

The Book of 2 Kings

The Division of the Second Book of the Kings

The second book of the Kings is a continuation of the history of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah up to the time of the captivities. As stated in the introduction to the book of Kings, both books were originally undivided. In the opening chapters Elijah the prophet is seen once more in his final ministrations, followed by his translation. Then Elisha comes upon the scene. In and through his ministry and miracles Jehovah manifested His power in behalf of His people. It was Jehovah's gracious appeal to Israel to return unto Him. The history of decline and apostasy in Israel and Judah follows after that. The house of Israel was first carried into captivity through Assyria. In the Kingdom of Judah a revival took place under Hezekiah, which was followed by a reaction under Manasseh and Amon. After Josiah's reform and death Judah's doom was sealed. The book ends with the record of the siege of Jerusalem and the captivity. Hosea and Amos exercised their prophetic offices in the northern Kingdom, while Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah were the prophets of Judah. Ezekiel prophesied among the captives, while Daniel was in Babylon. The division of this second part of the book of the Kings is therefore easily made.

I. ELIJAH'S FINAL MINISTRY AND TRANSLATION

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Analysis and Annotations

I. ELIJAH's FINAL MINISTRY AND TRANSLATION

1. Elijah and Ahaziah

CHAPTER 1

1. Moab's rebellion (1:1)

2. The illness of Ahaziah (1:2)

3. Elijah's message (1:3-8)

4. Ahaziah's messengers and their fate (1:9-15)

5. Elijah before the king and Ahaziah's Death (1:16-17)

6. Jehoram becomes king (1:18)

The rebellion of Moab is here briefly mentioned. Both Omri and Ahab had oppressed Moab, and after Ahab's death this rebellion took place. The complete report is found in the third chapter. That ancient monument known by the name of the Moabite stone contains a most interesting record of this revolt and the oppression by Omri and his son Ahab. This record is as follows: "Omri (was) King of Israel, and he oppressed Moab many days, for Chemosh (Moab's idol-god) was angry with his land. His son (Ahab) followed him, and he also said, I will oppress Moab." (See Appendix for a complete translation of the record on this monument.) However, if it were not for the Bible no one would know that the inscription on the Moabite stone is truthful. The Bible proves the record genuine, and not the record the genuineness of the Biblical account. The Bible does not need such confirmation.

Ahaziah, the wicked son of a wicked father, had an accident and sent his messenger to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron. Baal-zebub means "lord of flies." According to rabbinical tradition, he was worshipped in the form of a fly; and so addicted were the Jews to this cult that they carried a small image in their pockets, kissing it from time to time. Vile practices were also connected with its worship. What awful blasphemy the Pharisees uttered when they accused our Lord of using Beelzebub, the prince of demons! (Matt. 12:24. _Beelzebub is given in the Greek as _Beelzebul, which means "lord of idolatrous sacrificing.")

The messengers of Ahaziah never reached Ekron. The Lord had heard the charge to the king's messengers and He sent a messenger (angel means in Hebrew "a messenger") to Elijah the Tishbite. The angel of the LORD commanded the prophet to meet the men the king had sent forth to inquire of Baal-zebub and to announce the coming death of Ahaziah. The message is faithfully delivered; the messengers return to Ahaziah and he heard the words of Elijah from their lips. He knew at once who the mysterious person was who had turned back his messengers. The king sent therefore a captain with his fifty men to arrest the prophet. The captain addressed Elijah as a "Man of God" and commanded him in the name of the king to come down from the hill. But Elijah, fearless as he was, took up the word of the captain and appealed to his God to let fire come down from heaven. It was at once carried out and the captain with his fifty men were consumed by fire. The same fate overtook the second expedition, whose captain urged the prophet's obedience more than the first, for he said, "Come down quickly." The judicial character of Elijah's ministry is here once more in evidence. Critics have more than once condemned his action and called him "arrogant and merciless," while others deny the historicity of the event altogether. "Terrible as this answer was, we can perceive its suitableness, nay, its necessity, since it was to decide, and that publicly and by the way of judgment (and no other decision would have been suitable in a contest between man and God), whose was the power and the kingdom--and this at the great critical epoch of Israel's history" (History of Israel). Compare this fire judgment with Luke 9:54-56. When this present dispensation of grace is ended, judgment by fire will be meted out to the enemies of God (Rev. 11:5). During the great tribulation (Matt. 24:22) the fiery judgments will be on the earth (Rev. 8:5), preceding the visible manifestation of the Lord, who shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 1:7-8).

Elijah could consistently command fire to come down from heaven and consume those who dishonored and despised in him the prophet and servant of God. But when the disciples of Jesus, in a similar case (Luke 9:54-56) desired to imitate that example, the Lord restrained them, and said: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." Elijah here acted as the representative of the law, which showed no indulgence, but the disciples of Christ were the representatives of the gospel which proclaims the remission of sins. The old covenant necessarily alarmed and subdued the enemies of the kingdom of God by minatory language and punitive measures, while the new

covenant designed to disarm and, if possible, to win them by forgiving love (J.H. Kurts).

A third company was sent out by Ahaziah. Mercy was shown to this captain and his fifty men, for the captain feared God and honored Elijah as His representative. His words breathe humility and his prayer showed that he owned the power of God. Such mercy is also in store for those who humble themselves when the coming judgments are in the earth. Then Elijah appeared before Ahaziah in person and delivered the God-given message and the wicked King died according to the Word of the LORD.

2. Elijah's Translation

CHAPTER 2:1-11

1. From Gilgal to Jordan (2:1-6)
2. The divided Jordan (2:7-8)
3. Elisha's request (2:9-10)
4. Elijah goes up to heaven in a whirlwind (2:11)

The time for Elijah's departure had now come, and the LORD, whom he had served so faithfully, "would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind." As Lord He graciously orders the time and the manner of the departure of His servants (John 21:18-22). His coming translation was known to him, to Elisha and to the sons of the prophets. The latter belonged to the schools of the prophets.

The "schools of the prophets," which were placed under the direction of experienced and approved prophets, afforded to younger men an opportunity of becoming qualified to perform the duties of the prophetic calling. The selection and the admission of individuals who were suited for the prophetic office by their personal character, and who had a divine call, undoubtedly depended on the prophetic judgment of those who presided over these institutions. As prophecy was a gift and not an art, the instructions which were imparted, probably referred merely to the study of the law, and were intended to awaken and cultivate theocratical sentiments, as well as promote a growth in spiritual life, for herein a suitable preparation for the prophetic office necessarily consisted. There are also indications found which authorize us to conclude that the revival of sacred poetry, as an art, and that theocratic-historical composition also, are to be ascribed to these religious communities as their source. Such schools existed in Ramah, Jericho, Beth-el, and Gilgal (1 Sam. 19:18; 2 Kings 2:3, 5; 4:38). Those who frequented them, had, usually, reached the age of manhood already, and in some cases, were married men. They lived together in a society or community, which often embraced a large number of members, and were occasionally employed as prophetic messengers by their teachers (2 Kings 9:1). However, the prophets were not invariably trained in these schools; several are named who were taken at once from civil life and invested with the prophetic office (Sacred History).

The goodness and power of God was now to be manifested in taking him into heaven without passing through death. The Jewish synagogue and the church have always believed the record of his departure, but it has been reserved to the destructive criticism to deny the translation of Elijah. The following statements are taken from Canon F.W. Farrar's exposition of the second book of Kings. "Knowing that he was on his way to death, Elijah felt the imperious instinct which leads the soul to seek solitude at the supreme crisis of life." "His death, like that of Moses, was surrounded by mystery and miracles, and we can say nothing further about it." How strange that a scholar and expositor can speak twice of the death of Elijah, when the record so dearly establishes the fact that he was taken up into heaven in a whirlwind and that he did not die at all!

He appeared with Moses when our Lord was transfigured. According to Peter's inspired

comment the transfiguration scene foreshadows the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:16-21). As He stood in glorious majesty upon that mountain so will He come to this earth once more and bring His saints with Him. Moses is the representative of those saints, who died and are raised from the dead; Elijah represents that company, who will be caught in clouds to meet the Lord in the air, departing from the earth without dying (1 Cor. 15:51-53; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

Elisha clings close to Elijah. He had previously cast his mantle (the symbol of the prophetic office) upon Elisha, and he was then not quite ready to follow him fully. (See 1 Kings 19:19-20. Compare with Luke 9:62.) But now we see Elisha following Elijah from Gilgal to Bethel, from Bethel to Jericho, and from Jericho to Jordan. He proves himself worthy of the mantle, to exercise the holy office as the prophet of the LORD. He covets in answer to Elijah's request a double portion of the spirit which was upon Elijah to rest upon him. (According to the marginal reading, "the portion of the first born son," which was twice as much as that of the other sons. See Deut. 21:17.) Elijah's answer is conditional. If Elisha saw Elijah taken up into heaven, it should be so, and if not, then his request was not to be granted. And while they yet talked the chariot of fire, and horses of fire appeared and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. The chariot of fire with its horses of fire were the symbol of the presence of the LORD of Hosts (Psalm 104:3-4; Isa. 66:15; Hab. 3:8), but Elijah went up by the whirlwind. We know he was translated; he passed on without dying, but the details of it are not made known.

Elisha following Elijah, his request and the vision of glory, are suggestive about true service for God. Only as we follow the Lord wholly, as Elisha followed Elijah, and look to the coming glory, are we fit and fitted for service.

II. THE PROPHET ELISHA

1. The Beginning of His Ministry

CHAPTER 2:12-25

1. The mantle used (2:12-14)
2. The sons of the prophets (2:15-18)
3. The healing of Jericho's waters (2:19-22)
4. Judgment upon the scoffers (2:23-25)

Both Elijah and Elisha are types of our Lord Jesus Christ. Their names indicate this. Elijah means "my God is Jehovah," and Elisha, "my God is salvation." Suffering, affliction and rejection are prominent in the life of Elijah, but it ended for him by being taken into heaven. It foreshadows the path of Him who was rejected by His own, cast out by the world and who has gone to heaven. In Elisha and his ministry, sovereign grace towards Israel in apostasy and ripening for judgment, is the predominant feature, foreshadowing Him who appeared in the midst of His people, ministering grace and truth (John 1:14, 18). (Another typical application is to look upon Elisha's ministry as typifying what will be bestowed upon Israel and upon the Gentiles with the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.)

Elisha had seen Elijah's departure into heaven, and when he saw him no more "he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces." He thus expressed his grief, but at the same time he took Elijah's mantle (symbolical of the prophetic ministry, which had fallen upon him) and used it at once. He smites with it the waters of Jordan and the Lord God of Elijah answers faith by parting the river. It was the first miracle of his administration. "So shall the waters of difficulty, nay, the cold flood of death itself, part, if we smite in faith with the heaven given garment; so shall the promise of God ever stand sure, and God be true to His Word; and so may we go forward undauntedly, though

humbly and prayerfully, to whatever work He gives us to do" (A. Edersheim).

The sons of the prophets then acknowledged Elisha. They are seen ever after in close fellowship with the prophet; they belonged to the faithful remnant in Israel. However, not having witnessed Elijah's translation they were unbelieving and thought that the Spirit might have transported the prophet (1 Kings 18:12; Ezek. 3:14; 8:3). They were not obedient to Elisha's command and urged him to send, till he was ashamed and yielded to their request. After a three days' unsuccessful search they returned and now they had to be ashamed, when their master told them, "Did I not say unto you, Go not?" They were like the disciples of our Lord "slow to believe."

The second miracle is one of mercy, followed by a miracle of judgment. The healing of Jericho's waters is a miracle of much significance. Jericho is a type of the world under the curse (Joshua 6). The water was naught and the ground barren. A new cruse with salt is brought. The salt is put into the waters and the prophet said: "Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land." When He, who is greater than Elisha, comes back to this earth again, now under the curse and death reigning upon it, the curse will be removed; there will be healing as it was for Jericho. The other miracles of grace and mercy teach the same lesson.

The third miracle is one of judgment. Judgment well deserved fell upon those who despised the chosen messenger of God. The mockers were not "little children," but young men. They were of Bethel, and no doubt associated with the wicked worship established there (1 Kings 7:25-33). They were infidels and scoffers. They mocked the translation of Elijah and taunted Elisha. The curse of the Lord fell upon them. Forty-two of their number were torn by she-bears. The punishment has been declared by critics "disproportionate to the offence." It certainly is not when the offence is considered as an insult to the man of God, who had gone to heaven and to the prophet who had taken his place; besides, these young men had scoffed at the power of God. And we must not overlook the fact that present day mockers and rejecters of the ministry of the gospel and grace of God will also receive their punishment in due time (2 Peter 3:3-7).

