books of the Bible were not composed all at one time. That is, the writer did not begin a book and then continue uninterruptedly until the document was complete. When the Lord had something more for the writer to put down in writing or for him to do he would call upon him for that purpose. Hence this verse is simply one of those times when God is giving further instructions to his servant the prophet.

Verse 4. It is significant that Jeremiah was to hide the girdle near the River Euphrates, for that was the territory in which the people of Judah were to be in captivity.



Verse 5. When the prophet carried out the command his present duty was fulfilled. He was not yet told what it was all about. The motive of the prophet in hiding the girdle is expressed by the words *the Lord commanded me*. That should be all the reason necessary for anyone to serve the Lord; that it is commanded.

Verse 6. Further instructions are given the prophet and he is still not informed as to the meaning of his performance. After hiding the girdle he had returned to his former place for now he is told to *go to Euphrates* to get the girdle.

Verse 7. There is no logical explanation for the state of the girdle nor for the lesson the Lord means to teach by it. That still remains to be brought out after the importance of the subject has been emphasized by the "acting" of the prophet. All that Jeremiah saw was that the girdle was ruined when he found it.

Verse 8. This verse shows that up to the present time the prophet did not know the significance of the program. He was acting by faith in the Lord and the spirit of obedience that faith should produce in God's servants. So now it was necessary to give him some additional information which is to be understood as a prediction.

Verse 9. The meaning of the performance with the girdle is to be given by the Lord beginning with this verse. *Pride* is from a Hebrew word that is defined "arrogance or majesty." Judah (especially the leaders) had a feeling of importance that caused her to resist the teachings of the Lord. The first word in the definition is another word for "stubbornness," and the people of Judah (likewise of Israel) certainly had manifested much of that spirit in all of their history. But the Lord was determined to mar that pride through the captivity in the region of the Euphrates River.

Verse 10. *Imagination* is practically the same as stubbornness and also like the original for *pride* in the preceding verse. The stubbornness of Israel was manifested by the determination to serve the false gods. The Lord proposed to render his people to be like the girdle in its condition which was to be *marred*.

Verse 11. The application of the illustration is beginning to be more apparent. As a girdle would be worn near the body so the Lord attached Israel (as a whole) close to him. This girdle of the people was composed of

living and intelligent material and should have partaken of the characteristics of the wearer. Such an article of wearing apparel would be so intimately connected with a man's body that it would come to seem like a part of himself. That was why the Lord chose a girdle in this instance to illustrate his people. He had attached them so intimately near him that they should have partaken of the holy principle. However, such an effect could have come only through hearing the words of Him who put on the girdle, *but they would not hear*.

Verse 12. Such terms as wine and grapes and wine press are used figuratively in the Bible to denote wrath or vengeance or extreme confusion as if drunk. Jeremiah was instructed to tell the people that every bottle was to be filled with wine. The Lord expected them to think (or at least pretend to think) that it meant literal wine and that they were being promised a bountiful harvest from the vineyards.

Verse 13. Then the prophet was to tell them plainly that it was not meant to be taken literally. That it meant they were to be overcome with drunkenness or confusion by the deluge of God's wrath because of their unfaithfulness. This state of drunkenness on the wine of divine wrath was to affect the nation as a whole. However, the kings, priests and prophets are named particularly since they were chiefly responsible for the state of iniquity.

Verse 14. This verse predicts the state of general confusion that will arise after Jerusalem has been shut up by the Babylonian siege. Even the members of families will turn against each other with the result that many will be destroyed. This was to be a part of God's plan for bringing vengeance on his unfaithful people. We may read of other instances in the history of the Jews where the nearest blood relatives became deadly enemies against each other. (See Matt. 10: 21.)

Verse 15. The simple declaration that *the Lord hath spoken* is the only reason given here for paying attention to what is being spoken. *Be not proud* is equivalent to saying "be not stubborn." Pride is manifested in many ways by human beings and one of them is to be too self-willed to obey the commands of another even though the one giving the commands is supremely above all others.

Verse 16. The things threatened are figurative and refer to the calamity

about to come on the nation. The captivity was bound to come regardless of all efforts at reformation, but individuals who heeded such admonitions as these had the assurance of God's blessings on them even while in the captivity.

Verse 17. *Shall weep in secret places* denotes the regret that God will have (all to himself) over the sad plight of his people when it becomes necessary to punish them for their rebellious conduct. God does not weep for the fate awaiting his country.

Verse 18. The invasion into and capture of Judah would be a personal blow to the king and his family. That is why he is exhorted to humble himself, and if he did he would be spared the personal humiliation the nation as a whole was destined to suffer.

Verse 19. This is a direct prediction of the captivity soon to come upon the kingdom of Judah. *Cities of the south* is said on the same basis that caused Babylon to be referred to as coming from the "north." This subject is explained historically in connection with Isa. 14: 31 in Vol. 3 of this Commentary.

Verse 20. This historical note referred to in the preceding verse will explain the *north* of this verse. *Where is the flock* is a prediction in question form. It means that the flock of God (the people of Judah) will be taken over by this army that is to come from the *north*, which is the Babylonian army.

Verse 21. *What wilt thou say* means, what defence or answer can you offer when you see the condition about to be described? The pronoun *he* refers to God who is going to punish *thee* (the people of Judah) by the hand of the Babylonians. *For thou hast taught them* (the Babylonians); not literally, but by their devotion to the same kind of gods the Babylonians worshiped, these heathen people were encouraged to take the reins over the people of God (and this by His decree). The result will be that the people of Judah will be thrown into the terrors of national sorrow compared with the tremors or pains of a woman approaching childbirth.

Verse 22. Judah might wonder why all this disgrace was brought upon her and will inquire about it. The answer is indicated by the latter part of this verse. All through the Bible idolatry is likened to adultery and the various factors connected with such a life. A harlot could be punished by having her

body exposed contrary to her desire and at a time when she did not wish to engage in her accustomed loose occupation. Such is the meaning of the threat to remove her skirts and expose her body to public scorn. This figurative prediction was to be fulfilled when Judah was taken into Babylon and there forcibly committed to a life of spiritual adultery (idolatry) with the nation that had practiced that iniquity from its beginning.

Verse 23. The unchangeable coloring on the surface of these living creatures is used to compare the fixed character of the nation of God's people as a whole. Take note it does not say that the coloring cannot be changed, but that the creatures cannot change it themselves; some outside power must do it if it is changed. Likewise the kingdom of Judah had become so settled in its iniquity that only by some outside force could it be changed. That force is God and he is going to bring about the change by sending his nation into Babylonian captivity.

Verse 24. They were to be *scattered* by being exiled into the land of the Babylonians. Such terms as *stubble* and *wind* are used to compare the lightness of the character of the kingdom of Judah as it pertained to the matter of faithfulness.

Verse 25. *Lot and portion* and *measures* are used as if the passage said, "This is what you are going to get from me." This is followed by the reason for the treatment to be imposed upon the people; it was because they had forgotten the Lord. That fact alone would have been bad enough had they merely sat down and done nothing except to dismiss God from their minds. But they replaced their acceptance of God's truth with the *falsehoods* of the corrupt prophets and priests.

Verse 26. *Discover thy skirts* is explained at verse 22 which see. The addition of *upon thy face* is to visualize the completeness with which the nakedness of this spiritual adulteress would be exposed.

Verse 27. *Neighings* is from MATSHALAH, which Strong defines as follows: "A whinnying (through impatience for battle or lust)." The mildest form of evil desire should be condemned, but this unfaithful wife was so eager for the sinful indulgence that she manifested her impatience for it by whinnying for her desired partner in lust. The same thought of increased extent in sin is expressed by the words

*lewdness of thy whoredoms.* The first is from ZAMMAH and Strong defines it, "A plan, especially a bad one." To commit adultery on the occasion of the temptation that comes up unexpectedly would be bad enough, but this unfaithful wife planned to commit the act. A corrupt woman would accept her evil partner anywhere in the open areas, whether it be in the fields or on the hills. Likewise the people of Judah committed idolatry in the various spots where they could find or build an altar to their false gods. The questions in the end of the verse are for the information of the reader especially. It is an implied reminder of the thing that has often been predicted as to the cure from their idolatry. That prediction is to the effect that the nation had to be sent into captivity to be cured of the great national iniquity.

#### JEREMIAH 14

Verse 1. The Lord was ready for the prophet to add some more to his book, and this time the subject was the dearth that was soon to come on the land. Such a form of punishment had been threatened many years before (Deut. 11: 17; 2 Chron. 7: 13). The people became guilty of the very sin for which that kind of punishment was predicted.

Verse 2. The gates were the places through which the citizens passed to and fro in the activities of their public life, also when the products of the ground were to be offered for use. But the dearth was to stop such activities and plunge the inhabitants into gloom. *They are black unto the ground* means the people will give up in despair and sit down on the ground clothed in mourning garments.

Verse 3. The country was even so short of water that the natural places of the precious liquid (*the water*), and the *pits* (man-made cisterns) were dry. When the children or servants were sent to such spots for water they returned with their vessels empty. This threw them into a state of confusion because they realized that the condition was from the Lord.

Verse 4. *Chapt* is from CHATHATH and Strong defines it, "A primitive root; properly to prostrate; hence to break down, either (literally) by violence, or (figuratively) by confusion and fear." The physical earth cannot have the efforts described in the definition, therefore it means the farmers had such feelings. So depressing was the situation that they covered

their heads which was a custom practiced by people in ancient times under conditions of great distress.

Verse 5. The *hind* or deer calved which means she gave birth to her young in the field. Then she was forced to forsake the calf, being unable to nurse it because of the lack of pasture brought on through the withholding of rain.

Verse 6. *Stand in the high places* denotes that these beasts were forced to the higher spots to get more air and even there they panted, *snuffed up the wind*, in their "shortness of breath." *Eyes did fail.* Hunger caused the eyes of these wild asses to become dulled so that they gazed into space.

Verse 7. The awful condition was to bring the people to a sense of shame and acknowledgement of their guilt. *Do thou* it is the prayer of the people for the Lord to do something for them. Not that the punishment was not just for they admitted their guilt. But they appealed to God that he would have mercy for *his name's sake*.

Verse 8. This verse is a pitiful plea to God as the only hope for Israel (used in its general meaning) to find relief. *Be as a stranger in the land.* A stranger is one who is only temporarily in a place and then soon gone. In the midst of the conditions brought on by the dearth, the people felt as if God had forsaken them and that he had been with them for a short time only, then left the land as a *wayfaring man* or a temporary sojourner would do.

Verse 9. It appeared to the people of Judah that the Lord was so *astounded* (astonished) at their conduct that he was like a man in a helpless daze. Yet their better judgment told them such was not the case and that He was really still present even though apparently they were being forsaken. With that understanding in their mind they made another pathetic plea that the Lord *leave us not*.

Verse 10. In answer to the plea and complaint of his people, the Lord reminded them of their evil conduct. They had not been "overtaken in a fault," but loved to wander or stray instead of directing their feet in the way which God had pointed out to them. Because of all this he decreed to *visit their sins* which had reference first to the dearth about to come and next to the captivity a little later.

Verse 11. *For their good* is said in the sense of the favor they desired, which was that they might be spared

the punishment that had been threatened to come upon them. There was no use for Jeremiah to pray for such a favor upon the nation for it was bound to be punished according to the prediction previously made. Let the reader now see the note at 2 Ki. 22: 17 in Vol. 2 of this Commentary.

Verse 12. Fasting was encouraged and burnt offerings were commanded under the law, yet now the Lord told Jeremiah that he would not accept these services. For an explanation of this remarkable decision of the Lord, see the note and comments at Isa. 1: 10 in Vol. 3 of this Commentary. *Sword, famine and pestilence.* These three things are grouped together in various places as a prediction of calamities to come upon the unfaithful nation. The fulfillment of the three may be seen by considering the history found in the Bible. In 2 Ki. 24: 2 is the history of the sword, and in 2 Ki. 25: 3 is the famine. And famine was generally followed by pestilence, so we see the fulfillment of the threefold prediction in at least one instance.

Verse 13. By *prophets* Jeremiah means the false prophets referred to in ch. 5: 31 and 8: 10, 11, who had tried to calm the people with their assurance of peace. Jeremiah was not denying the words of God, yet he seemed to be worried that there were prophets who would give such promises of peace when there had been so much prophecy to the contrary. What doubtless added to Jeremiah's confusion was the fact that these men prophesied in the name of God.

Verse 14. The Lord explained to Jeremiah that these men forged His name to their lying prophecies. People will often swallow a false doctrine if the speaker of it uses the name of the Lord in connection with it. But God had never even asked the men to go forth as prophets, much less authorized them to give the people any assurances of peace. *Vision and divination* are practically the same and mean some supernatural insight into the future. *Nought* is from a word that Strong defines "good for nothing," and the original for *deceit* is defined "fraud." The two words just defined form a very significant thought. It would be possible for a thing to be useless without doing any particular harm actively. But the teaching of these false prophets not only was of no good purpose; it was fraudulent which means it acted in a way to defraud the people of some of their rights.

Verse 15. Not only will these false prophets be exposed for their corrupt teaching, but they will perish by the very instrument they said would never come.

Verse 16. The false prophets will not be the only ones who will feel the wrath of God, but the people to whom the false teaching was given will likewise suffer. The justice of such dealing is explained by ch. 5: 31 which says "the people love to have it so." It is the same principle of responsibility that Jesus taught (Matt 15: 14) that "if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." Paul taught the same idea in Rom. 1: 32 regarding those who are pleased with the wrong doing of others.

Verse 17. God does not personally weep, and when such language is used that would indicate such an act, it is the prophet Jeremiah who is doing it. It was also true that Jeremiah was personally affected by the misfortunes of his people. He therefore was to tell them how he felt about their situation and that the Lord was supporting him in that attitude. *Virgin daughter* is an affectionate and figurative term often used to designate the people of God.

Verse 18. The pronoun *I* refers to Jeremiah in his mournful viewing of the sad state of his people that was soon to come upon them in fact, and was even then being foreshadowed by the mental confusion of many persons. The *prophet and priest* whom he mentions are the false prophet and unfaithful priest referred to in ch. 5: 31 and 8: 10. *Go about* is from the Hebrew word CACHAR which Strong defines, "A primitive root; to travel round (especially as a pedlar) intensively to palpitate." These corrupt leaders were dealing in the abominable business of idolatry, and Jeremiah slips in a prediction that they would soon be taken to a strange land, *a land that they know not*, and there they will be compelled to continue their sinful traffic.

Verse 19. In this verse Jeremiah is expressing the sad meditations of his people over their undone condition to be brought upon them soon. *Judah and Zion* are both named because the former is the kingdom and the latter is its capital. *We looked for peace* was their mistake because no one but the false prophets had assured them of such a favor (ch. 6: 13, 14; 8: 11).

Verse 20. This acknowledgement or sin was doubtless sincere, but it came



too late to save the nation from the captivity. It is noteworthy that they recognized their sin to have been against the Lord. This confession if followed by a consistent reformation in conduct, would win for them individually the favor of God even though they would have to take their share of the national downfall at the hand of Babylon.

Verse 21. This fervent plea for mercy was not made on the basis of their merit, but for the sake of the Lord's name. *Break not thy covenant* refers to the many promises of God to save them for His possession and never to forsake them entirely.

Verse 22. *Vanities of the Gentiles* (heathen) refers to the false gods whom they had been serving. This clause is in question form but it is really an acknowledgement that no power is possessed by these gods; not one of them could even cause it to rain. The same admission is intended by *can heavens give showers* but with a still more significant reason in their implied confession. Reference to *heavens* has in mind the planets which the heathen worshiped. These false gods are right in the vicinity from where the showers come, yet with such direct contact as an advantage they are powerless to produce results. No, these objects of worship did not make any of the things in the material creation, neither can they show any control over them. Acknowledgement is made that *our God* made them all and a promise is made to *wait upon* Him which means to rely and serve him.

### JEREMIAH 15

Verse 1. In the preceding chapter Jeremiah expressed his feelings for the sad fate overhanging his beloved nation. It is true the wording of it sounds as if the people were doing the pleading for themselves, and doubtless there were many of them who had made such complaints as we may read in the passages. However, the prophet actually was making his personal intercession on behalf of his countrymen. He may have thought the Lord would change his verdict in view of this faithful service he had always rendered, and because he was a recognized prophet; his importance would surely count for something in the case. God did not wish Jeremiah to think there was anything lacking in his life that was causing the divine decree to be so strongly reaffirmed. As evidence of this, the Lord named

Moses and Samuel and said that even they would not be able to change the decree. Moses was the first national lawgiver and Samuel was the first national prophet (Acts 3: 24; 13: 20). Surely Jeremiah could not expect to have more weight with the Lord than those great men. No, the time and condition had come when intercession was not in order. We should be careful not to form a wrong conclusion on this critical occasion. It was not on account of God's lack of mercy that he declared nothing could stop the invasion and captivity. He is a God of infinite knowledge and was able to see that the captivity was the only thing that would cure the people of the sin of idolatry. Knowing this awful truth it would have been an unmerciful thing to prevent such an experience from occurring just because a period of exile seemed to be a severe treatment. It would have been like refraining from performing some necessary surgery because the treatment would be painful. Therefore the Lord in actual kindness though with apparent harshness gave Jeremiah to understand that His decision was "final" and that the people must be let go out of his sight which meant out of his favor as a nation in their own land.

Verse 2. The preceding verse closed with the order for the people to be driven from the sight of the Lord. It would be natural for them to ask for some particulars as to their faith or the experiences about to be forced upon them; this verse is a reply to that inquiry. In a siege there will be various "chances" appearing before the besieged, and those chances may not seem the same to all of the besieged people. To some of them it will look as if death in any manner might as well be awaited. To others it might seem that a hand to hand fight with the sword could be preferred. Others might calmly be resigned to starvation as the siege is prolonged. While another group would decide that unresisting submission to the enemy would be the less painful way out. It is as if the Lord said: "These various ways are bound to come upon you, either one or the other on the various ones among you, so take your choice." In ch. 21: 9 is a more direct statement on this phase of the subject, explaining how the various items of this group of "chances" might be carried out. I insist that the reader see that verse in connection with the present passage.

Verse 3. Suppose that when the peo-

ple are told to take their choice of these "chances" some would choose death; how will that be accomplished? This verse is an answer to that inquiry. The various means of death had been threatened or predicted previously by the great man Moses (Lev. 26: 16-22; Deut. 28: 26).

Verse 4. After the siege with all these terrible effects has accomplished its purpose, the nation as a whole will be taken away *into all kingdoms*. Babylonia was the only universal government among the heathen at that time. However, *kingdoms* comes from a word that includes in its meaning a territory or land, and the various lands of the heathen people were at that time under the control of the Babylonians. God had a grievance against Judah that covered the entire period of her rule, but it was aggravated by the very wicked deeds of Manasseh the king in Jerusalem.

Verse 5. *Who shall have pity* is a declaration in question form that the Lord will not have pity on Jerusalem, but she must go through the punishment that has been threatened. *Who shall ask, etc.*, is a form of speech to indicate that Jerusalem will be abandoned to her fate with nobody to save her from the doom awaiting her.

Verse 6. Having forsaken the Lord and gone after strange gods, Jerusalem shall in turn be forsaken by Him. This may seem like "returning evil for evil," but it was to be the only remedy possible. (See the comments on verse 1.) *Repenting* is used in the sense of being longsuffering and easy with his people and giving them one opportunity after another to make amends for their sins but all to no good result. Now He is tired of it and is going to deal with them in a stern manner.

Verse 7. *Fan them with a fan* literally means to scatter them as one would scatter the chaff with a winnowing shovel. It is a prediction that the people will be dispersed by the enemy. God was going to suffer his people to be imposed upon by the Babylonians because they had refused to return to the right manner of life.

Verse 8. *Widows are increased* is a prediction that more married men would be slain by the enemy thus leaving more widows in the land. *Have brought* is past tense in form but is a prediction that God will bring a foreign nation upon his people, and that even mothers with young children will not be spared. *Spoiler at noonday*. The last word should be considered in

the light of the word *suddenly* later on in the verse. An army generally puts forth its greatest exertions when the heat of the day is past. But this ravager is going to be so intent on ruining the country that he will not wait but will attack without warning.

Verse 9. The pronoun *she* stands for the nation or kingdom of Judah. *Sun is gone down* is figurative and refers to the national daylight that ceased to shine. *While it was yet day* is also figurative and means that Judah's national sun was to go down prematurely. It will be like the natural sun going down when the timepiece said it was noon time. Not only will Judah lose control of her capital city of Jerusalem, thus suffering a national sunset, but many of her citizens will be destroyed by the enemy. (See the fulfillment of this in 2 Ki. 24 and 25.)

Verse 10. Again Jeremiah shows his personal attitude in the distressing situation and "takes it to heart" that his country is to be so oppressed. But it is also true that he personally had to suffer at the hand of his countrymen who did not like his plain teaching. He seems to regret that he had been born at such a time of strife. *Have neither lent on usury* is an allusion to the grasping leaders of this nation who had imposed upon the poor of the land to increase their own possessions unlawfully. Jeremiah had never done such a wrong to his people, yet he was being persecuted as if he were such a guilty man.

Verse 11. The Lord frequently follows his threatening of punishment with a prediction of a more favorable nature. This verse jumps over the period of the captivity to the time of the return to Palestine. There will then be a remnant of the nation that survived the destructive effects of the exile (Ezra 2: 64). When these remaining Jews go back to rebuild their city they will be *entreated* (treated) well. This favorable prediction was fulfilled in Ezra 1: 1-4.

Verse 12. Favorable and unfavorable predictions alternate in rapid succession through several verses. Through verse 10 the prediction of the captivity with its many painful experiences was made. Then verse 11 came in with an easement by predicting the kind treatment that Judah was to receive at the hand of the heathen. Now the prophet must resume the gloomy picture of the fate of this countrymen. The first *iron* refers to Babylon that was to come from the north. The verse

is in question form but the meaning is that Judah is not a strong enough piece of iron to break the greater and stronger piece to roll down from the north. For the explanation of this word see the historical quotation at Isa. 14: 31 in Vol. 3 of this Commentary.

Verse 13. This verse refers to a particular feature of the calamity to come upon the nation and that was the loss of their personal property. The fulfillment of it is recorded in 2 Ki. 24: 13. *Without price* means that the Babylonians will take this property but will not pay for it.

Verse 14. After being stripped of their valuables, the people of Judah will be taken away into captivity. *Land thou knowest not* means that the land to which they were to be taken was one they had never seen and of which they knew nothing by personal contact. This *fire* is figurative and means the anger of the Lord over the unfaithfulness of his people and their corrupt practices with the idolaters.

Verse 15. This verse through the 18th should be marked into a bracket and given the title "Jeremiah's complaint." The prophet has taken a deep personal interest in the whole matter of his country's undone condition. He has been persecuted by the wicked citizens, especially the leaders, and this bracket expresses his personal plea for God's favor. He protests that his sufferings have been thrust upon him because of his faithfulness to the Lord and the divine law. We shall soon learn that God did not reject the claims of the prophet nor deny the requests that he made.

Verse 16. *Words were found . . . did eat them* is Jeremiah's way of saying he had desired the word of the Lord and when they were offered to him he consumed them as food. These professions of the prophet as to his interest in the divine law were true. He gives a logical reason for his attitude toward the Holy Word, that he was wearing the name of its Author. Surely, then, if one calls himself by the name of such an important Being, he should be interested in all of the instruction that would come from such a source for his benefit.

Verse 17. *Sit not . . . nor rejoiced* is a significant remark. A person may be guilty of a wrong without being active in it. Paul taught that God will judge those who are pleased with the evil conduct of others (Rom. 1: 32). Jeremiah would rather sit alone, be

without any company, than be associated with evildoers.

Verse 18. *Pain and wound* refers to the sorrow and humiliation that the prophet had to suffer on account of his wicked countrymen. He was in a perpetual strain because they would not give him any relief from their persecution. It was in that sense that he declared his *wound* (bitter persecution) to be incurable. The word *liar* seems very harsh to us and we know that Jeremiah did not use it as an accusation against the Lord. However, certain characters may be used for comparison at some points without extending the likeness to all the points in general. The comparison in the mind of Jeremiah was in the fact that a liar would disappoint anyone who would rely upon him. *Wilt thou be*, etc., is merely Jeremiah's way of beseeching the Lord to have mercy upon him and not let him be disappointed. We are sure this was the point the prophet was making because of the comparison at the end of the verse. *Waters* need not be thought of as anything objectionable unless they failed to continue, and in that case they would be the cause of disappointment as would the words of a liar.

Verse 19. The applications of this verse are somewhat complicated and we should study them carefully. Jeremiah has not been charged with any unfaithfulness, therefore the exhortation *if thou return* could not mean him personally. Yet the phrase is in the second person grammatically because the prophet not only had made earnest pleas for personal favors, but had spoken anxiously on behalf of his beloved countrymen. So we are logically required to interpret the passage in a way to include these truths; I would word it as follows: "If thou (as a representative of the nation) return (repent), then will I bring thee again and thou shalt stand before me (shalt be reinstated in my favor)." The same view should be taken of the words immediately following through the word *mouth*. But this exhortation to reformation with promise of favor again reminds us of the apparent contradiction of which mention has been made a number of times. That subject is explained by the note offered at 2 Ki. 22: 17 in Vol. 2 of this Commentary. The last clause of the verse changes the implications in its wording. Here the pronoun *thee* means Jeremiah personally because he was righteous and a true example of living for the people to imitate and a true teacher to heed.

Thus the Lord notifies him that *them*, the people, should return unto him in the sense of heeding his teaching. But he must not let his personal interest in and love for his people influence him to *return unto them* or fall in with them in their evil ways.

Verses 20, 21. *Fenced brasen wall* is a figure meaning a situation of strong protection. The paragraph is an assurance to Jeremiah that God would not "let him down." His unrighteous countrymen would persecute him and if possible would kill him. But God promises not to let his enemies succeed in their designs to destroy him. We shall see the whole subject demonstrated near the close of the book. There seems to be a popular notion in the minds of mankind that if one does not like the sound of some unpleasant truth, he can prevent the predicted outcome of it by destroying the man who utters the unwelcome truth. That was the principle that caused the Jews to kill the Saviour of the world and that also killed millions of His followers.

### JEREMIAH 16

Verse 1. This verse announces that the Lord has another inspired installment to give the prophet for his book.

Verse 2. *This place* means Anathoth, the city near Jerusalem where many of the prophets resided. The Lord was looking after the social or family welfare of Jeremiah and hence told him not to start his married life in that place.

Verse 3. This verse is on the same subject as the preceding, and goes into more details as to who would be affected were the prophet to start a family in the surroundings that existed there at that time.

Verse 4. Misfortunes were to be brought upon the people of Judah in general because of the iniquity of idolatry that had been committed for many years. The community of Anathoth, however, had especially incurred the displeasure of the Lord because of the wicked persecution that had been imposed upon Jeremiah in their hatred for his teaching. (See ch. 11: 21-23.) The experiences described in this verse might be extended to Jeremiah's family were he to produce one in that community.

Verse 5. The natural temperament of the prophet would prompt him to sympathize with these evil people of Anathoth, notwithstanding they deserved all of the punishment threat-

ened against them. Yet he was forbidden by the Lord to give way to this sentiment of pity. There is something significant in the reason assigned by the Lord why Jeremiah should not manifest any pity for these evil persons. It is expressed in the words *for I have taken away*, etc. In other words, Jeremiah should not be any more lenient or sympathetic toward evildoers than the Lord is. Today we may hear it said that even though a man may turn from the right way and take up with some new doctrine, yet we should not forget the good he has done. But the Bible teaches that God will forget it if the man ceases to be true to the former life of faithfulness. (See Ezk. 18: 24.)

Verse 6. The strange conduct mentioned in this verse referred to the performances that people practiced in ancient times on occasions of grief and anxiety. The reference to that subject as it is here was a prediction that not only would the people of that community be punished severely, but God would see to it that they would not even have the satisfaction of the sympathy of their friends.

Verse 7. This verse is on the same subject as the preceding one, giving a few more details of the bitter experiences that were in store for the wicked citizens of Anathoth who had been so keen in their persecution of Jeremiah.

Verse 8. Some of the people of Anathoth will be disposed to ignore all of the warnings uttered in their ears and will go on in their selfish enjoyments as long as they can. The prophet was to stay away from them even at the times of such mirth because they were unworthy of his company.

Verse 9. Jeremiah began to write near the end of the kingdom of Judah and many of the things predicted were about due when this chapter was written; such is the significance of the words *in your eyes and in your days*. The Lord would not wish to shut off all mirth while his righteous prophet was enjoying it, hence the instructions of the preceding verse.

Verse 10. It is a trait of human nature to profess innocence even when one's guilt is evident. But the denial is not always made directly; it is often done in a surprised attitude as if the subject were new. The Lord knew these people would take that turn when Jeremiah informed them of the message and prediction. He wished the prophet to be prepared for their action and hence the present verse.



Verse 11. This verse recounts the background of the nation's corruption. The *fathers* refers to the earlier citizens of the kingdom. They were not the first ones of the Jews who took up the sins of the heathen, for the book of Judges is full of that subject, and that was before there was any kingdom of Judah. But at the time when Jeremiah was writing it was the national fate that was being predicted, so the term *fathers* need not go back any farther than the history of the kingdom.

Verse 12. The question arises as to why this generation should be penalized for the sins of their fathers. They were not, but it was because they had *done worse than their fathers*. Then why mention the sins of their fathers if it was to be for their own conduct they would receive the punishment? It was because they had the example of their fathers with all of its results to teach them the danger of such a life. The Lord always expects his servants to profit by the example, either good or bad, that is left for their observation. Paul very aptly teaches this in 1 Cor. 10: 11.

Verse 13. This verse is one of the direct predictions of the captivity. *Land that ye know not* was said because none of these people had ever been in the land of Babylon. *Serve other gods* was literally fulfilled because the nation as a whole was not suffered to cease its idolatrous practices even after being taken into Babylon. See the note on this subject at 2 Ki. 22: 17 in Vol. 2 of this Commentary.

Verse 14. It is a usual thing in literature or oral conversation to identify certain facts by their relation to historical dates. For instance, for many years people could be heard to say that such and such an event happened before the Civil War. Later the saying was changed and it would be dated by the World War. Likewise it was a long-standing saying to identify the Lord by his connection with the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. This was because it was the most important event that had taken place with the descendants of Abraham since their origin. This verse announces that a change will be made in the practice and another event will be referred to.

Verse 15. This verse gives the event for the change indicated in the preceding verse. The release of the people of God from the Babylonian captivity was to be such an important event that it

would amount to an epoch in their history. Because of that importance it is here predicted that informed persons will identify the Lord by his connection with the event. Of course in making such a prediction it includes that of the return at the end of the captivity. The Biblical account of its fulfillment may be seen in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The historical account was cited in connection with comments on Isa. 14: 1 in Vol. 3 of this Commentary. Reference to the *north* is explained at Isa. 14: 31 in the same volume referred to above.

Verse 16. The unchronological style of the prophetic books of the Bible has been mentioned a number of times, and the matter should be kept in mind to avoid confusion in the studies. The preceding verse predicts the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity. Those conditions of national corruption were so extreme that the Lord decreed the capture and enslavement of his people by a foreign foe or foes which is the subject of this verse. The capture of the people is predicted in figurative language, the *fishers* and *hunters* referring to the Babylonian Empire and its able military men. The illustration is very appropriate because a practical fisherman or hunter does not merely wish for a place to fish or hunt, but he will search for such a spot. Likewise the army of Babylon was to make a "clean sweep" of the affair and see that none of the people of Judah would be missed by the dragnet. (See 2 Ki. 24: 10-16; 25: 4-12.)

Verse 17. *Mine eyes are upon* means the Lord was seeing everything his people were doing, not that he was looking with approval as the expression sometimes means.

Verse 18. The original word for *first* is defined in the lexicon as referring to "place" or "rank" as well as to time. The thought is that God regarded the punishing of his unfaithful people as of primary importance. *Carcasses* is from NEHELAH and Strong says its figurative meaning is "an idol." The verse charges the people with idolatry that is so extensive that the whole land had become filled with the *detestable things*.

Verse 19. The prophet is speaking of and for the people by making an acknowledgment and prediction. The acknowledgment is to the effect that the nation had depended upon falsehoods which we understand were offered chiefly by the unfaithful priests and prophets. The prediction is to be

twofold in its fulfillment. The first was when the *Gentiles* (heathen nations) came to look with favor upon the Jews after they had returned to their own land, entirely cured of their idolatry (books of Ezra and Nehemiah). The second is also predicted in Isa. 2: 2, 3, and the fulfillment may be read in Acts 2: 41; 4: 4; 5: 14; 12: 24.

Verse 20. This verse is an accusation that Judah had adopted some gods to worship that did not amount to anything.

Verse 21. *This once* means that once for all the people of Judah will be convinced that one Being only has the right to be called *Lord* (ruler). The verse also agrees with the truth that God's people never again practiced idolatry after the captivity. See the historical confirmation of this at Isa. 1: 25 in Vol. 3 of this Commentary. The Jewish nation has done many unwise things and it did the wickedest of deeds in killing the Messiah, but it never backslid into idolatry and to this very day they as a people are strict believers in the idea of only one true God.

### JEREMIAH 17

Verse 1. The writing instruments are used figuratively to illustrate the permanency of the record. It is another form of declaring that nothing in the power or plans of man could erase the guilt of the national sin. God only is able to alter the situation, which he is going to do by means of the captivity. *Horns of your altars* is a reference to the altars erected for the worship of the false gods. *Graven upon the heart* is literal in the sense that the love of idolatry was imbedded in their minds.

Verse 2. The present generation (*their children*) followed in the footsteps of the fathers and erected their idols and altars everywhere.

Verse 3. *Mountain* refers to Jerusalem and the *field* is the land of Judah of which Jerusalem was the capital. The verse is another prediction of the invasion by the Babylonians and their taking of the goods of the land. (See 2 Ki. 24: 13; 25: 13-17.)

Verse 4. *Discontinue from thine heritage* denotes that Judah was to lose her possession of the land that she had inherited from the forefathers. God had given this land to the fathers and their descendants on condition that they continue faithful.

Instead of remembering with gratitude the God who created them as a nation, the people of Judah went off after strange gods and served them. Now as a punishment God decreed to send them into a strange land, one that had always worshiped these false gods, and there they should serve these foreign enemies and continue their idolatrous practices. *Anger burn for ever*. The primary meaning of the last two words is "age lasting." In principle it means to the end of the particular age or epoch of which a declaration is being made. Its application here is that God's anger was so hot because of the unfaithfulness of his people that he would not cease to burn until he had brought that epoch to a close by the captivity.

Verse 5. The great sin of Judah was the worship of idols while this verse indicates that devotions to men was the trouble. There is no conflict of thought on the subject, for it was Judah's faith in her unfaithful teachers that led her into idolatry. (See ch. 5: 31.) All of this goes along with the general history of mankind on the subject of leadership. It has been divinely declared and humanly demonstrated that when men turn from God and listen to men they always get into trouble. Jesus taught this truth in many of his conversations but I will cite only two of them now, and they are in Matt. 15: 9 and verse 14 of that same chapter.

Verse 6. *Heath* is from ARAR, which Strong defines, "A juniper tree (from its nudity of situation)." Smith's Bible Dictionary says it "was some species of juniper, probably the savin, a dwarf stunted juniper which grows in the most sterile parts of the desert." Funk and Wagnalls Standard Bible Dictionary says the following: "There is no heath in Palestine or in the deserts near by. The plant referred to in Jer. 17: 6, 48: 6 is thought to be a variety of juniper, with small scale-like leaves close to the stem, and consequently called ARAR ('naked')." From all this data we may gather two distinct characteristics of the heath in the desert; nakedness and isolation. That makes the illustration especially appropriate, for Judah was destined to experience both. She was stripped of her authority and made bare of her belongings which answers to the characteristic of nudity. And she was exiled into a strange land with nothing but heathen religious atmosphere around

her which corresponds with the description of a desert or a state of isolation. The same thought is pictured in Isa. 1: 8 where God's people are likened to a lodge in a garden of cucumbers.

Verse 7. *Blessed* means happy and the declaration is not merely a decree of the Lord. The logic of it was already apparent in the experiences of that generation. The people of Judah had deserted the Lord for the sake of unfaithful prophets and priests and the result was the unhappy state they were in.

Verse 8. The first clause is the same in thought as Psa. 1: 3, and the comparison implies that as a tree demands constant moisture, so the happiness of man requires a never failing source of strength. The Lord will never fail to be that source to those who put their trust in Him. All of this is opposite of the result of trusting in false gods or deceptive leaders which the nation had been doing for years.

Verse 9. *Heart* is from LEB and in the King James Version it has been rendered by consent 1 time, heart 494, midst 12, mind 11, understanding 20, wisdom 6. Strong defines the word, "The heart; also used (figuratively) very widely for the feelings, the will and even the intellect; likewise for the center of anything." *Is deceitful* does not mean that the intellect of man is necessarily evil, for that would amount to the false doctrine of "inherited sin." But since the mind is invisible to the public it makes it possible for a wicked man to deceive others.

Verse 10. The Lord only can read the mind of man and he will expose that of an unrighteous one in due season. The leaders in Judah had misled the people for many years, but the reckoning was about to come through the exile under the Babylonians.

Verse 11. This is a very confusing translation and clouds the very thought the Lord wished to convey through the prophet. If a bird would be found that would sit on eggs and yet not hatch them, it would be no illustration of man taking possession of riches that another had produced. *Sitteth* is from DAGAR and Strong defines it "A primitive root; to brood over eggs or young." *Hatcheth* is from YALAD and the part of Strong's definition that applies here is, "A

primitive root; to bear young; causatively, to beget." This makes the language intelligible and gives us a clear illustration. A partridge takes possession of young birds which had not been produced either by her laying the eggs or by hatching the ones from which the young had come. Such a circumstance does compare with a man taking to himself the goods that have been produced by another. The leaders in Judah had done that very thing (Isa. 58: 3-7; 3: 13-15; 5: 23), and the Lord was going to bring his judgment against them.

Verse 12. From this through verse 18 should be marked as a bracket and given the title, "Prayer and complaint of Jeremiah." We should constantly keep in mind that an inspired prophet is speaking for and of the people, as well as being considered a spokesman for God. Another thing that plays an important part in this book is Jeremiah's personal interest and sympathy for the people. Hence, when he is writing as if he were making a personal plea for mercy or sympathy, he may be expressing the sentiments of the people as a whole, or at least what he considers should be their sentiments, at the same time wording it in the way he naturally would have done from his personal feelings even had he not been inspired. This verse is a recognition of the greatness of the headquarters that the Lord had provided for his people. Had they always taken that view of the subject and acted accordingly, they would never have gone off after strange gods.

Verse 13. This verse continues the acknowledgement of God's authority and importance. *Shall be written* means that all who forsake God will make a record of shame that will be known by the people of the earth.

Verse 14. The general principles revealed in this verse could be affirmed at any time and from any standpoint. The "healing" that had been done by the false leaders (ch. 6: 13, 14) was a deception, and that which the Lord performs is true. Individuals of the country who proved worthy were promised restored health (forgiveness of sins) upon repentance. The nation also was promised a cure by the only treatment that would answer the needs of the case which was the Babylonian captivity.

Verse 15. This verse has reference to the persecutions imposed on Jere-

miah by his unworthy countrymen. They did not like his teaching because it condemned their wicked lives. As a screen for their unruly attitude they pretended not to recognize the word of God in the mouth of the prophet and hypocritically asked, *where is the word of the Lord?*

Verse 16. Jeremiah insists before God that he was not guilty of their insinuations, but declares he had been a faithful *pastor* (spiritual feeder) of the people. *Not desired the woeful day* indicates he was not responsible for the day of woe about to come upon the country. He earnestly professes that what he had spoken to the people was the right teaching according to the will of the Lord.

Verse 17. Jeremiah believed the Lord would protect him from the terror of his enemies. His hope was in God and this verse is a prayer based upon that hope.

Verse 18. This verse continues the prophet's prayer for help against his persecuting townsmen. The closing words of the verse seem to be a selfish and cruel wish against the enemies of Jeremiah and we might wonder why such a good man would express such feelings. Again we should remember that he is an inspired prophet and many of the things which sound like his harsh wishes are really predictions that such things are to occur and that by the divine decree.

Verse 19. The most important cities were walled as a protection against enemies, and hence persons entering or passing from them would need to go through the gates. That would make an advantage for one who wished to meet the citizens with some kind of a message, and the prophet was told to go to the gate for that purpose.

Verse 20. The people in general were to be addressed, but the kings were referred to especially because a military situation was about to take place and the diplomatic exchanges would be made through them. Judah was the country or kingdom and Jerusalem was the capital hence the mention of the two. The word of the Lord was to be delivered to these inhabitants through the prophets, and they were to listen to its utterance.

Verse 21. The national corruption of the Jews was the worship of idols. When man takes up a religion that is contrary to that of the Lord he is sure to neglect some of the duties

that belong to the service of God. Hence when the Jews took up the practice of idolatry they began to neglect their duties to God, and one of them was that of observing the rest which they were commanded to give the land. They continued their disregard for that ordinance until they had defrauded the land out of 70 such years of rest. That was why the Lord decreed that they should be in captivity for that many years so that the land could "catch up" on its years of rest. It would not be surprising if a nation violated such an ordinance that involved whole years of rest, that other ordinances would likewise be treated with lightness such as regards secular interests. All the above considerations will explain this and the next verse. The present one referred especially to imports into the city on the sabbath.

Verse 22. This verse would have special reference to going out with one's possessions for the purpose of trading with others. The prophet was to instruct the people not to deal in such transactions but to give the Sabbath its deserved rest.

Verse 23. This verse describes the record of the Jewish people for most of the years of their residence in Palestine, and it shows the reaction they displayed against the teaching of Jeremiah concerning their unrighteous conduct.

Verse 24. We have clearly understood that at the time Jeremiah was writing this the Babylonian captivity was about due. No only so, but the Lord had decreed many times that nothing that any man could do would save the nation from the captivity. Yet several verses seem to hold out the promise that it could be done by the repentance of the people. The apparent contradiction can be explained from two different standpoints. These verses show what could have prevented the national downfall which would have been the conduct described in this and the verses through the end of the chapter. In that view of the case it will help clarify the subject to make the words *if ye diligently hearken* read as if they said, "if ye had hearkened." Another phase of the explanation is to distinguish between the nation as a whole and certain individuals in it. See the note for an explanation of this matter at 2 Ki. 22: 17 in Vol. 2 of this Commentary. Among the things they would have done to re-



tain the Lord's favor was the observance of the sabbath law both as to the land and the weekly activities.

Verse 25. Had Judah been true to God from the beginning the throne in Jerusalem would have continued to have kings sitting upon it who would have been respected, and whose rulership would have been attended by men of dignity. *City shall remain forever.* The last two words mean "age lasting." Had the nation been faithful its capital would have remained to the end of the age, or even as long as the earth lasted.

Verse 26. The political life of the nation would have been continued, also the religious activities that centered in Jerusalem would have been undisturbed as long as that religious age (or dispensation) continued to be in force. And even after the practice named ceased to be recognized by the Lord as of religious use (Rom. 10: 44), they could have continued as part of the national customs.

Verse 27. *If ye will not hearken* is to be understood as if it said, "since ye did not hearken." As a penalty for this violation of the law of God they were to have their city destroyed by fire and themselves be sent away into captivity. *Shall not be quenched* was fulfilled both literally and figuratively. The capital was actually destroyed by fire (2 Ki. 25: 9, 10), and the fire of God's anger was not quenched until the captivity was accomplished.

### JEREMIAH 18

Verse 1. Here is another revelation from the Lord to become a part of Jeremiah's book. The verses from this through 10 should be grouped as a bracket and the general subject is "responsibility," showing especially that God's dealings with man are based upon his conduct, and not on some arbitrary decree that was formed before man was created. The several verses of the bracket will be commented upon in their order.

Verse 2. Jeremiah does not know what lesson the Lord has in store for him because nothing had ever been said before about a potter. He was to get the message while seeing the potter at work, and thus he would receive inspiration through both eyes and ears in the same connection.

Verse 3. *The wheels* is a part of a potter's machine and may be likened to the turntable of a phonograph. A lump of clay is placed on this platform

which is revolving. The potter works this clay by pressing it between the fingers of both hands until it is of the shape and thickness desired. As the platform is revolving, the potter needs to work at one spot in the circle only, the circular motion having the effect of making the shape and thickness of the vessel uniform throughout its entire circuit.

Verse 4. Some kinds of vessels would be more difficult to make due to the particular fineness of their shape, and this because of the more important use that is intended to be made of them. Because of these facts the better vessels would require clay of better quality. The potter thought the lump would be good enough to form into one of the better vessels and was trying to do so. But the clay would not stand up to the requirements and fell apart in the workman's hands, so he had to be content with making it into a coarser kind.

Verse 5. Having let the prophet watch this procedure, God was ready to tell him the lesson he was to draw from the circumstance.

Verse 6. This illustration of the potter and clay has been greatly misused by some religious teachers. It has been made to teach that man (the clay) is helpless in the hands of the potter (the Lord). That his future state and usefulness is altogether in the hands of God, and whether he turns out to be a desirable character or the other kind, is subject to the divine decree and man has nothing to do in the matter. But such a theory is contrary to the evident facts of the performance the prophet saw. It is true this verse says man is as clay in the potter's hands and also that He can do with him as the potter did the clay. But the theory ignores the fact that he first tried to make a better vessel out of the clay, and did not decide to make the lesser one until the clay failed to meet the requirements of the better. But according to the doctrine of "predestination," the potter had decided to make this particular lump of clay into a coarse vessel before he even tried to make the other. The theory even requires that the clay had been destined for this less desirable use before it was dug out of the ground, for the predestinarians teach that God decreed "from all eternity" who should be saved and who lost. This would be before the man was born and before he had been tried and given a chance to be made into the better vessel.

Verse 7. *At what instant* is used in the sense that "in every instance that I speak," etc. The speaking means the threatening or predictions that may be uttered against a nation because of its sinful practices.

Verse 8. This verse states the principle on which God deals with nations and individuals, but "circumstances alter cases" in this as well as in other matters. Judah had been practicing idolatry for many years and was still guilty at the time Jeremiah was writing. Some great reformers such as Hezekiah and Josiah saw the evil and tried to correct it. There were also other unofficial men who were righteous and would have removed the abomination had they been able. But the iniquity was so general and had become so deep-seated that it was too late for even the good work of these reformers to get it corrected. On this account the Lord said that he would carry out his decree for the captivity as the only means of saving the nation. The reader should see the explanatory note in connection with the comments on 2 Ki. 22: 17 in Vol. 2 of this COMMENTARY.

Verse 9. *At what instant* has the same sense as in verse 7. God often made favorable promises and predictions concerning nations as well as individuals, but they were made subject to certain conditions or restrictions.

Verse 10. *I will repent*, both here and in verse 8, means the Lord will change his mind concerning what he had said he would do for the nation. The fundamental meaning of repentance is "change," whether done by man or the Lord. When man repents he changes his will, and when God repents he wills a change—a change in his plans—due to the changed conditions surrounding the nation or persons involved.

Verse 11. The preceding verses of the chapter describe a special communication between God and Jeremiah in which some very important principles of divine dealing were set out before the prophet. This verse instructs him to deliver the message to the people. Jerusalem was the capital of Judah and hence they are named together frequently as in this passage. *Frame evil* is used in the sense of something unpleasant but not in the sense of wrong as the word *evil* usually means. *Return ye* is another instance of exhortation for reformation of life and calls for the distinction between the nation as a whole and certain individuals in it.

Verse 12. *There is no hope* was the way the people had of saying it was useless for the Lord to admonish them for they were determined to do as they pleased. Not only at the time of Jeremiah did they show that kind of a spirit, but it had been that way all through their history. That was why God decreed to use the only means that would bring them into a right mind regarding Him, which was to be the captivity.

Verse 13. *Virgin of Israel* is a figurative way of designating the people of God because they were supposed to be pure in their religious conduct. However, they were not and God is going to shame them by comparing them to the nations that did not have half the advantages that the Lord's people had.

Verse 14. Those advantages are compared with the pure snow on the mountains of Lebanon and the crystal waters that come from it. No man would reject such blessings for the sake of some polluted stream in another place.

Verse 15. Yet God's people had done that which was as bad or worse than such foolish conduct as described in the preceding verse. They had forsaken the true God and turned to *vanity* (false gods) and offered service to them. The result of such perversion was a stumbling from the pathway of truth and staggering along in a way not cast up or improved properly for traveling upon.

Verse 16. *To make their land desolate* does not mean these people committed idolatry for that purpose. But it is the Lord's decision that their course of conduct would cause him to thrust the land into such a condition. The country was to be so ruined that all who saw it would *wag their heads* which means to toss the head in scorn.

Verse 17. *East wind* is referred to a number of times in the Bible as something especially unpleasant or destructive. Smith's Bible Dictionary says the following on the subject: "The east wind crosses the sandy wastes of Arabia Deserta before reaching Palestine, and was hence termed 'the wind of the wilderness.' Job 1: 19; Jer. 13: 24. It blows with violence, and is hence supposed to be used generally for any violent wind. Job 27: 21; 38: 24; Ps. 48: 7; Isa. 27: 8; Ezk. 27: 26." Funk and Wagnalls Standard Bible Dictionary says of it: "The hot, dry wind from the desert, that fills the air with dust and is exceedingly unpleasant for man and often fatal to

young vegetation. It blows generally in the spring. It is frequently referred to in the Old Testament." The figurative east wind was to consist of the Babylonian army that was to invade the country with such devastating results. *Shew them the back* means that when the enemy came against the people it would be useless for them to appeal to God, for he would turn his back upon them.

Verse 18. Physical persecution has long been a weapon of men who do not like the teaching that condemns their sinful practices. That kind of persecution was imposed on Jeremiah at times, but in the present instance they proposed attacking him with their tongues by devising some slander against him. Their grievance was his charge that the priests and other teachers such as the wise men and prophets were failing in their duty of delivering counsel according to the law. They agreed among themselves to deny Jeremiah's accusation and to maintain that the prophets would continue to deliver the proper teaching contrary to Jeremiah's predictions.

Verse 19. The attitude of the people worried Jeremiah so that he came to the Lord with a prayer for help.

Verse 20. The prophet did not complain of any physical persecution in this case, but that they had digged a pit for his *soul*. This was a reference to the persecution the enemies had devised of slandering him concerning his teaching. In doing so Jeremiah charged that they were recompensing to him *evil* for the *good* he had done in proclaiming to them the word of the Lord.

Verse 21. This verse is another of the passages that seem to show a cruel spirit in Jeremiah. But we should keep in mind that he was a true prophet of God and that such a wish as was here expressed was really an inspired prediction that such experiences were destined to come upon that wicked generation. Jeremiah was naturally a tender-hearted man and personally would not be inclined to be harsh. Yet he was always a faithful prophet and was always obedient when called upon to make severe predictions in spite of his personal feelings of pity.

Verse 22. This prediction was to be literally fulfilled when the *troop* (the Babylonian army) came against the city of Jerusalem. When the people observed the siege that was set up against them they would cry out in dismay.

Verse 23. Again let the reader consider the remarks on verse 21 as he observes the severe language of this. *Forgive not their iniquity* is the same decree in another form that has been discussed frequently in this work. The nation as a whole had gone too far in its corruption to be let off with anything less than the captivity. It was expressed as a personal prayer of Jeremiah but was really a prediction made through him, and it was to be fulfilled by the siege and captivity about to take place.

## JEREMIAH 19

Verse 1. In various instances God has caused his inspired men to go through a performance that may be called "acting." The exact reason for it has not been told us, but I have offered comments and given reference to various cases in 1 Ki. 20: 35, Vol. 2 of this COMMENTARY. One of those instances of acting is in the present verse with others in the chapter. An earthenware bottle was chosen because when it is broken it cannot be repaired as might a vessel made of skins of animals. *The ancients* means the older persons among the people and the prophets. These were to represent the nation in the performance that was to be carried out in their sight.

Verse 2. The scene of the acting was to be the *valley of the son of Hinnom*, a place near the city of Jerusalem. This spot was chosen because it was the place where some of the most abominable practices of idolatry had been committed by the people.

Verse 3. When Jeremiah and his selected group reached the place he was to make the speech to them that follows. *I will bring evil upon this place, the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle.* The last word is from an original that literally means to vibrate or rattle. However, the word is used figuratively and means the report of what is about to happen to this place of idolatry will overwhelm with astonishment all who hear about it.

Verse 4. *Estranged this place* has reference to the misuse that was made of it. The place had formerly been used as disposal plant or incinerator for the waste materials of Jerusalem. Such a use was right and could truly be regarded as a service pleasing to the Lord since he requires that man be cleanly and careful about that which pertains to health. But in using it for the practices of idolatry they *estranged* or took it away from the service that

God had sanctioned. *Filled with blood of innocents* was literally true for among the fearful practices of idolatry was that of burning their children as sacrifices. (See Lev. 18: 21; 2 Ki. 16: 3; 17: 31.)

Verse 5. The mere fact of having an altar on a high place would not be sinful for such a practice was done by the servants of God and without any rebuke for it (Gen. 12: 8; Judges 6: 25; 1 Sam. 7: 10; 13: 9; 1 Chr. 21: 26; 1 Ki. 18: 30). But God knew what his people would meet with when they got to the promised land, so he had it put into the law of Moses that such places for worship should not be arranged by them. Furthermore, they were to destroy all such places that had been erected by the heathen before them. Baal was one of the heathen gods of the imaginary class, and the Jews became worshipers of him even to the sacrificing of their children. The last lines of this verse simply means that such foolish practices were never a subject in the mind of God even in the least favorable sense.

Verse 6. *Tophet* was a spot in the famous valley of Hinnom near Jerusalem. This place had been used as a disposal plant for the waste materials of the city and for that reason there were fires kept burning continually. The idolatrous worshipers got to using the place for their abominable practices until Josiah defiled it in his great reformatory work (2 Ki. 23: 10). The people of Judah went so far as to use their children as sacrifices to the false gods that were represented in the valley. *No more be called Tophet* does not mean the name will be forgotten, but the place will not be referred to merely as one that was known by such a name. But the great work of the Lord in destroying the enemies of righteousness who assembled in that place will be so outstanding it will be remembered because of such a great slaughter.

Verse 7. The priests and false prophets of Judah had given forth much *counsel* or instruction to the people that promised them peace and safety from their enemies. God said he would *make void that counsel* which means he would overthrow all their plans. The destruction of life and desecration of human bodies was to be caused by the Lord through the hand of the Babylonians.

Verse 8. Jerusalem was to be made so desolate and ruined that its sight would cause people to *hiss* or express

scorn over it. Such a calamity was brought upon it and the record of it may be seen in 2 Ki. 25: 9-17.

Verse 9. It is hard to think that even a siege could produce such a state as predicted here, in which parents actually made food of their children's bodies. But such a thing had taken place before (2 Ki. 6: 29), and it should be accepted as an inspired prediction that the horrible deed would happen again.

Verse 10. Having made this speech reported in the hearing of his group, Jeremiah was to break the bottle in their sight. They would know that an earthen vessel thus shattered could not be repaired (at least by man) and thus that it was not to be used again; that its former status was over for good.

Verse 11. The prophet was then to interpret the whole performance to his group. The Lord further instructed Jeremiah to see that *they* (the men with him) would bury the pieces right there in the valley where so much of the idolatry had been committed.

Verse 12. Jeremiah was to give them further interpretation by predicting that Jerusalem would be treated in the same manner as was Tophet.

Verse 13. *Tophet* was not the only place where idolatrous worship was practiced. The houses had flat roofs and the people went up there for their services because of the convenience. Also, since they wished to offer devotions to the *host of heaven* (the planets) they would have unobstructed view of these false gods, hence their houses were to receive the same fate as Tophet. A *drink offering* was the offering of something that would have been used for drink by man and hence an article of value.

Verse 14. The preceding program was carried out in the valley of Hinnom near Jerusalem, and in the presence of the group of men that had been especially chosen to represent the nation. Jeremiah then came back into the city to speak to the people in general. He did this speaking in the *court of the Lord's house* because that was the part of the building where the common citizen was permitted to enter.

Verse 15. At the place designated in the preceding verse the prophet repeated the prediction he had uttered in the valley. *Hardened their necks* is a figure of speech, meaning they became stubborn and refused to listen to the words of the Lord. This characteristic was prominent all through the history of that nation.



## JEREMIAH 20

Verse 1. All material buildings require the services of someone or more to oversee them, who might be classed as a janitor of the higher class. Having such a work it is clear as to how this chief overseer, Pashur, overheard the remarks of Jeremiah.

Verse 2. A familiar argument (?) of men who cannot answer an unpleasant exposure of their sins in old times was a resort to physical violence. Pashur having a sort of public office took undue advantage of it and persecuted Jeremiah. He first smote him then put him into the *stocks*. This was an instrument of torture used in ancient times, made in various ways and used for the purpose of revenge in many instances. Smith's Bible Dictionary describes them as follows: "Stocks. (An instrument of punishment consisting of two beams, the upper one being movable, with two small openings between them, large enough for the ankles of the prisoner.—Ed.) The term 'stocks' is applied in the Authorized Version to two different articles, one of which answers rather to our pillory, inasmuch as the body was placed in a bent position, by the confinement of the neck and arms as well as the legs, while the other answers to our 'stocks,' the feet alone being confined in it. The prophet Jeremiah was confined in the first sort, Jer. 20: 2, which appears to have been a common mode of punishment in his day, Jer. 29:26, as the prisons contained a chamber for the special purpose, termed 'the house of the pillory.' 2 Chron. 16: 10 (Authorized Version "prison-house"). The stocks, properly so called, are noticed in Job 13: 27; 33: 11; Acts 16: 24. The term used in Prov. 7: 22 (Authorized Version "stocks") more properly means a fetter." The prophet was kept in this state of torture until the next day.

Verse 3. Human nature might have prompted Jeremiah to manifest some personal resentment over the way he was treated by Pashur. However, he only delivered to him the message which the Lord had authorized concerning this wicked man. The long name to be applied to him is defined "afright from around" in the lexicon. Many proper nouns in the Bible have significant meanings and one such was used here.

Verse 4. *Terror to thyself* is something like a popular saying that a man "is afraid of himself," or that he "is

afraid of his shadow." That would be an awful state of mind to come to Pashur, and just as his nerves would be in a tension, his friends and fellow citizens would be seized and taken away into the Babylonian captivity.

Verse 5. *Deliver all the strength* refers to the chief citizens of the place and 2 Ki. 24: 14-16 shows the fulfillment of the prediction. *All the treasures* means the moveable belongings and that was fulfilled in 2 Ki. 24: 13.

Verse 6. Since Pashur was a member of the nation it would be supposed that he would be taken into captivity along with the others. On account of his personal mistreatment of Jeremiah, however, he was singled out in the prediction. Another thing that made his case special was the decree that he was to die and be buried in Babylon, which was not to happen to all of the nation. Not only should he meet with that special fate, but also his friends who had endorsed him by giving a listening ear to his false prophecies. This gives us the lesson that the Lord regards a willing hearer of error in the same light as he does the speaker of it. Paul taught the same principle in 2 Tim. 4: 3, 4 concerning the false teachers of his day.

Verse 7. The word *deceived* has been rendered also by "allure" and "entice," and means that Jeremiah had simply followed the instructions of the Lord. That required him to make the unpleasant predictions against Pashur and other evil characters, and as a result he was being held in derision daily among the citizens.

Verse 8. That derision took the form of *violence and spoil*, such as his confinement in the stocks of which we have read in the beginning of the chapter.

Verse 9. The first clause of this verse indicates that Jeremiah was almost intimidated against speaking the unwelcome word of the Lord because of the pressure of persecution that was present. But his conscience, which he describes as a *burning fire*, would not let him hold back the truth, so he determined to speak it to people regardless of the persecution that might follow.

Verse 10. This verse refers to the spying and whispering conversations that were going on around the prophet.

The *defaming* means they were plotting for some sort of scandal they could start against the man who had cried out against their corrupt prac-

tices. They were all watching for his *halting* or hoping he would make some kind of slip in his life. They agreed with each other that if anyone saw the least mistep he was to tell it to the others and they also would *report it*, which means they would give the scandal further circulation. Jeremiah would not especially object to the mere fact of being watched, for he did not intend to do anything wrong anyway. But he knew that such spies as he had to deal with would not stop at any scheme within their means to trump up some false charge against him.

Verse 11. Jeremiah's dread of the enemy did not weaken his faith in the Lord and he felt confident that with His support he could overcome all opposition. One word in the definition for the original of *terrible* is "powerful," and it is used in that sense here. The word sometimes means "fearful" and it would have that meaning in this verse as it applies to the enemies of the prophet.

Verse 12. The kind of vengeance that a righteous man like Jeremiah would desire would be just and proper. *Triest the righteous* means that God suffers his righteous servants to be tested by the hardships of this life. *Reins* and *heart* ordinarily have the same meaning, but when used distinctly as in this case, the first means the intellect that rules one's conduct and the second denotes the motive that prompts it.

Verse 13. Jeremiah could personally express these sentiments because he appreciated the many favors that the Lord had given him. But he likewise wished his brethren to see the propriety of giving God all praise for their blessings.

Verses 14-18. *Cursed* is used in the sense of being unprofitable. It is an extremely strong statement of humility to show how vain the life of the prophet would have been when mentioned in the light of human strength alone. Jeremiah just got through rejoicing in the support that God had given him, which shows he believed the Lord considered him to be worth preserving. The passage therefore means to express the great appreciation the prophet had for the goodness of God, that he would preserve and care for an unworthy creature like him. Job made almost the same statements, and I have commented on the passage verse by verse. I ask the reader to see Job 3: 1-7 in Vol. 2 of this COMMENTARY.

## JEREMIAH 21

Verse 1. The *Pashur* named here is not the same one who put Jeremiah in the stocks, although he was just as wicked a man. The events connected with the first man took place in the reign of Jehoiakim, while this one was in the reign of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah. At the time of this verse the army of Babylon was at the gates of Jerusalem engaging in the siege. Zedekiah wanted some information as to the prospects and sent this Pashur to Jeremiah to obtain it.

Verse 2. The inquiry that Zedekiah sent Pashur to make really amounted to a prayer for help against the king of Babylon. The spelling *Nebuchadrezzar* is for the same man whose name is spelled *Nebuchadnezzar* elsewhere.

Verse 3. Jeremiah recognized the request of Zedekiah, for he was still the king of God's people, and directed Pashur to give the answer to him.

Verse 4. When God makes use of a man or army or any other means to accomplish a certain purpose, then to oppose that means is equivalent to opposing Him. This is true even if the thing to be accomplished would have been wrong under other circumstances. For instance, the revolt of the ten tribes was a thing wrong in itself, but the time had come and the circumstances were such that God knew the king in Jerusalem deserved such a misfortune. Therefore when he sought to interfere with the movement he was rebuked by the Lord. (See 1 Ki. 11: 26-35; 12: 21-24.) Likewise when the kingdom of Judah became so corrupt with idolatry, the Lord decreed to punish it by bringing the Babylonians against the city and taking the people into captivity. Because of all this it was the same as opposing God for Judah to oppose the Babylonians, and the more submissive anyone was to them the easier it would be for him in the outcome. (See the comments at ch. 15: 2.) This is why Jeremiah sent word to Zedekiah that his weapons of defence would fail and the enemy would finally enter Jerusalem. *Babylon* was the empire whose capital was the city of that name, and the *Chaldeans* were a special group of people who were the most influential among the others. Politically the two names were used interchangeably in the time of the captivity.

Verse 5. This verse does not mean that God would have a literal army fighting as allies of the Babylonians,

but he would see that their movements would succeed.

Verse 6. The success of the siege and the destruction that accompanied it were decreed by the Lord and hence would be carried out in spite of resistance from Judah.

Verse 7. *Afterward* means at the end of the siege and when the city has been taken. There will be many in it who survived the ravages of the ordeal, among whom will be King Zedekiah. God knew that this king would refuse the advice of the prophet to submit to the king of Babylon and would try to escape by fleeing. This verse is especially directed against him and his army (2 Ki. 25: 4-7).

Verse 8. The siege and captivity was inevitable, but the personal experiences of the besieged would depend upon their attitude at the time. The two kinds of experiences were generally listed under the headings of *life and death*, and it was left to them to decide which it would be.

Verse 9. This verse goes into more details as to the terms *life and death* mentioned in the preceding verse. The prediction of *sword, famine and pestilence* is commented upon at ch. 14: 12 which the reader should see.

Verse 10. *Evil and good* are not used in the moral sense but in that of being unfavorable and favorable. *Set my face* is a figurative way of saying the Lord had made up his mind and it would not be changed. *Burn it with fire* was literally done by the Babylonians as recorded in 2 Ki. 25: 9.

Verse 11. The *house* of this verse is the same as the "house of David" in the next verse which means the kingdom that descended from David.

Verse 12. This verse is worded in the form of a command as if the Lord expected the king and his people to put the order into effect at that time. It should be understood in the sense of saying these things were what they should have been doing in the past years. Actually it was too late for them to do much in the carrying out of the order for the enemy was then at the gates. *Lest my fury go out* should therefore be considered as if it said, "because of your failure to do these things mentioned my fury will go out."

Verse 13. We are sure the last comments are correct for this verse comes directly to that form of speech and the Lord says *I am against thee*. *Inhabitant of the valley* means the in-

habitant of Jerusalem, the last word being a figurative reference to the city. (See Isa. 22: 1, 5.) *Rock of the plain* refers to the expanse of territory of which Jerusalem was the capital. The people of the city and country had boasted that no power could succeed against them hence they had turned deaf ears to the warnings that God had given them for years by the mouth of his prophets.

Verse 14. This verse is a mingling of literal and figurative language. The houses were literally burned and many of the inhabitants were slain. We have no direct history of material destruction of the forests, but they did boast of their great wooded territories. Moreover, they used trees from the forest in their service of idolatry and the captivity was to put an end to that practice.

## JEREMIAH 22

Verse 1. A reference to ch. 21: 1 will tell us that Zedekiah was the king to whom the prophet was to deliver this special message.

Verse 2. The *throne of David* always meant the throne in Jerusalem because the one in Samaria was never occupied by a descendant of David. And the one in Jerusalem was attributed to that great servant of God because he received it first after it was taken from the tribe of Benjamin in the days of Saul. The crown remained in the tribe of Judah ever after as long as the people had a kingdom.

Verse 3. The conduct described in this verse is what should have been the practice all along. Instead, the strong had been permitted to overcome the weak and the rich were suffered to defraud the poor through bribery and other means.

Verse 4. We have here a passage similar to ch. 17: 24, 25 and it calls for like comments. We know it had been decidedly announced that nothing could be done to prevent the captivity and national downfall. Therefore the passage must mean that had they performed such transactions in time they would have obtained the favors described.

Verse 5. *If ye will not* should be taken to mean "since ye did not." As a punishment for it the house in Jerusalem was to become desolate.

Verse 6. A man often discards a possession because it had never been valued highly anyway. But that was not the case with Judah for God com-

pared her to *Gilead* and *Lebanon*, two very desirable districts in Palestine. Notwithstanding this estimate of the land of Judah, God determined to cast it off for its sins against Him and to cause its cities to become depopulated.

Verse 7. God did not directly perform the acts of punishment here described but strengthened the heathen nations that came against Palestine to do so.