2. Jehoram, Moab, and Elisha

CHAPTER 3

1. Jehoram, King of Israel (3:1-3)
2. Moab's rebellion (3:4-9)
3. Elisha's message and prediction (3:10-20)
4. The defeat of Moab (3:21-27)

In chapter 1:17 we read, "And Jehoram reigned in his stead (Ahaziah) in the second year of Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, King of Judah." (He was associated with his father in the government of the kingdom. See 2 Kings 8:27; 2 Chronicles 21:6.) There was, therefore, a Jehoram, king over Judah, as well as a king of Israel by the same name. They are also known by the name Joram. Joram and Jehoram are used interchangeably. In 2 Kings 1:17 and 2 Chron. 22:6 both kings are called Jehoram; in 2 Kings 9:15, 17, the King of Israel is called Joram; in 2 Kings 8:21, etc., the King of Judah is called Joram; comparing 2 Kings 8:16 and verse 29 we find these two names inverted. We mention this to clear up a possible difficulty some may find here. Jehoram was another son of Ahab, the brother of Ahaziah. A partial reformation was attempted by him, but he continued in the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat (1 Kings 12:25-33).

The full record of Moab's rebellion is now given. Jehoram formed an alliance with Jehoshaphat, the King of Judah and the King of Edom. Jehoshaphat had been in league with Ahab (1 Kings 22)

and now we see him in a similar alliance with Ahab's second son. It was an alliance displeasing to the LORD and Jehoshaphat was troubled in his conscience about it. The same question he had put to Ahab, he now puts to Ahab's son, "Is there not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may inquire of the LORD by him?" (cf. 1 Kings 22:7). Jehoshaphat knew the LORD, but was in evil company. When the three kings met in Elisha's tent, the prophet manifests the boldness of Elijah in rebuking the wicked King of Israel. But he honors the King of Judah. "As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the King of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee." But there was also a rebuke for the good King of Judah. The Spirit of God was grieved and Elisha had not the power of prophecy. He needed a minstrel first to calm his own agitated spirit and get into the condition of soul to utter the needed message. How it should have humbled the king, who served Jehovah, that after calling for a prophet of the LORD, the divine mouthpiece was unable to prophesy at once! Unholy alliances hindered the manifestation of the Spirit of God. Such is the case almost everywhere in our days of departure from the truth of God.

Then the ditches which had been made in obedience to the command given through Elisha were miraculously filled with water. On the next morning the Moabites saw the water and imagined that it was blood, on account of the reflection from the rising sun. "And they said, This is blood; the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another, now therefore Moab to the spoil." The onrushing Moabites were met by the Israelites and Elisha's prediction was fulfilled in the defeat of the Moabites and the devastation of their own land. It was the supernatural gift of water "when the meal-offering was offered" which led to the defeat of the enemy and the victory for Israel. And God has supplied the water of life through Him who is the true meal offering.

Kir-hareseth alone was left intact, all other cities were razed, all wells stopped up and every good tree cut down. (Kir-hareseth is repeatedly mentioned as the stronghold of Moab. See Isaiah 16:7.) On the devastation of Moab remarks a commentator, that the spirit of the times must be considered and that the half barbaric nations of that time all did this. But could the devastation of Moab hundreds of years before Christ have been any worse than the devastation of Belgium, Poland and Galicia in the twentieth century after Christ?

Then in despair the King of Moab did the horrible thing of sacrificing his eldest son, the one to reign after him. He offered him upon the wall, in plain sight of Israel, as a burnt offering, to conciliate his god Chemosh, who is mentioned on the Moabite stone. (See Appendix.)

3. The Miracles

CHAPTER 4

1. The widow's oil multiplied (4:1-7)
2. The Shunammite and her reward (4:8-17)
3. The son of the Shunammite raised from the dead (4:18-37)
4. The deadly pottage healed (4:38-41)
5. The multitude fed (4:42-44)

In the previous chapter Elisha appeared as the saviour of Israel, and now he acts in behalf of the widow of one of the sons of the prophets. His name is not given. Elisha had known him as one who feared the Lord. And now the widow deeply in debt, about to lose her two sons, appealed to the prophet. In answer to Elisha's question what she had in her house she told him that her whole possession consisted in a pot of oil (in Hebrew, anointing oil). She then was told to borrow empty vessels, not a few. Behind closed doors she was to pour out. All the borrowed vessels were soon

filled and when the empty vessels were all filled and no other to be filled, the oil stayed. The oil was to be sold to satisfy the creditor and the rest to be used to sustain the widow and her sons. The Lord is the father of the widows and heareth their cry; this is beautifully illustrated in this miracle. Then there is the lesson for faith. The vessels had to be produced to be filled; if there had been more vessels the oil would have filled them all. The limitation was not in the supply of oil, but in the empty vessels to receive the oil. There is an abundance of grace and in faith we can always come with our empty vessels to receive out of His fulness grace upon grace.

Then the great woman of Shunem is introduced for the first time. She belonged to the godly in Israel and did not know the prophet, but it did not take her long to discover that he was a holy man of God. It is a blessed picture to see this man of God walking through the land, possessing nothing and acting in grace in the midst of Israel's ruin. In the words of another, "Poor indeed, while making many rich; seeming to possess all things, yet really having nothing. Receiving bounty and care in the ordinary need of life from those in whose behalf he, at the same time, is opening resources which were altogether beyond man. And, besides, he walks alone in the world, and yet all wait on him.

"All this gives us a strong expression of the ways of One who could call Himself Master and Lord, receiving the homage of faith, even while He had not where to lay His head. In all this our prophet is marking out for us, as in a reflection, the path of the Lord Jesus in one of its most striking, remarkable characters" (J. Bellett).

The pious Shunammite prepared for the lonely pilgrim a little chamber with its simple furnishings in her own house. And the man of God appreciated the kindness shown to him, and, learning that she had no son, Elisha told her "about this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son." Like Sarah she believed and received her son. And when the child died, what faith the Shunammite exhibited! The son of promise was dead, yet in the midst of her great sorrow she could say, "It is well." Like Abraham, when he put the son of promise upon the altar, the Shunammite counted on resurrection and believed on Him who can raise the dead. She had lost her son for a while, but not her faith.

And how her faith clings to Elisha! Not Gehazi with the staff can help, but Elisha is needed. And her faith is rewarded. Her child is raised from the dead. The Holy Spirit mentions her in the New Testament. "Women received their dead raised to life again" (Heb. 11:35).

We see in her a true and faithful Israelitish woman, who, in a time of general apostasy, owned Jehovah alike in her life and her home. Receiving a prophet, because of Him who had sent him, because he was a holy man of God--and with humility and entire self-forgetfulness--she received a prophet's reward in the gift most precious to a Jewish mother, which she had not dared to hope for, even when announced to her. Then, when severely tried, she still held fast to her trust in the promise--strong even when weakest--once more self-forgetful, and following deepest spiritual impulse. And, in the end, her faith appears victorious--crowned by Divine mercy, and shining out the more brightly from its contrast to the felt weakness of the prophet. As we think of this, it seems as if a fuller light were shed on the history of the trials of an Abraham, an Isaac, or a Jacob; on the inner life of those heroes of faith to whom the Epistle of the Hebrews points us for example and learning (Heb. 11), and on such Scripture sayings as these: "Jehovah killeth, and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up" (1 Sam. 2:6); "Know that Jehovah hath set apart him that is godly for Himself. Jehovah will hear when I call unto Him" (Psalm 4:3); or this: "All the paths of Jehovah are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies" (Psalm 25:10). (Bible History).

And here we must also think of Him, whom Elisha but faintly foreshadows. He raises the spiritually dead now, all who hear His voice, as He will raise the physically dead in the future.

In Gilgal the eighth miracle of Elisha took place. The humble pottage which was being prepared for the sons of the prophets had been spoiled by the addition of a wild and poisonous gourd. Then

Elisha cast meal into the pot and the pottage became eatable--"there was no harm in the pot." The meal is typical of our Lord, who was cast into the scene of death and through His death hath brought healing.

The miraculous feeding of the multitude was Elisha's ninth miracle and prefigures the miracles of our Lord (Matt. 14:19-21, etc.).

4. Naaman and His Healing

CHAPTER 5

1. Naaman, the leper (5:1)
2. The testimony of the maid of Israel (5:2-4)
3. The message to the king of Israel (5:5-8)
4. Naaman and Elisha (5:9-19)
5. Gehazi; His sin and punishment (5:20-27)

The story of this chapter is peculiarly rich in its spiritual and dispensational meaning. Naaman, captain of Ben-hadad, the King of Syria, was a Gentile. He was no common man. In all his greatness and might, with all the honors heaped upon him and wealth at his command, he was an unhappy and doomed man, for he was a leper. Leprosy is a type of sin. Here, then, is a picture of the natural man, enjoying the highest and the best--but withal a leper. And then the little captive, taken from Israel's land, away from her home and family--what a contrast with the great Naaman! In her captivity she was happy, for she knew the Lord and knew that the prophet in Samaria, the great representative of Jehovah, could heal leprosy. She knew and she believed. The grace which filled the heart gave her also a desire to see the mighty Naaman healed; the same grace gave her power to bear witness.

And how the Lord used the simple testimony! The King of Syria heard of it and addressed a letter to the King of Israel demanding that he should recover Naaman from his leprosy. And Naaman departed with "ten talents of silver and six thousand pieces of gold besides ten changes of raiment." And the King of Israel, Jehoram, no doubt, was filled with fear, for he thought the King of Syria was seeking a pretext to quarrel with him. While he readily acknowledged that God alone has the power to heal, he did not look to the Lord nor did he think of the mighty prophet, whose very name declared that God is salvation. In helpless and hopeless terror, in the despair of unbelief he rent his clothes.

It was then that the man of God spoke reproving the King, asking that Naaman come to him. Then Naaman, with his horses and chariot, laden with the treasures, stood at the door of the house of Elisha. The prophet through a messenger told the leper, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." Well may we think here of our Lord Jesus, who cleansed the leper, and in doing so manifested Himself as Jehovah. But how He shines above all!

When the leper comes to Him, it is not as with the king, "Am I God, that I should heal a man of his leprosy?" nor is it as with the prophet, "Go wash in Jordan, and be clean." No; but He reveals Himself at once in the place and power of God. "I will, be thou clean." Elisha was but a preacher of Jesus to Naaman; the Lord Jesus was the lepers' cleansing, the healing God. Elisha did not venture to touch the leper. This would have defiled him. But our Lord "put forth His hand and touched him;" for He, with the rights of the God of Israel, was above the leper, and could consume and not

contract the defilement (J.G. Bellett).

And Naaman's wrath and indignation were stirred by Elisha's command. The great and mighty captain with his treasures expected a different reception from the prophet. He expected him at least to do what heathen priests with their enchantments did, to call on the name of the Lord his God and strike his hand over the place of leprosy. He rejects the remedy which grace had provided because it humbled him into dust and stripped him of his pride. It is just this the sinner needs. Naaman had to learn that he was nothing but a poor, lost leper. All his silver and gold could not purchase cleansing for him. He needed humiliation and the obedience of faith. And so he learned as his servants reasoned with him, and instead of returning in a rage to Damascus as the helpless leper, he obeyed the given command and dipped himself seven times in Jordan--"and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." Jordan is the type of death, as we saw in the study of Joshua. Our Lord was baptized by John in that river, for He had come to take the sinners' place in death. Naaman bathing in Jordan typifies death and resurrection in which there is cleansing and healing for the spiritual leper, but it is the death and resurrection of our blessed Lord. As we believe on Him who died for our sins according to Scripture, and was raised for our justification, we are born again and made clean. It is the one way of salvation, the only way, revealed in every portion of God's holy Word. "Saved by grace through faith (in Him who died for our sins), it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast."

And the blessed results of true salvation are seen at once in Naaman the Syrian. He is fully restored and healed. He stands now before the man of God, no longer the proud, self-trusting Naaman, but an humble believer. He confesses the Lord with his lips. He offers also a gift to Elisha. ("A blessing" means a gift.) He could not give anything to effect his cleansing, but after the healing he offered willingly. But Elisha refused the reward offered to him. He had freely received and freely he gave (Matt. 10:8). Then he requested "two mules' burden of earth." This was to be used to build an altar unto Jehovah in Syria. It was an outward expression of his faith and would be a testimony among the heathen that there is but one Lord to be worshipped. And there was the tender conscience (verse 18). Finally he departed in peace. "Go in peace"; the same words our blessed Lord used repeatedly. And Gehazi's covetousness earned him the leprosy from which grace had delivered the Syrian Gentile. The story is full of solemn lessons.

Dispensationally Naaman stands for the Gentiles. Through Him who is greater than Elisha salvation has been extended to the Gentiles, while Gehazi, who was closely connected with Elisha, but who had hardened his heart, is a type of Israel.