Verse 8. The devastation of Jerusalem was to be so evident that the passers-by would notice it and make remarks. The heathen nations did not know the Lord as the people of Judah did, yet they knew that Jerusalem had for centuries been known as a city possessed by a being called the *Lord*. Their questioning one with another was concerning the reason why the possessor of such a city would suffer it to fall into this state of desolation.

Verse 9. It was more or less common knowledge that the Jews were restricted against the worship of strange gods, and that penalties were to be imposed upon them if they practiced it. Therefore it would be understood that the conditions of ruin that met the eye came as a fulfillment of the warnings.

Verse 10. *Weep ye not for the dead*. People sometimes show sympathy for the wrong person and overlook another whose fate is actually more to be regretted. Such was the case when Jesus was being led away to crucifixion. The women were weeping for him when they should have been weeping for themselves (Luke 23: 27-29). The dead man in this verse was Josiah, the righteous king of Judah. When he died under such unfortunate circumstances (2 Ki. 23: 29; 2 Chr. 35: 22, 23) it caused a great lamentation. The words *weep ye not* do not mean that it would be improper to lament his passing for Jeremiah himself did so (2 Chr. 35: 25). The thought is that another person was to have a misfortune befall him that would be more lamentable, which was to be exiled into a foreign land without friends to accompany him.

Verse 11. The person referred to in the preceding verse was the son of Josiah. That son was not dead at the time Jeremiah was writing this prediction, but inspiration told him of the circumstances under which he would die. He is here called Shallum but was elsewhere called Jehoahaz. The Bible does not give us the reason for the extra name but it was not unusual

for people to have more than one name. This man succeeded his father Josiah on the throne but was allowed to retain it only three months. He was forceably removed from it by the Egyptian king Pharaoh-nechoh and taken to Egypt from which he never returned (2 Ki. 23: 33).

Verse 12. It is a sad experience not to be allowed even to see one's native land again after being banished from it. So this Shallum was destined to die in this far-away land without even being permitted to see his native land again (2 Ki. 23: 34). No wonder Jeremiah bade his people to mourn for him who suffered such a disgrace, rather than for his father who died without seeing the misfortune coming upon his son.

Verse 13. This has reference to the leaders who had enriched their own possessions at the expense of the common and poor people. They used their position unfairly because of their official standing and forced the others to serve them without wages.

Verse 14. These selfish men even boasted of the fine houses they had built, using the labor of the under classes in an overbearing way.

Verse 15. *Shalt thou reign* is a question the Lord asked these selfish leaders in his nation. Houses built of cedar usually indicated places to be used either as palaces of kings or the mansions for their residences. There would not have been so much wrong in their owning these good houses had they obtained them in a just way and also were occupying them in connection with a righteous life. As proof of this truth they were reminded of the case of their righteous ancestors who enjoyed the good things of life and at the same time received the favor of the Lord. But the reason for it was stated in connection with the subject; they practiced judgment and justice.

Verse 16. Further details are given as to why the forefathers fared so well. They judged the cause of the poor and needy, which means they gave consideration to the claims of the unfortunate classes of the citizens.

Verse 17. But the present generation was given to selfishness, even at the expense of the righteous poor of the land. If these covetous desires called for the slaying of innocent men the horrible plots were carried out.

Verse 18. The remarks of the preceding verses could truthfully have been made of the leaders generally, but the



Lord now comes to particulars and names a certain man. Jehoiakim was a son of Josiah and obtained the throne through the power of the Egyptian king who had deported his brother Jehoahaz, otherwise called Shallum. But Jehoiakim was a wicked ruler and practiced the injustices described in the preceding verses. Because of the oppression he forced upon the people they were actually relieved when he died, for they did not make any lamentations over it.

Verse 19. Honorable burial has always been regarded as an indication of the respect with which a person had been held, therefore the lack of it would indicate the opposite. Jehoiakim was to have his body dragged out of the city and buried with no more respect than would have been given to a dumb beast.

Verse 20. Lebanon was one of the favorite districts of Palestine from which the people sometimes got trees to form into idols. Bashan was a city in the heathen territory where much of the idolatrous practice was learned. *Thy lovers are destroyed* is an allusion to idolatry because that iniquity was compared with unfaithfulness in the marriage relation. The spots just named were connected with that corruption but were destined to be cleared of it by the captivity. The language of this verse is in the present tense as to grammatical form but is a prediction in thought.

Verse 21. *In thy prosperity* means the Lord gave his people full warning during the time when all things were going well with the nation. Had they heeded the instruction at that time they could have avoided the humiliation of the captivity.

Verse 22. As a wind will sweep things before it because of their lightness, so these *pastors* (unfaithful teachers) were to be swept away by the ("east") wind of the Babylonian army. When that takes place all the guilty ones will *go into captivity*. *Be ashamed and confounded* refers to the humiliation and confusion that was to result when the nation has been taken into Babylonian captivity.

Verse 23. *Inhabitant of Lebanon* is not literally restricted to the people who lived in that territory for it was not very near to Jerusalem the condemned city. It is mentioned in this connection because of the pride the people had in that spot and also because of the idolatrous practices that were connected with it. *Gracious* is

from CHANAN and the part of Strong's definition that applies here is, "to implore (i. e., move to favor by petition)." The thought is that when these guilty people see the enemy at their gates they will plead for God to be gracious unto them.

Verse 24. The last three kings who sat on the throne of Judah were wicked men and all have been given attention by the prophet. They have not always been mentioned in the order of their reign for Zedekiah has been named already and he was the last one. The one who reigned last before him is the one named in this verse. This man had three names or at least that many forms of spelling it. To avoid confusion I will state them which are, Coniah, Jeconiah and Jehoiachin. This man was not allowed to reign but three months when he was taken off by the king of Babylon. However, he submitted to the invader according to the advice of ch. 15: 2; 21: 9, and was taken unharmed to Babylon. *Though . . . were the signet upon my right hand* means that even the most valuable possession of the Lord would be discarded if it became corrupt. This man had to suffer the humiliation of captivity, also be destined to some other personal misfortunes, yet some exceptions were made in his case as we shall see later.

Verse 25. *Seek thy life* does not mean necessarily that he would be slain, but that his life would be taken over by another. Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon and the Chaldeans were a special group who were outstanding citizens of the country.

Verse 26. The *other country* was Babylon and mention was made of his not being born there to emphasize the fact of its being a foreign land. *There shall ye die*. In 2 Ki. 25: 30 it is stated that certain treatments were accorded Coniah in Babylon "all the days of his life." That would mean he lived his entire life in Babylon after being taken there which fulfills the prediction in the present verse. The Biblical account of the capture of this man and his relatives is given in 2 Ki. 24: 10-16.

Verse 27. Exile in a foreign land is sad enough, but Coniah and his family were notified that they never would be permitted to return to their native land.

Verse 28. The general context shows this verse is a declaration of the Lord and not merely a question as the form of sentence construction would indicate. Therefore the words should be

arranged to make them read, *this man Coniah is a despised broken idol*, etc. This does not add a single word to the passage but truly translates the original. We are not told just what particular evils Coniah had committed but they certainly were bad to have brought upon him and his family this shameful treatment.

Verse 29. The word for *earth* is also defined "land" by Strong. The verse means an emphatic call for all the people of the land to hear the word of the Lord.

Verse 30. *Childless* does not require that he never did have any children, for verse 28 says his *seed* was cast out into a strange land, and one word in the lexicon definition of *seed* is "posterity." The rest of this verse also indicates that he had seed but that no one of them would be allowed to succeed his father on the throne as was the usual procedure. Instead, the king of Babylon made his brother king of Judah who was called Zedekiah. (See 2 Ki. 24: 17; 1 Chr. 3: 15; 2 Chr. 36: 10).

### JEREMIAH 23

Verse 1. The original word for *pastor* was defined at ch. 2: 8 which the reader should see. The outstanding thought is one who feeds, figuratively or literally. The priests were expected to give spiritual food or knowledge to the people (Lev. 10: 8-11; Deut. 17: 9-11; Mal. 2: 7), and the prophets were to give any special messages that the Lord regarded necessary at times. But these leading men became negligent of their duties and misused their position for their personal advantage. The Lord accuses them of scattering the sheep and threatens woe upon them.

Verse 2. *Have scattered my flock* is a figure of speech that is appropriate in connection with a shepherd which is the illustration chosen in the case. *Have driven them away* had not yet been done literally except that the people were actually alienated from God by the evil practices of these pastors. *Have not visited them* is another term appropriate to the illustration of a pastor or shepherd. A shepherd is supposed to go and look after his flock to see if any of the sheep are in need. These shepherds had about lost all care for the flock and were bestowing the provisions on themselves that the chief Shepherd had placed in their hands for His flock (Ezk. 34: 8). For this great neglect of duty the Lord decreed severe punishment upon them.

Verse 3. This verse is a prediction of the return from Babylonian captivity. The original word for *countries* also means "lands." The Babylonian Empire was considered one institution but embraced practically all the lands in the civilized world, and the Lord's people were scattered over many of these lands. *Folds* is another term that is appropriate in the list connected with a *flock*. It literally means that God's people who survive the effects of the captivity (the "remnant") will be returned to their native land in Palestine. The Biblical account of the fulfillment is in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The historical account of it was cited with the comments on Isa. 14: 1 in Vol. 3 of this COMMENTARY.

Verse 4. The imagery or line of illustrations of a shepherd and his flock is still used. The *shepherds* of this prediction were such teachers as Ezra and Nehemiah and the good feeding of those men is recorded in Neh. 8: 1-9.

Verse 5. Jeremiah used the same practice as that of Isaiah (though not nearly as frequently) of passing from affairs of ancient Israel to those of spiritual Israel under Christ. David was the first king of ancient Israel from the tribe of Judah, hence it was fitting that he be named in connection with the spiritual King (Jesus) who also was from the tribe of Judah (Heb. 7: 14). *Branch* means something that has sprouted from another plant and is properly applied to Christ as he was a lineal descendant from David.

Verse 6. *Judah* and *Israel* being mentioned together indicates that all 12 tribes of the nation would be in existence when Christ came to the earth. But they were to be *saved* as followers of Christ and not as Jews. At the time of this writing, however, the Jews were the people who were in the front line of attention from the Lord, hence it was logical to mention them in this specific manner.

Verses 7, 8. These verses are identical with ch. 16: 14, 15 and the reader is referred to that place for the comments.

Verse 9. Jeremiah is expressing his own feeling in this verse although the remarks also truly represent the attitude of the Lord. An inspired prophet is always speaking for the Lord even when the language sounds as if he were expressing only his own sentiments. However, Jeremiah was so unusually concerned about the affairs of

his people that he would put himself into his speech at the same time he was speaking by inspiration. *The prophets* refers to the false ones who have been the object of much complaint from Jeremiah all along. *Because of the Lord* denotes that Jeremiah's disturbed condition of mind and body is caused by the disregard the prophets have for the words of the Lord.

Verse 10. Doubtless there were many men in Judah who were adulterers in the physical sense, but the charge has special reference to idolatry, which was always classed as adultery. *Swearing* is from a word that also means a curse, and here refers to the curse that the unfaithful prophets have brought on the land. The evil conditions named are somewhat prophetic and refer especially to what is destined to come upon the land as a chastisement from God.

Verse 11. The *prophet and priest* are the unfaithful ones who have been mentioned in so many places because of their false teaching to the people. (See ch. 5: 31.) They are called *profane* and the reason for the charge is the fact that they were practicing their wickedness in the Lord's house. Profanity consists in making a common or temporal use of a sacred thing, which these leaders were certainly doing.

Verse 12. *Slippery* is from a word that is defined "treacherous" in the lexicon, and the thought is the Lord would deprive these false teachers of any certain guidance. They have been so indifferent about His instruction for many years anyway, so now they were destined to face the future in great uncertainty.

Verse 13. This verse makes reference to the 10-tribe kingdom although it had been in exile for a century when this passage was written. When distinguished from Judah, that kingdom was called *Israel* and its capital was *Samaria*. That kingdom also had false prophets and God mentions them in this connection because he was threatening the false prophets of Judah with a punishment similar to that imposed on the others. *Prophesied in Baal* means they issued their declarations in the name of Baal.

Verse 14. Jerusalem was the capital of Judah and many of the prophets resided there or at least were near enough that much of their activity was done in that city. Adultery is continuously compared to idolatry in the Bible because both corruptions con-

stitute unfaithfulness of one partner in a unity to the other. However, we have evidence that when these unrighteous leaders are accused of adultery it refers to the physical kind, for sometimes it is said they commit adultery with their neighbors' wives (ch. 29: 23), which would have no meaning were the writer merely considering spiritual evil. *Strengthen hands of evildoers* was done by not admonishing them of their deeds, which resulted in their continuance in sin through the encouragement given. *They are . . . as Sodom . . . as Gomorrah* means the Lord regarded these false leaders with the same disfavor as he did those ancient wicked people.

Verse 15. *Wormwood and gall* are used figuratively because of the meaning of bitterness that is indicated by the words. For the technical comments on the words see those offered at ch. 9: 15. *Profaneness* is defined in the lexicon as "impiety," which means a lack of true devotion.

Verse 16. This verse is directed to the people of Judah and they are admonished not to listen to these false prophets. *Vision of their own heart* means the prophecies they issued were the fruit of their own mind and not the inspiration of the Lord.

Verse 17. The main subject of these false prophecies was *peace*. They pacified the people by assuring them that no trouble was in store for them. Such false prophecies were not only a denial of the word of God, but also encouraged the people not to make any improvement in their lives.

Verse 18. This verse might properly be called a challenging question that the Lord asked concerning the false prophets. *Stood in the counsel of the Lord* would mean to have taken their stand according to the instructions which the Lord would give. These false leaders had not done so and the verse calls upon them just to name one among them who had done so, and of course they could not point to a prophet of that unfaithful group who could say he had relied upon the Lord for his instructions.

Verse 19. *Whirlwind* is a figure of speech to illustrate the storm of God's wrath against these evildoers. It was to fall in a special manner on the heads of these men who were foremost in the corrupt practices.

Verse 20. The key to the significance of this verse is in the words *not return until*. The passage is a prediction of

the captivity that was to cure the nation of idolatry. When that is accomplished then the Lord's anger will *return* to himself because it will be satisfied with the results. *Latter days ye shall consider* is a specific prediction that when the captivity will have run its course, the people will take a serious view of the whole situation and will be done for good with idolatry.

Verse 21. These false prophets were acting solely as their own minds dictated and thus were on their own responsibility with no regard for the Lord.

Verse 22. Had these men been desirous of giving the proper advice to the people they would have been used by the Lord. The result of such teaching would have been to turn them from their evil way into the ways of righteousness.

Verse 23. *At hand* and *afar off* are the contrasting terms of this verse and represent the attitude the false teachers maintained toward God. In other words, they seemed to think that if God were near them they would need to "watch their step," but since he was afar off it would not matter so much. The thought offered for their pondering is that God is not so far away that he does not know what they are doing, and will bring upon them the chastisement their conduct deserves.

Verse 24. The first clause of this verse justifies the comments on the preceding one. Adam learned to his shame that man cannot hide from God because He is everywhere. On this important subject it will be well to read Psa. 139: 7-12.

Verse 25. Since God is everywhere at the same time he also sees and hears all that is done and said. When these false leaders were deceiving the people with the supposed importance of dreams, the Lord heard and knew all about it. It is true that one form of inspired revelations was that of dreams and these lying prophets took advantage of the common feeling of respect for dreams. But like many other things that God sometimes uses, these dreams were also relied upon by the unfaithful prophets.

Verse 26. This verse is the same in thought as verse 16.

Verse 27. This verse gives the motive these false prophets had for offering their deceitful dreams to the people. Jesus said that no man could serve two masters and these false prophets seemed to realize that truth.

On that theory they knew the people would not become interested in Baal as long as they had the proper regard for God, hence their efforts to turn them away from Him.

Verse 28. There is nothing wrong in having a dream nor even in relating it to others, provided one does not make any false claims for it. But when a man has the ordinary experience of a dream and then pretends it to have been an inspired one he becomes a false teacher. These remarks are the explanation of this verse. If a man has a dream *let him tell a dream* (tell it as a dream only) and not pretend it to be a revelation from God. If a man really has the word of God he will be able to prove it and should be faithful in revealing it to others. The inspired writer compares a dream to *chaff* in contrast with inspired words which are *wheat*.

Verse 29. The word of the Lord is compared to *fire* because it consumes the waste materials, and to a *hammer* because it can crush the stubbornness of wicked men.

Verse 30. *Stealing my words* if considered alone would not be true because no one can take anything from God by force. The explanation is in the words *from his neighbor*. By deceiving his neighbor through false dreams and prophecies he prevents him from hearing the words of God, and in this manner he steals the words from the people.

Verse 31. If the reader will underscore the pronouns *their* and *he*, the meaning of the verse will be seen. These false prophets would say what they wanted to then claim that God said it which amounted to a forgery of God's name.

Verse 32. *Prophecy false dreams* means to make false prophecies on the basis of their dreams. The chief grievance against them was that it caused the people to go astray. The original word for *lightness* is defined in the lexicon as "frivolity." God never sent out such men to prophesy to the people hence their speeches were not doing any good.

Verse 33. *Burden* means a statement or saying or message. If the people should ask these false prophets what message they had from the Lord they would be compelled to ask, *what burden?* That means they would have none to deliver, for the Lord had forsaken these false prophets and would



not entrust them with any inspired messages.

Verse 34. The three classes, prophet, priest and people, had composed an informal alliance against the Lord. The first two would express false teaching and the people took pleasure in it (ch. 5: 31), and now they were all claiming these false prophecies to be a burden or message from the Lord; but God said he would punish all guilty ones.

Verse 35. Instead of affirming that such is a message from the Lord, they should only be inquirers asking truly what the message of the Lord is.

Verse 36. The people had perverted the words of the Lord and hence were unworthy of being speakers of the burden or message of the Lord. So the truth of the matter was that God's judgments would finally be poured out upon the whole nation.

Verse 37. It would always be a proper inquiry to ask a prophet what the Lord had to say, but not proper to assume that these false prophets could discover for themselves what the Lord would have them say.

Verse 38. The charge the Lord had was that these false teachers would assert that certain words were from the Lord when they were not. The Lord had even forbidden them to claim their messages were from the Lord. By considering the general context of this run of verses we may understand that the unauthorized *burden* or message these false prophets were circulating was the promise of peace assuring them that nothing was going to happen to mar their peace (ch. 6: 14).

Verse 39. In reply to the false assurances of peace preached by these unfaithful leaders, the Lord again announced the surety of the captivity.

Verse 40. The captivity was not to last for ever, for the return from it was predicted many times, but the shame of it was destined to be remembered by future generations. This has been verified by the history of the Jews down to our own times.

## JEREMIAH 24

Verse 1. We have previously had some occasions of prophets who were "acting" as a means of emphasizing a subject under consideration. In this chapter we have a case where the Lord does some of it, or at least makes a literal use of the matter he wishes to impress upon Jeremiah. The case is one where some baskets were set be-

fore the temple because both represented coming events to which that institution was related. The date of the vision of the baskets is given which is just after the king of Babylon had taken Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) from his throne in Jerusalem and carried him to Babylon; that event is recorded in 2 Ki. 10-16.

Verse 2. This verse only describes the character of the figs in the basket. The good ones are said to be so because they are ripe or mature and useful, which means the others are the opposite and hence not useful.

Verse 3. We know the Lord did not ask this question for information, but for the purpose of impressing the scene on the mind of Jeremiah. The mere act of repeating a statement or describing a situation will often fasten it firmly on the memory.

Verse 4. Having fixed the scene vividly on the mind of the prophet, the Lord is going to tell him its meaning.

Verse 5. The nation as a whole was doomed to fall into the hands of the invader and be taken out of the land. But certain parts of it would be treated in a special manner through the Lord's decrees. Most of the people were to be taken unharmed to the country of Babylon proper and finally have a remnant returned to their native land of Palestine. This portion of the nation was illustrated by the good figs.

Verse 6. *Good* is used in the sense of something pleasant or favorable and not as the opposite of wrong. The good was to consist of their return to their native land, and being rebuilt as a nation with Jerusalem as its capital. *Not pluck them up* was an assurance that the nation would not again be taken into captivity as before.

Verse 7. This wholehearted return in devotion to God was fulfilled and it is recorded in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Verse 8. As stated before, a part of the nation was to fare less favorably than others and that part was represented by the bad figs. This had specific reference to Zedekiah and his relatives, he being the last king to sit on the throne in Jerusalem. He ignored the admonitions of the prophet to submit peaceably to the king of Babylon. He thought he could outwit the invaders and thus thwart the inspired predictions of the prophet. He tried to escape but was overtaken, and he and his relatives were treated with

great disgrace by the king of Babylon. The history of this may be seen in 2 Ki. 25: 4-7.

Verse 9. Some of the scattered people of Zedekiah's kingdom were taken off to Egypt or other places in the earth many of whom were never accounted for afterward. A glimpse of this misfortune can be seen in Jeremiah 43.

Verse 10. For comments on the three items, *sword, famine and pestilence*, see those in connection with ch. 14: 12.

### JEREMIAH 25

Verse 1. This verse gives some clear information on important dates. We notice that the fourth year of Jehoiakim corresponds with the first year of the king of Babylon. (See 2 Ki. 24: 1.) Again we are reminded that the Bible is not strictly chronological in its record of events. This verse leaves the time of the capture of Zedekiah who was the last king of Judah, and takes us back to the time when the king of Babylon made his first hostile invasion into Palestine. That date should be remembered as the beginning proper of the historic 70-year captivity. This is treated at length in the comments on 2 Ki. 24: 1 in Vol. 2 of this Commentary.

Verse 2. *The which* means *the word* referred to in verse 1. Since the inspired revelations were given to the prophets in "installments," we can understand why the same date may be given for various "words" from the Lord.

Verse 3. The actual date of the present "word" is the 23rd year of Josiah according to the calculation of this verse. In this instance the prophet goes back to the time when he had first begun to write and gives a brief review of his work of admonition for the people and of their indifference to his words.

Verse 4. There were other prophets in the service of the Lord who were not classed as writing prophets but who delivered their messages orally. Many of these had tried to admonish the nation but their words also had been ignored.

Verse 5. *They said* means these lesser prophets who did not write their exhortations. They admonished the people to return to the faithful service for the Lord in order to retain His protection from the enemy.

Verse 6. The chief corruption of the nation was the worship of idols which

are called false gods. Had they been true to the God of Heaven they would always have received the divine blessings. *Do you no hurt* means that God would not have decreed to punish the nation as he now is threatening.

Verse 7. All of these admonitions were refused and the people continued to serve their man-made gods to the disrespect of the true God.

Verse 8. *Because ye have not* is a key to many of the passages in this book that may not be worded as clearly as this. Frequently the language will seem to offer the promise of continued favor from God on the condition *if ye will* do so and so, when we know that according to the general context all hope for averting the national downfall was past. With the above key we may understand all such indirect passages to mean the people must go into punishment because they had not done as commanded.

Verse 9. This verse is a prediction of the invasion by the Babylonian army. The *north* is explained by the historical note at Isa. 14:31 in volume 3 of this Commentary. Nebuchadrezzar is called *my servant* because he was to carry out the plan of the Lord regarding the invasion, and not with reference to his personal life.

Verse 10. Grain for bread was ground by millstones, but the country was to be so desolate and shorn of its crops that the millstones would not be needed. Hence the stopping of such sounds would be caused by the condition of famine.

Verse 11. This predicts the total length of the Babylonian captivity which was to be 70 years. It began with the fourth year of Jehoiakim and ended with the overthrow of Babylon by the Persians in 536 B.C.

Verse 12. Babylon was to be punished for her wicked attitude towards God's people. He used various heathen men and nations to carry out his plans, but never would permit them to take any personal satisfaction out of it. *Babylon* was the name of the kingdom and the *Chaldeans* were a special group of citizens in that kingdom. The historical fulfillment of this overthrow of Babylon is quoted with the comments on Isa. 13: 1 in volume 3 of this Commentary.

Verse 13. *That is written in this book* could mean either that Jeremiah's predictions against Babylon had been composed at the date of this chapter, or that the declaration was

made in prospect of the completed book. In either case the important thought is that God would back up the predictions of the righteous prophet and bring the deserved punishment upon the wicked nations.

Verse 14. *Serve themselves of them* denotes that many nations will take advantage of the ones that have mistreated God's people. As one specific instance we might cite the Medes and Persians who *served themselves* (helped themselves) to the property of the Babylonians on the night of Belshazzar's feast (Dan. 5: 30, 31).

Verse 15. The prophet now comes to the front and does the speaking for the Lord, whereas he has been wording his writing as if God was doing the speaking direct. Wine and all items connected with the industry are used figuratively in the Bible to represent wrath and vengeance. In keeping with this usage of figures the prophet is told to take charge of the cup of wrath that is in the hand of God and cause the nations to drink from it. This is a figurative way of telling the prophet to pass the Lord's threats of vengeance on to the nations.

Verse 16. This verse describes the confusion that will be caused among the nations over the chastisement that the Lord will inflict upon them.

Verse 17. Again the figurative cup is used to indicate that Jeremiah obeyed the order of the Lord and delivered to the nations his predictions against them.

Verse 18. This cup of God's wrath contained enough to serve all who were deserving of it. So the first drink was taken by Judah with her capital of Jerusalem. That drink was to be realized when the Babylonians took possession of the city and led the people away into captivity.

Verse 19. Another nation that was to drink from the cup of God's wrath was the Egyptian. God had a grievance of long standing against it, for he never forgot the 4-century enslavement by that country of his people in the time of Moses. And down to the time of this writing it had and was still unfriendly toward them.

Verse 20. The cup of God's wrath must have been large and well filled in view of all the nations that needed to drink from it. The exact time or circumstance when they took this drink may not be known at present, but I shall try to identify them. *Uz* was the land south and east of Pales-

tine and is familiar to Bible readers because of its connection with Job (ch. 1: 3). The *Philistines* were a people located along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea and on the western side of Palestine. The other names in this verse were towns in the country of the Philistines.

Verse 21. The land of *Edom* was occupied by the descendants of Esau. The *Moabites* and *Ammonites* were descended from Lot, and these three countries were just east of the Jordan located in a north and south line of territory.

Verse 22. *Tyre* and *Zidon* lay near the sea on the northwest border of Palestine. *Isles beyond the sea* is worded in the margin, "region by the seaside," and the lexicon agrees with it.

Verse 23. The towns named were trading centers for Tyre and located near her.

Verse 24. *Arabia* was the vast extent of territory east of Palestine. It was referred to as a desert but various tribes occupied it from time to time and occasionally made journeys into other countries.

Verse 25. *Zimri* was an unimportant person whose ancestry is uncertain. *Elam* later became known as Persia and the two formed the Medo-Persian Empire which is well known to all students of history.

Verse 26. The *north* is a general reference to the various peoples who lived north and east of Palestine, and who generally appeared from the north when coming into the land. Among all these peoples one is especially named for obvious reasons and that is *Sheshach*. According to Strong, Moffatt and Smith's Bible Dictionary this is a symbolic name for Babylon. It is interesting that in this group of verses mentioning the heathen people who were to drink of the cup of God's wrath, the list begins with Egypt and ends with Babylon. That agrees with the history because Egypt was the first nation to enslave Israel as a people and Babylon was the last.

Verse 27. This verse is an emphatic summing up of the experiences to be had by those who were destined to drink of the cup of God's wrath.

Verse 28. Sometimes a child or other patient refuses to drink of a cup prepared for his condition. In such a case it is necessary for the parent or nurse to use force and compel him to drink. On the same principle it

might be these heathen nations would not be willing to drink of this cup, hence the prophet was told to see that they *shall certainly drink*.

Verse 29. The preceding verse dealt with the enforced drinking from the cup of the wrath of God. The nations were notified that they would be compelled to drink of the cup which means they would have to feel the sting of divine chastisement. This verse continues the subject and a reasoning is given for the decree. God reminds them that even his own city was to be chastised, and so they could not reasonably expect to escape. This circumstance offers a useful comment on 1 Pe. 4: 17, 18 where it is said that judgment was to begin at the house of God. If such a group must feel the strictness of God's discipline then surely the ungodly and sinners will not escape.

Verse 30. The Lord is continuing his instructions to the prophet and urging him to prophesy to the nations. He is to warn them of the vigor with which God was going to express himself from his throne. *Shout as they that tread the grapes* is just an illustration of the intensity of God's voice drawn from a custom connected with wine making. Smith's Bible Dictionary gives a description of that activity and among other things it says: "The 'treading' was effected by one or more men, according to the size of the vat. They encouraged one another by shouts."

Verse 31. The original word for *controversy* is defined as "contest" by Strong. The meaning of the clause is that the nations have opposed the Lord which virtually amounts to a challenge from them to show His power as against that of the gods of their service. God has accepted the challenge and all who are acquainted with the ability of God will have no doubt as to the outcome.

Verse 32. The figures of speech in this verse refer to the general disturbances that will arise between the nations. One of the means that God has frequently used to defeat his enemies was to set them against each other. The effect is often like a whirlwind coming through the country.

Verse 33. *The slain of the Lord* means those who will be slain by each other through the effect of the Lord's plan concerning them.

Verse 34. The *shepherds* were the priests and prophets who were sup-

posed to feed the flock of God with spiritual food. (See Lev. 10: 11; Deut. 17: 9 and Mal. 2: 7.) But these shepherds had fed themselves instead of the flock. *Days of your slaughter* refers to the time when they were doomed to be cut off in their iniquity. *Your dispersions are accomplished* is a prediction that the unfaithful are soon to be captured and taken into exile in a foreign land.

Verse 35. The whole nation was destined to suffer when the captivity came but the *shepherds* (leaders) were condemned more severely.

Verse 36. These terms are rather figurative, and all have reference to the leaders of the nation, such as the prophets and priests. They had been living for themselves and enjoying the pasture instead of leading the flock into it; now that pasture is to be taken from them.

Verse 37. *Peaceable habitation* refers to the condition of security that these pastors made themselves believe they possessed. Those "habitations" were going to be destroyed by the ravages of the Babylonian invasion.

Verse 38. A *covert* is a hiding place such as the den of a lion. The beast is secure in his covert in ordinary circumstances, but when a flood from the overthrow of the river reaches the den he will forsake it. The Lord was going to bring the flood of the invading army over the land and the unfaithful shepherds would be driven from their situation of false security.

## JEREMIAH 26

Verse 1. According to 2 Ki. 24: 1 and Dan. 1: 1 the Babylonian captivity proper began just after the third year of Jehoiakim king in Judah. The present verse is dated at the first year of this reign and hence on the very eve of the captivity.

Verse 2. The Lord's house was the headquarters of the nation both religiously and politically. That would make it the most appropriate place in which to utter the important messages of divine instruction and warning. At this place the prophet would have opportunity to speak to *all the cities of Judah* because their people had to come here to perform their worship and other duties.

Verse 3. *If so be* again brings up the apparent difficulty in the language concerning the fate of the country. This and many other passages sound as if the people were still given the



chance to reform with the promise of averting the captivity, yet it had been declared that nothing could be done to prevent it. But the matter will be clear if we observe the distinction between the nation as a whole and certain worthy individuals in it. Had the nation always done the things that are now being mentioned in connection with the proviso *IF*, then it as a whole would never have been doomed to the captivity. Since that was not done, the Lord decreed that the captivity was necessary to refine the nation as a whole, but that the better individuals could be given special consideration on condition of their personal reformation of life, hence the many exhortations of which we may read. It will be well for the reader to see the note at 2 Ki. 22: 17 in volume 2 of this Commentary.

Verse 4. The words *if ye will not hearken* should be understood in the sense of "since ye did not hearken."

Verse 5. A word that is offered through a servant of the Lord is just as binding as that delivered directly by Him. *Rising up early* is a figure to indicate the promptness and eagerness with which the true prophets delivered their inspired messages.

Verse 6. *Shiloh* was the headquarters for the ark at the time of its capture by the enemy (1 Sam. 4: 11). That was a great misfortune for Israel and one from which they never fully recovered, for the ark never again was replaced in the tabernacle. The circumstance is referred to as an illustration of the disaster soon to come upon Jerusalem the capital of Judah. *Curse* is from a word that means "to make light of," and that was done to Jerusalem by the nations after the city was demolished by Babylon.

Verse 7. The three divisions of the nation were represented at the hearing when Jeremiah uttered the predictions against them. Responsibility for the national corruption was placed on the three classes though not to the same extent. The relative degree of responsibility may be seen in ch. 5: 31.

Verse 8. It has always been a trait of man to dislike even the truth if it condemns his conduct, but the foolish thing about it is that he will blame it onto the one who delivers the unwelcome truth. What is still more unreasonable is his notion that he can avoid the fulfillment of unpleasant predictions by destroying the one who

has spoken them. It would be as logical to think of escaping the effects of a cancer by slaying the doctor who discovered the disease. So the three classes of the people of Judah threatened Jeremiah with death because of his predictions.

Verse 9. There was a general protest against Jeremiah over his prophesying against the city, among the ones who had assembled in the house of the Lord.

Verse 10. The report of the protest reached the ears of the *princes*. The original for that word is defined, "A head person (of any rank or class)." It is used to refer to the important attaches of the palace of personal residence of the king. Upon learning of the commotion in the house of the Lord these princes came up and sat down at one of the entries.

Verse 11. Note the priests and prophets pronounced a death sentence upon Jeremiah merely because he had prophesied against the city, not that it was a false prophecy. They were incensed at the mere thought of being criticized by Jeremiah.

Verse 12. Their tirade against Jeremiah did not intimidate him, but he declared that his prophecy against the place was by the order of the Lord.

Verse 13. This verse is another instance that calls for the distinction between the nation as a whole and certain good individuals in it. See the long note at 2 Ki. 22: 17 in volume 2 of this Commentary.

Verse 14. Jeremiah had done his duty and his conscience was clear. He would not use any resistance against them no matter what they saw fit to do unto him.

Verse 15. As a solmen warning, however, he affirmed that his death at their hands would bring the guilt of innocent blood upon them. This warning might not prevent them from putting him to death, but it would clear him of all responsibility for the act. Should he not protest his innocence, his very silence might be interpreted as an indication of guilt of some kind.

Verse 16. The princes and people then took a more favorable view of the case. They declared that the prophet was not worthy of death; not merely because of what he had said, but because it was said in the name of the Lord. Whether favorable or unfavorable, when a man delivers the

word of the Lord it should be respected.

Verse 17. These *elders* were not officials but were men who were influential because of their advanced years and extended experience.

Verse 18. The elders took up the case in behalf of Jeremiah and supported their position by citing a case in the history of their nation. They referred to Micah who prophesied against Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah the king. That prophecy may be read in the book that bears his name (ch. 3: 12).

Verse 19. It was asked if the king of Judah acted as these men demanded to be done to Jeremiah. They made their own answer which was a negative one. Instead of doing violence to Micah, Hezekiah repented and went to the Lord in a plea for mercy and the prayer was heard and God showed him great compassion.

Verse 20. Another case in point was cited that took place in the days of Jehoiakim. Urijah prophesied *according to* which means he prophesied in a similar way as did Jeremiah against the place.

Verse 21. Jehoiakim was angered by the words of Urijah and threatened to kill him, but he fled to Egypt and thus escaped death for the time being.

Verse 22. In his wickedness Jehoiakim determined to have his way against Urijah. He got up a group of men headed by Elnathan and sent them into Egypt after Urijah.

Verse 23. These men forced the prophet to come with them back to Jehoiakim in Jerusalem. That wicked king slew the prophet and showed his contempt for him by putting him in the graves of the *common people* which means where the public in general was buried. This was intended as an insult to Urijah's position as a prophet, because they had tombs set apart for their especial use (Matt. 23: 29). By denying Urijah honorable burial in the tombs of the prophets Jehoiakim thereby deposed him from the honorable class of the prophets of God.

Verse 24. All of the facts connected with the case of Jehoiakim are not stated here, but they were doubtless known by the persons dealing with Jeremiah, that the wicked king of Judah had to suffer for his treatment of Urijah. In view of the cases that had just been cited in the preceding verse (16-23), Ahikam, a righteous

man, spoke up in behalf of Jeremiah. *Nevertheless* is a somewhat difficult rendering of the original word which Strong defines, "a particle of affirmation, surely." The thought of the verse is that the writer is affirming that Ahikam took Jeremiah's part and defended him against being put to death.

## JEREMIAH 27

Verse 1. Jehoiakim's original name was Eliakim but it was changed to this other name by the king of Egypt who had taken a hand in the affairs of Jerusalem (2 Ki. 23: 31-35). Jehoahaz was the natural successor of his father Josiah, but he was displeasing to God who suffered the king of Egypt to take this temporary control and place his brother Jehoiakim (Eliakim) on the throne. It was in the first year of his reign that Jeremiah received the message from God that is in this chapter. It was about the time when the king of Babylon was coming up to Jerusalem to form a sort of alliance with the king of Judah. God knew that could not be permanent and that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, would take control over Judah and other lesser kingdoms near. It was God's will that all nations be subject to the king of Babylon that he might form the first of the four world empires later spoken of by Daniel (ch. 2: 36-40; 5: 17-19). It was best therefore for the nations to submit peaceably to Babylon and the present message from God to Jeremiah was on that subject.

Verse 2. Here is another case where the prophet was to do some of the "acting" that has been mentioned a number of times. Governments have frequently been illustrated by a yoke (Matt. 11: 29; 1 Tim. 6: 1). That is because a yoke must be used by two if it is of the desired force, and a government must also be a co-operative proposition if it accomplishes the expected purpose. "A government derives its just power from the consent of the governed" is as true in this instance as all others. That does not mean that people cannot be controlled against their will for we know they can and have been so controlled. But the most satisfactory situation will exist when the governor and the governed co-operate. That is why the prophet was to bear the present message to the nations being represented soon at the court of Zedekiah. A *bond* was the same as a halter signifying the creature was under control, and a

yoke indicated that he would be required to do service. Jeremiah was first to put them on his own neck which was his part of the acting and to denote that certain restraints and services would be imposed on human beings.

Verse 3. The first three places named were just east of the Jordan and the next two were on the west side of Palestine. These representatives of the governments came to counsel with Zedekiah about resisting the power of the king of Babylon. They were all weaker than Judah and thought that together they could throw off the yoke of the distant ruler.

Verse 4. These ambassadors of the governments were to be shown the bonds and yokes that Jeremiah had worn for a little while on his neck. This sight was supposed to impress them with the importance of the situation, and they were to take a message back to their masters in their home communities.

Verse 5. The message was to begin by a statement as to who made everything, that it was the God of Israel. Very logically, then, the maker of anything would have the right and power to give it to whomsoever he saw fit.

Verse 6. In the exercising of this right the Lord had given the things into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. *My servant* does not refer to his personal life for he was a heathen and had many grievous faults. It refers to the service he was called upon to render to God in his great plan of the nations.

Verse 7. This short verse contains a very important prediction that will extend through a period of 70 years. *Son and son's son* indicates that the rule given to Nebuchadnezzar was to continue for some generations after him. *Until the very time of his land come* means the rule of Nebuchadnezzar would continue through his successors until the time when his land, too, was to be ruled by another power. *Then many nations . . . shall serve themselves* (help themselves) to the land of Babylon. The history of the ages shows the fulfillment of this prediction, for the Babylonian Empire lasted 70 years and was taken over by the Medes and Persians. The Biblical account of this is in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and the historical account may be seen with the comments on Isa. 13: 1 in volume 3 of this Commentary.

Verse 8. Since this rule of the king of Babylon was to be by the decree of God it would be folly for any other nation to resist it. The best thing for them would be to accept the yoke of his government (symbolized by the literal yoke that Jeremiah showed them) and submit peaceably. To resist Nebuchadnezzar in this case would be the same as resisting God which no king could do and succeed. Such a nation was destined to be punished with the threefold rod of *sword, famine, and pestilence*. The manner in which this kind of chastisement was accomplished is described at ch. 14: 12.

Verse 9. The *prophets, dreamers, enchanters and sorcerers* were persons in the ancient nations who claimed to have supernatural knowledge of the fates overhanging cities and kingdoms. They were frauds but possessed a strange influence over their people. They had been advising them to resist the power of Nebuchadnezzar and assuring them that they would be able to throw off his yoke.

Verse 10. *Prophecy a lie . . . to remove you*. This does not mean their purpose in prophesying the lie was to remove them, but the Lord means their false promises of security will result in that. The reason is that the people will believe these lying prophecies and refuse to submit willingly to the king of Babylon. Then they will be taken over by that king who will remove them out of their own land. The king of Babylon will be able to accomplish this because the Lord declared it so when he said *I should drive you out*.

Verse 11. The nations that accept the Babylonian yoke without resistance will be compelled to be under the rule of Babylon, but will be permitted to live in their own communities and serve as tillers of the ground.

Verse 12. Jeremiah gave the same advice to Zedekiah that he had given to the ambassadors of the heathen groups. Zedekiah was still on the throne of Judah in Jerusalem but was destined to be the last king that nation was ever to have because of its resistance to God's will. Had the king of Judah accepted the counsel of Jeremiah he would still have been subject to Babylon, but he would have been permitted to serve out his days in Palestine as a vassal king of Nebuchadnezzar. It also would have saved the lives of his people instead of having them destroyed by the invader.

Verse 13. Even though the nation as a whole was doomed to go into captivity, Zedekiah and his family could have escaped personal hardship had they conducted themselves in the proper manner. Jeremiah pleaded with them to hearken to the word of the Lord which he was delivering unto them.

Verse 14. Jeremiah realized that his people were being misled by the false prophets and hence he warned them not to listen to their advice.

Verse 15. *That I might drive you out* is explained at verse 10. The false prophets and the people who listened to them were doomed to perish.

Verse 16. The priests were the ones who had charge of the service of the vessels in the house of the Lord. Many of these vessels had been taken away by the king of Babylon (2 Ki. 24: 13). In keeping with the other false prophecies of consolation, these lying prophets assured the priests their instruments of service would soon be returned to them. Jeremiah exhorted them not to believe these promises for they were not authorized of God.

Verse 17. *Serve the king of Babylon* means for them to submit to his rule politically. That is as far as their service would have been required if they had submitted as the Lord demanded. But all who did not thus submit were also to serve the false gods of the Babylonians as a cure for their own idolatry (ch. 16: 13).

Verse 18. Not all of the vessels of the Lord's house had been taken to Babylon at this time. Had the proper conduct been performed by the king of Judah and his leading people, many of the articles of service could have been retained at Jerusalem. The necessary number of priests could have been left in the city to continue the service, even though they would have been under the rule of the Babylonians. These false prophets had claimed to be speaking by the sanction of God. Now Jeremiah challenges them to act consistently and pray to that same God whom they profess to be serving and ask him to spare these vessels.

Verse 19. The articles named had been made by Solomon the third king of Israel in Jerusalem (1 Ki. 6 and 7); they had not yet been taken away by Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 20. But he had taken the king

who had preceded Zedekiah whose name is here spelled Jeconiah. He had also taken captive many of the chief men of the city.

Verse 21. The present message to Zedekiah and his leaders is that many of these articles were still left in the house and should have been destined to remain longer if the king had obeyed the word of the Lord.

Verse 22. But upon the evil conduct of the king, all these things were to be taken to Babylon and remain there until the Lord *visited them*. That means the day when God would overthrow Babylon and reclaim his people from captivity. At that time these vessels also were to be returned to Jerusalem and the fulfillment of this prediction is recorded in Ezra 1: 7-11.

## JEREMIAH 28

Verse 1. The preceding chapters dealt with the false prophets generally while this one gives the history of a particular one. Hananiah was a false prophet but went into a more particular form of prophesying, even to the extent of doing some acting as other prophets had done. This man appeared in the house of the Lord and in the presence of Jeremiah and the priests and the people assembled there. Thus the setting would seem to give to this prophet an appearance of dignity.

Verse 2. Hananiah opened his prophecy by connecting it with the true God, the same One whom Jeremiah served. And, like the true prophets, he made his prophecy in the present tense in speaking of an event yet to come.

Verse 3. It gives a prediction the appearance of genuineness to go into particulars, so Hananiah stated the time when his would be fulfilled. Since it was to be only two years to wait it would naturally sound good to the people who were then stinging with the disgrace of subjugation to Nebuchadnezzar's forces. It would certainly be heartening to see the return of the holy vessels of service that had been taken to Babylon, hence this prophet promised that event to the priests.

Verse 4. Jeconiah had been taken to Babylon and it was declared that he would never leave that place (ch. 22: 24-30). Now this prophet Hananiah reversed this and predicted that the said captive would be returned to Jerusalem together with all the others



who had been taken into that foreign land.

Verse 5. Jeremiah made his reply to Hananiah in the presence and hearing of the priests and people. What he had to say would be a matter of record having been witnessed by a number of persons and in a public place.

Verse 6. Jeremiah was entirely free from prejudice or envy of another prophet. He also was affectionately interested in the happiness of his people. If the Lord had changed his mind and had decreed to reverse the prediction which had been made, his faithful prophet was willing to say *amen* to it.

Verse 7. *Nevertheless* signifies that Jeremiah was not accepting the favorable prediction of Hananiah blindly and without expressing himself on the subject.

Verse 8. He reminded Hananiah that they were not the only men who had ever prophesied of unfavorable events to come upon the nations. The implication was that when the wars came it proved those men to be true prophets.

Verse 9. On the same principle of the preceding verse, if Hananiah has prophesied with authority, then the Lord will sustain it by bringing about the desirable events predicted. The whole circumstance may be likened to that of Elijah and the prophets of Baal (1 Ki. 18) in which a test was made to prove who was the true God. Jeremiah was willing for the outcome to prove whether he or Hananiah was a true prophet, and thus it amounted to a challenge to make such a test.

Verse 10. Hananiah virtually accepted the challenge by doing some "acting" in that he took the yoke from the neck of Jeremiah and broke it.

Verse 11. The yoke having been broken in the presence of the people, Hananiah spoke to them also and interpreted his action, that it meant the Babylonian yoke would be broken from the necks of all the nations then bearing it. This ended the issuing and accepting of the challenge for the time and Jeremiah went his way to await the action of the Lord regarding the proposed test.

Verse 12. After the preceding "challenge" had been made and apparently accepted, the Lord entered the case again and spoke to Jeremiah.

Verse 13. He was to contact Hana-

niah and deliver the latest message from the Lord. The pronoun *thou* occurs twice but has different antecedents. The first is Hananiah and the second is Jeremiah, for the Lord was still speaking to him. He was to say to Hananiah, *Thou hast broken the yokes of wood*. Then the Lord, speaking directly to Jeremiah said, *but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron*. The force of the language was that nothing would be gained by destroying the yokes of wood, for other and stronger ones would be made and fastened upon their necks.

Verse 14. The Lord here made his interpretation of the action and prediction. It left the matter where it was before Hananiah intruded with his false prophecies of peace. The several nations then under the power of Nebuchadnezzar were still to serve him and he was to have control of their personal property.

Verse 15. Having received this confirming message from God, Jeremiah knew that Hananiah was a false prophet and he accused him accordingly to his face.

Verse 16. Moreover, he pronounced a sentence of death upon him. He did not make his prediction in general terms as a false prophet might have done, but set the time which was to be yet that same year.

Verse 17. Hananiah died the 7th month of that year and the prediction of Jeremiah was made the 5th month (verse 1), thus bringing a prompt fulfillment of the sentence against this wicked man.

## JEREMIAH 29

Verse 1. The Babylonian captivity as a whole began in 606 B.C. and ended in 536 B.C., 70 years in all. It began at the end of Jehoiakim's 3rd year and ended at the overthrow of Belshazzar on the night of his noted feast. However, the period had three stages in the beginning which are sometimes referred to as the 1st, 2nd and 3rd captivities for the purpose of fixing certain dates. Another manner of designating them is to do so under the name of the king who was reigning in Judah at the time of the one referred to. The three kings were Jehoiakim, Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) and Zedekiah, who were subdued by Nebuchadnezzar but allowed to sit for a time on the throne in Jerusalem. These facts must be kept in mind or confusion may result from some of

the statements regarding the Jews in their relation to the Babylonians.

Verse 2. The capture of Jeconiah and his family marked the "second" captivity and Jeremiah sent his letter to his brethren in Babylon after that event. The prophet was under the authority of the Babylonian Empire, but was not required to leave Palestine due to the respect the captain had for him (ch. 40: 1-6). Jeremiah wished his brethren in Babylon to be like a "model prisoner" while in captivity and sent the letter for that purpose which was for their own advantage.

Verse 3. The men named were the bearers of Jeremiah's letter to the Jews in Babylon. They went by the authority of Zedekiah, king of Judah, and hence their mission had the dignity of an official one.

Verse 4. The Jews in Babylon should have been impressed with the letter of Jeremiah since it was dictated by the Lord. Also by the fact that He was the one who had caused them to be taken into captivity. With the assurance that God always has an important purpose for everything He does, then profound attention should have been given to any message sent to them by His direction.

Verse 5. The general subject of the letter was for them to prepare for a long stay in Babylon. That they should plant gardens and eat of the products of the same. They should not only build houses, which could be merely an occupation for exercise, but they were told they would get to live in the houses.

Verse 6. It was predicted that the number of the Israelites would be generally reduced by the captivity (Isa. 1: 9; 10: 22), yet it also was indicated by these same predictions that a number would be left and the history shows that it was done (Ezra 2: 64). But in order for that to occur it was necessary for the people to continue their normal ways of family life as far as the conditions would permit. So the prophet told them to marry and produce families for the continuance of them as a people.

Verse 7. *Seek the peace of the city* meant for them to be orderly and respectful toward the city in which they might be located. If they were resentful under their bondage it would only add to their unpleasant situation. Also, if the said town where they were having their residence should have any difficulty with outside people, these

Israelites would have to share in that trouble, hence they were to seek its peace.

Verse 8. Before the captivity ever began the false prophets kept telling the people there would be no war nor trouble. Their visions of peace proved to be false and yet in the face of that fact they had the boldness to claim that the captivity would soon be over. Jeremiah admonished his people not to be deceived by them.

Verse 9. Jeremiah plainly charged these prophets with lying, and that they were uttering their falsehood in the name of the Lord. A man might write a check when he knew he had no funds to make it good and that would be a sin. It would be still worse if he made out a check and signed the name of another man to it without his consent. That would be like the wicked action of these prophets, for they delivered their false predictions and then claimed to have the authority of the Lord for them.

Verse 10. The exact length of the captivity was predicted here as it had been done in ch. 25: 12. History shows it began B.C. 606 and ended B.C. 536. *I will visit you* is a prediction of the influence God would exert on the governments concerned, which would cause them to release the Jews so that they could return to their own land of Palestine. That history is in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah for the Biblical account, and the secular history may be seen in the comments on Isa. 14: 1, volume 3 of this Commentary.

Verse 11. *Thoughts and think* have the same meaning except as to grammatical form, the first being a noun and the other a verb. The clause means that God understood what he was planning concerning his people. The plots referred to in this place were in regard to the restoration of the people of God to their own country.

Verse 12. *Then* is an adverb of time and applies to the date when the captivity was to be terminated. It would then be according to God's will to pray for deliverance from captivity, hence such a prayer would be answered.

Verse 13. However, even when it is God's will that his people be released, their prayer for divine favor must be offered with sincere hearts.

Verse 14. *All the nations* refers to the various peoples that made up the

Babylonian Empire. In course of the 70-year period the Jews became more or less scattered among various districts, and this verse was a prediction that they would be called out from such places to return to Palestine.

Verse 15. The preceding verses were that part of Jeremiah's letter intended for the encouragement of the Jews who were better disposed toward the Lord. This verse starts the part directed toward the false prophets among them and the people who had been listening to them. Certain ones had been denying the predictions of Jeremiah about the extent of the captivity. They also denied that any more of the nation yet remaining in Jerusalem were to follow their brethren into Babylon.

Verse 16. The king referred to was Zedekiah who was the last man to occupy the throne in Jerusalem. It was called the throne of David because he was the first man of the tribe of Judah to sit on that throne.

Verse 17. The things threatened in this verse were to come on the Jews still left in Palestine and who had been listening to the false prophets.

Verse 18. *Persecute* does not have the ordinary meaning for God never treats anyone in that way regardless of his deserts. It comes from the Hebrew words and the meaning is to pursue or chase one with hostile intent. The means the Lord proposed to use in bringing about the punishment threatened against his people was the one frequently mentioned; sword, famine and pestilence. (See the comments on this subject at ch. 14: 12). The meaning of the *nations* is explained at verse 14.

Verse 19. God always gives man an opportunity to know what is right before punishing him for wrongdoing. He had sent his inspired prophets to the people to instruct and admonish them but they would not give heed. *Rising up early* is from SHAKAM and Strong defines it, "Literally to load up (on the back of a man or beast), i.e. to start early in the morning." The meaning here is that God was prompt in starting his prophets on their mission of admonition to his people.

Verse 20. The part of Jeremiah's letter starting with this verse is again directed toward the captives in Babylon to warn them concerning the false prophets.

Verse 21. The punctuation as the

A.V. has this verse might be somewhat confusing in the use of the preposition "of." It will help clarify the thought by wording it as follows: "The God of Israel says thus of Ahab, etc." This Ahab and Zedekiah were false prophets in Babylon who deceived the captives by their lying predictions, and whose false assurances had a tendency to incite a spirit of rebellion against the king. The letter said that these false prophets would be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon who would slay them in the sight of the captives.

Verse 22. The manner of death that Nebuchadnezzar inflicted on these false prophets was by roasting them in the fire. The publicity that was given to this terrible execution is indicated by the fact that "all the captivity" would talk about it.

Verse 23. If a man loses his respect for the truth of God he is likely to become corrupt in his personal conduct. These false prophets committed *villany* ("moral wickedness."—Strong) by violating their neighbors' wives. They sought to hide their abominable conduct by issuing false prophecies in the name of God.

Verse 24. Shemaiah was a false prophet in Babylon who sent rebellious letters to certain ones back in Jerusalem, and Jeremiah's letter was addressed to him in part.

Verses 25, 26. One of the letters of Shemaiah was sent to Zephaniah who was a priest in Jerusalem. We know that priests were expected to be teachers of the people as well as to be presiding at the sacrifices (Lev. 10: 11; Deut. 17: 9; Mal. 2: 7), but it is not clearly shown that they were to exercise the kind of work claimed by Shemaiah. But regardless of that question, it is certain they would not have had the right to persecute a good man as this false prophet demanded to have done.

Verse 27. Shemaiah did not like the message that Jeremiah had sent to the Jews in Babylon, and he complained to Zephaniah because he did not criticize the prophet.

Verse 28. Shemaiah correctly reported the contents of Jeremiah's letter although he did not like it because of his own falsifying prophecies to the captives.

Verse 29. There is no evidence that Zephaniah attempted to reprove Jeremiah, but he did let him hear what Shemaiah wrote against him. It is

also reasonable to conclude that Zephaniah went to the Lord about the situation.

Verse 30. After the exchange of communications between Shemaiah and the priest Zephaniah, the Lord gave Jeremiah another message to send to Babylon.

Verse 31. The message was to be in regard to the false prophecies of Shemaiah that he had uttered among the captives; the Lord accused him plainly of lying.

Verse 32. Shemaiah was already in Babylon as a captive, hence some additional punishment was to be inflicted upon him. His family was to become extinct and he also was to die before the return of his brethren to their native land.

### JEREMIAH 30

Verse 1. This verse pertains to a direct word from the Lord to Jeremiah concerning instructions about to be given him.

Verse 2. The Lord had spoken many predictions directly to the mind of Jeremiah, and he in turn had repeated them orally in the ears of the people. But now he was to write them down which would get them in permanent form.

Verse 3. This verse predicts the return of all the people of God to their own country. *Israel* and *Judah* means the 10 tribes and the 2 tribes. Israel had been taken captive by the Assyrians before the Babylonian Empire was established; but the territory that had been controlled by the Assyrians was taken over by the Babylonians, who found the people of the 10 tribes scattered among the cities. Then when the Babylonians brought the 2 tribes from Jerusalem it practically got the entire nation of the Jews together, hence the return after the captivity would logically include the 12 tribes.

Verse 4. This verse is an introduction to the predictions that Jeremiah was to write in a book.

Verse 5. *Have heard a voice* means the Lord heard the mournful complaints of his people in Babylonian captivity and had compassion on them.

Verse 6. The pains of a woman approaching childbirth are used to illustrate the depressed state of mind suffered by the people of God in captivity.

Verse 7. The miseries of *Jacob* (the founder of the race of Israel) is still

the subject of this verse as far as the word *trouble*. The subject is then changed and the remainder of the verse begins another prediction of the return.

Verse 8. *That day* refers to the time when the 70-year captivity would be over, and *his yoke* means the bondage under the Babylonian king. *Strangers* refers to the same people signified by the yoke, who had been *serving themselves* or helping themselves to the services of the people of God.

Verse 9. When the captivity is ended *they*, the people of God, will no longer give their services to Babylon, but will give them to the Lord their God. *David shall be their king* is a leap of over 500 years, from the close of the captivity to the beginning of the kingdom of Christ in Acts 2. This is not the first nor will it be the last instance where the prophets pass from fleshly to spiritual Israel in their predictions. The new or spiritual Israel is frequently spoken of as that of David. It is fitting that it should be so done, for David was the first man of the tribe of Judah to sit on the throne of fleshly Israel, and the reign never left that tribe as long as the nation had a kingdom. And through respect for the righteousness of David, the Lord promised him with an oath that when the time arrived for the reign of spiritual Israel, its king would be a lineal descendant of this great man and hence One of the tribe of Judah. This was carried out according to Heb. 7: 14. Some of the passages that connect the reign of Christ with David are Psa. 89: 3; Isa 55: 3; Ezk. 34: 23; 37: 24; Luke 1: 69; Acts 2: 30; 13: 23.

Verse 10. After making a brief but pointed reference to the time of Christ, a prophet will usually resume his original line of writing concerning fleshly Israel. This verse, therefore, continues the prediction that the fleshly people of God will be released from the captivity and be permitted to return to their own country.

Verse 11. Some of the predictions pertain to the release from captivity in general. This verse concerns a special condition that will exist at the end of that experience and that is about the remnant that was to be saved from the ravages of that period. The nation numbered some millions when it went into the captivity but was reduced to a much smaller number according to Ezra 2: 64. However, this reduction had a favorable signif-



icance for the severity of the captivity might have completely snuffed out the nation had it not been for the care and oversight of God.

Verse 12. We have observed that the events in the history of the Jews are not always recorded or predicted in chronological order. This verse and the three that follow pertain to the fate which God had decreed against his people. *Bruise is incurable* is a figurative statement that Judah had sinned so grievously that nothing that man could do would cure the condition.

Verse 13. *None to plead* could not mean that no one was willing to speak on behalf of Judah, for both Hezekiah and Josiah had tried to bring the nation to repentance with a view to securing the favor of the Lord. The key to the statement is in the words *hast no healing medicine*. Human plans could not work the cure necessary for the reinstatement of the nation in the favor of God.

Verse 14. Since human means could not cure the diseased condition (which was idolatry) the Lord only could heal the nation of it. This healing was to consist of a severe treatment, even *the chastisement of a cruel one*, which means the enslavement of the people in the land of Babylon.

Verse 15. *Why criest thou* has the effect of telling the people there was no use to make their complaint with the expectation of avoiding the captivity. God was punishing them by the hand of this cruel agency (the Babylonians) in order to bring about their cure from the terrible disorder of idolatry.

Verse 16. God would never suffer the nations whom he used to chastise his own people to take personal satisfaction out of their service for Him. After they have accomplished the purpose for which God brought them into action, they were made to suffer for their motives of cruelty toward the unfortunate people; hence this verse predicts the overthrow of Babylon. It was to be done through another world power but God would be the planner of the whole event. The Biblical account of the fall of Babylon is in Dan. 5. The historical account of it is cited with the comments on Isa. 13: 1 in volume 3 of this Commentary.

Verse 17. The Lord continued using the figures of speech pertaining to disease and its cure. The treatment of some diseases is sometimes so severe

that it causes wounds temporarily, and then those wounds have to be healed. So the disease of idolatry was so deep-seated that the nation needed to have its national dignity wounded by the captivity in a foreign land. The people of that land looked upon these national wounds and belittled the unfortunate victims of their cruelty. The Lord promised to heal those wounds, which was to be accomplished by the release from captivity and the return to their own land. The predictions of that glorious event is the subject of the next five verses which might be marked by a bracket.

Verse 18. *Bring again the captivity* means God will reverse the captivity, etc.

Verse 19. At the end of the captivity the number of the Jews was to be greatly reduced, but this verse promises that the Lord will multiply them so that national glory may be again enjoyed.

Verse 20. This verse repeats much that has been promised, extending the prosperity to their descendants. It was to be accomplished after having punished their former oppressor, and it also promises to punish any who would attempt to oppress them after their return to Palestine.

Verse 21. *Nobles shall be of themselves* means the nation will not be dependent upon others for its outstanding men, for they will produce them of themselves. The same kind of prospect was held out before them with regard to their rulers. The principle on which these favors will be granted is a heart *engaged* or disposed to approach unto the Lord to learn and do his will.

Verse 22. In one sense the Jews never ceased to be God's people, but he had cast them off from being his people as a nation.

Verses 23, 24. This paragraph is a prediction of the overthrow of Babylon and takes the same comments and historical note as verse 16.

### JEREMIAH 31

Verse 1. The first 14 verses should form a bracket and the general subject is the return of the Jews from captivity. Some special details of that event will be noticed in various places hence the verses will be commented upon in their order. *At the same time* refers to the event predicted in the last of the preceding chapter.

Verse 2. The language is in the past

tense as to grammatical form, but it is a prediction of events at and after the overthrow of Babylon. *Wilderness* is a figurative reference to the desolating captivity in a foreign land. *People left* are the ones elsewhere referred to as the remnant that survived the ravages of the long exile.

Verse 3. *Appeared unto me* represents Israel as speaking and acknowledging the mercy of the Lord. That mercy was extended to the people because the Lord loved them notwithstanding their many acts of unfaithfulness toward Him.

Verse 4. *I will build thee* is a prediction of the restoration of the people to their native land and the rebuilding of their national institutions. The mention of *tabrets* and *dances* is a prediction of the joy that was to come to Israel upon their return to the home country after 70 years of enforced absence.

Verse 5. Not only were their homes to be restored, but their agricultural pursuits were to be resumed. Samaria was the part of Palestine that had been occupied by the 10 tribes. This prediction indicates that they will be returned to their former homes as well as would the 2 tribes; no "lost 10 tribes" taught here.

Verse 6. The tribe of Ephraim included the capital of the kingdom of Israel and their people did not go to Zion (or Jerusalem) for worship because they had revolted from the kingdom of Judah. This verse predicts that after the return from captivity they all will go to the original headquarters in order to meet with the Lord. It indicates that Israel will be a united kingdom after the return from captivity.

Verse 7. *Say, O Lord, save thy people* is the prophetic style of language. It is a prediction that the Lord would come to the rescue of his people while there was still a remnant of them surviving the captivity.

Verse 8. For the significance of *north* see the historical note given in connection with Isa. 14: 31 in volume 3 of this Commentary. *Coasts* means the various regions in the vast Babylonian Empire where the Jews had been scattered. *Blind* and *lame* and other people with different handicaps will all be enabled to come to Jerusalem when God is ready to restore his people to their own country.

Verse 9. *Weeping* was fulfilled in Ezra 3: 12 when the older men ob-

served the reduced appearance of the temple as compared with the original one. This view of the case is made clear by Hag. 2: 3. *Supplications* is rendered "favors" in the margin, and the context as well as the lexicon agrees with it. The meaning is that their supplications or desires were granted as to the favors of rebuilding the house. (See Ezra 1: 1-4.) *Ephraim* once meant the 10 tribes separate from the other tribes, but after the captivity all the tribes were to be together. Hence *Israel* (as a whole) and *Ephraim* are referred to in the same relation to God. *Firstborn* is used in a complimentary sense meaning "chief," also as the first nation to be formed by the Lord to be his own peculiar (or purchased) people.

Verse 10. *O ye nations* predicts that the great event of the return of Israel and re-establishment in Palestine will become generally known. The first definition of the original for *isles* is "A habitable spot," and it is used here in about the same sense as *nations*. God's love and care for his people is assured which will be evident to the peoples of the earth. The flock will be brought together again.

Verse 11. *Jacob* is used to include the nation of the Jews because that patriarch was the father of the tribes forming the nation. Babylon was the hand that was stronger than Jacob, but that was because the Lord willed it to be so as a chastisement.

Verse 12. *Height* is from MAROM and is defined "elation," and *Zion* has reference to Jerusalem as the capital of the nation. The clause means the Jews will come to Jerusalem after the captivity and will be so elated over the situation that they will sing together. *Flow* is from NAHAR, which Strong defines as follows: "A primitive root; to sparkle, i.e. (figuratively) be cheerful; hence (from the sheen [luster] of a running stream) to flow, i.e. (figuratively) assemble." The phrase *flow together* is a beautiful prediction and pictures the Jewish nation or its people assembling at Jerusalem through the goodness of the Lord. Their happy state of mind is likened to the luster on the bosom of a calmly-flowing stream. The mention of *wheat*, *wine*, *oil* and the possession of *flocks* is to indicate the return of prosperity after they have regained possession of their land. *Not sorrow any more* means especially that they will not again be taken bodily into captivity.

Verse 13. Dancing was engaged in by various age groups in ancient times, but the indications are that the practice was an expression of joy. The women and men danced separately, for the motive of happiness did not even suggest the familiar association of the sexes at such a time. This verse predicts their engaging in the dance as an evidence of the joy and lightness of heart the people would have after being made free from their bondage in the land of Babylon.

Verse 14. *Satiate* means to quench and *soul* means the vitality or life of a creature. The clause means God would make the priests feel satisfied with their lot after coming back to their former work with the nation of the Lord.

Verse 15. The prophet has been writing about the past sorrows of God's people and their joy that came afterward. Following the prophets' practice, Jeremiah regards this as an opportunity to speak of another event in the future in which a condition of great distress was to be turned into a cause of joy. That event was the coming slaughter of the infants by Herod (Matt. 2: 16-18) in his attempt to destroy Jesus. That crime was overruled by the Lord for the good of humanity, just as the captivity of the Jews was to be reversed and replaced by a condition of rejoicing. The reference to Rahel (Rachel) is figurative and doubtless is in recognition of her sorrowful life, ending at her death in childbirth at Ramah, near Jerusalem.

Verse 16. Having extended the "telescope" (See Illustration at Isa. 1: 1) to get a glimpse of an event many years in the future, the prophet resumes his prediction of the return of Israel from Babylonian captivity. *Refrain from weeping* predicts the happiness that is to follow the return to their own land. *Land of the enemy* refers to the Babylon country.

Verse 17. *In thine end* refers to the end of the Babylonian captivity.

Verse 18. *Ephraim* stands for the 10 tribes when used in this way because the capital of that kingdom was in the possession of that tribe. That kingdom had been removed from their land a century before this writing of Jeremiah, and the prophet is predicting their release from the exile which was to occur at the same time with the 2 tribes. *Turn me and I shall be turned* refers to the cure from idolatry that was accomplished by the captivity. The historical note that shows the

fulfillment of this prediction was quoted at Isa. 1: 25 in volume 3 of this Commentary.