5. Elisha and the Syrians

CHAPTER 6

1. The lost axe-head recovered (6:1-7)
2. Elisha makes known Ben-hadad's plans (6:8-12)
3. Elisha's arrest planned (6:13-17)
4. The blinded Syrians led to Samaria (6:18-23)
5. Samaria besieged (6:24-30)
6. The king's wrath against Elisha (6:31-33)

It has been truly said that the miracle of the swimming axe-head reveals the condescension of divine power and the grace of benevolence. We see the great man of God in fellowship with the

sons of the prophets. He goes with them and when they are in distress the power of God is manifested through him. Rationalistic critics have always ridiculed the miracle of the swimming iron. "The story is perhaps an imaginative reproduction of some unwonted incident," saith Farrar, the higher critic. Then he adds, all the eternal laws of nature are here superseded at a word, as though it were an every day matter, without even any recorded invocation of Jehovah, to restore an axe-head, which could obviously have been recovered or resupplied in some less stupendous way than by making iron swim on the surface of a swift-flowing river" (Expositor's Bible). And Ewald, the German critic, explains, "he threw on to the spot where it had sunk a piece of wood cut to fit it, which caught it up"! These men all aim at the denial of miracles of any kind. They delight in making an omnipotent God, in whom they profess to believe, a helpless slave to the laws of nature, a God who has neither power nor inclination to set aside these laws in behalf of His trusting people. We say it again, the rationalistic critic is an unbeliever of the worst type.

There is much comfort for God's trusting children in the miracle of the swimming iron. The mighty power of God condescends to help those who trust even in the smallest things of life. Our Lord fills the throne in glory and is the upholder of all things, yet as the sympathizing priest, He enters into the lives of His people. His power answers faith, if we but learn to bring our little troubles to Him as the man came in distress to Elisha.

When war broke out between Ben-hadad and the King of Israel, Elisha made known the secret counsels of the King of Syria. The man of God, walking in constant fellowship with Jehovah, received this supernatural information, and thereby an additional evidence was given to apostate Israel that the Lord is for His people and a very present help in time of trouble. Then one of Ben-hadad's servants suggested that it was Elisha's work, and the king in his blindness sent a great host to capture Elisha. (Certainly not Naaman as some have surmised. Yet the knowledge that Elisha had been the instrument of healing the Syrian captain moved some unknown servant of Ben-hadad to suggest that Elisha was responsible for the revelation of the king's plans.) What Ahaziah attempted with Elijah (chapter 1), Ben-hadad now undertakes with Elisha. But Elisha, who acts in grace, does not call down fire from heaven to devour the men who compassed Dothan. Elisha's servant (not Gehazi) is terror stricken when he beheld the besieging host. Elisha knows no fear, for he knows "they that are with us are more than they that be with them." He had seen the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof before (2:12). He knew that the Lord's hosts compassed him about. He did not need to pray for himself, that he might see, for he saw, because he believed. He prayed for his servant that his eyes might be opened. Then the servant saw, "and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots round about Elisha." Angelic ministry and protection may be termed one of the lost comforts which God's people have. They are still "ministering spirits to minister unto the heirs of salvation."

"I doubt not, a host or constellation of angels, those heavenly creatures, which, excelling in strength, stand in the presence of God, or go forth to minister on account of those who are heirs of salvation. For of them we read that 'God maketh His angels spirits (winds) and His ministers a flame of fire'; and again, 'The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels.' At the divine behest, they get ready to serve in whatever the exigency of the saint, or the occasion under the throne of God, may require. They formed a travelling chariot to convey Elijah to heaven, and to carry Lazarus to Abraham's bosom. They now form chariots of war, when Elisha is beleaguered by the hostile bands of Syria. Either singly or in company they visit the elect on earth, and either alone or in concert celebrate the joy of heaven in the audience of the earth. They have drawn the sword to smite a guilty city, or with the strong hand of love dragged the too reluctant one forth from the doomed city. They are either as winds or as fire. They are messengers of mercy, and executors of judgment, as 'the Lord' who 'is among them' may command. They attended on Mount Sinai when the law was published, and they hovered over the fields of Bethlehem when Jesus was born. And here, in their order and strength, they are as a wall of fire, a wall of salvation, round about the prophet.

Very blessed all this is. And still more blessed to know, that ere long, the hidden glories, which

are now only known to such faith as Elisha's, will become the manifested things; and the threatenings of the enemy, the noise and the din and clang of arms, which are the present apparent things, all of fears and sorrows for the heart, shall have rolled by, like the past thunder-storm, but to leave the sunshine the brighter (Meditations on Elisha).

Elisha then prayed that the besieging host should be smitten with blindness. The prayer was at once answered. He led on the Syrian forces into Samaria. But was it not deception when the man of God said to the blinded enemies, "I will bring you to the man whom ye seek," leading them into Samaria? It was not. Samaria was the home of the prophet and he was then on his way there. His object was to demonstrate to the Syrians, as well as to the King of Israel, that Jehovah is the God and all-sufficient helper of His people. What mercy he then showed to his captives. Jehoram would have smitten them, but Elisha fed them and had them sent away in peace. In this he is a type of Him who taught, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you" (Matt. 5:43-44).

Some time after Ben-hadad besieged Samaria and a great famine followed, and there was such a distress that women ate their own offspring. It was but a fulfilment of the threatened judgments upon an apostate people (Lev. 26:29; Deut. 28:53). The same horror occurred during the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (Lam. 4:10) and also, according to Josephus, during the siege by Titus 70 A.D. The wicked nature of the king asserted itself in blaming Elisha for the misfortune which had fallen upon his kingdom. He seeks to slay the man of God. After all the mighty miracles God had wrought by the hands of Elisha, the representative of Israel, wants to kill the prophet. This also foreshadows our Lord, when they sought to kill Him after His gracious ministry. But Elisha knew the murderous purpose of the long ere the messengers came. He called the king by the right name "this son of a murderer," for such Ahab was. And when the king appeared in person he said, "Behold this evil is of the LORD, what should I wait for the LORD any longer?" He realizes the impending judgment on account of Israel's sin.

6. Elisha's Prediction and Its Fulfilment

CHAPTER 7

1. Elisha's prediction (7:1)
2. The unbelieving lord (7:2)
3. The four lepers and their discovery (7:3-8)
4. The day of good tidings (7:9-15)
5. The prediction fulfilled (7:16-18)
6. The death of the unbelieving lord (7:19-20)

When the worst had come, Samaria starving to death, the king in despondency, Elisha's life threatened, then the mercy and kindness of God is revealed once more. The prophet announces the good news of salvation and deliverance. All is typical of the gospel of grace. The unbelieving lord who rejected the good news and refused to believe it represents those who reject the gospel. All in this chapter is intensely interesting and suggestive.

The great victory was accomplished by the Lord alone. His chariots had frightened the Syrian camp and put them to flight. The bread and the water, the silver and gold and raiment, all was His provision for a starving, dying people, and the four lepers in despair, facing certain death, were the

first to discover God's victory for them and the people. Their great need led them to find the needed salvation. Well may all this be applied to our Lord's work for us and to the provision of the gospel. He alone worked out the great salvation and provided all, that sinners dying and lost (represented by the lepers) may come to eat and drink, without money and without price. It was a day of good tidings. Such is the still lasting day of salvation, the day of grace. The lepers who had their fill first and had tasted God's great salvation, could not hold their peace. Through them the whole city hears of the provision made. And the people went out to see how wonderfully the prediction of Elisha had been accomplished. All enjoyed it. But the unbelieving lord perished, a warning that he that believeth not must die in his sins. The repetition at the close of this chapter of the words of the unbeliever recorded in the beginning of this story, is of solemn meaning. God is true to His Word, the Word which promises life to all who believe and which threatens eternal punishment to all who believe not. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

7. The Famine Predicted and Further Events

CHAPTER 8

1. The famine predicted (8:1-2)
2. The Shunammite's land restored (8:3-6)
3. Elisha with Ben-hadad and Hazael (8:7-15)
4. Jehoram King of Judah (8:16-19; 2 Chronicles 21:5)
5. The Revolt of Edom (8:20-21; 2 Chronicles 21:8-10)
6. The Revolt of Libnah (8:22-23; 2 Chronicles 21:10)
7. Death of Jehoram (8:24; 2 Chronicles 21:19-20)
8. Ahaziah and Jehoram (8:25-29; 2 Chronicles 22)

The threatened judgment upon the house of Ahab is now rapidly approaching. Elisha, knowing the secrets of the Lord, predicts the seven years famine. "Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but He revealeth His secrets unto His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). The Shunammite, that godly woman, is here introduced once more. As her husband is not mentioned she may have been a widow. Elisha warns her of the coming famine, and she heeded the warning and sojourned for seven years in the land of the Philistines. After her return all was restored unto her by the King. The introduction here of Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, has drawn the fire of the critics. "As it is unlikely that the king would converse long with a leper, and as Gehazi is still called 'the servant of the man of God,' the incident may here be narrated out of order" (Expositor's Bible). But not so. It is fully in order. Gehazi was known as the servant of Elisha and is mentioned by his former position so that all doubt about his personality might be removed. That the deposed servant was with the apostate king is of much interest and has its lessons.

"It seems to me that Gehazi stands here in a grievous position. Smitten by the hand of God, because his heart clung to earth, even in the presence of Jehovah's mighty and long-suffering testimony, he is now a parasite in the king's court, relating the wonderful things in which he no longer took part. This poor world grows weary enough of itself to lead it to take some pleasure in hearing anything spoken of that has reality and power. Provided that it does not reach the conscience, they will listen to it for their amusement, taking credit to themselves perhaps for an

enlarged and a liberal mind, which is not enslaved by that which can yet recognize philosophically in its place. But that is a sad position, which makes it evident that formerly we were connected with a testimony, whilst now we only relate its marvels at court. Nevertheless God makes use of it; and it does not follow that there was no truth in Gehazi. But to rise in the world, and entertain the world with the mighty works of God, is to fall very deep" (Synopsis of the Bible).

Elisha after this went outside of Israel's land to Damascus. Guided by the Lord, whom he served so faithfully, he paid a visit to the sick King of Syria. By referring to 1 Kings 19:15 we find that the commission to anoint Hazael, King over Syria, had been given to Elijah. There is no record from which we learn that Elijah had done so. And now Elisha meets Hazael, who came to him as the messenger of the sick King Ben-hadad, bringing costly presents. And the king asked the question, "Shall I recover of this disease?" The prophet's answer was brief. The sickness itself was not fatal, he would certainly recover and yet the Lord had shown to him that the king should surely die. This meant while the sickness in itself would not result in Ben-hadad's death, he should nevertheless die by other means.

Then Elisha's countenance fell and the man of God wept. Then Elisha told Hazael he wept on account of the horrible atrocities which he would commit against the children of Israel. The fulfillment of Elisha's prediction is found in chapters 10:32, 12:17, 13:3. Weeping Elisha foreshadows our Lord weeping over Jerusalem when He saw what was to come upon the city He loved so well. And Hazael, with a mock humility, expressed surprise. But the prophet revealed the innermost thoughts of his wicked heart by telling him he would be king over Syria; this was his aim. And so he returned to Ben-hadad, bringing a mutilated message and murdered the king immediately after.

The record of the kings of Judah and Israel is now briefly given. All is fast ripening for the long threatened judgment. After the death of Jehoshaphat, his son Jehoram became sole ruler over Judah. He walked in the evil ways of the kings of Israel and the record tells the reason, "for the daughter of Ahab was his wife." After him came his son Ahaziah. Again wicked Athaliah, his mother, is mentioned. (The marginal reading "grand-daughter" is correct. She was Ahab's daughter and Omri's grand-daughter.) His connection with Ahab is made prominent. He did evil also in the sight of the Lord and made an alliance with the son of Ahab, Joram (or Jehoram), who was still king in Israel. Joram was wounded by the Syrians and Ahaziah, King of Judah, visited him in Jezreel. Alas! the unholy alliance of Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, with the wicked murderer, Ahab, King of Israel (1 Kings 22) had resulted in the marriage of his son with Athaliah, the wicked daughter of a wicked father. And Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son, was dragged down by her and she became the ruin of her son Ahaziah. A dreadful harvest!

8. The Anointing of Jehu

CHAPTER 9:1-10

1. The commission (9:1-3)

2. Jehu anointed (9:4-10)

The hour of judgment for the house of Ahab has come. The instrument for it, mentioned long ago to Elijah (1 Kings 19:16-17), appears now upon the scene. The army of Joram, King of Israel, besieged Ramoth-gilead and Jehu was the captain of the forces. Joram was recovering from his wounds in Jezreel. Then Elisha called one of the sons of the prophets. Handing him a box of oil he sent him to Ramoth-gilead. He was to look out for Jehu, the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi, and anoint him King over Israel. Then he was not to tarry, but to flee. Jehu means "Jehovah is He"; Jehoshaphat, "Jehovah judges"; Nimshi, "Jehovah reveals." Significant names!)

The messenger carried out the commission and at the same time states the judgment work into which God had called him. He was to execute judgment on the house of Ahab, to avenge the blood

of the prophets and the Lord's servants at the hand of Jezebel. The whole house of Ahab was to perish like Jeroboam (1 Kings 14:10) and that of Baasha (1 Kings 16:3). "And the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her." More than fifteen years had passed since Jehovah through Elijah had announced the doom of the house of Ahab and the doom of Jezebel. And now the hour of execution had come. God will judge in the end, though He is never in haste to execute His threatened judgments. The day is surely coming when the Lord will judge this world, when especially Jezebel (Rev. 2:20), Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth, drunken with the blood of the saints, the Romish apostate "church," will receive her judgment. "And in her was found the blood of the prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain on the earth" (Rev. 17:5-6, 18:24).

III. THE PERIOD OF DECLENSION AND APOSTASY

1. Jehu, King of Israel and His Deeds

CHAPTER 9:11-37

1. Jehu is king (9:11-13)
2. Jehoram, King of Israel slain (9:14-26)
3. Ahaziah slain (2 Chronicles 22:9)
4. Jezebel and her end (9:30-37)

Jehu revealed the secret anointing as King over Israel, and under the blare of the trumpets the army hails him as King. "Jehu is King!" Oh! for that day when our Lord Jesus will be hailed as King to begin His righteous judgment over the earth.

The Assyrian monuments bear interesting testimony to a good deal of the history contained in 2 Kings. Our space forbids a fuller mention of this. The name of Jehu has a place in the obelisk of black marble which Layard discovered at Nimrod. The Assyrian form of his name is "Yahua." Shalmaneser II (860- 825 B.C.) erected this obelisk and inscribed on it the annals of his reign in 190 lines in cuneiform characters. Five rows of bas-relief illustrate the annals. The second row pictures the bearers of the tribute of Jehu to the Assyrian King. The obelisk is in the British Museum.

He begins at once his awful judgment-work. He is just an instrument used by a holy and righteous God to execute His vengeance. Of real communion with the Lord he knew nothing. Nothing of the fear of the Lord or exercise of soul towards Him is recorded, nor do we read that he ever worshipped or called upon the name of the Lord. There was zeal and obedience in the execution of the judgments of the Lord.

"But how awful in its character! On what a fearful journey does it send this sword of the Lord! From Ramoth to the vineyard of Naboth, from thence to the going up to Gur, from thence to Jezreel, from thence to the shearinghouse, and from thence to Samaria, and all the road marked by blood!-- blood, too, appointed in righteousness to be shed! For though the sword that shed it cared not for righteousness, yet in its action the Lord was pleading with the flesh of Ahab and his house--as, by and by, He will have a greater pleading, even with all flesh, and the slain of the Lord shall be many. And what shall be the rapidity and the stretch of the divine judgment then! What will be the journey of the sword of the Lord, or the 'grounded staff' in that day, when 'as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be!'"

The record itself of how Joram and Ahaziah fell under the judgment executed by Jehu needs but little comment. Jehoram sent messengers from Jezreel, which Jehu detained, while he drove on furiously. Then Joram, with his nephew Ahaziah, King of Judah, went to meet Jehu. When they

met, the arrow of Jehu, pierced Joram's heart and his body was cast into the field of Naboth, the Jezreelite, "according to the word of the LORD." Ahaziah fled, but was smitten "at the going up of Gur." He tried to reach Megiddo and there he died.

Then comes Jezebel, the wicked. She died as she had lived, in wickedness and pride. She knew she had to die. The evil tidings had reached Jezreel, where once in younger days she was queen and mistress. She painted her face to make herself look beautiful. Did she attempt to attract Jehu? Hardly that, for she was an old woman, having a grandson twenty-two years old (2 Kings 8:26). It was a proud defiance--she would meet death like a queen. The miserable, doomed woman, the dunghill of all vileness (Jezebel means "dunghill"), the instigator of crimes, looked out of the window, while Jehu's chariot came thundering on. Then she spoke, "Is it peace--Zimri! murderer of his master?" It was a bold taunt. Zimri had murdered his master, but reigned only seven days (1 Kings 16:9-19). She reminds him of Zimri's deed and Zimri's fate. Eunuchs threw her out of the window. The blood bespattered the wall and the prancing horses. The chariot of Jehu rushed on over her body. He did not pay any attention to her mangled body. Jehu entered the royal palace to feast and afterwards gave command to bury the cursed woman. But little was left of her. And Jehu said, "This is the word of the LORD, which He spake by His servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel." God's judgments are often slow, but they are sure.

2. Jehu's Judgments, Baal-worship Destroyed, and His Death

CHAPTER 10

1. The judgment upon the house of Ahab (10:1-11)
2. The relations of Ahaziah slain (10:12-14; 2 Chron. 22:8)
3. Jehonadab spared (10:15-17)
4. The Baal worship destroyed (10:18-28)
5. Jehu's record (10:29-31)
6. Israel cut short (10:32-33)
7. Jehu's death (10:34-36)

And now Jehu, the instrument, chosen for judgment, continued his judgment work without showing mercy. The long threatened national judgment upon Israel had begun.

The hint which Jezebel had given him concerning Zimri and the possibility of a rebellion may have influenced Jehu to put away the descendants of Ahab. There were seventy sons, which, according to Hebrew phraseology, means his grandsons and their offspring. He concocts a clever scheme by which the elders of Samaria and the guardians of the grandsons of Ahab were forced to kill the seventy. This was done probably to head off a rebellion against him. Then, according to the custom of those days, the ghastly evidence of the deed was piled in two heaps at the entering in of the gate. Then he addressed the people, showing that while he had slain his master, they were also guilty in slaying these seventy persons, and finally he added the justification of the deeds. "'Know now that there shall fall unto the earth nothing of the Word of the LORD, which the LORD spake concerning the house of Ahab, for the LORD hath done that which He spake by His servant Elijah.' So Jehu slew all that remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men, and his kinsfolks, and his priests, until he left him none remaining."

Then forty-two princes and the sons of the brethren of Ahaziah (2 Chron. 22:8) were slain. They were on the way to Jezreel, which showed their guilty affiliation with the wickedness of Jezebel. They were taken alive and then were slain at the pit of the shearing house, probably a cistern called Beth Eged.

Next he met Jehonadab, the son of Rechab. The Rechabites belonged to the Kenites (1 Chron. 2:55). They are first mentioned in Gen. 15:19. A part of this tribe had followed Israel (Num. 10:29-32) and settled in the south of Judah (Judges 1:16), where they became attached to the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15:6). Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, was a Kenite (Judges 1:16) and so was Jael, who slew Sisera (Judges 4:17). See the record of Jehonadab and his work for the tribe in Jeremiah 35:1-16. Jehu recognized him as a friend and took him into his chariot. He may have been acquainted with Elijah; and the great work he did, as made known by Jeremiah, in separating them unto the Lord may have been brought about by the threatened judgment by Elijah and its execution through Jehu, of which Jehonadab knew and part of which he witnessed.

Then in great subtlety Jehu destroyed the worshippers of Baal who appeared at his summons in their festive vestments. Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel. But the summary of Jehu's reign gives a mournful picture. Like Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, Jehu did not depart from the golden calves at Beth-el and at Dan. Nor did he take heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart. He is a sad illustration of a man who may be used of God and yet is disobedient in his own life; executing God's plans, yet knowing nothing of real communion. But the LORD did not forget even this imperfect service (verse 30).

3. Athaliah and Jehoiada's Revival

CHAPTER 11

1. Athaliah's wicked reign (11:1-3; 2 Chron. 22:10-12)
2. Joash (Jehoash) proclaimed king (11:4-12; 2 Chron. 23:1-11)
3. The death of Athaliah (11:13-16; 2 Chron. 23:12-15)
4. Jehoiada's revival (11:17-21; 2 Chron. 23:16-21)

Athaliah, the wicked daughter of a wicked pair (Ahab and Jezebel), the widow of Joram, King of Judah, Jehoshaphat's son and the mother of Ahaziah, who had been slain by Jehu, destroyed the seed royal. She did so because she wanted the authority herself. It was an awful deed, inspired by him who is the murderer from the beginning. And Satan aimed through her at something of which his instrument was ignorant. It was one of the many attempts Satan made to exterminate the male offspring to make the coming One, the promised saviour, the seed of the woman, impossible. Had he succeeded through Athaliah in the destruction of the royal seed of David, the promise made to David would have become impossible. Notice the first little word in the second verse, "But." Satan's attempt failed. The watchful eye of Jehovah and His power frustrated it all. A wicked woman killed her own children and a godly woman was used to keep one of the royal seed alive.

Jehosheba ("the LORD's oath" is the meaning of her name), through whom the covenant-oath was sustained, was the wife of Jehoiada (meaning "the LORD knows"), the high-priest (2 Chron. 22:11); he was brother-in-law to Ahaziah (2 Chron. 22:11) and Jehosheba was probably a half sister of Ahaziah. She took the young child from among the King's sons and hid him first in the bed-chamber and then in the house of the LORD till the seventh year. Well may we see here a most beautiful type of our Lord Jesus Christ. Like Joash He was doomed to death, yea, He died. But He was raised from the dead and is now hidden in the house of God above, the heavens having received Him. Joash, the heir of the throne of David, was hidden till the seventh year even as the true heir to the throne of David is now hidden in the presence of God till the six years (six the

number of man's day, the present age) are passed. And when the seventh year comes--the beginning of the coming age, He will be brought forth as Joash was brought from his hiding place and be crowned king.

A remnant selected by Jehoiada saw the king first. It is a great scene this chapter describes. The company brought together, armed with King David's shields and spears, the king's son brought into the midst, Jehoiada putting the crown upon his head, anointing him with oil, they clapped with their hands and shouted "God save the King." Greater will be the scene when He will be crowned King of Kings, whose right it is to reign. Athaliah, the usurper, appears on the scene, attracted by the noise. She is face to face with the crowned king and receives now her well-deserved punishment outside of the house of the LORD. A great revival followed. A covenant was made by Jehoiada between the LORD and the king and people "that they should be the LORD's people." Baal's altars and images are broken. The king sits upon his throne. All the people of the land rejoiced and there was peace. All these blessed results are faint foreshadowings of what is yet to be when the usurper is cast out, when the true King is crowned. Then Israel will be in truth the LORD's people, idolatry will cease, the land and the people will rejoice and the city be quiet.

4. Jehoash, the Temple Repaired, and the Death of Jehoash

CHAPTER 12

1. Jehoash's (Joash) Reign (12:1-3; 2 Chron. 24:2)
2. The Failure of the Priests (12:4-8; 2 Chron. 24:4-5)
3. The Temple Repaired (12:9-16; 2 Chron. 24:8-14)
4. Hazael and Jehoash (12:17-18)
5. The Death of Joash (12:19-21; 2 Chron. 24:25-27)

Great things had the Lord done both in Israel and in Judah. As we have seen there were numerous divine interpositions in the downward course, but all led to the final judgments upon both. Revivals took place, but they were not lasting and the reactions which followed produced a greater apostasy. This also is the course of the present age, which will end in a greater departure from God and in a corresponding greater judgment than Israel's. "The people had fallen away from the divine purpose of their national calling, and become untrue to the meaning of their national history. From this point of view the temporary success of these reform movements may be regarded as a divine protest against the past. But they ultimately failed because all deeper spiritual elements had passed away from rulers and people." "And still deeper lessons come to us. There is not a more common, nor can there be a more fatal mistake in religion or in religious movements than to put confidence in mere negations, or to expect from them lasting results for good. A negation without a corresponding affirmation is of no avail for spiritual purposes. We must speak because we believe; we deny that which is false only because we affirm and cherish the opposite truth. Otherwise we may resist; and enlist unspiritual men, but we shall not work any deliverance in the land" (A. Edersheim).

The reign of Jehoash had begun well. The record tells us that he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD as long as Jehoiada was priest. But what happened after the departure of Jehoiada? The answer is indicated in verse 3 and fully given in 2 Chron. 24:17-22. The king, who had received such kindness from Jehoiada, ordered the stoning of Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, because he delivered a faithful message to the king against his idolatry.

The leading work of Jehoash's reign was the repairing of the temple. This had become necessary because the family of Athaliah had broken it up and used the dedicated things in the worship of Baal (2 Chron. 24:7). The king took the initiative, but the neglect of the priests made the

work practically impossible. Then the work was taken up in earnest by Jehoiada, and voluntary contributions received. A large sum was collected which was exclusively used for the repairing of the temple. When this was completed the balance was used for the purchase of the sacred vessels (2 Chron. 24:14).

Then Hazael began his wicked work and threatened Jerusalem. Joash bought him off by turning over to him all the hallowed things of the temple and the treasures of the palace. Not a word is said that Jehoash sought the Lord or prayed. It shows only too clearly that Jehovah, the present help in time of trouble, had been forgotten. The death of the king, murdered in the house of Millo followed soon. In our annotations of Chronicles we shall hear more of his history. Then Amaziah reigned in his stead.