Verse 19. This is still considering the 10 tribes in exile, and shows them as brought to repentance by their punishment. *Smote upon my thigh* is simply a gesture of shame for the sins that were committed in the days of *my youth* which means that the 10 tribes committed idolatry from the beginning of their separate existence as a nation. The first thing their king did after pulling off from the capital at Jerusalem was to set up the golden calves to be worshiped as gods (1 Ki. 12: 28-30), and the nation practiced idolatry as long as it lasted as a kingdom.

Verse 20. The first clause of this verse sounds as if it questioned the matter, but actually it is a declaration that Ephraim (the 10 tribes) was the dear child of God. For that reason the Lord loved him in spite of his sins and wished to save him.

Verse 21. The 10 tribes had been in exile more than a century when Jeremiah wrote and they really were beyond the opportunity of erecting *waymarks* or monuments to mark their way back. The language is figurative and prophetic, meaning that God could conduct them on their return home as definitely as if they had set up such marks.

Verse 22. At verse 15 we observe the prophet extending his vision to the time of Christ for a few sentences, then resuming his line concerning ancient Israel; he is doing the same thing in this verse. He speaks in reassuring terms to his dejected people by promising that a very important event was to happen in their home land, which was that *a woman shall compass a man*. This evidently referred to the virgin conception and birth of Christ. It might be asked if this clause could not be said of all conceptions. There is a special fact in the case of Mary and Christ. *Man* is from GEBER and Strong defines it, "A valiant man or warrior." This gives to the word a peculiar meaning that could apply especially to Christ. According to John 8: 58 Jesus existed before he was conceived by Mary, and also according to Luke 10: 18 he was a powerful being before he left Heaven. Hence we can understand that when Mary received him into her body she really did *compass a man*, "a valiant man" as the lexicon has it.

Verse 23. This verse resumes the

good fortune of Israel after the return from captivity. *The Lord bless thee* is a prediction that the nation will be blessed by being restored to its native land.

Verse 24. The agricultural pursuits will be resumed without being even threatened successfully by a foreign enemy.

Verse 25. *I have* is past tense in form but is future in meaning. To *satiate* means to satisfy fully which was to take place after the return from captivity.

Verse 26. *Upon this* means that on account of the good fortune to be given the people they will be able to enjoy refreshing hours of rest.

Verse 27. *Sow . . . with man . . . with beast* means the land will again increase its population and they will be permitted to have their needed beasts of service. *Israel* and *Judah* are mentioned because after the captivity the 12 tribes were all to return to Palestine and live together as one nation.

Verse 28. When God saw fit to overthrow his nation he did so according to his wisdom. Likewise when the time comes to reverse its sad state He will accomplish that.

Verses 29, 30. The language is figurative and teaches individual responsibility. The people had to suffer the captivity largely because of the sins of the leaders; that will not occur again.

Verse 31. This and the three verses that follow should form a bracket which contains a very important prediction. The passage is cited almost verbatim in Heb. 8: 8-12. *Israel* and *Judah* are both named because those were the names that included the 12 tribes. However, in the fulfillment both Jews and Gentiles will have a part.

Verse 32. *The day* is a reference to that period in general, for the covenant was actually delivered at Sinai which was about two months after the exodus from Egypt. The *new covenant* was to be different from the *Sinaitic covenant*, and some of the differences will be described in the following verses.

Verse 33. One of the differences between the two covenants is indicated by the words *write it in their hearts*. Under the Jewish covenant a boy baby was circumcised when 8 days old which made him a full member of the group. But the new covenant has

to be entered by accepting it in the heart or mind.

Verse 34. *Not teach . . . his brother*. Circumcision made an 8-day-old boy a full brother to all other members of the covenant. Yet that boy could not know anything about the Lord, and when he became old enough he had to be made acquainted with Him by his "brother" in the Jewish covenant. Under the new covenant a person must be old enough to know the Lord before he can become a member. See the comments on this subject at 1 Sam. 3: 7 in volume 2 of this Commentary.

Verse 35. The greatness of God as shown in the created universe is the subject of this verse. *Ordinances* is defined by Strong, "An enactment; hence an appointment (of time, quantity, labor or usage)." It means that God made the moon and stars for light (not to be inhabited). *Divideth* is from a word that means to manage or control and refers to God's power over the sea.

Verses 36, 37. The surety of God's predictions is illustrated by these conditions in the universe. No one doubts the permanence of the planets, neither should he doubt the surety of His predictions. Man's ability to measure (comprehend) the heaven above is no more unlikely than God's failure to carry out his promises to Israel.

Verse 38. *The city* refers to Jerusalem and the *tower of Hanameel* was an important part of the wall; it was near the place where the work of rebuilding was to start. The fulfillment of this prediction is recorded in Neh. 3: 1.

Verse 39. *Gareb* and *Goath* were spots near Jerusalem. The *measuring line* or extension of the city's occupation was to reach unto these spots.

Verse 40. *Valley* is from EMEQ which Strong defines, "A vale (i.e. broad depression)"; this has special reference to the Valley of Hinnom near Jerusalem. This place and the fields nearby had been the scene of much destruction in former times. After the return from captivity that whole territory was to be brought into peaceful control by the people of the Lord.

## JEREMIAH 32

Verse 1. The attention of the reader has frequently been called to the unchronological character of parts of the Bible. This is particularly true of the prophetic books. On this point I



shall quote from Smith's Bible Dictionary as follows: "Apparently the prophets kept written records of their predictions, and collected into larger volumes such as were intended for permanent use." As the different parts of the prophetic writings were not written at the same time, it can be understood that in collecting them into one book they might not always be compiled in just the same order as they were written. Thus the present chapter through chapter 36 should be read or at least dated after chapter 37, for that chapter closes with the same subject that begins the present one. With this explanation settled, let us now consider the passages in their order and as they occur in the common version before us. We are in the tenth year of Zedekiah's reign and he has just one more year to sit on the throne. The army of Babylon is at the gates of Jerusalem and conducting a distressing siege against that city that is about to end in defeat for the besieged.

Verse 2. The siege had started in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign (2 Ki. 25:1), and at the present time (tenth year) Jeremiah was a prisoner in the *court of the prison*. This was an open space occupied by the guard where the prophet was kept for the present. But though he was a prisoner his friends could visit him since the area was more or less unrestricted as to the public.

Verse 3. From ancient times it has been a notion of mankind that the effect of unwelcome truth could be avoided by suppressing the one who uttered it. Zedekiah was angry at the predictions of Jeremiah and had him imprisoned.

Verses 4, 5. These verses state the unpleasant predictions of Jeremiah. A part of this prophecy has been charged with being a contradiction of another (Ezk. 12:13) which says that Zedekiah should not see Babylon although he would be taken there. The explanation is very simple and needs only a brief bit of history (2 Ki. 25: 6, 7).

Verse 6. This verse through 14 should be marked as a bracket and labeled "A literal transaction or some more 'acting' to indicate the surety of the return to Palestine."

Verse 7. The offer to buy a piece of real estate was a test for Jeremiah to show his confidence in his own predictions. There had not been any indication that he had any doubts but the performance was for the benefit of

others. A piece of land would not be worth anything to a man who could not use it. The Lord told Jeremiah that his cousin was coming for this purpose, and thus he would know that the circumstance was by the Lord's arrangement.

Verse 8. *Right of inheritance* means he was in line as an heir; that if the land was going to be sold he was the one to "have the first chance." Then *I knew* means that by the act of his cousin in offering him the land just as the Lord said he would, Jeremiah knew the whole proposition was from Him.

Verses 9, 10. The *evidences* were the equivalent of our notarizing a document. It shows that according to the transaction Jeremiah favored the idea of personal ownership of property with individual title to the same.

Verse 11. *Law and custom* means it was not only customary but lawful to perform the transference of real estate from one individual to another.

Verse 12. *In the sight* was to have the force of a record as for a deed to the property. This was not only to make the sale legal, but for its effect on the public as to Jeremiah's faith in his own predictions.

Verses 13, 14. Baruch was acting as secretary for Jeremiah and was charged with the care of the document concerning the transaction. *Sealed and open* means the parts of the deal that were written and those that were merely beheld with the eyes and heard with the ears as audible agreements.

Verse 15. This verse is the prophet's interpretation of the whole transaction just enacted in the presence of the people. If Jeremiah was willing to invest money in land that was then in control of a foreigner, he surely believed that such a condition would be removed so that he could make his own use of that land.

Verse 16. Having performed the demonstration of his faith, Jeremiah offered a prayer to his God.

Verse 17. *Nothing too hard for thee* means that God can do anything if it is a matter of power or knowledge. There are some things God cannot do because they are wrong, but He has the power and knowledge to do anything that is right.

Verse 18. *Recompense . . . iniquity . . . fathers . . . children*. This may seem to teach that children are punished for the sins of their fathers

which we know is not the way God deals with man. The statement is from Ex. 20: 5 where the fuller wording adds the proviso "of them that hate me." The passage means that God will punish the sinful children with the same penalty he used on their sinful fathers.

Verse 19. *Counsel* means advice and *work* is the practice of it; God is great in both. *Eyes open upon* means that God sees everything that is done.

Verse 20. *Set signs* refers to the miracles which God did in Egypt on behalf of Israel which they had not forgotten *unto this day*. These facts gave God a name that was respected by the nations of the earth.

Verse 21. After the above-mentioned signs in Egypt (which means the 10 plagues), God delivered his people by the miraculous crossing through the Red Sea.

Verse 22. *This land* means the land of Palestine where Israel had been living for centuries. It was necessary for the Lord to perform many more miracles in order to give them the land that had been promised to the fathers.

Verse 23. This verse is an acknowledgement of the sins of the nation. It also accounts for the sad condition into which it was plunged.

Verse 24. *Mounds* is rendered "engines of shot" (machines for hurling large stones) in the margin and the original seems to be used in that sense in some places. However, Strong defines the original, "A military mound, i.e. rampart of besiegers," and Moffatt renders the word "siege-mounds." The word evidently was used in both senses since those engines would be planted on the ramparts for the purpose of battering down the wall. At the time when Jeremiah was writing this the Chaldeans (or Babylonians) were at the walls of Jerusalem and conducting a siege. That would result in the three evils, *sword, famine and pestilence*, explained at ch. 14: 12.

Verse 25. The prophet makes it a matter of personal interest because he has always been sympathetic towards the woes of his people. In reminding the Lord of the recent business transaction he is not necessarily expressing any doubt, but is making a plea for further instruction from God.

Verses 26, 27. The requested information came, in which Jeremiah was also reminded of the greatness of the One who was doing all this. It

was repeated that nothing was *too hard* for the Lord, therefore he could suffer the siege and captivity to occur, and then return the people so that they could use the land that was purchased. With this assurance the immediate situation with its outcome was described again to Jeremiah.

Verse 28. The siege was in progress when this verse was spoken by the Lord but the city had not yet been taken.

Verse 29. The *Chaldeans* were a special group who were in the lead in the Babylonian Empire, hence the two words are used interchangeably. This verse was fulfilled as here predicted and the account of it is in 2 Ki. 25: 9.

Verse 30. When *Israel and Judah* are named separately but in the same sentence it means the 10-tribe and the 2-tribe kingdoms. Both groups had sinned against God by the *works of their hands* which means their man-made gods.

Verse 31. *This city* means Jerusalem which was the capital of the nation and was where the temple was located. *Day that they built it* means the day they repaired and arranged it as their capital city.

Verse 32. This verse includes the Jews of all the tribes, and all ranks of men in the tribes. All of them had been guilty of idolatry although the leaders were charged with being the ones who set the example and the others followed them.

Verse 33. *Turned the back* denotes they had deserted the Lord and had faced themselves toward their idols. It was not for lack of information, either, for God had been prompt, *rising up early*, in teaching them the good and the right way.

Verse 34. It was not enough to build altars for idol worship in the groves, but they brought their false gods into the Lord's temple.

Verse 35. These horrible human sacrifices are commented upon at 2 Ki. 16: 3 in volume 2 of this Commentary. *Baal* and *Molech* were invisible gods of the idolaters.

Verse 36. *Ye say* refers to Jeremiah's complaint that Jerusalem was about to fall into the hands of the king of Babylon. The Lord does not deny it but is going to authorize the prophet to make another prediction of the return from the captivity.

Verse 37. During the 70-year captivity the civilized world was all prac-

tically under the control of Babylon. The various parts of that empire included many lands, here called *countries*. Naturally, then, the Jews would get dispersed among these regions and the Lord would need to gather them out of all such places.

Verse 38. The word *people* is from the Hebrew word *am* and occurs over 1800 times in the Old Testament. Strong defines it, "A people (as a congregated unit); specifically a tribe (as those of Israel); hence (collectively) troops or attendants; figuratively a flock." Israel never ceased to be God's people in the sense of race or nationality, but during the captivity they were not a collected group.

Verse 39. *One heart* refers to the unity of mind the Jews were to have when they return from captivity.

Verse 40. *Everlasting* means age-lasting, and God promised to protect them as a collected group throughout that dispensation.

Verse 41. *Plant them* means God would establish them in that land as a strong nation. That was done after the captivity and as long as they were faithful they continued to be a strong force in the world.

Verse 42. *Like as* means only to make comparison of the certainty of God's predictions. His threat of the punishment was fulfilled, so likewise his promises would be fulfilled in their appointed time.

Verse 43. A demonstration of the prediction that *fields shall be bought* was enacted by Jeremiah in verses 6-14. By that transaction the prophet showed his confidence in the predictions which the Lord inspired him to make.

Verse 44. Private ownership of property has been endorsed all through the Bible. Not only so, but some form of title with legal or public security of it has been practiced. See Gen. 23: 17-20; 33: 19.) Hence the prediction is made here that the transference of property would be *subscribed and witnessed and sealed*.

### JEREMIAH 33

Verse 1. See the comments on ch. 32: 1, 2 as to this imprisonment. The following message from the Lord was to be the second one Jeremiah received while in prison.

Verse 2. The pronoun *it* refers to the earth that contains the fields spoken of in the preceding chapter. The point in the discussion is the fact

that God made the earth, therefore He has the power to give it to whomsoever he will.

Verse 3. This verse invites the prophet to call upon the Lord for information concerning things hitherto unrevealed.

Verse 4. *Houses of this city and of the kings* means the families in those places. They thought to retain possession of the houses but had failed; they had been thrown down by the *mounts*. For explanation of this word see the comments at ch. 32: 24.

Verse 5. *They* refers to the people of the houses mentioned in the preceding verse. They thought they could resist the Chaldeans (or Babylonians) but they failed. As a result their cities were filled with dead bodies which God had caused to be slain.

Verse 6. This verse through 14 is a bracket on the return from the captivity with a few special predictions in connection with that event. The only difference between *health* and *cure* is that the first is the result of using the second. It has general reference to the national soundness in their native land.

Verse 7. *Judah and Israel* are again named separately but in the same sentence. It is a prediction that the 12 tribes were all to be returned to Palestine.

Verse 8. *Cleanse them from all their iniquities* refers to the cure from idolatry. The historical note that shows the fulfillment of this prediction was quoted at Isa. 1: 25 in volume 3 of this Commentary.

Verse 9. The restoration of Israel to national greatness made an impression on the other nations. This can be seen by a careful reading of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. *Fear and tremble* means the nations will have respect for the Jewish nation.

Verse 10. This verse describes the condition of Jerusalem at the time Jeremiah was writing. The people had complained of it and God was giving them a prediction that it was to be changed.

Verse 11. This is a prediction of the general condition of goodness that was to exist after the return from captivity. The various relations of society and family life were to be restored.

Verse 12. This verse predicts the return of industrial and agricultural pursuits. *Flocks to lie down* indicates two blessings; sufficiency, and peace

while using it under the protection of the God of Israel.

Verse 13. Not only was the capital city of Jerusalem to be restored, but the smaller cities of the whole land were to be repossessed. *Him that telleth them* means the shepherds will be able to enumerate their flocks and retain their number in peace.

Verse 14. The bracket concludes very much as it began, with a prediction of the general prosperity that was to follow the captivity.

Verse 15. The "telescope" (See illustration at Isa. 1: 1) is again extended and the prophet sees farther into the future. This verse through 22 is a bracket and the subject is the kingdom of Christ. *Branch* is a reference to Christ because the word means a sprout or shoot from a former plant. That would mean David who was the illustrious ancestor of Christ through two family lines of descendants.

Verse 16. *Judah and Jerusalem* were to be saved spiritually by the benefits of the church that was to be set up by the descendants of David.

Verse 17. *Never want a man* is a prediction that David's great Descendant would occupy the throne continuously. He was not to be succeeded by other kings as were the ones in fleshly Israel.

Verse 18. *Levites* is used figuratively because they furnished the priests under the Mosaic system. Under Christ all of God's people will be regarded as priests (1 Pe. 2: 5, 9; Rev. 1: 6; 5: 10). The other terms of the verse also are figurative, referring to the services in the kingdom of Christ.

Verse 19, 20. The Lord rather interrupts the passage to make a comparison of the surety of his promises. They are as sure as the established law that regulates the day and night.

Verses 21-23. The subject of *David* and his Son is explained at verse 15, and that of *priests* is commented upon at verse 18. *Ministers* means servants and applies to all who are citizens in the kingdom of Christ since they are all servants.

Verse 24. The *two families* refers to the 10-tribe and the 2-tribe kingdoms. The first had gone into exile under the Assyrians more than a century before, and the second was already in the beginning of their 70-year captivity.

Verse 25. The condition of the universe and the movements of the planets had been regular for centuries. Their

surety is used to compare that of the predictions of their Creator as to other things about His people.

Verse 26. The predictions related to the fleshly descendants of David through Jacob. They were destined to suffer the full 70-year period of captivity, but the Lord assured them that he would cause *their captivity to return*.

## JEREMIAH 34

Verse 1. To avoid confusion the reader should frequently consult the information as to the "three" captivities, or rather the three divisions or stages of the main period. Each of these divisions is sometimes referred to as a captivity and certain predictions or other statements are made on the basis of such a date. A fuller statement was made at 2 Ki. 24: 1 in volume 2 of this Commentary. At the time of our present verse the third of the captivities was about due and Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, was still on the throne in Jerusalem.

Verse 2. Zedekiah was still resisting the siege and thought he could avoid capture by the king of Babylon; Jeremiah was instructed to go to him with a message.

Verse 3. This verse has been thought to contradict another prediction, but it is explained at ch. 32: 4 which the reader should see for the sake of the information.

Verse 4. *Not die by the sword* means he would not die in war or other physical contest. He was taken, blind, from Riblah to Babylon where he lived the rest of his life.

Verse 5. Incense and sweet odors were burned at the burial of people, especially men of distinction. Although he was to spend the rest of his days in Babylon, he was to be honored at his death by this custom.

Verse 6, 7. Jeremiah faithfully delivered the message to Zedekiah, king of Judah. At the time the city of Jerusalem was in a state of siege, and other cities of Judah, Lachish and Azekah, having walls of defense about them, were still holding out in resistance against the king of Babylon.

Verse 8. Zedekiah promised to obey the law of Moses regarding the releasing of servants, and had secured an agreement from the princes to release them. But they broke their agreement and then the Lord gave Jeremiah a message as mentioned in the first part of this verse.



Verse 9. The law of release referred to is in Lev. 25: 39-46. This was in consideration for the hard times that might be thrust upon them.

Verse 10. The princes and others who had servants at first agreed to let them go free. The servants enjoyed a short period of freedom as required by the law.

Verse 11. The greed of mankind for property is great, as well as the desire to be dominant. The princes broke their word as well as the law and forced their servants to resume their burdens of servitude.

Verses 12, 13. It was at this point the Lord gave Jeremiah the message referred to in the first part of verse 8. *Word of the Lord . . . from the Lord* is not an empty repetition. Many of the speeches were offered to the people in ancient times that were claimed to be the word of the Lord. Those speeches, however, were not from the Lord and therefore were not His word. For comments on the day see ch. 31: 32.

Verse 14. Many of the regulations under the Mosaic system were related to the idea of the unit "seven." They had the seventh day of the week as a holy day, the seventh-year rest for the land, and the seventh-year release for the servants. The last was the ordinance involved in the truce breaking charged against the princes.

Verse 15. When this agreement was made the masters of the servants were in the house of the Lord. That did not make the covenant any more binding as far as their moral obligation was concerned, but it amounted to an acknowledgment that the Lord was concerned in the transaction. Hence their breaking the contract not only violated a moral law but it constituted trucebreaking against the Lord.

Verse 16. In breaking their covenant concerning the servants the princes were accused of polluting the name of the Lord. That was because they had made that agreement in the house that was called by His name.

Verse 17. *I proclaim a liberty for you* means the Lord was going to punish these trucebreakers who were His servants by releasing them from their present servitude. In other words, their present Master was going to turn them over to another master who would treat them very cruelly. He was to punish them with the sword and other harsh measures, then remove them from their own country.

Verse 18. Verse 15 states this covenant was made in the house of the Lord. That would be in connection with the altar services, and important ceremonies were often made in connection with an animal sacrifice. In preparing a beast for the altar they sometimes cut it into two parts and *passed between the parts*. They could do this literally or with some motion of the hand, indicating they offered the sacrifice as an evidence of good faith in the transaction.

Verse 19. Judah was the kingdom and Jerusalem was its capital. The kingdom was represented by the princes or leading men in the presentation of the sacrifice.

Verse 20. Since the kingdom was represented in the transaction, including the making and breaking of the agreement, it was to be given the threatened punishment.

Verse 21, 22. A special punishment was to be imposed upon Zedekiah which was that he was to be taken from his throne and delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon. *Are gone up from you* refers to the action of the Babylonian army when Zedekiah fled from Jerusalem. This army pursued the king and overtook him near Jericho. Turning him over into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah, a temporary judgment seat, the army returned to finish the overthrow of Jerusalem. The history of this may be seen in 2 Ki. 25: 4-10.

## JEREMIAH 35

Verse 1. Again the book drops back several years and stops at the reign of Jehoiakim. A glance at verse 11 will tell us this writing was in the days when Nebuchadnezzar had come against the land of Judah.

Verse 2. The value of a good example will be the subject of a number of verses. There was a family called the Rechabites dwelling in Jerusalem at the time of this story. Jeremiah was told to bring them into the house of the Lord and offer them wine.

Verse 3. This verse names the members of the family of Rechabites who were brought in and offered wine.

Verse 4. The particular room where these people were brought was in charge of one who was a *man of God*, hence the Rechabites would know that no evil was intended as far as the association was concerned.

Verse 5. In this room the prophet offered to entertain his guests with

wine. It should be remembered that what was offered these people was not wrong in itself in those days, for wine was generally used by the best of people. The wrong in this case will be revealed in the rest of the story.

Verse 6. The Rechabites refused to drink the wine. They did not object because they thought it was wrong in itself, but because their father had forbidden it.

Verse 7. Their father further commanded them not to build houses to live in but to dwell in tents. They also were not to follow agricultural pursuits. We know such activities are not wrong in themselves, therefore the conclusion is that the wrong would have been in disregarding the commandments of their father.

Verses 8, 9. The only reason given by these people for their conduct was that they *obeyed the voice of their father*. That is the principle of obedience that should be the motive of all who are under authority. We may not understand why God has given certain commands, but if we respect His authority we will obey his orders.

Verse 10. By dwelling in tents these people would be in better condition to move if circumstances required it. They could do so and remain together, thus retaining their tribal unity as seemed to be the desire of their father.

Verse 11. This verse explains why the Rechabites were living at Jerusalem at this time. They had been living in other parts of Palestine, and, while friendly toward the full-blooded Israelites, and favorable to the doctrine of only one true God, they maintained a tribal independence.

Verse 12. After this experience with the Rechabites, the Lord was ready to draw a lesson for the use of Jeremiah with his people.

Verse 13. He was first to go to the men of Judah and call for their attention to the instructions which he was about to give.

Verse 14. The obedience of the Rechabites to their father's commands was contrasted with the disobedience of the men of Judah to the words of God. The contrast will stand out all the more when it is considered that it was the words of an earthly father in one case, and those of the God of Heaven in the other.

Verse 15. This passage is another where the apparent disagreement appears which has been mentioned a number of times. The explanation lies

chiefly in distinguishing between the nation as a whole and certain individuals in it. See the note at 2 Ki. 22: 17 in volume 2 of this COMMENTARY.

Verse 16. The contrast between the obedience of the Rechabites and the disobedience of the men of Judah was made the basis for the next message from the prophet.

Verse 17. The message consisted of the same prediction that had been made before. Judah and Jerusalem were to be punished because of their disobedience of God's words.

Verses 18, 19. Stress is laid by Jeremiah on the fact of obedience on the part of the Rechabites. The reward promised for this good conduct was to be an honor for their father. *Not want a man* means that the family would be perpetuated. That was just what their father hoped to accomplish by his instructions to the family, for he said (verse 7) *that ye may live many days in the Land*.

## JEREMIAH 36

Verse 1. The preceding chapter gave a general statement as to the date of the writing, but this gives the year which is the fourth of the reign of Jehoiakim. According to 2 Ki. 24: 1 that was the first year of the great 70-year captivity.

Verse 2. The difference between a *roll* and a *book* is in the fact that after a roll has been written upon it is called a book. The clause means as if it said: "Take a roll and make a book out of the things I have said to you by word of mouth." The subject matter of the book was to cover the whole time since the days of Josiah. It would be impossible for a man to write all of that from memory unless he had the inspiration of God to guide him, such as the Spirit did for the apostles (John 14: 12).

Verse 3. The key to this passage is in the words *may return every man*. It agrees with the distinction that has been made between the nation as a whole and the individuals in it. Even most of them refused to heed the admonitions of the Lord, but at least they were given the opportunity with the promise of personal consideration even though they would have to go along with the nation into captivity.

Verse 4. Baruch was a faithful attendant upon Jeremiah and acted as his secretary. He wrote the words on the roll as the prophet dictated them.

Verse 5. *Shut up* does not mean he

was in prison, for ch. 37: 4 shows he had not yet been imprisoned. One part of Strong's definition of the original is "to hold back." Jeremiah was hindered in some way from entering the temple where the book was to be read because of the opportunity of meeting the greater number of people.

Verse 6. Baruch was to select a day when some fast would be proclaimed because he would then have opportunity of meeting the people coming there to worship.

Verse 7. *It may be* should be considered in the light of the comments, ch. 35: 15.

Verse 8. *According . . . the prophet commanded him* is a significant statement. The inspired prophets represented the authority of God and to disregard their commands was the same as disobeying Him.

Verse 9. This verse gives the date when Baruch had the opportunity of reading the book. He was to wait until a fast was proclaimed so as to meet the people in the temple. The work of writing it was begun in the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim and it was in the fifth year that the fast was proclaimed.

Verse 10. The places named here were parts of the house of God where the people could assemble to hear the reading of the book. Baruch read in such a manner that *all the people* could hear.

Verse 11. Michaiah's grandfather was a scribe and he doubtless knew something of the importance of an inspired document.

Verse 12. Having heard as the book was read to the masses of the people in the temple, Michaiah went down to the king's palace where he found a group of special persons who were connected with the king's service.

Verse 13. *Declared all the words* means he declared about the words, for the book was still in the hands of Baruch who had written it.

Verse 14. The interest of these men was so aroused that they desired to hear from the book direct. They sent Jehudi to request Baruch to come with the book.

Verse 15. Having come to the group in the king's palace, Baruch was requested to read the book to them which he did.

Verse 16. *Afraid* is defined by Strong, "to be startled." This was caused by the unpleasant predictions the book con-

tained against them, and they thought the king should be informed about it.

Verse 17. See my comments at verse 2 as to writing so much from memory. These men thought the same about Baruch and asked him how he did it.

Verse 18. The explanation was a simple one and would not require the work of the memory. Baruch was not an inspired man but had served Jeremiah as his secretary and was accustomed to "taking dictation."

Verse 19. No doubt the men understood the temperament of the king and thought it would not be safe for Baruch and Jeremiah to show themselves.

Verse 20. Jehudi and the princes laid the roll aside in a safe place, but they went to the king and related the circumstances to him.

Verse 21. The report stirred up the interest of the king and he ordered Jehudi to get the roll out of its place in the scribe's room. The king then had the roll read in the hearing of himself and the princes attendant upon him.

Verse 22. The *winterhouse* was the winter apartment of the king's house; the mention of it was to explain the presence of the fire.

Verse 23. After Jehudi had read a few leaves, the king would cut that much from the main roll and cast them into the fire, continuing until the entire roll was burned.

Verse 24. The message of the roll did not produce the desired effect. Neither the king nor his princes showed any signs of regret for their unrighteous lives.

Verse 25. *Nevertheless* means that notwithstanding the pleas of these good men, the king destroyed the roll by burning.

Verse 26. This verse justifies the advice that was given Baruch and Jeremiah in verse 19. That verse merely told the men to hide from the sight of other men. This verse tells us the further particular that God helped them to find a safe hiding place from the wrath of the king.

Verses 27, 28. Men can destroy the material copy of God's word, but that does not do away with the truth taught therein. In this case the material copy of the word will be replaced with the same authority as was the first one.

Verse 29. Jeremiah was not a witness to the burning of the roll, but the king was to be informed that the prophet knew about it.

Verse 30. *Have none to sit upon the throne* ignores the 3-month reign of his son Jehoiachin. Such a short and uneventful reign was not considered worth noticing. The prediction concerning the dead body of Jehoiakim was made before and comments were made there at ch. 22: 19.

Verse 31. These predictions had been made by word of mouth from God to Jeremiah and they were written in the book which Jehoiakim destroyed. This verse was to remind him of them and to warn him that his burning the former roll would not let him escape the punishment threatened for his iniquities.

Verse 32. Some additional words were written in the second roll, hence the king made his case worse by his wicked act of burning the roll.

### JEREMIAH 37

Verse 1. The last date we had was the fifth year of Jehoiakim (ch. 36: 9). That king reigned 11 years (2 Ki. 23: 36), and we are now in the first year of Zedekiah; hence a period of 6 or 7 years has passed since the preceding chapter. Coniah (or Jehoiachin) is mentioned here, but he reigned only 3 months so we may overlook him in making practical estimates of dates.

Verse 2. Zedekiah, like his predecessor, refused to hearken to the words of God which were spoken by the prophet Jeremiah.

Verse 3. Notwithstanding his rebellious attitude Zedekiah had the boldness to send men to Jeremiah to ask for his prayers.

Verse 4. This verse is explanatory on the subject of Jeremiah's freedom. Some previous passages had spoken of his imprisonment, but the parts of Jeremiah's book are not always chronological as to dates. This verse is necessary, therefore, to clarify the situation of the prophet.

Verse 5. The Egyptians were not favorably disposed toward the Babylonians, and when the latter had come up against Jerusalem, the Egyptians came up and offered to help the Jews to resist the siege. Seeing this, the Babylonians withdrew from Jerusalem for the time in order to meet the Egyptians; I shall quote some history on this event: "Now when Zedekiah had preserved the league of mutual assistance that he had made with the Babylonians eight years, he brake it, and revolted to the Egyptians, in hopes, by their assistance, of overcoming the

Babylonians. When the king of Babylon knew this, he made war against him. He laid his country waste, and took his fortified towns, and came to the city of Jerusalem itself to besiege it. But when the king of Egypt heard what circumstances Zedekiah was in, he took a great army with him, and came into Judea, as if he would raise the siege; upon which the king of Babylon departed from Jerusalem, and met the Egyptians, and joined battle with them, and beat them; and when he had put them to flight, he pursued them, and drove them out of all Syria [Palestine]. Now as soon as the king of Babylon was departed from Jerusalem, the false prophet deceived Zedekiah, and said, that the king of Babylon would not any more make war against him or his people, nor remove them out of their own country into Babylon; and that those men in captivity would return, with all those vessels of the temple, of which the king of Babylon had despoiled that temple." Josephus, Antiquities, Book 10, Chapter 7, Section 3. I trust the reader will take careful note of this historical quotation as it explains many of the verses just now before us.

Verse 6. The prophet Jeremiah is often mentioned by name to distinguish him from false prophets. At the present time there were some of them trying to mislead the king of Judah into a false feeling of security.

Verse 7. There is no evidence that the prophet prayed for any special favor for Zedekiah as he evidently expected, but he did look to the Lord for information. God told him to inform the king of Judah that the army of Pharaoh, which was at that moment approaching the city of Jerusalem, would return to their own land and hence would be of no help for Zedekiah.

Verse 8. After the Chaldeans (or Babylonians) had driven Pharaoh back to his own land as per the preceding verse, they were to return to the siege about Jerusalem. (See the quotation from Josephus at verse 5.) This verse is a prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem which would complete the captivity. The fulfillment of this is recorded in 2 Ki. 25: 8-10.

Verse 9. *Deceive not yourselves* was said in allusion to the false prophets mentioned in verse 6. False assurances of peace are dangerous because they act as a hindrance to necessary reformation of life.

Verse 10. Wounded men do not liter-



ally rise up and perform military duty except by a miracle. The passage was so worded to mean that no apparent obstacle could prevent the Lord from carrying out his plans. The Chaldeans were bound to succeed now because God willed it to be so.

Verse 11. This refers to the time when the Babylonians withdrew from the siege of Jerusalem to meet the Egyptians, mentioned in verse 5 and illustrated with a quotation from Josephus.

Verse 12. The withdrawal of the Babylonian army gave Jeremiah an opportunity to get out of Jerusalem. The land of Benjamin was near the capital city and was a part of the kingdom of Judah, hence he was still within his own country.

Verse 13. Jeremiah's movement was misinterpreted by a guardsman and he was accused of trying to desert his country in favor of the enemy. This was not only a false accusation, but was foolish since the Benjamites were his fellow citizens.

Verse 14. Of course Jeremiah denied the accusation in strong terms, asserting that it was a falsehood. Nevertheless the guard ignored the denial and brought the prophet to the princes.

Verse 15. For some reason the house of a scribe named Jonathan was being used as a prison at this time. The prophet was given unjust and cruel treatment and shut up in this prison.

Verse 16. *Dungeon* is from *bowr* and is defined by Strong, "A pit hole (especially one used as a cistern or prison)." The word therefore does not necessarily mean a place of darkness but only a place dug out for various uses. The original for *cabins* really means "a vault or cell," and here means the departments dug in the pit.

Verse 17. We do not know whether the king had anything to do directly with putting Jeremiah into the prison. However, he certainly knew about it for when he wished to obtain some information he had him brought out. He was given the word from the Lord which was practically what he had been told before, that he was to be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon.

Verse 18. Now we know that the king had something to do with the imprisonment of Jeremiah, for in his protest he charged him with the words *ye have put me in prison*.

Verse 19. Jeremiah further shamed him for listening to his false prophets

who had contradicted the predictions of the inspired prophet.

Verse 20. Jeremiah did not retract anything he had predicted; he did not even request to have his imprisonment entirely set aside. He only requested for himself that he not be returned to the cells lest he die.

Verse 21. Jeremiah's request was granted and he was placed in the *court* which was the yard around the prison and which was enclosed with a fence or other barrier. (See the comments at ch. 32: 2.) He was also favored by the king's command that he be given daily rations of bread as long as the supply lasted.

### JEREMIAH 38

Verse 1. *Prince* is from *SAB* and Strong defines it, "A head person (of any rank or class)." In the King James translation it has been rendered by captain, chief, general, governor, keeper, lord, master, ruler. Generally speaking the word would apply to any leading or outstanding man whether official or unofficial. The men named in this verse are called princes in verse 4.

Verses 2, 3. These men were displeased with the predictions that Jeremiah had made against Jerusalem which they repeated in these verses. They gave a correct report but seemed to blame the prophet for the truth contained in them when he was only faithfully delivering to them the word of the Lord.

Verse 4. It is an old story that men have thought they could avoid the fulfillment of undesirable truths by removing the man who speaks them. These princes made a plea to the king to have Jeremiah put to death.

Verse 5. By giving these men unrestricted authority in their dealing with Jeremiah the king became a party to whatever they did.

Verse 6. Their motive might have been to let Jeremiah die of starvation and exposure without directly putting him to death. We have reason to suspect them of this for they had called for his death (verse 4). This *dungeon* has the same original as the word in the preceding chapter. We there saw the word could mean a cistern or a pit dug for other purposes. In this place it might have been dug for use as a cistern but it was almost empty except the mire in the bottom. Jeremiah sank down in the mire and was thus a prisoner in a double sense.

Verses 7, 8. Many persons of rank employed eunuchs as chamberlains instead of chambermaids. These servants had their duties in the houses, but the king was not in there at this time, having taken a seat at one of the important gates of the city to act as judge of affairs. So this eunuch, hearing of Jeremiah's plight, left his work and went out to the king to inform him of the prophet's situation.

Verse 9. The eunuch made no reference to the merits of the case against Jeremiah; he may have had no opinion on that subject. The plea the eunuch made was from the standpoint of humanity, that Jeremiah was being treated in an evil way in that he was exposed to the danger of a cruel death.

Verse 10. It would not require thirty men to pull Jeremiah out of the pit, but the eunuch would need protection against the princes. They had caused the prophet to be placed in the pit and might try to prevent his release.

Verse 11. *Cast clouts and rotten rags* mean practically the same. The latter means old garments and the former includes old rags in general. *Treasury* is from an original that means a storage place in general, and is used here to refer to some closet where were placed articles "not good enough to keep but too good to throw away."

Verse 12. *Armholes* is a strange translation and it comes from two Hebrew words: *ATSTSIYL*, which Strong defines "a joint of the hand (i. e., knuckle), and *YAD* defined, "a hand (the open one)." Jeremiah was to put the rags in the palms of his hands to keep the cords from cutting them in the strain of pulling him out of the mire into which he had sunk; he did as he was directed.

Verse 13. Jeremiah was not released after being taken out of the mire, but was returned to the court of the prison where he remained until the city was taken.

Verse 14. Zedekiah was selfish and wished to confer with the prophet in his own interests. He arranged a meeting at one of the important entries to the temple. He wanted to commit the prophet to a promise of confidence before asking some question.

Verse 15. Jeremiah was suspicious of the king which he had reason to be from his previous experiences. His statements indicated the suspicion, for he exacted a promise from the king before giving any information.

Verse 16. The king did not make

any promises as to his compliance with the word of the Lord, but he did assure Jeremiah of his life. *That made us this soul* was a logical statement. The One who made the *soul* (from *NEPHESH*, defined "a breathing creature") would certainly know what that creature was saying and thinking. The oath, therefore, was supposed to be made in all solemnity.

Verses 17, 18. Jeremiah did not change his predictions from what he had made before. He admonished the king to surrender to the king of Babylon. We should note that no promise was made of ending the captivity even though the king should surrender peacefully. His personal welfare and that of the city could have been taken care of even while the captivity of the nation continued.

Verse 19. Zedekiah seemed to be in a state of nervous agitation. He was afraid of the Jews who had already been taken by the Chaldeans lest they be peeved because they had been taken while the king was still comparatively free. He feared they might cause him to be turned over into the hand of the enemy and that would make him an object of reproach.

Verse 20. Jeremiah assured the king that what he feared would not come upon him; if he would surrender peacefully all would be well with him personally.

Verse 21. *Refuse to go forth* is a key phrase in this situation. There was to be no avoiding the falling into the hands of the Babylonians. The question was whether it would be done through the unresisting surrender of the king, or that he would be taken by force and be treated as a captive of war would be.

Verse 22. If the king chooses to be taken by force, then the women who were still left in his house would be taken also by the king of Babylon. If that happens these women will reproach Zedekiah and say he had even been betrayed by *his friends* (meaning the false prophets who had deceived him). *Feet are sunk in the mire* is used figuratively, meaning he would find himself in deep trouble. The figure is an allusion to the persecution of Jeremiah whose feet were literally put in the mire.

Verse 23. Jeremiah concluded his speech with the summing up of what would happen if the king refused to surrender. He and his family would be taken, also the city of Jerusalem

would be burned. That would be unfortunate, since the city might be spared notwithstanding the captivity of the nation by the Babylonians.

Verse 24. The king requested Jeremiah to observe secrecy as to the subject matter of their conference. We do not know what were the motives for this request, further than his wish to avoid trouble with the princes.

Verse 25. Zedekiah surely knew the character of his leading men to be questionable, at best, and that they might not stop short of murder were their plans hindered. Moreover, he did not want any serious harm to come to Jeremiah which he feared would be done if his conversation with the princes did not please them.

Verse 26. Jeremiah had made such a request of the king (ch. 37: 20) as was mentioned in this verse. Moreover, such a subject would be sufficient reason for the conversation between the king and the prophet.

Verse 27. Sure enough, the princes came and asked Jeremiah the question the king expected and the prophet gave them the answer as directed. It had the desired effect for they ceased their conversation with Jeremiah. *Matter not perceived* means they did not know all of the conversation that had taken place between Jeremiah and the king; only that part just stated.

Verse 28. Jeremiah's request was granted and he remained in the court (or yard surrounding the prison) of the prison until the end of the siege.

### JEREMIAH 39

Verse 1. This verse is according to 2 Ki. 25: 1-3 which is the original history of the event. The city of Jerusalem was thrown into a state of siege which is one of the most effective military measures for taking a fortified place.

Verse 2. The city endured the inconvenience and suffering of the siege for about three years when it was finally taken. *Broken up* is from BAQU, which Strong defines, "A primitive root; to cleave; generally to rend, break, rip or open." The phrase denotes that a breach was made in the walls of the city which would let the Babylonian army enter. That would mean the capturing of the city as the people were not in any condition, either in body or mind, for putting up any resistance, having undergone the ravages of famine for several years.

Verse 3. The men named were im-

portant military leaders of the Babylonian Empire who took possession of the city. *Middle gate* signifies the central or most important gate of the city. The chief transactions between cities in ancient times were done at the gates since that would be the spot for direct contact with the people coming and going. The passages showing the importance of the city gates are too numerous to mention all, but the reader will do well to note the following. Gen. 19: 1; 22: 17; Deut. 25: 7; 2 Sam. 19: 8; Job 29: 7.

Verse 4. This verse through 8 should be marked as a bracket because of the important events recorded in connection with each other, and their connection with other passages in the Bible. I will suggest that the reader see also 2 Ki. 25: 4-7. The king thought he could make his escape if he selected the darkness for the purpose. Only a short time before this (Ezk. 12: 12) another prophet had predicted that the king would flee by night or "twilight."

Verse 5. Zedekiah did not get very far until the Babylonians overtook him in the plains of Jericho. He was seized and taken for a hearing before Nebuchadnezzar who was stationed at Riblah. This was a place on the way from the Babylonian country to Palestine and Egypt. The occasion for Zedekiah's being brought to this place will be understood better by a quotation from Smith's Bible Dictionary. "Riblah in the land of Hamath, a place on the great road between Palestine and Babylon, at which the kings of Babylon were accustomed to remain while directing the operations of their armies in Palestine and Phoenicia. Here Nebuchadnezzar waited while the sieges of Jerusalem and of Tyre were being conducted by his lieutenants."

Verses 6, 7. I have included these two verses in one paragraph because they pertain to an apparent difficulty or disagreement between certain statements in different places. In some passages it will be predicted that Zedekiah was to see the king of Babylon, also that he was to be taken to the city of Babylon and yet was never to see it. All is clear when we understand that he saw the king at Riblah and where he then had his eyes plucked out, after which he was taken to Babylon where he died. It would be well for the reader to make a group of the following passages. 2 Ki. 25: 6, 7; Jer. 32: 4, 5; 34: 3; 39: 6, 7; Ezk. 12: 13.

Verse 8. Having overtaken Zedekiah and turned him over to Nebuchad-

nezzar at Riblah, the Chaldeans completed their reduction of the buildings in Jerusalem. They destroyed the temple (2 Ki. 25: 9) and the king's house which means the palace.

Verse 9. There were still some people left in Jerusalem who had not been taken in the previous attacks. These were taken as captives to Babylon by the captain of the guard or commander-in-chief.

Verse 10. We are not told why the captain of the guard extended this favor to the poor, but we do know that certain personal favors were given to members of the Jewish nation. For instance, we shall learn that Jeremiah did not have to go to Babylon after the fall of the city. These *poor* of the nation had been the victims of the greedy leaders (Isa. 3: 15; 10: 2; 58: 3), and it was just for them now to have some enjoyment in the use of the lands that had been wrongfully taken from them.

Verse 11. Nebuzar-adan was captain of the guard or commander-in-chief for Nebuchadnezzar, and he managed the military affairs under the direction of the king. He was thus following the orders of his superior in what he did with the captives.

Verse 12. He was commanded to treat Jeremiah with special kindness, even permitting him to be granted any of his wishes. Of course we will understand that all these favors would have to be in harmony with his status as a prisoner of the Babylonians.

Verse 13. What Jeremiah's present wishes were we are not told but they can be surmised by what was done for him since it was of a desirable nature. The men named in this verse were officers in the Babylonian army but were under Nebuzar-adan.

Verse 14. The men named were sent to take Jeremiah out of the court of the prison where he had been held for a long time. He was put into the hands of Gedaliah who had been appointed as governor over the Jews (verse 10) after the siege of Jerusalem had been accomplished.

Verse 15. As an explanation of this kind treatment, the prophet goes back and tells us of a word that God spoke to him while he was still shut up in the court of the prison.

Verse 16. Ebed-melech was the eunuch who was friendly toward Jeremiah and procured his deliverance from the mire (ch. 38: 7-13). He was honored with a personal message from

the prophet in which the predictions against the place were repeated.

Verse 17. In recognition of his trust in the Lord and his friendly services for Jeremiah, the eunuch was promised protection from his personal enemies.

Verse 18. Ebed-melech was assured that he would not die by the sword when the city fell. Thus we have another instance of personal favor bestowed for a righteous life even amidst the trials of the calamity that was to come upon the nation.

## JEREMIAH 40

Verse 1. History and prophecy are blended together in the closing chapters of this book, and the events are not always chronological, either in the order of their occurrences or the dates. The principal thing for us to learn is what happened and to whom. The preceding chapter tells us of the special favor that was extended to Jeremiah on orders from the king of Babylon. It meant that he was to be taken out of the court of the prison and to be committed to the care of Gedaliah who had the oversight of the Jews at Mizpeh and other places. After telling us about that favor the writer proceeds to a later fact and says, *so he dwelt among the people*. However, this was not immediately carried out upon the fall of Jerusalem. In the general disturbance of that event Jeremiah was put in chains and taken to Ramah for the time where Nebuzar-adan had his headquarters. Then when this chief captain was ready to go to Babylon with the prisoners who were destined for that place, he first arranged to carry out the orders given him concerning Jeremiah; that is where this chapter begins. *The word that came to Jeremiah* refers to some message God gave the prophet after being released by Nebuzar-adan.

Verse 2. We know that God sometimes spoke to heathen persons when they were involved in some of the affairs of His people (Dan. 4: 14; Ezra 1: 2). Here the chief captain repeated to Jeremiah what the prophet had himself previously declared.

Verse 3. Nebuzar-adan was talking to Jeremiah but the pronouns applied to Judah as a whole of which nation the prophet was a member though innocent of any charge. So the words *ye* and *you* were said in reference to the guilty nation.

Verse 4. Nebuzar-adan was then ready to complete his charge concern-



ing Jeremiah. He thus removed the chains that had been fastened upon him in the excitement of the fall of Jerusalem. He told him to take his choice between going with him to Babylon or remaining in the land of Palestine.

Verse 5. *Was not yet gone back* means this conversation was at Ramah before the captain left for his other activities. It repeats the same offer made in verse 4, and the context shows Jeremiah chose not to go with Nebuzaradan, who then rewarded him with provisions and dismissed him.

Verse 6. Having been released at Ramah, Jeremiah went to Mizpah and dwelt among the people who had been committed to the care of Gedaliah. This is the fact that is mentioned ahead of time, in ch. 39: 14.

Verse 7. *Captains of the forces* means the war officers who had been serving Judah at the time of the Babylonian invasion. When Jerusalem fell these men ceased their operations, and they learned that Gedaliah had been made governor over the Jews who were left in the land by the commander-in-chief of the Babylonians.

Verse 8. The men referred to in the preceding verse are named in this. They came to Mizpah where Gedaliah was to have his headquarters. Ishmael seemed to be a leader among the group but we shall learn that he was an ambitious, jealous, wicked man.

Verse 9. Gedaliah was disposed to be a trustworthy captive of Babylon who would show the proper respect for the king who had conquered his country. He gave faithful advice to his fellow Jews and assured them it would be better for them to submit to the Babylonians peacefully whose prisoners they virtually were already.

Verse 10. Gedaliah expected to be kept busy with his appointment at Mizpah, not only in overseeing the poor Jews who were left in his care, but in his attentions to the members of the Chaldean nation who would resort to him there. But as for these officers who had formerly led the Jewish forces, they were advised to go out and gather of the fruits of the land (as per ch. 39: 10) and reside in the cities which they had succeeded in holding in the conflict.

Verse 11. The report of Gedaliah's appointment was learned by the Jews in the more distant districts, such as *Moab* and *Edom* which were east of the Jordan.

Verse 12. The Jews mentioned before had been driven into those countries by the invasion of the Babylonian forces into Palestine. Upon hearing the favorable news of Gedaliah's appointment they came gladly to him at Mizpah.

Verse 13. Johanan was mentioned in verse 8 but the writer then turned his attention to Ishmael because of his apparent outstanding importance. Now Johanan claims attention as bearer of a message to Gedaliah.

Verse 14. The Ammonites had long been enemies of the Jews though they were distantly related to the Abrahamic blood line. The king of these people heard of the honorable position of Gedaliah and conspired with Ishmael to have the good man killed. For that purpose Ishmael, whose personal ambition fitted him for the hateful work, was sent to Mizpah where Gedaliah was situated according to the appointment of the king of Babylon through his commander-in-chief. Johanan learned of this dark plot and gave Gedaliah the warning but he would not believe it.

Verse 15. Johanan was so confident in his view of the situation that he offered to prevent the plot by slaying Ishmael. That would have been a just act since all who plot to overthrow a lawful ruler by force have forfeited their right to live.

Verse 16. Gedaliah not only refused to authorize Johanan for the patriotic act of service which he offered to do, but charged him with making a false accusation. We shall learn how sadly true was the warning of this faithful man.

## JEREMIAH 41

Verse 1. The coming of these men had been referred to in the preceding chapter as part of a general statement; this verse begins the direct account of the sad affair. Gedaliah showed that he had not been impressed by the warning of Johanan for he entertained Ishmael and his associates royally. *Eat bread together* was a positive mark of intimate friendship in Biblical times. (See 1 Cor. 5: 11.)

Verse 2. Ishmael and his group violated almost every rule of proper conduct that we can think of. They disregarded the law of gratitude; they took advantage of Gedaliah's confidence; they violated the laws of both God and man against murder, and that, too, by killing a man who was in

a position of authority. Not only so, but they killed a man who not only had not sought his office, but who was appointed thereto on account of his evident worthiness, seeing it was done by a man who had it in his power to have humiliated him to the utmost had he been so minded.

Verse 3. Ishmael was so mad against Gedaliah that he slew all the Jews who were helpless and who had been entrusted to Gedaliah's care. He evidently wished to have no witnesses who might escape and be in the way of his further wicked plots.

Verse 4. This verse verifies the remark on the preceding one, for it says concerning the slaying of Gedaliah that *no man knew it*.

Verse 5. These men did not have animal sacrifices for the house of God and the articles of service had been removed. But the place where they had stood was considered, especially by these men who came from the region of the 10 tribes. They could burn incense even without the temple and its furniture. *Beards shaven* was a custom in ancient times on occasions of grief or humility. These Jews had much cause for those feelings, having lost their country and temple.

Verse 6. On their way toward Jerusalem these people passed near Mizpah and Ishmael went out to meet them. He thought it might not be suitable to his plans for them to be living but rather since "dead men tell nothing," it would be to his advantage and interest to get them out of the way. But to do so he must use some kind of deception, and he did so by pretending to sympathize with them and offering them some assistance. He invited them to come with him to Gedaliah who would be supposed to offer them some consolation.

Verse 7. These trusting people followed the wicked Ishmael into the city for they were not aware that Gedaliah and others had been slain. No sooner had they reached the city, the place where Ishmael had started his "reign of terror," than he slew these sorrowing worshipers almost to the last man, and disposed of their bodies in a disrespectful manner by casting them into a pit as if disposing of waste matter.

Verse 8. There were ten men who had survived the attacks of Ishmael. They bribed him to spare them on the ground that they possessed valuable fields and products. Should Ishmael slay them there would be no one to

show him where to find these valuable products. On this ground Ishmael was himself misled and he spared their lives.

Verse 9. *Because of Gedaliah* indicates that Ishmael feared these men would have been friendly toward Gedaliah. He had reason to think thus since they had followed him into the city in order to *come to Gedaliah*. So his hatred for the governor was extended to these men also and hence their death was decreed. The purpose of identifying this pit as the one that Asa made was to give some idea of its size. Asa made it as a part of his preparation in his war with Baasha. It was a cistern and its use was that for water (pit meaning cistern) while engaged in the war and it would necessarily be large. That is the point being made here for it says Ishmael *filled it* with the dead bodies.

Verse 10. After the aforesaid slaughter of the captives, Ishmael kidnapped the daughters of Zedekiah whom the king of Babylon had sent to Mizpah for safekeeping with some others, and started with them to go into the land of the Ammonites.

Verse 11. About this time Johanan got the news of what Ishmael had done, including the kidnapping of the king's daughters and other refugees.

Verse 12. He took his captains and pursued after Ishmael. They overtook him near a large pool at Gibeon which was a spot on the way to the land of the Ammonites.

Verse 13. When Johanan and his forces came in sight of the persons whom Ishmael had kidnaped *then they were glad*. They knew that it meant their rescue for Johanan was a good man and was the one who had warned Gedaliah of Ishmael.

Verse 14. Encouraged by the sight of these friends, these victims of Ishmael turned from him and joined Johanan and his group.

Verse 15. We do not know how much of a conflict took place at this time. However, Ishmael escaped with eight men and fled to the land of the Ammonites, the place to which he had started from Mizpah.

Verse 16. This sad experience made Johanan fearful in a general feeling of terror. Such a feeling sometimes causes a man to act with poor judgment. After his encounter with Ishmael at the pool near Gibeon, he gathered his captains with all the Jews he had recovered there, and joined them

with the others who had escaped the sword in the terrible slaughter by Ishmael at Mizpah.

Verse 17. Johanan decided on fleeing to Egypt to get away from the Chaldeans. They paused in their flight at a spot held by an Israelite named Chimham which was near Bethlehem. This was a friendly region and Johanan considered it a safe place to rest while making his further plans for the journey into Egypt.

Verse 18. The Chaldeans (or Babylonians) had appointed Gedaliah as governor at Mizpah, and his murder might be regarded as an act of war against them. Since Ishmael was a Jew, the Chaldeans might develop a new feeling against the others. At least this was the panicky fear that possessed Johanan, so he planned to flee.

### JEREMIAH 42

Verse 1. *Came near* indicates a more personal contact, sufficiently near to make a verbal request of Jeremiah. He doubtless was in the group as one of the persons whom Johanan had carried off from Mizpah, having escaped the sword of Ishmael.

Verse 2. Having paused at the habitation of Chimham, the group headed by Johanan made this personal approach unto the prophet to make an urgent request.

Verse 3. They professed to desire divine guidance in their way and in all their general conduct. To obtain such assistance they asked Jeremiah to pray God for them, he being a faithful prophet and servant of the Lord. Such a request would be praiseworthy were it coming from the heart; we shall see whether it was or not.

Verse 4. Jeremiah agreed to make the requested prayer for them. He also assured them that whatever the Lord revealed to him he would deliver to them faithfully.

Verse 5. The people even called upon the Lord to witness their promise to do whatever He should require of them.

Verse 6. They went into even more detail and specified their promise to obey whether *good* or *evil* were imposed upon them. These words are not used in the sense of right and wrong for God never brings anything wrong upon man. The words mean whether the things required would be pleasant or unpleasant.

Verse 7. The Lord used a waiting

time of ten days before giving to Jeremiah the message in answer to his prayer on behalf of the people.

Verse 8. Jeremiah wished to present his message to the entire group of petitioners that no one might be left with any excuse. Hence it was said he called them *from the least even to the greatest*.

Verse 9. The identity of the source of the message was carefully attended to. It was the God of Israel, and the very one to whom they asked Jeremiah to go with his supplication on their behalf.

Verse 10. The message advised them to be submissive and *abide in this land*. This phrase meant for them not to go to Egypt but to remain where they were. They had not been required to go to Babylon although they were "prisoners of war" in reality, but had been given the privilege of remaining in their home land.

Verse 11. They were assured that no harm would result to them from their captor (the king of Babylon) if they would obey the word of the Lord.

Verse 12. The particular ones to whom this message was given were yet in their own land, but the promise applied to their nation as a whole. The return of the nation from Babylon would mean a blessing to these individuals also.

Verse 13. *But if ye say*. This phrase, considered in the light of the context shows that the people rejected the advice of God through the prophet, and declared their determination of going to Egypt. This and the following verse is their rebellious assertion against the admonition of the prophet.

Verse 14. They professed to believe that by going into Egypt they would escape the ravages of war. They probably based this hope on the few instances of apparent friendship that Egypt had shown to them recently.

Verse 15. From here to the close of the chapter the prophet describes the evils that will come upon them if they reject the advice of the Lord. *Remnant of Judah* means the ones who had been permitted to remain in Palestine when the others were carried off to Babylon.

Verse 16. There is no use to try to run away from God, and by going to Egypt against the admonition of the prophet they would be casting defiance against the Lord.

Verse 17. For the significance of *sword, famine and pestilence* see the

comments at ch. 14: 12. The punishment was to be complete for all who attempted to make Egypt a hiding place from the Babylonians.

Verse 18. The ruin the Lord brought on Jerusalem was in punishment for the sins of the nation. Now that which was to be imposed on these who would not accept the punishment of Jerusalem submissively would also be great. An *execration* means something worthy of being cursed.

Verse 19. This verse sums up the warning that God gave to his people. *Remnant of Judah* means the small number of the kingdom of Judah who had survived the overthrow of Jerusalem, and had been given permission to remain in Palestine.

Verse 20. To *dissemble* means to act deceitfully or hypocritically. The prophet accuses the people of having acted in that way when they asked him to pray to God for them. They evidently thought their profession of trust in God would win for them some escape from the divine wrath, for when the answer of God was unfavorable they broke their word and declared they would go into Egypt as they had originally said.

Verse 21. In rejecting the warning of the prophet, the people were accused of disobeying the voice of the Lord God.

Verse 22. A final warning was given that they would perish in the very land whither they had fled for safety.

### JEREMIAH 43

Verse 1. When Jeremiah spoke *all the words of the Lord* he fulfilled the promise he made to these people as recorded in chapter 42: 4.

Verse 2. We regret to see the change that seemed to come over Johanan. In the previous chapters he was devoted to the interests of Jeremiah and the other refugees and opposed the wicked plots of Ishmael. Now he is against Jeremiah and siding with the others who rebelled against the admonition of the Lord. He even accused Jeremiah of falsehood and denied his inspiration. These men were said to be *proud* which shows that pride is not always exhibited by some showy condition. In the present case it was demonstrated by a rebellious spirit. Paul gives a similar picture of it in 1 Timothy 6: 3, 4 where he accuses a false teacher of being proud.

Verse 3. Baruch was Jeremiah's

secretary (ch. 32: 12-14) and was a good man. There was no ground for saying that he had influenced Jeremiah in the wrong direction. But some pretext had to be used for opposing the prophet since he had previously supported him in his teaching. If a good man could be influenced at all in the wrong direction, it would probably be possible to be done by the words of a friend; hence the mention of Baruch who was a trusted servant of Jeremiah.

Verse 4. Some people do not appreciate a good thing when they have it. These captives of Babylon had been given the privilege of remaining in their own home land, but now they ignored that favor and planned to flee out of the country. Such an action was as bad in principle as that of a "trusty" who abuses his parole by fleeing.

Verse 5. This revolt was headed by Johanan and included the scattered citizens of Judah from various territories.

Verse 6. All of these persons were herded into a band of escapees to be taken to Egypt. We have no direct information as to the attitude of these individuals, but we do know that Jeremiah and his faithful secretary Baruch were not willing to go. Hence we may justly say that they were kidnaped by Johanan.

Verse 7. This verse concludes the sad story of this rebellious action. The significant part of the whole affair was in the fact that it was in disobedience against the word of the Lord. Tahpanhes was the place where they settled which is in the northeast part of Egypt.

Verse 8. In ancient times the Lord frequently used one heathen nation to chastise another. This verse starts a bracket in which the prophet predicts a conflict between Egypt and Babylon and the victory will be on the side of Babylon. Following my practice where important information can be gained from secular history, I shall here make a quotation as follows: "The king of Babylon, taking advantage therefore of the intestine divisions which the rebellion of Amasis had occasioned in that kingdom, marched thither at the head of his army. He subdued Egypt from Migdol or Magdol, a town on the frontiers [borders] of the kingdom, as far as Syene, in the opposite extremity where it borders on Ethiopia. He made a horrible devastation wherever he came; killed a great number



of the inhabitants, and made such dreadful havoc in the country, that the damage could not be repaired in *forty years*. Nebuchadnezzar, having loaded his army with spoils, and *conquered the whole kingdom*, came to an accommodation [agreement] with Amasis; and leaving him as his viceroy [representative] there, returned to Babylon [emphasis mine, E. M. Z.]. Rollin's Ancient History, Volume 1, page 232. This history is corroborated in Britannica, v. 7, p. 743, article Egypt; Josephus, Antiquities, Book 10, Chapter 10, Section 3.

Verse 9. It is related that Pharaoh was repairing his palace at the time of this prediction. The stones referred to were like those being used for the repair work of the self-satisfied Egyptian king.

Verse 10. The significance of the "acting" was just where the king of Egypt was feeling secure in his power, the king of Babylon would some day set up his throne. *My servant* is said of Nebuchadnezzar because the Lord was going to use his services in punishing the king of Egypt.

Verse 11. Famine, pestilence and sword were often threatened as a punishment from God in ancient times. That is practically what is meant in this verse. When an attack was made some might surrender without putting up any fight; they would be punished with *captivity*. Others would resist but would be finally slain by the sword. Still others would neither try to fight nor be submissive to capture willingly. All such would be hemmed in by a siege and finally meet *death* from the pestilence that usually resulted from a famine caused by a siege.

Verse 12. The Egyptians, like Babylonians, were worshippers of false gods and had houses erected for their services. These houses were destined to be set on fire by the Babylonians who are the antecedent of the pronoun *he*. It is a very easy thing for a shepherd to put on his garment when he wishes to go out about his business in control of his flock. The fact is used figuratively to illustrate the success of the king of Babylon in appropriating to himself the spoils of Egypt.

Verse 13. A general prediction was made against the gods of Egypt in the preceding verse. This specifies a place called Beth-shemesh which was considered as a holy city by the Egyptians because of the houses therein erected to the gods.

## JEREMIAH 44

Verse 1. The closing verses of the preceding chapter were a prediction against Egypt, doubtless because the country harbored the fugitives of Judah who fled there contrary to the wishes of the Lord. This chapter is directed against the Jews who had thought to avoid the wrath of God by fleeing to this heathen land.

Verse 2. *Evil* is used in the sense of something unpleasant or in the nature of a severe punishment, not in any sense of moral wrong. The complete destruction of Jerusalem was cited as an evidence of what the Lord could and would do to those who resisted the divine admonitions and thus incurred His wrath.

Verse 3. Idolatry was the outstanding sin of Judah and it caused them to commit many other iniquities. Gods which they *knew not* means the gods that were foreign to them and which were thus called *strange* (from the outside) gods.

Verse 4. The transgressions of Judah were not from any lack of instruction. *Rising early* is a figurative expression, referring to the urgency with which God sent his admonitions to his people.

Verse 5. To hearken means to heed what is said and to incline the ear means to be a willing listener. The people of Judah refused to do either although the Lord earnestly admonished them about it.

Verse 6. God's fury would be in evidence in the streets of the cities by the destruction that the enemy was permitted to make in them.

Verse 7. *Against your souls* means against their own best interests. When men oppose the will of the Lord they become their own worst enemies. However, the interests of the *soul* in this case did not necessarily mean the spiritual matters, but those that were vitally concerned with their population and national life. Note that mention was made of their citizens and descendants, that all were to be destroyed.

Verse 8. It is remarkable to note how slow man is to learn a lesson from his own experiences. The citizens of Judah as a whole had been taken to Babylon in punishment for their idolatry. These few who were in Egypt had been given the special exemption of remaining in their home land though at the same time they were virtual captives. Now here they

are in another country through desertion and are taking up the very practices their fellows did for which they had been taken into captivity.

Verse 9. The Lord asks these runaway Jews if they had forgotten the record of their fathers. It is in question form but really is a reproach upon them for not having profited by the end of the nation.

Verse 10. The Jews who were at that time in Babylon were as forgetful as these in Egypt and had not become humble through their severe punishment.

Verse 11. Coming back to the Jews in Egypt, the Lord warned them that he would set his face against them for *evil*. The last word means something very unpleasant as a punishment for their sins, not anything wrong morally.

Verse 12. The sum of the terrible things threatened in this verse is the most total extinction of the ones who sought residence in Egypt. They were to be consumed by the threefold curse previously mentioned, that of the sword, famine and pestilence. An *execration* means something considered worthy of being cursed.

Verses 13, 14. The threefold punishment is again threatened, and the comparison is made to that which was imposed upon Jerusalem. The significance of the passage is that the stragglers in Egypt were as guilty as the ones who had been taken into Babylon. Of course all rules may have some exceptions and the threat that the ones who had fled to Egypt would be destroyed meant that as a group that would occur. Yet a few individuals were to be suffered to escape as indicated in verse 28. Doubtless it was in some way through them that the world outside of Egypt received the writings which Jeremiah produced after being taken to that country.

Verse 15. A man is not responsible for what he cannot prevent or know, but if he can know it and does not oppose it, he is as guilty as those doing an evil thing. The men were aware of the idolatrous practices of their women and were hence in partnership with them in sin.

Verse 16. The men not only knew of the sins of their wives but spoke in defence of it. The words *we will not hearken unto thee* constituted a deliberate rebellion against the words of the inspired prophet.

Verse 17. According to Smith's Bible

Dictionary the *queen of heaven* "is the moon, worshiped as Ashtaroth or Astarte, to whom the Hebrew women offered cakes in the streets of Jerusalem." We should understand that the women were speaking also in this rebellious conversation (verse 15). They were the ones who made the cakes to be burned in this idolatrous practice, hence were prominent in the defence of this iniquity.

Verse 18. These idolaters were vain enough to attribute their prosperity to the false gods which they worshiped. As long as the Lord is willing to tolerate an evil generation at all, he will continue to bestow the blessings of nature. (See Matt. 5: 45.) These corrupt people were so foolish as to give their false gods the credit for the blessings that came from the true God.

Verse 19. The question form of this verse is really an assertion on the part of the women referred to in verse 15. *Without our men* means they had the consent of their husbands in the practice of idolatry, and that made the men equally guilty with the women. Such a principle was taught in the law of Moses (Numbers 30: 6-9).

Verse 20. When Jeremiah replied to these people he spoke to *the men* and to *the women*. That indicated that he regarded both sexes as guilty of the corrupt practices.

Verse 21. *Did not the Lord remember them* signified that God was aware of all the corrupt practices of the people of Judah and would not forget it. He declared (Ex. 20: 5) that he was a jealous God, and when his people disrespected him by burning incense to false gods his wrath was kindled against them.

Verse 22. *Could no longer bear* means the longsuffering of the Lord finally was exhausted. The result was the desolation of the land and the deportation of its people.