5. Jehoahaz and Jehoash of Israel, Elisha's Death

CHAPTER 13

1. The reign of Jehoahaz and his death (13:1-9)
2. Jehoash King of Israel (13:10-13)
3. Elisha and Joash (13:14-19)
4. The death of Elisha (13:20-21)
5. Hazael and his death (13:22-25)

Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, reigned after the death of his father (10:35) and here we learn that he also followed in the abominable worship which Jeroboam had instituted in Bethel and in Dan. The Lord delivered therefore Israel into the hands of Hazael of Syria and into his son's hand. Jehoahaz prayed to the LORD and the LORD, so abundant in mercy, hearkened, for He saw the oppression of Israel, because the King of Syria oppressed them. Verses 5 and 6 form a parenthesis. The seventh verse tells of the havoc which the King of Syria had wrought among Israel. The prayer of Jehoahaz, though heard, was not fully answered at once. The parenthetic verses (5 and 6) must be looked upon as giving a summary of the entire history; God sent a saviour and yet they continued in their sins. Joash, the son of Jehoahaz, was the first one through whom a partial deliverance was wrought (verse 25) and the full deliverance came under the grandson Jeroboam II (14:25-27). We have here a good illustration of how the Lord hears prayer and how in His sovereignty and all-wise purposes He may delay the answer for many years. It should be enough for God's people to know that prayer is heard and to leave the answer with Him, who does all things well. And so Jehoahaz saw nothing but oppression (verse 22) though he had turned unto the LORD and had prayed. It was a trial of faith.

After his death his son Jehoash (also called Joash, distinguished from the King of Judah of the same name) reigned. There was no change for the better. Verses 10-13 are another brief summary giving briefly the character of his reign, his death and his successor.

The deathbed scene of Elisha and Joash's visit follows. Over sixty years Elisha had been the prophet of God. The last we heard of this great man of God was when he sent his messenger to anoint Jehu. Forty-five years had passed and no ministry of Elisha is recorded. He was quite forgotten and neglected. The same was the case with Daniel in Babylon. When apostasy advances, the Lord's true prophets are not wanted; they share the rejection of the Lord and His Truth. Joash then visited the dying prophet. From this we may gather that his abode was known and that Joash realized that Elisha's death would be a great loss. He utters the same words which Elisha spoke when Elijah went to heaven. He wept and still his words were the words of unbelief, as if with Elisha's death "the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof," the protection and blessing for Israel

would have an end. Then follows the symbolical shooting of the arrows and the smiting of the ground. Halfheartedly the unbelieving king enters into that which Elisha had made so plain. It was Joash's lack of faith, indicated by smiting the ground but thrice, which made the complete victory over the Syrians impossible. Only "three times did Joash beat him (Hazeal's son Ben-hadad) and recovered the cities of Israel" (verse 25). If he had faith it would have been five and six times.

Elisha had died. A corpse about to be buried was hastily cast into the sepulchre of Elisha, where his bones rested. "And when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood up on his feet." This final miracle bears a great and blessed testimony. Here an application must be made concerning Him who is foreshadowed in Elisha's ministry of grace. It is by faith in Him who died that sinners receive life and are raised up from the dead. To touch Him in faith means to live. And Israel, moreover, is typically represented by the dead man and through Him who died for that nation, Israel is yet to live.

6. Kings of Israel and Judah

CHAPTER 14

1. Amaziah's reign over Judah (14:1-7; 2 Chron. 25)
2. The conflict between Israel and Judah (14:8-11; 2 Chron. 25:17-24)
3. Judah's defeat and Jerusalem taken (14:12-14)
4. Jehoash and his successor (14:15-16)
5. Death of Amaziah (14:17-20; 2 Chron. 25:26-28)
6. Azariah, King of Judah (14:21-22)
7. Jeroboam II (14:23-29)

Amaziah, a son of Joash, began his reign over Judah. His mother was Jehoaddan (LORD is pleased) of Jerusalem. He did right in the sight of the LORD and yet he followed the errors of his father. His first deed was to deal in judgment with the two servants who had murdered his father in Millo, both of whom were sons of Gentile women (2 Kings 12:19-21; 2 Chron. 24:26). He feared, however, the Word of God. The additional record which is found in Chronicles we shall not follow here, but do so in the annotations of that book. He raised a large army and hired besides 100,000 Israelitish mercenaries at a tremendous cost. He gained a victory over Edom. All the cruelties practised then we shall find recorded in Chronicles. He became lifted up by his victories and then challenged Jehoash, the King of Israel. That King answered by a parable. The thistle in Lebanon is Amaziah; the cedar is Jehoash, King of Israel. The wild beast that was in Lebanon overcoming the thistle (Amaziah) is Jehoash's army. And the King of Israel gave him a solemn warning to desist. But proud Amaziah paid no attention to Jehoash's words. God was behind it all. "It came of God, that He might deliver them into the hand of their enemies, because they sought after the gods of Edom" (2 Chron. 25:20). A complete defeat of Amaziah followed and Jerusalem was taken. And Jehoash "took all the gold and silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of God with Obed-Edom, and the treasures of the King's house, the hostages also and returned unto Samaria." After this humiliating defeat there followed a revolution in Jerusalem and the unhappy King fled to Lachish, where he was slain. His body was brought back to Jerusalem for burial.

The brief record of the reign of Jeroboam II concludes this chapter. The Prophet Jonah, the son of Amittai is here mentioned. This same Jonah made later the experience which the book of Jonah relates and to which our Lord refers as a historic fact. Hosea and Amos also prophesied at that time

in Israel.

(The books of Hosea and Amos, especially the latter, shed much light upon the history of the Kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam and his son. This will be pointed out in annotations of both books.)

CHAPTER 15

1. Reign and death of Azariah (Uzziah) (15:1-2; 2 Chron. 26).
2. Reign and death of Zachariah (15:8-12)
3. Reign and death of Shallum (15:13-15)
4. Menahem, King of Israel (15:16-18)
5. Pul of Assyria and Menahem (15:19-20; 1 Chron. 5:26)
6. Death of Menahem (15:21-22)
7. Pekahiah and his death (15:23-26)
8. Pekah and his death. Hoshea (15:27-31)
9. Jotham, King of Judah (15:32-38; 2 Chron. 27)

Eight kings are mentioned in this chapter. Of five it is said they did evil in the sight of the Lord. One was a leper; four were murdered; one committed unspeakable cruelties.

Azariah is first mentioned. In 2 Chronicles his name is Uzziah; but he is also called by this name in the present chapter (verses 13, 30, 32 and 34). Different explanations of the use of this double name have been given. We insert here the one advanced by Edersheim as the most satisfactory.

"The usual explanation either of a clerical error through the confusion of similar letters, or that he bore two names seem equally unsatisfactory. Nor is the meaning of the two names precisely the same--Azariah being 'Jehovah helps,' Uzziah, 'My strength is Jehovah.' May it not be that Azariah was his real name, and that when after his daring intrusion into the sanctuary (2 Chron. 26:16-20), he was smitten with lifelong leprosy, his name was significantly altered into the cognate Uzziah--'My strength is Jehovah'--in order to mark that the 'help' which he had received had been dependent on his relation to the LORD. This would accord with the persistent use of the latter name in 2 Chronicles--considering the view-point of the writer--and with its occurrence in the prophetic writings (Hosea 1:1; Amos 1:1; Isa. 1:1, 6:1, 7:11). And the explanation just suggested seems confirmed by the circumstance that although this king is always called Uzziah in 2 Chronicles, yet the Hebrew word for 'help,' which forms the first part of the name Azariah, recurs with marked emphasis in the account of the divine help accorded in his expeditions (2 Chron. 26:7, 13, 15)."

As his intrusion into the priestly office and his punishment for it is found in full in the second book of Chronicles, we shall follow it there.

Then follows the brief record of Zachariah (The LORD remembers), King of Israel. He became king of Israel in the thirty-eighth year of Uzziah, King of Judah. He was the son of Jeroboam II and the fourth and last ruler of the dynasty of Jehu. Thus was literally fulfilled the Word of The LORD (2 Kings 10:30). His reign lasted only six months. Shallum assassinated him in public. The murderer occupied the throne only one month. Shallum means "requit." As he did to Zachariah so

Menahem did to him. All was now lawlessness in apostate Israel. Departure from God and the true worship came first and that opened the way for moral corruption and lawlessness. The same is true of this present Christian age. It also ends in apostasy, moral corruption and lawlessness. Hosea testified faithfully to these conditions. "And the revolvers are profound to make slaughter, though I have been a rebuker of them all"--"They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God, for the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them and they have not known the LORD. And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face; therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity, Judah also shall fall with them" (Hosea 5:2-5).

Josephus here informs us that Menahem was the military leader of Zachariah, the murdered King. When Tiphseh refused his authority he executed a terrible, barbaric punishment. "All the women therein that were with child be ripped up." And God in His eternal justice permitted the same punishment to fall upon Samaria (Hosea 13:16; Amos 1:13).

And now for the first time the Assyrian is mentioned, the power used by God to execute judgment upon the Kingdom of Israel. The meaning of the Assyrian in prophecy we shall point out later. Pul, King of Assyria, came against the land. In verse 29 Tiglath-pileser is mentioned as king of Assyria. Are these two different kings or are they the same person under different names? The identity of Pul with Tiglath-pileser II has been proved, after the most painstaking research, beyond the possibility of a doubt. The Assyrian monuments bear witness to this fact. (Assyrian Echoes of the Word by Laurie and Fresh Light from the Ancient Monuments by Prof Sayce, are helpful books on these and other questions.) In the annals of Tiglath-pileser the record is found that he received tribute from "Minikhimmi Samirina"--this is Menahem the Samaritan. Pul was evidently one name of the Assyrian ruler and later he assumed the title of Tiglath-pileser II. This does not clash at all with the statement in 1 Chron. 5:26. Through paying an immense amount of tribute (almost two million dollars) the Assyrian was kept back. Menahem's son, Pekahiah, after his father's death, ruled two years in Israel. He also was assassinated. Pekah headed the conspiracy and killed him. Under his reign, doing evil in the sight of the Lord, Tiglath-pileser came again and devastated a part of the land "and carried them captive to Assyria." This marks the beginning of the end. This invasion took place after his wicked attack upon Jerusalem with Rezin of Damascus during the reign of Ahaz, King of Judah. He tried to overthrow the house of David (2 Kings 16:1-8; 2 Chron. 28; Isa. 7:4-8). Wicked Pekah, who had killed so many Jews (2 Chron. 28:6) was murdered by Hoshea, who reigned in his stead. His death had been predicted by Isaiah (Isaiah 7:16).

The full record of Jotham, King of Israel, is given in the book of Chronicles. It was "in those days that the LORD began to send against Judah Rezin, the King of Syria, and Pekah, the son of Remaliah." Judah, like Israel, was degenerating fast and the LORD chastised them by judgments.

7. King Ahaz and Assyria

CHAPTER 16

1. King Ahaz and his reign (16:1-4; 2 Chron. 28)
2. The invasion by the two kings (16:5-6)
3. Ahaz appeals to Assyria (16:7-8)
4. Ahaz in Damascus and the idolatrous altar (16:9-18)
5. Death of Ahaz (16:19-20; 2 Chron. 28:26-27)

Righteous Jotham had for his successor a wicked son. Ahaz "walked in the way of the Kings of Israel, yea, and made his son pass through the fire according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel." (This refers to the horrible rite of child-

sacrifice. Ahaz was the first among the kings who did this. As the apostasy increased this awful ceremony became more frequent. 2 Kings 17:17; 21:6; 23:10; See Micah 6:7; Jer. 7:31; 19:5.) For additional wickedness he committed see 2 Chron. 28:2, 21-25. He burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom and burnt his children in the fire.

"But this was to revive the old Canaanitish and Phoenician worship, with all its abominations and all its defilements. The valley of Gihon, which bounds Jerusalem on the west, descends at its southern extremity into that of Hinnom, which in turn joins at the ancient royal gardens the valley of Kidron, that runs along the eastern declivity of the Holy City. There, at the junction of the valleys of Hinnom and Kidron, in these gardens, was Topheth--'the spitting out,' or place of abomination--where an Ahaz, a Manasseh, and an Amon, sacrificed their sons and daughters to Baal-Moloch, and burnt incense to foul idols. Truly was Hinnom, 'moaning,' and rightly was its name Gehinnom (valley of Hinnom--Geheena), adopted as that for the place of final suffering. And it is one of those strange coincidences that the hill which rises on the south side of this spot was that 'potter's field,' the 'field of blood,' which Judas bought with the wages of his betrayal, and where with his own hands he executed judgment on himself. History is full of such coincidences, as men call them; nor can we forget in this connection that it was on the boundary-line between the reigns of Jotham and Ahaz that Rome was founded (in 752 B.C.), which was destined to execute final judgment on apostate Israel" (A. Edersheim).