Verse 23. It should be noted that the burning of incense in religious service was considered the most exclusive form of devotion. That was why it was what distinguished the rights of the priests from all others. (See 2 Chron. 26: 16-18.)

Verse 24. The *people* and the *women* are mentioned separately because the latter made the cakes to be used and the former accepted them to be offered to the idol gods.

Verse 25. *Mouths* and *hands* are both named very appropriately because it

is not only words but also deeds that show a man's standing and by which he is to be judged. However, if the words are uttered first, the deeds cannot be thought to be prompted by some sudden impulse. It would show that the deeds were the result of a deliberate plot. This principle is recognized by the governments of the land today. In determining the degree of guilt of an accused man, if his previously-uttered words on the subject can be proved, they are given much consideration by the courts.

Verse 26. This prediction was against the Jews who had fled to Egypt, because of their twofold transgression. First, they had sinned in fleeing to that land, and second, by taking up the idolatrous practices of the people around them. God had determined they should not be allowed to engage in professed praise to Him in that land.

Verse 27. *Watch over them for evil* denotes the severe chastisement that the Lord would bring upon them. To prevent them from any success in their unrighteous plots, the Lord was going to *watch over them* or be always on the alert. As a result, the group as a whole was destined to be destroyed by the threefold calamity often mentioned.

Verse 28. These exceptions were commented upon at verse 14. *Shall know whose words shall stand* is the phrase that indicates these persons were destined to deliver the writings of Jeremiah to the world outside of Egypt.

Verses 29, 30. As a visible evidence that God could and would perform these threats against the people of Judah in Egypt, He would deliver Pharaoh-hophra (the then-ruling king of the country) into the hand of his enemies. For the historical fulfillment of this prediction see the quotation at chapter 48: 8.

### JEREMIAH 45

Verse 1. In the compiling of the parts of Jeremiah's writing not much attention was paid to chronology. This chapter should be read just after chapter 36. Baruch was a good man and served as secretary to Jeremiah. After writing at the dictation of the prophet, he was addressed personally by him.

Verse 2. Jeremiah did not speak merely as a personal friend to Baruch although he was that, but passed on to him the words that came from the God of Israel.

Verse 3. Baruch was worried over the predictions he had been instructed to write at the mouth of the prophet. He seemed to take it as a personal misfortune that was to come upon him and that he would be the chief sufferer therefrom.

Verse 4. God instructed Jeremiah to hold Baruch's attention to the calamity to be brought upon the general work He had in the nation. The whole land was to be brought down in chastisement for its corruptions. That would be a far greater matter for grief than the interests of just one man.

Verse 5. Baruch was mildly rebuked for his personal worry in view of the greater misfortune to be imposed upon the land. However, he was given some assurance as a comfort that his life was to be spared to reward him for his righteous conduct.

### JEREMIAH 46

Verse 1. After the digression of the preceding chapter, Jeremiah resumed his writings against various nations. *Gentiles* is from oor and is defined by Strong as follows: "A foreign nation; hence a Gentile." In the King James version the word has been rendered Gentiles 30 times (always plural), heathen 143, nation 366, people 5. The verse means that the prophet was going to make some predictions against the heathen people of various classes and in the many places.

Verse 2. The prediction against Egypt was made and the historical comments cited in chapter 43: 8-13.

Verses 3, 4. A *buckler* is a small protector and a *shield* is a large one. A *helmet* is a piece for the protection of the head. To *furish the spears* means to polish them. *Brigantines* were the coats of mail to be worn as a general protection for the body. The entire passage was a notice to Egypt to get ready for war because the Lord was going to bring the Babylonians against the people of that country.

Verse 5. *Wherefore* in the Bible usually means "why?" or "how?" and sometimes it means "therefore," which is its meaning in the present passage. The prediction had just been made that Egypt was to be drawn into war. God knows the future as well as the past and thus he could say *I have seen them* (the Egyptians) *dismayed*, etc.

Verse 6. *Let not . . . flee away* is a prediction in the style of the language used by the prophets, and means the people of Egypt will not succeed in

their attempts to escape capture by the Babylonians. *Fall toward the north* denotes they will be overcome by the nation whose capital is on the Euphrates River. As to the reason for referring to the "north" see the note at Isaiah 14: 31 volume 3 of this COMMENTARY.

Verse 7. *Who is this*, etc., is a challenging question to Egypt. That country relied on its great River Nile for the life of its people as well it might. But it often filled its kings with an undue sense of importance as to their power.

Verse 8. Not only did the Nile furnish Egypt with the necessities of physical life, but the people worshiped it as their chief god and believed that through it they could cover the earth and take possession of the cities. That is why the prediction shows the nation in a mood of defiance against the Babylonians.

Verse 9. Many of the passages along here are in the nature of a challenge to Egypt. It is as if the Lord said to her: "Just come on and do your best if you think you can defeat My plans." In that spirit God bids Egypt to come on with her horses and let the (war) chariots rage. She is even challenged to attach to herself all the allies she wishes, such as the *Ethiopians* and *Libyans* and others.

Verse 10. *This* is a pronoun referring to the day of the Lord God of hosts, and that day was to be when He brought the Babylonians against the land of Egypt. *Sword shall devour* means the sword of the Babylonians will slay the people of Egypt. *Made drunk* does not mean intoxication in the ordinary sense of that word for blood will not do that. It means the same as to be satisfied or filled and gorged. The passage means the Babylonians will shed an abundance of blood when the Egyptians resist them. *Sacrifice in the north country.* The land of Egypt will not literally be taken to Babylon, but it will be sacrificed to the Lord's will and the service will be executed by a people from the north whose capital is on the Euphrates. (See verse 6 on the word *north*.)

Verse 11. A part of Strong's definition of the original for *virgin* is "figuratively, a city or state," and it is so used with reference to Egypt. Smith's Bible Dictionary says this of *Gilead*, "A mountainous region bounded on the west by the Jordan, on the north by Bashan, on the east by the

Arabian plateau, and on the south by Moab and Ammon . . . Gilead was specially noted for its balm collected from 'balm of Gilead' trees, and worth twice its weight in silver." Because of the healing qualities believed to be possessed by this balm it was often used or referred to (both literally and figuratively) as a source of cure or relief. This verse means to tell the Egyptians that it will not do them any good to go up after the balm of Gilead. There is to be no cure for them against the predicted affliction, therefore it will be *in vain* for them to seek for any.

Verse 12. *Nations have heard* is a prediction that the nations will learn of the defeat of Egypt when it takes place. *Mighty man stumbled against the mighty* denotes that all the strong men of Egypt, together with their allies on whom they will rely, shall be overthrown together by the Babylonians.

Verse 13. This verse repeats the prediction previously made against Egypt, and names the particular man of Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar) who was to be the ruler there at the time. For the historical fulfillment of that prediction see at chapter 43: 8-13.

Verse 14. *Migdol*, *Noph* (modern Memphis), and Tahpanhes were principal cities in Egypt. They were singled out by the prediction and were warned to *stand fast and prepare*. This meant for them to get ready for war waged against them by Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 15. *Why are? . . . because* means the utter defeat of their men of war will be due to the driving force of the Lord.

Verse 16. This is similar to verse 12, referring to internal troubles of Egypt.

Verse 17. This is a prediction of the boasting the Egyptians would do regarding their defeat by the enemy. The last clause of the verse is the statement of the Lord, and means that the time will have been passed when Egypt could defend herself when the Babylonians are brought up against the country.

Verse 18. *Tabor* was a high mountain and *Carmel* was a prominent range in the land of Palestine. Their impressive existence is used as an illustration of the surety and force of the king of Babylon when he comes against Egypt.

Verse 19. *Furnish thyself* means for Egypt to prepare for the worst; that



the country was destined to be overcome by the enemy. *Noph* was another name for Memphis, one of the great cities of Egypt that was to be laid in desolation when the country was invaded by Nebuchadnezzar and his powerful army.

Verse 20. The Egyptians paid special attention and devotion to the cattle kind (as witness the golden calf of Israel just recently from that country), and hence her attitude of self-importance and fitness is compared to a *fair heifer*. But the Lord threatens her with destruction from the *north* which denotes from Babylon.

Verse 21. The leading men of Egypt felt independent and the country relied on them. *They are turned back* is a prediction that these men will fail the country when the king of Babylon comes against the land.

Verse 22. The pronoun *thereof* refers to the time of their visitation mentioned in the preceding verse. It was to take place against Egypt. *The voice . . . like a serpent* means the voice of the men of Egypt when the Babylonian forces come against the men. Moffatt's version renders this, "She can but draw back hissing like a snake before her foes." When a strong force threatens to overcome a snake all it can do is to hiss at its attacking foe. That is what the great men of Egypt will do before the army of Babylon because *they* (the Babylonians) *shall march with an army*.

Verse 23. The Babylonians will cut down the forests of Egypt at the time of the invasion. *Though it cannot be searched* means the forest was supposed to be too great to be destroyed, yet God would enable the Babylonians to cut it down. *They* means the men of the invading army will be like a swarm of grasshoppers and they will cut down the trees as grasshoppers would consume a field of grass.

Verse 24. *Daughter* means the country of Egypt was to be *confounded* or confused and defeated. For the significance of the *north* see the note at Isaiah 14: 31, volume 3.

Verse 25. *No* was another important city of Egypt whose modern name is Thebes. It was among the cities that were to feel the hand of Babylon under the Lord's plan.

Verse 26. The desolation of Egypt was not to be permanent but *afterward shall it be inhabited*. This was set forth in the history quoted at chapter 43: 8-13.

Verse 27. Before proceeding to the predictions against other heathen nations, the Lord gave a brief piece of consolation for his own people who were at that time in captivity. They were promised that they would return out of the land of their captivity and rest securely again in their own land.

Verse 28. God's people as well as the heathen were to be punished for their sins against Him. However, there was to be a difference in the severity and results of the punishment. The heathen nations were to be put down permanently while God's nation was to survive the chastisement. The fulfillment of this promise may be seen in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

### JEREMIAH 47

Verse 1. Again I will remind the reader that chronological order was not always observed in compiling the several parts of a prophet's writings. Historically we last knew of Jeremiah when he was being taken by force to Egypt, and little is known of what became of him after that. But his writings seem to have been available and were finally put together by the friends of Truth in the form now with us and known as the book of Jeremiah. Hence we shall read yet many of his prophecies that he wrote before the time he was taken captive. Many of those were against heathen nations that had mistreated the people of God, or had otherwise displeased Him by their practices. The present chapter was written against the Philistines and it was dated at a time prior to the fall of Gaza which was a prominent city of the Philistines. That date is mentioned in order to explain that a prediction was made against the Philistines and that its fulfillment was to be brought about through the Egyptian king.

Verse 2. *Waters* and *flood* in figurative language refers to great times of trouble. The application here is to the calamities that were to overthrow the land of the Philistines.

Verse 3. The reference to the *horses* and *chariots*, etc., is in view of the army that was destined to be brought against the Philistine land. *Fathers not look back to their children*. So great will the consternation be that parents will not be concerned for the safety of their children but will think of themselves only.

Verse 4. *Tyrus* and *Zidon* were cities of Phoenicia, a country lying near that of the Philistines. It was natural

that they would have a fellow feeling for each other in times of distress, but the prophet warned them that such an alliance would not avail.

Verse 5. *Gaza* and *Ashkelon* were cities of the Philistines, and baldness was a figurative prediction that they would be made bare by the ravages of war. *Cut thyself* refers to the self-imposed motions of grief over the misfortunes of the country.

Verse 6. This verse represents the Philistines in a pleading mood asking the Lord to put up the sword; such is the meaning of *how long . . . ere thou be quiet?*

Verse 7. This verse is the answer of the Lord to the pleading of the Philistines. They are told that *it*, the sword, cannot be quiet because the Lord had given it a charge, which was against Ashkelon, one of the cities of the Philistines.

### JEREMIAH 48

Verse 1. This entire chapter is against the land of Moab which was situated on the east side of the Dead Sea. Its people were descended from one of the sons of Lot (Gen. 19: 37) and were hence related by blood to the line coming down from Abraham. For this reason the Lord would not permit his people to deal with them as they did with other nations with whom they came in contact (Deut. 2: 9). Yet the relations between the two peoples were somewhat strained and in the main the Moabites were considered as enemies to the Israelites and were marked for some severe judgments from the Lord. The places named were cities of the Moabites that were destined to feel God's wrath.

Verse 2. *Heshbon* was another city in the land of Moab that was to be punished. *They have devised evil against it* means the forces whom God would see fit to use as his instruments when the time came for the punishment predicted.

Verse 3. *Voice of crying* means the bemoaning that was to be heard in the city of Horonaim which was one of the special ones among the Moabites.

Verse 4. *Moab* is named and includes the land and the people. *Little* has a various definition in the lexicon, but the general meaning is to be small or helpless against the attacking foe, and that was to make the people of the land cry out so as to be heard.

Verse 5. *Luhith* and *Horonaim* were cities of Moab and their citizens were

destined to be heard crying because of the destruction of their cities.

Verse 6. *Flee, save yourselves* is a prediction of the distressful condition that was to come upon the land of Moab. *Heath* means a tract of waste land, and the land of Moab was to become such a place for a time.

Verse 7. The feeling of security which the Moabites had was to be shattered and their helplessness was to become evident. *Chemosh* was one of the invisible gods of the land of Moab, the chief one that they worshipped. Idolaters relied on their gods for protection and help, but the prediction was against all their expectations.

Verse 8. *The spoiler* means one who would strip the country of its goods, and in this case it was to be the Babylonians. *City and valley* are named together to indicate the completeness of the desolation as it would affect the land.

Verse 9. There would be no use to try fleeing from the punishment that God designed against Moab. The language intends to picture the people in a state of panic and desire to escape the chastisement confronting them.

Verse 10. God had decreed the punishment of Moab at the hands of another country, and the work to be done by it (Babylon) would be the work of God. If the swordsman of Babylon should be negligent in using the sword against the victims of God's wrath, the divine curse will be upon him.

Verse 11. This verse is an interesting figurative description of the past state of the self-satisfied peace of Moab. The figure is drawn from the subject of wine and its various conditions. *Lees* are the settleings that fall to the bottom of a vessel in which the raw juice of the grape has been placed. After a time these settle and leave the pure wine undisturbed and clear on the top. To pour this wine from one vessel to another would disturb it which would represent the disturbed condition of the land of Moab when it is upset by the Babylonians. The land had not gone into captivity which means it had been left alone as a quantity of wine undisturbed with the lees at the bottom of the vessel. In such a condition the taste of the pure wine would remain in the vessel, not having been mixed with the dregs through being shaken up or poured out.

Verse 12. This condition of peace

was to be disturbed and the *wanderers* (the Babylonians) were to come and *break the bottles* (figuratively speaking) and destroy the peace of the land on which the people had been resting in their false security.

Verse 13. *Bethel* was one of the places where the 10-tribe kingdom of Israel set up the golden calves for idolatrous worship (1 Ki. 12: 29). That did not save Israel from the shame of captivity (2 Ki. 17), neither was the idol god *Chemosh* going to save Moab in the day of its humiliation.

Verse 14. The Moabites boasted of their men in the war forces and virtually defied any nation to oppose them.

Verse 15. *Moab is spoiled* is present tense as to grammatical form but is prophetic in thought. When God says a certain thing will be done it is as certain as a thing that is done at the time it is predicted.

Verse 16. This verse is still a prediction in the present tense, but it is a little more definite as to time and says the fulfillment is soon to come.

Verse 17. The downfall of Moab was to be so evident and humiliating that the surrounding nations would lament over it. They are predicted as being so affected because the men of Moab had been regarded as great and strong and it would be a matter of astonishment to see them meet such great defeat.

Verse 18. *Daughter* is a figurative name for a country and *Didon* was one of the cities of that country. The Moabites were proud and independent and had exalted themselves over the glory of this city. *Come down from thy glory* is a prediction that the Moabites would be taken down from that self-constructed pinnacle of glory and be made to *sit in thirst* which means they would be brought to want.

Verse 19. The countries of the ancient world counted much on their cities, and for that reason many of the military conflicts were directed towards those centers. *Aroer* was a city of Moab and its inhabitants were warned of the destruction to come upon the city. *Espy* means to look on and see the people fleeing from the city. They were then to ask the meaning of the excitement and would wonder *what is done?*

Verse 20. This gives the answer to the inquiry, which is that *Moab is confounded* or confused because it is

broken by the invasion of the Babylonians. *Arnon* was a stream on whose banks the city of *Aroer* was located, and the stream is represented as lamenting the hard fate of the country through which it flowed.

Verse 21. The towns named in this verse were not very important and little is known of them. But the Moabites counted much on their many towns or cities, and the Lord wished them to get some idea of the greatness of His wrath by overthrowing them.

Verses 22-24. The cities named in this paragraph were to receive punishment similar to those previously named, hence they are grouped into the one unit.

Verse 25. When *horn* is used figuratively it is defined "power" in the lexicon. The power of Moab as a nation was to be taken from her by the Babylonians.

Verse 26. We should understand these terms are being used figuratively. A drinking man sometimes boasts of his ability to "handle" as much liquor as he chooses. God represents Moab in that frame of mind and predicts that he will be forced to swallow more than he can manage. He was to become repulsively sick from drink and then forced to wallow in the discharges of his besotted stomach.

Verse 27. Moab had made light of Israel and compared him to a man caught among thieves. It was true that Israel had met with misfortune as a chastisement from God for his sins, but the Lord would not tolerate having Moab *skip with joy* over it.

Verse 28. The burden of the oppression that was to come against the people of Moab would be directed chiefly against the cities. That is why the citizens of such spots were told (which was a form of prediction) to leave them and dwell among the rocks.

Verse 29. Pride is not always manifested by a display of outward glory. The original word is also rendered "arrogancy," which means an overbearing attitude. Moab had certainly shown that disposition against Israel, a noted instance being that in the affair of Balak and Balaam (Num. 22-24).

Verse 30. The same spirit described as *pride* in the preceding verse is here called *wrath*. In that attitude Moab threatened to destroy Israel (even as he tried in the days of Balak), but God knew all about it and decreed the failure of the plot. *Shall not effect it*

means Moab would not be able to bring the effect against Israel that he conspired to do.

Verse 31. *Will I howl* is a form of prediction, meaning that Moab would howl for the miseries that the Lord would bring against the land. *Kir-heres* was one name of a place in the land of Moab that was destined to feel the sting of God's wrath.

Verse 32. Much of this verse is figurative but it has the same thought as the other predictions against the land. *Weep with the weeping* means that Sibmah will weep in the same manner as did Jazer, a city that had been taken by invaders (Num. 21: 32). *Plants* refers to the people who *are gone* (will go, according to prophetic style) *over the sea*. This clause is an indirect reference to the cities tributary to Babylon.

Verse 33. Grape cultivation was one of the principal industries of the lands of the Bible. For that reason an interference with that business would be considered a serious thing for the country; such a misfortune was to befall the land of Moab.

Verse 34. *Nimrim* was a stream in the region of Moab, and the other names were towns and places that depended on the waters for sustenance, but that was to be cut off by the curse the Lord intended bringing on the country. According to verse 11 Moab had never suffered much as a nation, even as a *heifer of three years old* had never known the hardships of work. The circumstance is used to illustrate the unaccustomed misfortune to be brought against the land.

Verse 35. The idolatrous practices of Moab were destined to be stopped by the Lord. This would be accomplished by the dearth that would come which would cut short the production of animals and other items commonly used in sacrifices.

Verse 36. The distressful situation of Moab is described figuratively in this passage. The prophet (speaking for the Lord) expresses a pitiable attitude toward the sad fate decreed to come upon the land. The figure is based upon an instrument called a pipe. The appropriateness of such a comparison will be apparent in the following quotation from Smith's Bible Dictionary: "The sound of the pipe was apparently a soft wailing note, which made it appropriate to be used in mourning and at funerals." This explains to us the reason for the language in Matthew 9: 23.

Verse 37. In ancient times a strange custom prevailed in cases of great distress or anxiety. People would mutilate their bodies and disarrange their hair and beards in the manner described in this verse.

Verse 38. Houses had flat roofs in the eastern countries so that people used them as places of prayer and other activities. (See Acts 10: 9.) Moab was destined to engage in mourning programs on the tops of their houses as well as in the streets, when the threatened punishment came upon the country.

Verse 39. *They shall howl* means that others shall express themselves at the shameful condition that was to come on the land of Moab. The significance of it is in the fact of the situation's being so evident that others would realize it and make remarks.

Verse 40. *He shall fly* denotes that the Lord will come down upon Moab with his punishment, even as an eagle would swoop over a land.

Verse 41. Kerioth was a town of Moab and it was to suffer the same fate as her sisters. When a woman is in the pangs of childbirth her entire nervous system is in a state of terror (John 16: 21). That circumstance is used to illustrate the state of mind that will overcome the men of Moab when they see the trouble in their gates.

Verse 42. The destruction of Moab was to be understood in a comparative sense and not in a total one as will be seen in the last verse of this chapter.

Verse 43. A *pit* indicates a place into which one might fall, and a *snare* means an instrument in which one would be caught. Both terms are used to indicate the downward plunge that the people of Moab would take in the hour of their adversity.

Verse 44. The varied experiences of escaping from one difficulty only to run into another describes the things that were destined to come upon the land of Moab. *Year of their visitation* means the year when God would visit Moab with his punishments.

Verse 45. *Heshbon* was a prominent city of Moab and the people thought they would find shelter in the shadow thereof. They fled there *because of the force* of the enemy that the Lord had chosen by whom to chastise the Moabites. But the *fire* of God's wrath had already shot forth even in the region of Heshbon so that it would not avail anything to flee thither for the purpose of finding refuge.



Verse 46. The *people of Chemosh* means the Moabites who relied on this god for protection. Instead of help from this false god his worshippers were to perish.

Verse 47. Moab never did go bodily into national captivity as we understand that term regarding the captivity of Israel. It rather indicated a state of domination under some other people in which its national progress was checked. The original for *captivity* is defined by Strong, "a former state of prosperity." Thus the prediction in the phrase *bring again the captivity* means that after having suffered punishment according to God's purpose, He would restore to the land of Moab its previous state of national prosperity and the liberty of enjoyment therein.

### JEREMIAH 49

Verse 1. Several noted heathen nations will be considered in this chapter because the Lord had complaints against all of them. The first one is the *Ammonites* who were descended, like the Moabites, from Lot. More than once we have seen that God has used various foreign nations to chastise his own people, yet when those nations took improper joy from the misfortunes of Israel the Lord turned against them. In 2 Kings 24: 2, 3 is an account of the punishment of the kingdom of Judah, and the Ammonites were included in the forces God used for the purpose. Previously Israel (the 10-tribe kingdom) had been taken out of their possessions and Judah would logically have been the rightful inheritor of the territory left by Israel. But Judah incurred the wrath of God and forfeited the right to it and hence He brought the nations mentioned (including the Ammonites) against the country. However, that did not justify the Ammonites in acting as if Israel had no rightful inheritor of his estate. In seizing, therefore, upon the territory of Gad (a part of the 10-tribe dominions), the Ammonites brought upon themselves the predictions here recorded.

Verse 2. *Rabbath* was a city of the Ammonites and was destined to suffer the ravages of war. The last clause means that the people who had possessed the territory of Israel would be brought under by Israel.

Verse 3. This *Ai* is not the one so well known in Israelite history, but was one near Heshbon and belonging to the Ammonites. It was doomed

along with other Ammonite cities to feel the weight of God's wrath. *King go into captivity* means a condition in which the leading men of the nation would be temporarily subdued, not that the nation as a body would be taken into another country.

Verse 4. *Daughter* is a figurative name of a city or country, and it is here applied to the Ammonites. They are called *backsliding* because they had slipped in their national conduct and had brought upon themselves the displeasure of the Lord. *Flowing valley* means the resources of their prosperity in which they gloried. They boasted that their wealth would provide them security against any who might come to them.

Verse 5. In spite of their material strength the Ammonites were destined to be thrown into a panic of fear. This would be similar to the predictions against Moab in chapter 48: 41. (See the comments at that place.) Under the confusion of this panicky state they would be scattered by the adversaries about them.

Verse 6. The unfortunate condition of the Ammonites was not to be permanent. *Bring again the captivity* has the same meaning as a like statement about Moab. (See the comments on it at chapter 48: 47.)

Verse 7. *Edom* was another name for Esau (Gen. 36: 1) and the Edomites were the descendants of that man. Esau was a full brother to Jacob (they being twins) and hence these people were closer of kin to the Israelites than were the Ammonites. The Edomites were always regarded as enemies of the descendants of Jacob and many predictions were made against them. *Teman* was a prominent district of the Edomites and was hence singled out in the declarations of the prophet. The question form of language is used in this verse, but the thought is that the area of Teman was destined to decline in wisdom.

Verse 8. *Dedan* refers to some other locality in the land of Edom. The prediction of misfortune that was to come on it was expressed in the form of a warning for its citizens to flee from the place. *Dwell deep* is a figurative exhortation to the inhabitants of the place to "prepare for the worst," or to make the best they can of a situation of distress when it is brought upon them.

Verse 9. The thought in this verse is that what was coming on the people of the land would be more desolating

than the work of a grape harvester. He would at least leave enough fruit to justify going over the vineyard to glean. Or a thief would stop when he had secured enough for his appetite, then leave the rest to the owner.

Verse 10. But God threatened to make a more complete desolation than the invaders mentioned in the preceding verse. *Have made* is past tense in form but future in thought. *Esau* (or Edom) was to be exposed as a nation to the gaze of others, and the prediction is compared to the exposure of a man's body to his shame before the eyes of the public. *Seed is spoiled*. One word in Strong's definition of the original for *seed* is "posterity," and for that of *spoiled* is "to ravage." The phrase means that the Edomites were to lose their strong men in the conflicts with their foes.

Verse 11. This verse sounds like a favorable prediction in that the widows and orphans were to be cared for by the Lord. It virtually is a prediction of a misfortune since the very need for such special care indicates some form of disaster for the land.

Verse 12. *They whose judgment was not to drink of the cup*. The Jews were God's people and it might have been expected they would not have to drink the cup (figuratively speaking) of affliction on account of their nearness to the Lord. Yet He did not spare them in their sins notwithstanding their high relationship. Surely, then, a foreign nation should not hope to escape the wrath of God whom they had displeased.

Verse 13. *Bozrah* was one of the prominent cities of Edom, yet it and the cities thereof (meaning its suburbs) were to be made desolate.

Verse 14. The changing back and forth between the first and third persons in the language need not confuse us. It should be understood that God is the source of all the statements, and the prophet is the one who is delivering them to man. Hence we here have Jeremiah expressly confirming the declaration in the preceding sentence and telling us he has heard a rumor from the Lord. The first word is from *SHEMUWAH*, which Strong defines, "Something heard, i. e., an announcement." That announcement was a prediction that the heathen (nations) would gather force against Edom.

Verse 15. Edom was a heathen nation as well as were those destined to come against her. We should remem-

ber that the word has a national as well as religious use. The prediction means that Edom was to be looked down upon by other nations like her.

Verse 16. God had predicted (Gen. 27: 40) that Edom was to be a ruffian sort of people and would assume a hostile attitude toward others. This very condition was abused and they had come to feel so independent they "feared not God nor regarded Man." But the Lord declared their self-exaltation would not place them beyond the reach of Him.

Verse 17. Not only was Edom to be humiliated from its position of pride and haughtiness, but the country was to become desolate to the extent that passers-by would look with scorn and belittle it.

Verse 18. The land of Edom was to become desolate to begin with, but its desolation was to be as permanent as was that of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Verse 19. For the significance of the comparison to the enraged lion see the comments at chapter 4: 7. The second half of the verse refers to the power of the Lord over the Edomites. That was to be executed by bringing against them some invading force such as the Babylonian army.

Verse 20. The Edomites are considered as an unfortunate people being attacked by a hostile band of shepherds. The prediction is that even the weakest of those shepherds will be able to overcome the Edomites. Their power will be to chase them away even as a roaring lion would frighten a shepherd away from his flock.

Verse 21. This verse is figurative and means the downfall of Edom will be great.

Verse 22. The pronoun *he* refers to the Babylonian king who was to come against Edom. In this passage the comparison is to an eagle because of its ability to overspread the territory attacked. *Bozra* is singled out because it was one of the chief cities of the Edomites. For the explanation of comparison to a woman's pangs, see the comments at chapter 4: 31; 6: 24; 13: 21; 22: 23; 30: 6; 48: 41.

Verse 23. *Damascus* was the chief city of Syria hence the present prediction is against that country. The other places named also were cities of Syria and were destined to share in the hardships of the people. A troubled sea in which there would be a tossing about is used to compare the unsettled condition that was destined to come

upon the cities of Syria according to the decree of the Lord.

Verse 24. Specific attention is given to *Damascus* because it was the metropolis of the country. But this mighty city was warned that it would be *waxed feeble* and would attempt to escape from the doom settling upon it.

Verse 25. *City of praise* refers to the admiration that the world would manifest about her. *Not left* indicates that when God brings his punishments upon the land of Syria He will not leave out Damascus.

Verse 26. It is a special blow to a country to have its military men overthrown. Not only were these men to be overthrown, belonging to Damascus, but her *young men* who should supply the future recruits were to be slain in the streets.

Verse 27. Ben-hadad was the name of three great kings of Syria. The destruction of the *palaces* therefore would mean a thrust at the very vitals of the kingdom.

Verse 28. *Kedar* is defined by Strong, "A son of Ishmael; also (collectively) bedawin [the Arabs] (as his descendants or representatives)." *Hazor* is identified by Strong as a city of Arabia, hence this verse is a prediction against the Arabians. They were to be attacked by the king of Babylon and overthrown.

Verse 29. The Arabians were a wandering people and had their dwelling in tents. This was likewise in keeping with their chief occupation of tending flocks. This is why it is predicted that the Babylonians were to *take to themselves the tents and curtains* of these people. The *camels* are mentioned because they were one of the usual means of travel over the deserts when the Arabs journeyed.

Verse 30. *Flee, get you far off* is the prophet's way of predicting that the inhabitants of the town of Hazor would wish to escape the hand of the Babylonians. This attack by Nebuchadnezzar was to be through the Lord, but the mighty ruler was to go about it according to his own *counsel* or advice also.

Verse 31. *Arise* is a prediction in the form of an order from God for the King of Babylon to make the attack on the Arabians. *Wealthy* is from SHE-LEVAH, which Strong defines, "Tranquil; (in a bad sense) careless; abstractly, security." They seemed to have the feeling that no danger could overhang them. *Neither gates nor*

*bars, dwell alone.* This refers to their manner of life, dwelling in tents away from civilization in general.

Verse 32. This verse is a summing up of the material losses the Arabs were to suffer when the Babylonians overran their territory.

Verse 33. Wild creatures were to dwell in the city of Hazor and it was to be a perpetual desolation. To avoid confusion I shall explain that the Arabians were roving in their habits of life as described in the preceding verses. However, they had certain centralized places that existed as cities, and the form of government which they maintained was centered in them. These cities served as a background for the tribes who chose not to reside permanently in any certain place, but who wandered through the world at times in search of trade. We have an instance of such a business in the event of Joseph's sale as recorded in Genesis 37th chapter.

Verse 34. *Elam* was the name of a number of men but came to designate a country. It lay east of Persia proper but was finally referred to in various reference works under the same heading as Persia. This prophecy was made about 600 years B. C. while the overthrow of the Persian Empire as the second of the "four world empires" was not until 300 years later; it would seem, therefore, that the present prediction did not refer to that great event. We are sure this is correct for the last verse of this chapter shows the punishment was temporary, while the one 300 years later was to be permanent according to Daniel 2: 44. The prediction now before us was evidently concerning some earlier misconduct of this district and the chastisement was to be for a time only.

Verse 35. *Break the bow* is a reference to their defeat in war because one principal means of warfare in ancient times was the bow and arrow.

Verse 36. *Four winds* is figurative and means that the desolation to be wrought in Elam was to be general. The citizens of the country were to be scattered in every direction. That is indicated by the figure just used since it is equivalent to referring to the four points of the compass.

Verse 37. To be dismayed means to be confused and frightened at the sight of such powerful foes. The condition was to be brought about because of the Lord's *fierce anger* at

their evil conduct. These people had shown too much interest in the opposition that other heathen kings had manifested against God's people. *Consumed* could not mean they were to be literally destroyed for the last verse says they were to survive. It means, therefore, that for the time being they would cease to be a people.

Verse 38. *Set my throne* means the Lord would overthrow the power of Elam and take charge of the country Himself and see that matters were run as he saw fit.

Verse 39. For the meaning of *bring again the captivity* see the comments at chapter 48: 47. This indicates the threatened punishment was to be temporary on Elam.

### JEREMIAH 50

Verse 1. Various heathen powers are being threatened in the remaining chapters of this book and a large portion of the predictions will be against Babylon or Chaldea. It was the first of the "four world empires" so well noted in prophecy and history. God was using this empire to chastise his own people, but he never tolerated the hostile attitude of any nation toward His people, even though said people deserved the punishment.

Verse 2. God was especially displeased with the heathen nations because they worshiped false gods and pretended to rely so much upon them. *Bel* was a short form for Baal which was a god of the Babylonians. *Mero-dach* was a title used in connection with the same god otherwise known as Bel or Baal. *Is confounded* is a prophecy that when the day of the Babylonian doom arrives her idol will avail her nothing.

Verse 3. The Babylonian Empire was overthrown by the Medo-Persian Empire, and that empire is referred to in history under a variety of terms. Sometimes it is the one here shown which was the full and proper title; at other times it is referred to as the Medes and Persians; in still others either one of the names may be used to designate the whole empire. However, care must be taken not to apply this use of the single name in every instance, for in a few cases one of them is used as a distinction from the other. The reader will be informed when such use of either word is to be observed. The present verse is a prediction of the overthrow of Babylon and the power that was to accomplish that fact was the Medo-Persian (here

called the Medes) and it was geographically north of the Babylonian territory. For the historical fulfillment of this decisive action see the quotation at Isaiah 13: 1 in volume 3 of this COMMENTARY. The downfall of Babylon takes up many verses of this chapter, and the reader will do well to have his copy of the historical statement ready for reference.

Verse 4. Many times the events of prophecy and fulfillment are not inserted in chronological order. In the present instance, however, the literal order has been observed. The release of the Jews from captivity in Babylon (which is the subject of this and the following verse) took place at the same time that Babylon was conquered. When the Medes and Persians took possession of Babylon, they gave the Jews permission to return to their own land. *Israel* and *Judah* are named distinctly because the former which was the 10-tribe kingdom, and the latter which was the 2-tribe kingdom had been in captivity. The former had been taken into the territory while the Assyrians had control of it, and the latter was taken into virtually the same area after the Babylonians gained possession. We might wonder why the Jews would be weeping at such a time, but it will not seem strange if we realize the mingled feelings of joy and penitence that must have possessed them at that time. They had been captives in a strange land where they were not permitted to serve the Lord. Now they are headed toward their own beloved country where they will have the lawful opportunity to *seek the Lord their God*. No wonder, then, that their emotions would be stirred so that they would be caused to weep. The historical fulfillment of the return of the Jews from captivity is quoted at Isaiah 14: 1, in volume 3 of this COMMENTARY. The Biblical account of it is in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Verse 5. *They shall ask the way* was fulfilled in Ezra 8: 21-23. The *perpetual covenant* was the agreement which the Jews made to bring about all necessary reforms in their social lives, and to worship the true God only.

Verse 6. This verse is a glance back over the past experiences of the nation of the Jews. The language is formed from the occupation of a shepherd and his sheep. The leaders were the shepherds and the people were the flock. Those leaders had misled and neglected the people in the same way that



an unfaithful shepherd would treat his flock. The result of such neglect would be that it would be caused to wander from one mountain to another until the sheep would lose sight of its fold or resting place.

Verse 7. *Found them have devoured them* refers to the rough treatment the Jews received from the heathen nations whom God suffered to come against the sheep of His pasture. *We offend not* represents those nations as denying there was anything wrong in what they were doing to the Jews. They felt justified in it because that nation (the Jews) had *sinned against the Lord* and deserved what they were getting.

Verse 8. This verse comes back to the subject of the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity. The passage is a prediction of the return stated in the form of an order for them to leave the land of their bondage. *He goats before the flocks*. A he goat being strong and rugged would be able to brave the wilderness and lead the way for the more timid sheep. In Ezra 1:5 we see this prediction fulfilled when the *chief of the fathers* rose up because their *spirit God raised to go build the house of the Lord*.

Verse 9. Before the Jews could go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans (or Babylonians), that nation must first be overcome by another. That was to be done by *an assembly of great nations*, which refers to the Medes and Persians. That force was to come against the empire that had been holding the Jews in captivity for 70 years.

Verse 10. *Chaldea* here is the same as Babylonia and was destined to fall. *Shall be spoiled* means that the invading nation would take possession of the property of Babylon.

Verse 11. *Because ye were glad*. God would never tolerate a boasting attitude from those whom He had used to punish his own people. After they had served the Lord's purpose, they in turn were destined to be chastised. That was why the Medo-Persian Empire was raised up by the Lord as the conqueror of Babylon.

Verse 12. A mother's disappointment over an unworthy child is used to compare the humiliation that was destined to come upon Babylon. *Shall be* is in italics but is justified by the context, so that the clause should read "she shall be the hindmost of the nations"; it means that Babylon was to become the deserted nation.

*Wilderness and desert* was a prediction that the city of Babylon would become such a spot as per the historical quotation referred to in verse 3.

Verse 13. In reading the historical quotation cited in verse 3 in connection with the several passages predicting the overthrow of Babylon, care should be taken to distinguish between the Babylonian Empire as a whole and its capital as a city. The former was to be taken over by another power but left intact for the possession of the victorious one, but the latter as a city was to be destroyed and never rebuilt. All predictions as to a desert and an uninhabited spot apply to the city only.

Verse 14. This verse is a prediction in the form of an order for the *North country* (referred to in verse 9) to come against Babylon. The overthrow of Babylon by Persia was not as a favor for the conquering power, but as a punishment upon Babylon because she had *sinned against the Lord*.

Verse 15. It is a general custom for the successful one in any kind of a contest to applaud even with a "yell" of triumph. That sort of performance was to take place against Babylon as predicted by the words *shout against her*. *Hath given her hand* means that Babylon would give way to the forces attacking her. *Vengeance of the Lord*. When any person or group carries out an action that results in vengeance against another, such action is regarded as the vengeance of God if He has called for such action. (This is the teaching of Paul in Romans 12: 19 and 2 Corinthians 7: 11.)

Verse 16. The Babylonian Empire (like all world-powers) was made up of various groups of people. In the time of her subjection she was to be rendered helpless as to occupations and other resources. The morale of the people was to be so lowered they would shrink into their individual refuges among their own lands.

Verse 17. *Israel* is used of the nation as a whole and the verse is a historical statement. Ten tribes were taken away by Assyria (2 Kings 17) and two tribes were taken by the king of Babylon (2 Kings 24 and 25). *Sheep* refers to the flock to which the nation is compared, and it was to be scattered over the wilds of the heathen fields.

Verse 18. Assyria was the first to oppress God's people and she was punished by being overthrown under the Chaldean yoke. Later the king of

Babylon was chastised by the invasion of the Medo-Persian Empire.

Verse 19. The event predicted at the close of the preceding verse was followed immediately by the release of God's people who were then in captivity in Babylon. They not only were to be released from the yoke of Babylon but were to be given possession of the cities and other important spots in their native land.

Verse 20. *Iniquity of Israel . . . sought for . . . not be found* is a prediction that Israel would be cured of the chief national evil of idolatry. For the historical fulfillment of this prediction see the quotation at Isaiah 1: 25, volume 3 of this COMMENTARY.

Verse 21. From this verse through 32 constitutes a bracket of predictions against Babylon or Chaldea. (See note at verse 3.) *Merathaim* and *Pekod* were cities of that country and the Persians were called upon to go up against them. When this nation brings utter destruction upon the cities of Babylon it will be according to all that I (the Lord) commanded thee.

Verse 22. *Sound of battle* was a statement both of present fact and a prediction of facts in the near future. The invasion by Persia into Babylon had not occurred in literal fact when the prophet began to write, but the gathering of the military forces of that eastern empire was going on under men destined to overthrow the Babylonians.

Verse 23. A *hammer* is a heavy instrument by which objects may be beaten and crushed. The Babylonian Empire had been just that kind of an instrument against the other nations of the world. Now that great hammer was to be broken and its holder (the city of Babylon) was to become a desolation.

Verse 24. The pronoun *I* means the Lord who had laid a *snare* for the capital city. *Wast not aware* was a prediction of the suddenness and surprise with which the Persians would take possession of Babylon. (See Daniel 5 for the fulfillment.)

Verse 25. An *armory* is a place for storing weapons of war. To open this place or speak of opening it is a figurative expression, referring to the use the Lord makes of one heathen nation when such services are needed to chastise another. The particular *armory* that was to be used in the present case was that against the Babylonians or Chaldeans. The motive for the opening

of this place of weapons was God's indignation at the cruelty of Babylon against Israel.

Verse 26. This is a prediction made in the form of an order from headquarters, and it pertains to the overthrow of the city of Babylon by the Persians. The complete destruction of the capital city was predicted as well as the defeat of the men of war.

Verse 27. *Bullocks* (or bulls) is used figuratively in the Bible where the connection shows it means warriors or other strong men (Psa. 22: 12). Hence the strong men of Babylon were to be sacrificed to the vengeance of God and the Persians were to preside at the service. *Time of their visitation* means the visiting upon them of the punishment decreed by the Lord.

Verse 28. This verse is still a part of the bracket concerning Babylon, but is a slight diversion to note the escape of Israel from the doomed city. With inspired ears the prophet could hear his people announcing their release according to God.

Verse 29. *Archers* were the men who used the bow and arrow, a prominent weapon of warfare in ancient times. This is a prediction that such forces would be called together against the wicked city of Babylon. God always hates pride, especially when it is connected with cruelty, and the Babylonians were just such people in their doings.

Verse 30. This verse is literal and predicts the attack and overthrow of the men in the city of Babylon. The event took place on the night of Belshazzar's feast.

Verse 31. One way that pride is manifested is in being stubborn or rebellious against admonition. The prophet Daniel (ch. 5: 22, 23) charged this fatal conduct against the king of Babylon who had called for him on that noted occasion of the Chaldean downfall, while interpreting the writing on the wall.

Verse 32. The capital city of the Chaldeans was destined to be destroyed and never to be rebuilt. The country in general would remain in good condition in the possession of the conquerors, but the capital was to be in Susa or Shusan.

Verses 33, 34. The long passage of predictions against Babylon is broken into with these two verses to insert one on the return of the Jews to their own land. *Israel* and *Judah* are men-

tioned distinctively because both of the divisions of the nation of the Jews had been held in bondage in virtually the same territory. That is why it is said that they were *oppressed together*.

Verse 35. The prophet resumes his writings against the Babylonian Empire, also called the Chaldeans. The sword was another of the weapons commonly used in ancient warfare, and it is predicted that the men of Babylon were doomed to feel its edge. Not only were the military men to suffer from it, but the leading men in civilian life also were to be cut down by the sword.

Verse 36. *Liar* is from *BEDRYL*, which Strong defines, "A brag or lie; also a liar." The passage refers to the false prophets among the Jews who boasted that no country could harm them, thus lulling the common people into a false assurance of peace. But the sword of the Lord in the hands of the Persians was coming against them and they were going to *dote*, which means they would be made to feel and act foolishly and manifest the greatest of confusion.

Verse 37. This is more along the same line as the preceding verses. These leading men depended on their soldiers to protect the country against invasion but to no avail. The sword of the invading army was to overcome these men of war and they were to *become as women*. This comparison was made in view of the fact that women were not armed nor otherwise provided for military service.

Verse 38. *Drought* when used literally refers to a lack of moisture and that was actually brought about in this case. The Persians diverted the stream of the Euphrates River so they could march into the city of Babylon. The reader should again consult the historical note referred to in verse 3. This great event made a logical occasion for the predictions of the following two verses on the desolation of Babylon.

Verse 39. The historical note just cited will show the fulfillment of this prediction to have been literally true. The city of Babylon became an uninhabited spot, and only these doleful creatures of desert life could live there.

Verse 40. This verse emphasizes the preceding one by comparing Babylon to the city of Sodom in its complete desolation. The site of that wicked city and its neighbors became the Dead Sea because of the extent of territory involved, but the condition

was the same as that of Babylon in that no human being could live there.

Verse 41. This verse predicts the attack from the Medo-Persian Empire whose territory lay north and east of Babylon. This twofold empire was to continue many years and be ruled by a succession of kings, many of whom were powerful.

Verse 42. A *bow* was used to shoot an arrow and a *lance* was thrust by hand; these two forms of weapons were used by the Persians. The rough practices of these people are predicted in this verse. The history of their long combined reign is too full of incidences and details to relate in this place.

Verse 43. This verse has specific reference to Belshazzar and his plight when he saw the handwriting on the wall (see Daniel 5: 6).

Verse 44. For comments, and historical information on the lion's actions see chapter 4: 7. In the present case the lion is the Medo-Persian Empire. *Who shall appoint me a time* implies that no one will be able to plead any defence when the Lord brings the year of his vengeance upon Babylon.

Verse 45. *Counsel* means the advice and decision of the Lord concerning Babylon. *Land of the Chaldeans* means the same as the Babylonian territory. *Least of the flock* means that Persia will very easily conquer their *habitation* which refers to Babylon.

Verse 46. *Earth is moved* is a figure of speech and refers to the revolutionary effect upon the world of the report of the downfall of the Babylonian Empire.

## JEREMIAH 51

Verse 1. This long chapter is a continuation of Jeremiah's predictions against Babylon. Much of the language is figurative even as the prophetic style often is. *Wind* is very destructive when it comes in great volumes, and the onrushing of the Persians was to be like such a wind. *Rise up against me*. Since the Lord was the power that was bringing the Persian army against the land of Babylon, those who opposed them were opposing Him.

Verse 2. *Fanners* is from a word that means a foreigner, and *fan* is from *ZARAH*, which Strong defines, "To toss about; by implication to diffuse, winnow." The statement means that Babylon was to be treated as chaff

and the Persians were to be the workers who would use the fan. Since the empire of Babylon was become as chaff, when the fan has done its work it will leave the land empty.

Verse 3. The literal meaning of this verse is for the Persians to oppose the Babylonians. *Him that bendeth* means the Babylonian who bends the bow to shoot an arrow. The Persian archer (a user of a bow) is told to bend his bow to shoot an arrow at the other man. A *brigandine* is a coat of mail or metal armor. The Babylonians wore one and *lifted* himself up; that is, he stood up and trusted in the protection of his armor. The Persian soldier is told (in prediction) to stand against the other soldier who trusted in his armor.

Verse 4. This is a more direct prediction that the Chaldeans were to be slain in their own land. The streets of their cities were to be strewn with dead bodies.

Verse 5. These misfortunes were to come upon the Babylonians on behalf of Israel and Judah who had been held in captivity by these heathen. And all this was to be done in spite of the sins of God's people committed while they were in their own land. But the Lord would not tolerate the attitude of the Babylonians toward even an unrighteous nation when it was the peculiar possession of Him.

Verse 6. God's people were to flee out of the land of Babylon and this verse is a prediction of the return to their own land. The Biblical account of the fulfillment of the prediction is in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The historical account of it was quoted at Isaiah 14: 1 in volume 3 of this COMMENTARY.

Verse 7. When *cup* is used figuratively it denotes an instrument containing the wine of wrath or other unpleasant lot to be experienced by someone. When God is said to be using the cup it is a signal that He is imposing upon some person some deserved chastisement. In the instance at hand Babylon is the cup and God has used it against certain nations to punish them for their wrongs. But Babylon took too much joy out of the distress that was brought onto the nations by drinking from this "cup" served to them, so now the Lord is going to bring her to suffer humiliation.

Verse 8. Babylon *is* fallen is present tense in form but future in thought. *Suddenly* refers to the surprise attack described in Daniel 5.

Verse 9. The gist of this verse is that Babylon was a self-willed nation and would never have accepted any instructions that might have prevented her downfall. She was to receive the chastisement that was due her wicked stubbornness. *Judgment reacheth unto heaven* (or to the skies) is a figurative expression, meaning the doom of Babylon was to be great.

Verse 10. The pronoun *our* refers to the Medes and Persians who were the instrument in God's hands for the punishment of Babylon. The verse means that in attacking the nation these people will be doing the right thing.

Verse 11. This is the same thought as the preceding verse. Mention of only the Medes is merely a common manner of the Old Testament writers in referring to the Medo-Persian Empire. God was back of this kingdom in its movements upon Babylon.

Verse 12. The *standard* is the flag or ensign of a nation or army. The passage is a prediction that the Medes would raise their flag in triumph upon the walls of Babylon. Having taken possession of the city, they would place a guard to be on the lookout for any who might attempt to wrest their victory from them. The watchers on the walls would not be enough protection, but others would be stationed at spots in hiding to detect any attempt of the enemy to surprise the conquerors in some attack.

Verse 13. *Waters* refers to the River Euphrates that flowed through the city of Babylon. It is a mighty stream and was the pride of the Chaldean capital. *Measure of thy covetousness* denotes that the sad end about to come upon the city will be appropriate in view of her grasping disposition.

Verse 14. The men with whom the city was to be filled were the Medes and Persians. (See Daniel 5.) *Lift up a shout* refers to the cry of victory that a successful army makes when it has taken possession of the enemy position.

Verse 15. *He is the Lord of hosts* mentioned in the preceding verse. The earth was made by His power and certainly he can overcome even the strongest of the governments of men. This will be accomplished soon by the hand of the Medo-Persian Empire.

Verse 16. The thought in this verse is on God's control over the rain and other elements of the universe. Since the entire workings of the universe are subject to the divine power, then



surely such a comparatively small thing as a human monarchy cannot resist that power successfully.

Verse 17. To be *brutish* means to be more like a dumb brute than a human being. When a man makes a graven image to worship he manifests a mind that is foolish and one that is to be compared to that of a beast.

Verse 18. *They* means the graven images which the heathen nations formed to worship. Such gods are *vanity* or vain. *Time of their visitation* means the time when they are put to the test. When that time comes the weakness of these idols will be manifested in that all who have relied upon them will perish.

Verse 19. *Portion of Jacob* means that which Jacob received from the Lord, which was the favor of divine help not to be compared with the advantages of the heathen. *He* means the Lord as the source "from whom all blessings flow."

Verse 20. *Battle axe* is from *MAPPETS*, which Strong defines, "A smiter, i. e., a war club." For the sake of Israel who came from Jacob, the Lord will use the Medes (and Persians) as a war club to hammer the nations that have mistreated His people.

Verse 21. *Horse and rider* were used in battle, and those of the enemy nations were to be broken or brought to defeat in war.

Verse 22. All ages and ranks and sexes of the hostile nations were to be brought under. None will be able to endure when God sends his forces as his agencies to carry out his vengeance against those who disrespect Him.

Verse 23. The reference to *shepherds* and *husbandmen* indicates that all agricultural pursuits will be stopped. *Captains* and *rulers* pertain to the governmental departments of a nation, and these also were to be overthrown in God's wrath.

Verse 24. This verse comes into more direct reference to the specific event which the prophet has been describing. *Babylon* and *Chaldea* are the same as to the present situation, and *Zion* stands for the nation of God which had been mistreated by the mentioned people of the heathen nations.

Verse 25. *Mountain* in symbolic language means a government, and in this place it means the government of Babylon. God was against this "mountain" because of the destruction that it had wrought in the earth. If a rocky mountain should be burnt into lava it

would roll down and be flattened out and cease to exist as a mountain. Hence this mountain of Babylon is threatened with being dissolved by the fire of God's anger and be brought to nothing as a kingdom.

Verse 26. *They* (the Medes and Persians) will not use the building materials of Babylon for their own benefit for that will not be the purpose of their attack. However, they will destroy the city and make it desolate for ever.

Verse 27. The world empires such as Medo-Persia comprised the units of government in many localities. Some of such units are mentioned in this verse and they will be among the forces that Persia will bring against the capital of the Babylonians. *Set up a standard in the land* means the flag of the invading army will be planted in the conquered country.

Verse 28. This is virtually the same in thought as the preceding verse, and it means the Medes will gather with their accumulated forces and come against Babylon.

Verse 29. *The land of Babylon* has special application to the site of the capital city and perhaps the nearby territory. The country in general remained to be inhabited by the citizens whom it pleased the Persians to permit.

Verse 30. The war had been going on in the country at large before the city of Babylon was attacked. But all the while the active soldiers were in the field in defence of their country, the princes of the land, and especially those in the capital city were shrinking from their military duty. While this cowardly attitude was being maintained their houses were being burned by the invading forces.

Verse 31. Before reading this and the following verse it is very important to read the historical note or quotation made at Isaiah 13: 78 in volume 3 of this COMMENTARY. A *post* is a runner whose business it is to spread news or reports of great interest, and this verse is a prediction of the events that took place on the memorable night of Belshazzar's feast and death. City taken at one end. While the king was absorbed in his drinking feast, the Persians were making their way into the city at one end, the place where the Euphrates River entered beneath the walls. (See note again.)

Verse 32. *Passages are stopped*. The Euphrates River flowed through the city of Babylon and at every street

coming down to it there were means provided for crossing over. After the Persians got within the city through the lowered river, they took possession of all these crossings. *Reeds* is from AGAM, which Strong defines, "A marsh; hence a rush (as growing in swamps); hence a stockade of reeds." A stockade is a sort of fortification made of stout posts and these heavy reeds on the banks of the river were so used. After the stream had been lowered in the way described in the historical note, the Persians set fire to these reeds. This would produce an alarming appearance which accounts for the prediction that *the men of war are affrighted*.

Verse 33. A threshing-floor is a place where grain is beaten and then the chaff is blown away. Babylon has already been compared to chaff (verse 2) and hence the prediction is repeated that the city was destined to be threshed.

Verse 34. The Lord speaks of the mistreatment of his people as if it had been done to Him. Jesus taught the same principle in Matthew 25: 45. The king of Babylon named in this verse was the one in power when the "three captivities" took place and hence he is the one named in the complaint.

Verse 35. The complaint that God expressed in the preceding verse on behalf of his people is made in this verse by the people themselves. *Zion* and *Jerusalem* are mentioned because the former was the most important district of the latter.

Verse 36. The invasion of Babylon by means of the Euphrates River is predicted by the phrase *dry up her sea*. Strong says the original for *sea* is sometimes defined as "a large river." By the ingenuity of Cyrus (the Persian commander) the river was rendered powerless as a defence for Babylon.

Verse 37. This verse is a repetition of the prediction that Babylon was to be completely destroyed and never to be inhabited nor rebuilt.

Verses 38-40. I have purposely combined these verses into one paragraph because of the direct relation of all the items to each other. The passage is a prediction of the scenes in Babylon on that last night of Belshazzar. The student will do well to read again very carefully the fifth chapter of Daniel. Then read again the historical quotation given at Isaiah 13: 1 in volume 3 of this COMMENTARY.

Verse 41. Strong's lexicon says *Sheshach* is a symbolic name of Babylon.

The taking of such a great city was so unusual an event that it caused universal surprise. *Praise . . . surprised*. Those who had direct information on the noted event gave forth such great *praise* or laudation that the nations were astonished.

Verse 42. In figurative language such terms as floods and waters are often used to indicate great distress. The same thing is meant in the verse by *the sea*, referring to the army of the Persians that was to overflow the city of Babylon.

Verse 43. Doubtless many of the cities besides the capital were destroyed and the inhabitants slain in the general wars the Babylonians had to suffer. However, the permanent state of desolation as to inhabitants applied to Babylon only.

Verse 44. *Bel* was another form for Baal which was one of the heathen gods worshiped by the nations of the ancient world. They pretended to rely on the protection these idols could give them and God was determined to expose the vanity of such gods. On the night of the capture of Babylon the king and his lords "praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of wood, and of stone" (Daniel 5: 4). But these gods could do nothing to help Belshazzar; could not even furnish him a man who was able to explain the writing on the wall.

Verse 45. This verse is a prediction in the form of an order. God's people were to be released after Babylon was captured by the Persians, and they were to be given the privilege of returning to their own land.

Verse 46. *Lest your heart faint* means that God's people were told about the revolution that was to come upon the land wherein they were being held as captives, so that when they began to hear disquieting rumors about it they would not be faint. Moffatt renders this, "Never be daunted or dismayed by rumors that you hear."

Verse 47. One of the main objections that God had against the heathen nations was their worship of idols. By humiliating those nations that relied on such things, the weakness of false gods was demonstrated.

Verse 48. *Sing for Babylon* means that all intelligent creatures will feel jubilant over the downfall of the hated city. *Spoilers from the north* refers to the Medes who were located north of Babylon. They were to come down upon the city and take from her the

personal belongings in which she took so much pride.

Verse 49. A glance at verse 45 shows that Israel is being addressed still, and is being consoled over the downfall of the nation that had opposed them while in captivity. The original for *earth* is defined in the lexicon also as "the land." The passage means that as Babylon had caused the people of Israel to be slain, so the people all over the land of Babylon should be slain and made to fall.

Verse 50. *Escaped the sword* would refer to the same ones who are elsewhere considered the "remnant" that was to survive the ravages of the captivity. (See Isaiah 1: 9; 10: 21; 37: 31; Ezra 2: 64.) This group is notified through the prediction to leave the land of their captivity and return to Jerusalem their own capital city.

Verse 51. This verse expresses the sentiments of the people of Israel over their misfortunes. *Strangers* or people from the outside had invaded the holy places of God.

Verse 52. This sad state of mind is being comforted by the promise that divine judgment was to be poured out upon the oppressor nation. The heathens relied on their *graven images* and other false gods for support. The downfall of this government, therefore, would be a defeat for these idols.

Verse 53. *Mount up to heaven* is a figure of speech meaning the highest attainment possible for a human government. Babylon doubtless did reach such heights as a world power (see Daniel 2: 36-37), but this verse predicts her final downfall.

Verse 54. The *cry* that is predicted refers to the wail of distress that the people of Babylon were to utter at her shameful overthrow.

Verse 55. *Waves* and *waters* are figures of speech that mean the floods of distress and ruin that would come upon the land of Babylon. All of this was to be brought about through the service of the Persians, but it would be by the decree of the Lord.

Verse 56. This verse is more along the same line as the preceding verses. A *spoiler* is one who takes possession of the things in the hands of another. The Medo-Persian Empire was decreed by the Lord to come as a spoiler against Babylon. To *requite* means to impose upon one some chastisement for his unrighteous deeds.

Verse 57. This verse has specific application to the scenes that took

place in Babylon on the night of Belshazzar's drunken feast. (See Daniel 5.)

Verse 58. *The broad walls of Babylon*. The walls of Babylon were one of the "Seven Wonders of the World," and they are referred to in this verse. In view of the importance of the subject I shall copy a description of these walls out of authentic historians. The reader should take careful interest in this quotation for it will not be again produced in full in this COMMENTARY. "First, the walls were very prodigious [of vast dimensions]: for they were in thickness eighty-seven feet, and in compass four hundred and eighty furlongs, which make sixty of our miles. This is Herodotus's account of them, who was himself in Babylon, and is the most ancient author that hath written of this matter. And although there are others that differ from him herein, yet the most that agree in any measure of those walls give us the same, or very near the same, that he doth . . . These walls were drawn round the city in the form of an exact square, each side of which was one hundred and twenty furlongs, or fifteen miles in length, and all built of large bricks, cemented together with bitumen, a glutinous slime arising out of the earth in that country, which binds in building much stronger and firmer than lime, and soon grows much harder than the brick or stones themselves which it cements together. These walls were surrounded on the outside with a vast ditch filled with water, after the manner of scarp [a steep wall] or counterscarp, and the earth, which was dug out of it, made the bricks, wherewith the walls were built; and therefore, from the vast height and breadth of the walls may be inferred the greatness of the ditch. In every side of this great square were twenty-five gates, that is, a hundred in all, which were all made of solid brass; and hence it is, that when God promised Cyrus [the Persian commander] the conquest of Babylon, he tells him, 'that he would break in pieces before him the gates of brass' (Isaiah 45: 2). Between every two of these gates were three towers, and four more at the four corners of this great square, and three between each of these corners and the next gate on either side; and every one of these towers was ten feet higher than the walls. But this is to be understood only of those parts of the wall where there was need of towers; for some parts of them lying against morasses always full of water, where they could not be approached by an enemy, they had there no need of any towers

at all for their defence; and therefore in them there were none built; for the whole number of them amounted to no more than two hundred and fifty; whereas, had the same uniform order been observed in their disposition all round, there must have been many more. From the twenty-five gates on each side of this great square, went twenty-five streets in straight lines to the gates, which were directly over against them in the other side opposite to it. So that the whole number of the streets was fifty, each fifteen miles long, whereof twenty-five went one way, and twenty-five the other, directly crossing each other at right angles."—Prideaux's Connexion, 570 B. C.

The magnitude of the feat of Cyrus in taking Babylon may the better be realized after we ponder this description of the walls and gates. *The people shall labor in vain* means the labor the people had put on this vast structure will prove to have been in vain, for it was all destined to be lost in destruction that the Persians would bring to the city.

Verse 59. Jeremiah wrote a special copy of his predictions to be used as herein directed. We know it was a special copy, for it was to be destroyed, while we still have the major writing of the prophet. This was done in the fourth year of the reign of Zedekiah which was only seven years before the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. *Went with Zedekiah* means he went on behalf of the king since Zedekiah never went to Babylon until after his reign came to an end. *Quiet prince* is properly translated according to the lexicon of Strong. The point is that Seraiah was a chamberlain who was not active in any of the disturbances of the city and would be the most dependable kind of man for such a delicate mission.

Verse 60. The purpose of taking this special document with him was to console the Jews who were in captivity in Babylon. He was to read it (to himself) after he got there which doubtless was in order to have it fresh in his memory to relate orally to his people, for he was to destroy it as soon as he had read it.

Verse 61. Jeremiah instructed Seraiah to read the document after he had seen the situation at Babylon.

Verse 62. As a "check" on the correctness of his reading and his understanding of the words, Seraiah was to "repeat back" to the Lord what the prophecy contained. Since this was

directly addressed to the Lord, we would understand that the people would not yet have learned about the message.

Verse 63. From now on the actions of Seraiah were in the presence and hearing of the Jews. He had told them of the contents of the message, that it predicted the downfall of Babylon. Furthermore, that the city would never be rebuilt but would be a perpetual desolation. In keeping with one of the practices where men of God "acted out" their predictions, Seraiah was to fasten a stone to the book and cast it into the River Euphrates. Of course it would not be expected that the book would rise to the surface with the weight tied to it. By that same token the city of Babylon, which boasted so much of its great river, was to be caused to sink, never to rise again. And it is significant that Babylon's ruin will be accomplished by means of this very stream into which the weighted book was thrown.

Verse 64. After explaining the meaning of his actions to his people, Seraiah was to cast the book into the river. He was then to add the words orally, *and they shall be weary*. That means that when Babylon is attacked her citizens shall tire of defending her and will surrender. *Thus far are the words of Jeremiah*. This concludes the book of Jeremiah, hence the next chapter was added by some man of God, taking it from the history already in existence, either as a separate document, or from the records of the kings that were kept in the royal accounts.

## JEREMIAH 52

General remarks: From verse 1 through verse 27 this chapter is a duplicate of the history in 2 Kings 24: 18 to 25: 21. Since those verses have been commented upon in their proper place I shall not take up the space to repeat them here; they are in volume 2 of this COMMENTARY and the reader is requested to see that place.

Verses 28-30. This paragraph gives some historical details that are left out of the book of 2 Kings. We know the third stage of the great captivity took place at the end of Zedekiah's 11-year reign. At that time the king of Babylon took most of the citizens away with him, yet he left some remaining in Palestine. (See 2 Kings 25: 12, 13, 22.) Some of these who were left in the land became restless and escaped into the land of Egypt. (Jeremiah 42 and 43.) Of others who



were still remaining, the king of Babylon finally brought into his realm those mentioned in this paragraph.

Verse 31. *Captivity of Jehoiachin.* The taking of this king off the throne in Jerusalem marked the "2nd captivity" (2 Kings 24: 10-16), and the things about to be related here are dated from that event. In the meantime Nebuchadnezzar had died and his son Evil-merodach came to the throne. Frequently a new ruler will celebrate his first year in office by some special act and favor. *Brought him forth out of prison.* Although Jehoiachin had been permitted to live after being deposed, he was made a prisoner in the land of Babylon until Evil-merodach released him.

Verse 32. *Set his throne* does not mean that he was permitted to act as king. It means he was treated with more courtesy and distinction than other kings in captivity.

Verse 33. *Prison garments* were replaced by those worn by free men in civilian life. Since eating with another meant so much in ancient times, this dining with the king of Babylon meant much for Jehoiachin.

Verse 34. Jehoiachin not only dined with the king, but was given a daily serving out of the provisions that had been prepared for the Babylonian king. We are not given the information as to the cause of this special friendship between this captive and his master, a favor he enjoyed to the end of his life.

### LAMENTATIONS 1

Verse 1. This book consists chiefly of the lamentations of Jeremiah over the sad condition of Jerusalem and the people for whom it was the capital. The book was written after the destruction of the city and thus after the "3rd captivity." In view of this fact all of the statements regarding that event should be regarded as history. Other remarks will occur in course of the book that are mournful predictions of future sorrows in store for his beloved people. Some statements will be made concerning the future of Babylon, and still others will come of a favorable character pertaining to the return of Israel from captivity. *City sit solitary* refers to the desolated and isolated situation of Jerusalem. This very condition was predicted in Isaiah 1: 8. *Become tributary* means to become in subjection to another country.

Verse 2. Israel had doted on many

nations but none of them stood by her now.

Verse 3. *Because* has no word in the original and if retained at all it should be understood in the light of the connection. The first clause should read, "Judah is gone into captivity to suffer affliction and servitude." *Overtook her between the straits* means her enemies found her in trouble and took advantage of it.

Verse 4. *Ways of Zion* means the roads leading to the city where the national feasts had been observed. They *mourned* (figuratively speaking) because no one was passing over them to attend the feasts. The rest of the verse is on the same subject.

Verse 5. *Her adversaries* means the Babylonians who had become *chief* or exalted above the people of Judah. But the prophet admits that such a sad state of affairs was just because it was from the Lord as a punishment for her many transgressions. *Her children* means the citizens of Judah who had gone into captivity.

Verse 6. *The beauty* referred to was the national and religious excellence of the city of Zion. The *hart* is of the deer family and is timid, especially when he is pursued in a wilderness in which he had become impoverished through the want of food. The princes or leaders are compared to this creature because they had been pursued by the enemies from a foreign land.

Verse 7. *Jerusalem remembered* means the people who had lived in that city but had been taken into a strange land. (See verse 8.) After they got to Babylon they fulfilled the statement of this verse, which was also prophesied in Psalms 137.

Verse 8. Jeremiah again admits that his people had sinned grievously and for that reason she had gone into captivity. To *despise* means to belittle or look upon with contempt. Jerusalem had been so humiliated that her former admirers now considered her condition to be one of disgrace.

Verse 9. *Filthiness is in her skirts* is a figurative way of saying the guilt of Jerusalem is evident, referring to the religious corruptions of the nation as well as the personal iniquity of the leaders. *Remembereth not her last end* means that Jerusalem was unthoughtful as to the outcome of her course. *Came down wonderfully* refers to the completeness of the fall of the city. The prophet then expresses his per-