Isaiah, Micah, Hosea and Oded then exercised their prophetic offices. When Rezin, King of Syria, and Pekah, the son of Remaliah, King of Israel, came against Jerusalem and besieged Ahaz, he appealed to Tiglath-pileser to save him out of their hands, instead of crying to Jehovah for the deliverance He had promised to His people. The king also took the silver and gold from the LORD's house and presented it to Tiglath-pileser. Then after Ahaz had declared himself the vassal of Assyria ("I am thy servant"), Tiglath-pileser conquered Damascus. The inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser mention this fact. We refer again to Isaiah 7. The alliance with the Assyrian was opposed by Isaiah. He told Ahaz "at the end of the conduit of the upper pool" to ask a sign of any kind of the LORD God, to allay the fears of the king and give an evidence that the LORD would preserve the house of David. And furthermore Isaiah had taken with him his son Shear-jashub, which means "the remnant shall return," prophetic also of the preservation of a remnant. When wicked Ahaz refused, the prophet uttered that great sign which was to take place over seven hundred years after, that the virgin should conceive and bring forth a son, even Immanuel. The house of David might be punished and chastised, but there could be no full end of the royal family, for the promised One had to come from David and receive in due time the promised kingdom. And Isaiah also predicted that the Assyrian, in whom Ahaz had put his trust, should come upon them (Isa. 7:17). What Pekah did to Judah and Oded's testimony against Pekah we shall learn from the Chronicles.

The erection of a new altar in the Temple by Ahaz according to the pattern of the idol-altar, opened the door wide for the unlawful worship in the Temple of God. He found a willing helper in Urijah (the LORD is light), who conducted the worship "according to all that King Ahaz commanded." And greater profanation followed. He even shut up the doors of the house of the Lord (2 Chron. 28:24), which probably meant a complete cessation of the services in the Holy Place. The gods of Damascus were worshipped by him in connection with this altar (2 Chron. 28:23). And in Christendom an even greater profanation of worship has come to pass. True Christian worship is in spirit and in truth. Roman Catholicism has erected altars patterned more or less after the ancient Babylonish worship.

7. Assyria Conquers Israel and the Captivity

CHAPTER 17

1. Hoshea, Israel's last king (17:1-2)

2. Shalmaneser imprisons Hoshea (17:3-4)

3. Israel carried into captivity (17:5-6)

4. Retrospect and Israel's sins (17:7-23)

5. The colonization of Samaria (17:24-41)

Israel's last king was Hoshea. His name means "deliverance." It indicates what might have been had he and the people repented of their sins. The record of his character is brief. "And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel before him." This does not mean that he improved. The golden calves had been taken away by the Assyrian from Bethel and Dan, so that he could no longer sin like Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, and the other kings of Israel. Hosea had predicted this (Hosea 10:5-8).

Shalmaneser, King of Assyria, then came against him, and Hoshea became his servant. The Biblical account is meager, but the Assyrian inscriptions have a great deal to say about this period. Shalmaneser's name is given in these inscriptions as "Salmanu-ussir" and Hoshea's as "A-usi." From these inscriptions we learn that after the siege of Samaria had lasted two years Shalmaneser was succeeded by Sargon, who took Samaria in the first year of his reign. While Sargon is not mentioned in the record here it is significant that the capture of Samaria is not attributed to Shalmaneser. Both passages, 2 Kings 17:6 and 18:10-11, speak only of the king of Assyria. These inscriptions declare that Sargon captured Samaria, led away 27,290 of its inhabitants and appointed a governor over Samaria. There is also a record of the deportation of Israel and the colonization of the land. What would these interesting ancient inscriptions mean if it were not for the Bible? Again we say they are proven true because the Word of God confirms them.

Hoshea had, after he had become the vassal of the king of Assyria, made a conspiracy against the king by sending messengers to So, king of Egypt, and then he refused to pay the tribute. (The proper reading of "So" is given as "Seve" or "Sava." By the Greeks he is called "Saba Kon" on the monuments "Shabaka," in cuneiform inscriptions "Shabi-i.") He was imprisoned and we hear nothing whatever of his fate. (Hosea 10:7 tells of his death.) Samaria completely in the hands of the king of Assyria, the people were carried away captives into Assyria. The places are given, but beyond this little is known. Nor do we know anything about their subsequent history. They did not return from the captivity. Various attempts have been made to locate them. The American Indians, the Afghans, Armenians, Nestorians and others have been mentioned as the descendants of the ten tribes, but no substantial evidence can be given to verify this supposition. The so-called "Anglo-Israel theory" is so full of unreasonable speculations and inventions that it does not deserve any consideration. God knows where they are located, and in His own time He will surely gather them and together with the remnant of the house of Judah bring them back to their land. At that time the many unfulfilled promises made to Israel and to Judah will all be literally fulfilled.

There is next given a solemn retrospect of the history of the house of Israel. Judah is also mentioned. The record shows the awful apostasy and the great patience of Jehovah in delaying the threatened judgment.

The account of the colonization of Samaria by the King of Assyria is interesting. It gives the history of the Samaritans, which emanated from this mixture of races and religions and which were responsible for much trouble after the return of the Jewish remnant from the exile. The priest who was returned from Assyria to teach religious rites to the colonists settled in Bethel, where Jeroboam had instituted the idolatrous worship, which had dragged Israel down, produced a new religion, partly Israelitish and partly heathenish, like the mixed multitude which dwelt in the land.

Thus ended the Kingdom of Israel. Out of the nineteen kings which reigned seven were

murdered, one died from wounds received on the battlefield, one died from a fall out of the window, one was struck down by the judgment of God and one committed suicide.

IV. THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH, MANASSEH AND AMON

1. Hezekiah and Sennacherib's Invasion

CHAPTER 18

1. Hezekiah, King of Judah (18:1-3; 2 Chron. 29-32)
2. The Revival (18:4-7)
3. Victory over the Philistines (18:8)
4. Israel's captivity (18:9-12)
5. Sennacherib's invasion (18:13-16)
6. Sennacherib's messengers and message (18:17-25; 2 Chron. 32:9-19)
7. The request of Hilkiah, Shebna and Joah (18:26)
8. Rabshakeh's insulting answer (18:27-37)

Hezekiah (strength of Jehovah) was the pious son of a very wicked father. It is refreshing to read now after the long list of kings who did evil in God's sight that Hezekiah "did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David did." According to the book of Chronicles, the first thing he did was to open the doors of the house of the LORD (which Ahaz his father had closed) and repair them (2 Chron. 29:3). This was a true beginning. We shall find in Chronicles the details of the great revival and the restoration of the temple-worship, the keeping of the Passover, as well as the other reforms which took place under his reign. All these will be considered in the annotations on Second Chronicles. He destroyed also all forms of idolatry. Especially mentioned is the brazen serpent which Moses had made. This interesting object had been preserved since the days when Moses had lifted it up in the wilderness, the wonderful type of Him who knew no sin and who was made sin for us on the cross. The children of Israel in their apostasy had made the brazen serpent an object of worship. He broke it in pieces and called it Nehushtan, which means "brazen." Thus negatively and positively a great reformation was accomplished. The secret of it all we find tersely stated in one sentence. "He trusted in the LORD God of Israel." Because he trusted Jehovah, Jehovah was with him. "And the LORD was with him, and he prospered whithersoever he went forth." This is the way of A true recovery and the way to blessing.

The evil alliance with the king of Assyria, which his father had made, the God-fearing king refused to own. "He rebelled against the king of Assyria and served him not." Immediately after he smote the ancient enemy of God's people, the Philistine. (The fate of Samaria, the Kingdom of Israel, is once more mentioned in verses 9-12 obviously because chronologically it followed Hezekiah's victory over the Philistines.) In annotations of Judges we learned the typical significance of the Philistines. They represent ritualistic Christendom. After Hezekiah's restoration of the true worship of Jehovah and after the breaking down of all false altars and idol worship, a complete victory over the Philistines has a special meaning, Ritualism, the deadly foe of true worship, can only be overcome by a return to that true worship and trust in the Lord. Protestantism attempted this, but it has failed.

The rebellion of Hezekiah against Assyria may have been under the reign of Shalmaneser. Then followed Sargon, who was succeeded by his son Sennacherib. In all probability Sennacherib was co-regent with his father Sargon. The Assyrian inscriptions concerning Sennacherib covering this period are very interesting though not always correct and often mixed and confusing. In the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, Sennacherib came against the fenced cities of Judah and they fell before him. Isaiah 10 gives us additional information on this invasion. True, Hezekiah's faith was severely tested. Sennacherib had not yet come near to Jerusalem and Hezekiah sent to him at Lachish, saying "I have offended; return from me; that which thou puttest on me will I bear." It was not according to faith, but the godly king had acted in fear and unbelief. No mention is made by Isaiah of this occurrence, nor do we find a record of it in the Chronicles. The tribute was very heavy, amounting to over one million and a half dollars. Hezekiah had to use the silver and the gold of the Temple and the palace to meet this obligation.

Then Sennacherib decided to attack Jerusalem. Here we have three accounts of what took place: 2 Kings 18-19; 2 Chron. 32 and Isaiah 36-37. These Scriptures should be carefully read and compared. From 2 Chron. 32:1-8 we learn the wise preparations Hezekiah made in anticipation of the coming attack. The water supply for the invading army was cut off; he made strong fortifications; he reorganized the army. But the best of all are the words he addressed to the people. "Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor discouraged for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him; for there be more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles." These were noble words. No wonder the people leaned upon them in that hour of trial. We hear in them an echo of Isaiah's faithful ministry. The head of the expedition and negotiations for the surrender of Jerusalem were entrusted to the "Tartan," the commander-in-chief of the army: "Rabsaris," which has been explained to mean "chief of the eunuchs" and Rabshakeh, the Assyrian title of "chief captain." The message which Rabshakeh brought was delivered from the same spot where Isaiah stood when he gave his message to Ahaz (Isa. 7:3). The words of the emissary of Sennacherib were coarse; they reveal the blindness of a heathen, who thought of Jehovah having been offended by Hezekiah's great reformation (verse 22). Politically and religiously it was misrepresentation. He ended up with a lie, "The LORD said to me, Go up against this land and destroy it."

When the representatives of Hezekiah requested for the sake of the populace not to speak in Hebrew, but in Aramean, which the common people did not understand, Rabshakeh became very abusive and shouted a vulgar appeal to the people. It needs no further commentations. The people were obedient to the king. They answered not a word. And the king's representatives return to the king with clothes rent.

2. Hezekiah and Isaiah and the Deliverance

CHAPTER 19

1. Hezekiah's message to Isaiah (19:1-5)
2. Isaiah's answer. (19:6-7)
3. Sennacherib's message to Hezekiah (19:8-13; 2 Chron. 32:17)
4. Hezekiah's Prayer (19:14-19; 2 Chron. 32:20)
5. Jehovah's answer through Isaiah (19:20-34)
6. The deliverance (19:35; 2 Chron. 32:21-22)

7. Sennacherib's death (19:30-37)

And Hezekiah also rent his clothes. In deep humiliation and sorrow the pious man went to the house of the Lord and sent messengers to Isaiah. This is most blessed. He did not call a counsel of his advisers, a meeting of the captains to talk the matter over; nor did he send first to the prophet. Faith knows a better way than that. He went straight into the presence of the LORD and the sending to Isaiah was secondary. Many of our failures as His people are due to the fact that we do not go to the LORD first.

And equally beautiful is his message to God's prophet. He mentions not himself in the danger of Jerusalem. It is the honor of Jehovah which is at stake; the honor of the living God is at stake. The Assyrian had defied the God of Israel. Yea, Hezekiah's comfort was that Jehovah had heard it all and knew it all. What lessons and what comforts are here for us also! Then he requests prayer.

The divine answer through Isaiah was brief. Be not afraid. The blessed assurance for faith first-- Fear not! The promise of deliverance is the second thing in Isaiah's answer.

Another message in the form of a letter is sent by Sennacherib to the king. Again Hezekiah goes with it straight to the LORD. He read it and went up into the house of the LORD and spread it before the LORD. What blessing there would be in the lives of all God's people; what wonderful evidences of His power and His love we might have if all things which happened unto us were at once taken into the presence of God and spread before Him!

And the beautiful answer to Hezekiah's prayer sent through the prophet! The LORD had heard, He had seen. All what had taken place He knew and any word which had been spoken. The message ends with the assuring word, "I will defend this city, to save it, for Mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake."

That night the judgment stroke fell. The whole Assyrian army of 185,000 men was smitten by the angel of the LORD. Prophetically it stands for the end of the Assyrian who will enter Israel's land during the great tribulation and who will perish like Sennacherib's army.

Sennacherib dwelt after that in Nineveh. There he was murdered by his own sons. An Assyrian cylinder in the British Museum contains a record of this deed.

3. Hezekiah's Illness, Recovery, Failure, and Death

CHAPTER 20

1. Hezekiah's illness and recovery (20:1-11; 2 Chron. 32:24)

2. Hezekiah's failure (20:12-19; 2 Chron. 32:25-31)

3. The death of Hezekiah (20:20-21; 2 Chron. 32:32-33)

Hezekiah's sickness must have occurred about the second invasion of the Assyrian. Then the prophet Isaiah delivered to him the message of approaching death. "Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live." The message made a deep impression on the sick king. He turned his face to the wall; he prayed and wept sore. Though he was a pious man he was greatly agitated and deeply moved when he heard the announcement of his coming departure. The meager knowledge God's saints had in Old Testament times on the things beyond the grave, as well as the conception that an untimely death denoted divine disfavor produced no doubt much of this grief. How differently saints in New Testament times can face death! Life and immortality is now brought to life by the gospel, and we know that absent from the body means to be present with the Lord, and to depart and be with Christ is "far better."

Hezekiah's prayer was at once heard and answered. It is one of the most striking answers to

prayer. Isaiah had not gone very far, he had just reached the middle of the court, when he was commanded to turn back and bring to Hezekiah the answer. Seven things are contained in this new message to the weeping king. "I have heard thy prayer"; "I have seen thy tears"; "I will heal thee"; "Thou shalt go up to the house of the LORD"; "I will add unto thy days fifteen years"; "I will deliver thee"; "I will defend the city." And Isaiah was also commanded to use means. "Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil and he recovered." If this simple remedy had been neglected, if there had been disobedience, the recovery would not have taken place. The third day is mentioned on which he should go up to the house of the LORD. For Israel there is also in store the third day, when they will be raised up nationally and worship the LORD (Hosea 6:2). Then there was the sign of the shadow turning backward ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz. Hezekiah's experience is a great encouragement for God's people to pray.

"It is interesting to learn that Ahaz had--probably on his visit to Damascus (2 Kings 16:10)--seen and brought to Jerusalem some of the scientific appliances of the great empire of the East. It is impossible to determine whether this mode of measuring the progress of time (not strictly hours) was by a sun-dial, the invention of which Herodotus ascribed to the Babylonians. According to Ideler it was a gnomon, or index, surrounded by concentric circles, by which the time of the day was marked by the lengthening shadow. But the term "steps" seems rather to indicate an obelisk surrounded by steps, the shadow on which marked the hours, so that the shadow falling in the morning westwards first on the lowest step, gradually ascended to the plane on the top, and after midday again descended the steps eastwards. As the text seems to imply that there were twenty such "steps," they must have marked the quarters of an hour, and in that case the event has happened about half-past two o'clock p.m." (Bible History)

And the promise the LORD had given, "I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for Mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake," was wonderfully fulfilled in the complete destruction of Sennacherib's army. The last we hear of this great king is the failure when he was lifted up with pride and did not give the glory to God. Merodach-baladan, (Berodach is the error of some scribe. See Isaiah 39:1.), King of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah when he heard of his sickness and his miraculous recovery. This is the first time we hear of a king of Babylon. The ambassadors came possibly to form with Hezekiah a league against Assyria. Hezekiah was favorably impressed, "he hearkened unto them," and then he made a display of all his possessions. He had hearkened unto them and pleased with the attention shown to him and the presents the king of Babylon had sent to him, he became lifted up in his heart, he boasted of his wealth and his possessions. Then Isaiah had another message for him. The Babylonian captivity is announced; remarkable in itself. How verses 17 and 18 were fulfilled is well known.

4. Manasseh and Amon

CHAPTER 21

1. Manasseh's reign of wickedness (21:1-9; 2 Chron. 33:1-9)
2. The word of the LORD against it (21:10-15)
3. Manasseh's end (21:16-18; 2 Chron. 33:18-20)
4. Reign and death of Amon (21:19-26; 2 Chron. 33:20-25)

Hezekiah had a wicked father and his son Manasseh did not follow the example of his father, but became even more wicked than Ahaz, his grandfather. Manasseh means "forgetting." No doubt Hezekiah named him thus because the LORD had delivered him and thus made him forget his troubles and trials. He was born three years after Hezekiah's recovery from sickness. And now

Manasseh forgot all the goodness and mercy of the LORD and plunged headlong into the worst apostasy. All the vile practices of the Canaanites and the Sodomites were revived by him. The Moloch-worship flourished, sorcery and the practice of demonism as well. The corruption was more vile than the corruption of Samaria. It was even worse than the corruption of the Canaanites. "Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel." And still more evil is recorded of this king. "Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another" (verse 16). Josephus declares that he killed all the righteous in Jerusalem and it is not unlikely that the tradition of aged Isaiah's violent death under Manasseh's reign is correct. Then the LORD sent to him His judgment message, announcing the coming doom of Jerusalem. Of his conversion and subsequent reign nothing is said in Kings. We find the record of these interesting events in Chronicles. His conversion was indeed a miracle of grace.

After his death Amon ruled as king and followed all the wickedness of his father Manasseh. Terrible is the record of this lost soul. "And he humbled not himself before the LORD as Manasseh his father had humbled himself, but Amon trespassed more and more" (2 Chron. 33:23). He was murdered by his servants.

V. THE REIGN OF JOSIAH

1. The Revival

CHAPTER 22

1. Josiah begins to reign (22:1-2; 2 Chron. 34:1-2)
2. The temple repaired (22:3-7; 2 Chron. 34:8-13)
3. The law discovered (22:8-9; 2 Chron. 34:14-21)
4. The reading of the law and its results (22:10-14)
5. The words of Huldah, the prophetess (22:15-20)

After the violent death of Amon his eight-year-old son Josiah (sustained by Jehovah) began to reign. Under him the greatest reformation and revival took place. While he was yet young he began to seek after the God of David, his father. Afterward he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem. The carved images and molten images as well as the altars of Baal were destroyed by him. "And he burnt the bones of the priests upon the altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem" (2 Chron. 34:5). Thus was fulfilled the prophecy uttered more than three hundred years before by the man of God from Judah (1 Kings 13:2). Perhaps the prophecy had been forgotten, the unbelievers may have ridiculed its fulfillment. But when God's time came He saw to the literal fulfillment of His own Word. It is so today. Rationalists scoff at the Word of God. Others spiritualize the predictions of the Bible and do not believe that they will ever be fulfilled. This is one of the characteristics of the last days of the age (2 Peter 3:3-7).

We must leave it to the reader to study the details of the great reformation-revival which took place under Josiah. In the annotations on Second Chronicles we point out some of its lessons. After the breaking down of the idols and idol-altars the temple was repaired. The law was also found by Hilkiah the high-priest. The Word of the Lord written by Moses in the Pentateuch had most likely been hidden away by Manasseh. It was the accusing voice of God against the wickedness of the king. Strange it is that it is not mentioned in connection with the repentance and conversion of Manasseh. And when the law was read to the king by Shaphan, the king rent his clothes.

"Here we have a tender conscience bowing under the action of the Word of God. This was one

special charm in the character of Josiah. He was, in truth, a man of an humble and contrite Spirit, who trembled at the Word of God. Would that we all knew more of this! It is a most valuable feature of the Christian character. We certainly do need to feel, much more deeply, the weight, authority, and seriousness of Scripture. Josiah had no question whatever in his mind as to the genuineness and authenticity of the words which Shaphan had read in his hearing. We do not read of his asking, 'How am I to know that this is the Word of God?' No; he trembled at it. He bowed before it. He was smitten down under it. He rent his garments. He did not presume to sit in judgment upon the Word of God, but, as was meet and right, he allowed that word to judge him. "Thus it should ever be. If man is to judge Scripture, then Scripture is not the Word of God at all. But if Scripture is, in very truth, the Word of God, then it must judge man. And so it is, and so it does. Scripture is the Word Of God and it judges man thoroughly. It lays bare the very roots of his nature--it opens up the foundations of his moral being. It holds up before him the only faithful mirror in which he can see himself perfectly reflected. This is the reason why man does not like Scripture--cannot bear it--seeks to set it aside--delights to pick holes in it--dares to sit in judgment upon it. It is not so in reference to other books. Men do not trouble themselves so much to discover and point out flaws and discrepancies in Homer or Herodotus, Aristotle or Shakespeare. No; but Scripture judges them--judges their ways--their lusts. Hence the enmity of the natural mind to that most precious and marvellous book which carries its own credentials to every divinely prepared heart" (Things New and Old).

The direct result of reading the Word of God was more than outward grief and repentance. The king gave the command, "Go ye, inquire of the LORD for me, and for the people and for all Judah." Jeremiah and Zephaniah were then upon the scene, but we do not read anything of them in the record. It is Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum (retribution), the son of Tikvah (meaning "hope") the son of Harhas (meaning "extremely poor"). That he had to inquire of a woman, the weaker vessel, must have been humiliating to the king. And Huldah's message is one of judgment. To Josiah personally good is promised. He was not to see the evil. In spite of the great reformation-revival, judgment would fall upon Judah and upon Jerusalem (verses 15-17).

And here is an important lesson for our own times. Reformations and revivals cannot keep back the decreed judgments of God. Often it is thought that great waves of reformation and revival movements are evidences that the world is getting better and that only good is in store for this age. It is forgotten that this age is an age marked by departure from God, by the rejection of His own blessed Son and by the perversion of the truth of God. It will culminate in the great apostasy and the manifestation of the man of sin--the son of perdition. Christendom has been even more unfaithful than Israel in Old Testament times. Judgment is in store for this age and for that which claims to be the church. The Lord has announced this long ago and it will surely come as judgment came upon Judah for all the abominable things they did. Reformation-revival movements are evidences, too, that the threatened judgment is not far away. As the end approaches God warns us and His Spirit presses home the truth once more to awaken the consciences of men. In 2 Chron. 36:15 we read the following words: "And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling place." But the next verse declares the failure of what the Lord had done in His compassion. "But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy." No remedy! an awful word it is. Judah in spite of the gracious revival under Josiah hastened on to the predicted doom, and so does this present age.

2. The Results of the Revival and the Death of Josiah

CHAPTER 23:1-30

1. The People hear the law (23:1-2; 2 Chron. 34)

2. Josiah makes a covenant (23:3)
3. The great reformatations (23:4-20)
4. The Passover celebrated (23:21-23; 2 Chron. 35)
5. Further statements concerning Josiah (23:24-27)
6. The death of Josiah (23:29-30)

It is a great scene with which this chapter opens. The king feels now his responsibility towards the people. All the elders of Judah and Jerusalem were called together by him. Then there was a great procession of people headed by the king, followed by the elders, the priests and the prophets and all the people both small and great. The king read before this vast assembly all the words of the book of the covenant. The king standing on a pillar, or Platform, made a solemn covenant to walk after the LORD and to keep His commandments. All the people stood by it. But it did not last very long. As far as the king was concerned there can be no question that it was real with him. However, if we read the opening chapters of Jeremiah we find that the people's consecration was but skin-deep. They did not turn unto the LORD with the whole heart, but in falsehood (Jer. 3:10).

The description of the cleansing of Judah and Jerusalem of all the abominable things (verses 4-20) shows the awful depths of vileness and wickedness into which the professing people of God had sunk. All the abominations of the flesh connected with the worship of Baal and Ashera and a host of other things flourished in the land. "And he slew all the priests of the high places that were there upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them and returned to Jerusalem" (verse 20).

The keeping of the Passover, the blessed feast of remembrance of what Jehovah had done, follows immediately after the cleansing of the land. The full account we find in Chronicles where we give further comment (2 Chron. 35:1-19). But the record declares that "there was not holden such a passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah." The same was said of Hezekiah's passover (2 Chron. 30:26). Hezekiah's passover was greater than any previous one and Josiah's feast was even greater than that of his great-grandfather.

And all the workers with familiar spirits (the demon possessed mediums) and other wickedness he cut off. In all this Josiah pleased Jehovah and the Spirit of God testifies to it. "And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him." Yet after these words there stands written once more the judgment message so soon to be accomplished upon Judah and Jerusalem.

Josiah died, having been shot on the battlefield at Megiddo. The Chronicles contains the details of his death (2 Chron. 35:20-27).

VI. FINAL APOSTASY OF JUDAH AND THE CAPTIVITY

1. Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim

CHAPTER 23:31-37

1. The three months' reign of Jehoahaz (23:31-33; 2 Chron. 36:1-2)
2. Jehoiakim made king (23:34-37; 2 Chron. 36:4-5)

Chronicles tells us that immediately after the death of Josiah, the people of the land took

Jehoahaz (which means "Jehovah holds up") and made him king. He was not the LORD's choice, but the people's choice. He was not the eldest son and therefore the action of the people was an unlawful and a lawless one. He was an evil-doer; Josephus speaks of him as having been vile. In the brief period he reigned he may have attempted to restore the immoral rites which his father had so completely crushed. He may have opposed Pharaoh-necho, King of Egypt.

As Josephus explains it, "Necho had, after the battle of Megiddo, continued his march towards Syria. Thither, at Riblah, 'in the land of Hamath,' the victor summoned the new Jewish King. On his arrival, Jehoahaz, who had been crowned without the leave of Necho, was put in bonds. Necho does not seem, on this occasion, to have pursued his expedition against Assyria. The great battle at Carchemish, to which the chronicler refers by anticipation (2 Chron. 35:20), was fought on a second expedition, three years later, when the Egyptian army under Necho was defeated with great slaughter by Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabopolassar. This was after the fall of Nineveh, and when the Babylonian or Chaldean empire had taken the place of the Assyrian. But on the present occasion Necho seems to have returned, before encountering the Assyrians, into Egypt, whither 'he brought' with him Jehoahaz, who died in captivity." (See Jeremiah 22:11-12.)

Then the king of Egypt took the oldest son of Josiah, Eliakim, changed his name to Jehoiakim and made him King over Judah. Jehoiakim means "Jehovah raiseth up"; this name was probably selected to impress the people. He reigned eleven years. It was a most disastrous time and the beginning of the end. God's mighty prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Habakkuk, Zephaniah and also Urijah were then warning and delivering their great messages.

"The reformatory work of Josiah gave place to a restoration of the former idolatry (compare 2 Chron. 36:8). As in previous reigns, it was connected with complete demoralization of the people (compare Jer. 7:9-15; 17:2, 19:4-9; Ezek. 8:9-18). And this not only among the laity, high and low, but equally among the priests and prophets (compare Jer. 23:9-14). All the louder rose the voices of the prophets Jeremiah, Urijah and Habakkuk. But their warnings were either unheeded and scorned, or brought on them persecution and martyrdom (2 Kings 24:4; Jer. 26:10, 11, and especially verses 20-23). Otherwise, also, it was a wretched government, characterized by public wrong, violence, oppression and covetousness. While the land was impoverished, the king indulged in luxury and built magnificent palaces, or adorned towns, by means of forced labor, which remained unpaid, and at the cost of the lives of a miserable enslaved people (Jer. 22:13-18; Hab. 2:9-17)" (A. Edersheim).

The book of Jeremiah will give us much more of the history of this wicked king and our annotations will lead us back to the ending days of Judah and Jerusalem. He tried to put Urijah to death because he prophesied against Jerusalem. The prophet fled to Egypt. Jehoiakim sent for him and slew him with the sword and threw his body into the graves of the common people (Jer. 26). He himself was buried with the burial of an ass (Jer. 22:18-19). Another infamous deed he committed was the cutting with the penknife of the scroll upon which Jeremiah had written the Word of God, casting it into the fire (Jer. 36).

2. Jehoiachin and Zedekiah: The Beginning of Judah's Captivity

CHAPTER 24

1. Jehoiakim, Servant of Nebuchadnezzar, and His Death (24:1-5; 2 Chron. 36:6-7)
2. Jehoiachin (24:6-10; 2 Chron. 36:8-9)
3. The first deportation to Babylon (24:11-16)
4. Zedekiah, the last king, and his rebellion (24:17-20)

The foe of Judah, the chosen instrument of the Lord to execute His wrath upon the people and the city, now comes to the front. Jeremiah had predicted the coming judgment; Isaiah and the other prophets did the same. Then Jehoiakim proclaimed a fast (Jer. 36:9). It was nothing but hypocrisy. Immediately after, he cut the scroll to pieces and cast it into the fire. Jeremiah and his secretary Baruch hardly escaped with their lives. Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, bound Jehoiakim in fetters to carry him to Babylon (2 Chron. 36:6). This was not done because Nebuchadnezzar was suddenly called to Babylon. The book of Daniel introduces us more fully to this great monarch, the head of the times of the Gentiles; we give in the annotations on that book more information about his character and history.

Nabopolassar, founded the new Babylonian empire, which began the period of the Chaldees--as they are chiefly known to us in Scripture. Here we may at once indicate that he was succeeded by his son, Nebuchadnezzar (or Nebuchadnezzar), and he in turn by his son, Evil-merodach, who, after two years' reign, was dethroned by his brother-in-law, Neriglissar. After four years (559-556 B.C.) Neriglissar was succeeded by his youthful son, Laborosoarchod. After his murder, Nabonidos (Nabunit, Nabuna'id) acceded to the government, but after seventeen years' reign (555-539 B.C.) was dethroned by Cyrus. The eldest son of Nabonidos, and heir to the throne, was Belshazzar whom we know from the book of Daniel, where, in a not unusual manner, he is designated as the son, that is, the descendant of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 5:2, 11, 18). We infer that, while his father, Nabonidos, went to meet Cyrus, to whom he surrendered, thereby preserving his life, Belshazzar had been left as "king" in Babylon at the taking of which he perished in the night of his feast, described in Holy Scripture. (See The Prophet Daniel, by A.C. Gaebelein.)

Jehoiakim became a vassal of Nebuchadnezzar. Three years later he rebelled. Punishment followed swiftly. It was "at the commandment of the LORD."

After the death of Jehoiakim, buried with the burial of an ass (Jer. 22:1-19), his son Jehoiachin reigned in his stead. He was eighteen years old when he ascended the throne and reigned only three months and ten days (2 Chron. 36:9). (2 Chronicles 36:9 gives his age as eight years, evidently the error of a scribe.) He is also known by the names of Joiachin (Ezek. 1:2) and Coniah (Jer. 22:24, 28, 37:1). Then Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem. The city surrendered and the long predicted punishment was executed. At the first invasion under the reign of Jehoiakim, when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, a part of the vessels of the house of God were transported to Babylon, as well as the noble children, among whom were Daniel and his companions (Dan. 1:1-6). With the second siege and conquest of Jerusalem all was taken and the people were taken away captives, among them was the prophet Ezekiel (Jer. 52:28; Ezek. 1:1-2; Jer. 29:1).

A remnant, however, was left behind; Jehoiachin was carried into captivity. The last chapter of this book gives his fate. He never returned. Important is to note the curse which was pronounced upon him. Jeremiah pronounced it upon Coniah Jehoiachin). "Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days; for no man of his seed shall prosper sitting upon the throne of David and ruling any more in Judah" (Jer. 22:28-30). He had children; no offspring of the line of Solomon was ever to occupy the throne of David. But there were the descendants of David through another line, that is, Nathan's; no curse rested upon that line. The virgin Mary, the mother of our Lord, was of David through Nathan (Luke 3:31). Joseph, to whom Mary the virgin was espoused was a son of David through Solomon's line.

Nebuchadnezzar made Mattaniah, the youngest son of Josiah, King over Judah (compare verse 18 with chapter 23:31). His name means "the gift of Jehovah" and he changed it into Zedekiah, "the righteousness of Jehovah." Here is no doubt a prophetic hint. When Judah and Jerusalem went down in judgment, in unspeakable ruin and shame, God indicated in thievery names of the last king that there would yet come from David's line He, who is His own precious gift and in whom righteousness will be given and established. Zedekiah filled full the measure of wickedness and finally rebelled against the king of Babylon.

3. The Siege of Jerusalem and Judah's Complete Overthrow

CHAPTER 25

1. The last siege and complete overthrow (25:1-21; 2 Chron. 36:17-20)
2. Gedaliah (25:22-26)
3. Jehoiachin's captivity and release (25:27-30)

Zedekiah's rebellion was a great offence. He had sworn in Jehovah's name to be loyal to Nebuchadnezzar (2 Chron. 36:13; Ezek. 17:13). We find more light thrown upon this king and his rebellion in the book of Jeremiah. Ambassadors from Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon came to Jerusalem to see Zedekiah (Jer. 27). A combined revolution was probably contemplated. Zedekiah sent at the same time a message to Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon (Jer. 29:3); the prophet Jeremiah used this opportunity to send a God-given communication to the exiles in Babylon (Jer. 29:1, etc.). The news of Zedekiah's schemes must have reached the captives, for they expected an early return. (The prophet Ezekiel was especially used to warn against these false hopes. See annotations on Ezekiel.) False prophets, Satan's instruments, gave them their lying messages. Prominent among them was Hananiah who received his deserved punishment for his lying words (Jer. 28). Once more the city was besieged. A great famine prevailed. What happened in the doomed city and Jeremiah's great ministry as well as suffering may be learned from his prophecies. Consult especially the following passages: Jer. 21:1-2; 37:3; 34:2-6; 38. Jeremiah charged with treacherous designs had been cast into a dungeon, but was later delivered out of the miry pit and brought before the king, who declared himself willing to follow Jeremiah's advice. What followed we give from Edersheim's Bible History:

Meantime the siege was continuing, without hope of relief. Tyre suffered straits similar to those of Jerusalem, while Ammon, Moab, Edom and the Philistines had not only withdrawn from the alliance, but were waiting to share in the spoil of Judah (Ezek. 25). At length a gleam of hope appeared. An Egyptian army, under their King Hophra, the grandson of Necho, advanced through Phoenicia, and obliged the Chaldeans to raise the siege of Jerusalem (Jer. 37:5-7). The exultation and reaction in Jerusalem may be imagined--and it was probably in consequence of it that Jeremiah, who still predicted calamity, was cast into prison (Jer. 37:4). But the relief of Jerusalem was brief. The Egyptian army had to retire, and the siege of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans was resumed, and that under even more disadvantageous circumstances to the besieged.

To the other calamities that of famine was now added (2 Kings 25:3). Of the horrors of that time Jeremiah has left a record in the Book of Lamentations (comp. 1:19, 2:11, 12, 20; 4:3-10). The last resistance was soon overcome. On the ninth day of the fourth month (Tammuz), in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the enemy gained possession of the northern suburb (2 Kings 25:4; Jer. 39:2, 3; 52:6, 7). Before the middle gate the Babylonian captains held a council of war (Jer. 39:2, 3). Then the king and all the regular army sought safety in flight during the darkness of the night (Jer. 39:4). As the Chaldeans held the northern part of the city, they fled southwards. Between the two walls, through the Tyropoeon, then out of the "fountain-gate," and through the king's garden, they made haste to gain the Jordan.

But their flight could not remain unobserved. They were pursued and overtaken in the plains of Jericho. The soldiers dispersed in various directions. But the king himself and his household were taken captives, and carried to the headquarters at Riblah, where Nebuchadnezzar himself was at the time. Here Zedekiah was formally arraigned and sentence given against him. His daughters were set free, but his sons were slain before him. It was the last sight the king saw. His eyes were put out; he was bound hand and feet with double fetters of brass, and so carried to Babylon. There he died in ward (Jer. 52:11).

The remainder of this mournful tale is soon told. After the flight and capture of the king, the city could not long hold out. A month later, and on the seventh day of the fifth month (Ab) Nebuzar-adan ('Nebo gave posterity') penetrated into the city. The temple was set on fire, as well as the king's palace. The whole city was reduced to ruins and ashes, and the walls which had defended it were broken down (2 Kings 25:9, 10). After three days the work of destruction was completed; and ever afterwards was the 10th (9th) of Ab mourned as the fatal day of Jerusalem's fall (Jer. 52:12; Zech. 7:3, 5, 8:19). The rest of the people left in the city, and those who had previously passed to the enemy, together with the remnant of the multitude, were carried away (2 Kings 25:11). We can scarcely be mistaken in regarding these captives as the chief part of the non-combatant population of Jerusalem and Judah.

Jeremiah's history and how he was found in prison when Jerusalem fell we shall learn from his book.

The administration of the conquered country was then entrusted by Nebuchadnezzar to Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam (2 Kings 22:12; Jer. 26:24). Gedaliah dwelt on Mizpah. He held his office only two months and was murdered by Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah (Jer. 40:8-16 and 41:1-9).

Jehoiachin's release needs no further comment. In the second book of Chronicles we shall follow again this mournful history. The seventy year captivity was on. The Word of the LORD through Jeremiah that "the land should enjoy her Sabbaths, for as long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill three score and ten years" (2 Chron. 36:21).

We add the words of another:

Again is the land keeping Sabbath, And again is it "stillness unto God," till His voice shall waken land and people, Whose are land and people, dominion and peace: till He shall come who is alike the goal and the fulfillment of all past history and prophecy--"a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel."

Appendix

THE MOABITE STONE

This ancient monument was discovered by R.F. Klein in 1868 at Diban in Moab.

The inscription consists of thirty-four lines (the last two being undecipherable), and was written by Mesha, King of Moab to commemorate his successful revolt from the yoke of Israel, recorded in 2 Kings 1:1 and chapter 3; and to honor his god Chemosh, to whom he ascribed his successes.

The writing is in the ancient Hebrew characters, which continued in use down to 139 B.C., but was gradually replaced by the modern square Hebrew characters which are in use today.

1. "I, Mesha son of Chemosh-Melech King of Moab, the Di-
2. bonite. My father reigned over Moab thirty years and I reign-
3. ed after my father. I made this monument to Chemosh at Korkhah. A monument of sal-
4. vation, for he saved me from all invaders, and let me see my desire upon all my enemies. Om-
5. ri [was] king of Israel, and he oppressed Moab many days, for Chemosh was angry with his
6. land. His son followed him, and he also said: I will oppress Moab. In my days Che[mosh] said;
7. I will see my desire on him and his house. And Israel surely perished for ever. Omri took the land of

8. Medeba and [Israel] dwelt in it during his days and half the days of his son, altogether forty years. But there dwelt in it

9. Chemosh in my days. I built Baal-Meon and made therein the ditches; I built

10. Kirjathaim. The men of Gad dwelt in the land of Ataroth from of old, and built there the king of

11. Israel Ataroth; and I made war against the town and seized it. And I slew all the [people of]

12. the town, for the pleasure of Chemosh and Moab: I captured from thence the Arel of Dodah and tore

13. him before Chemosh in Kerieth: And I placed Therein the men of Sh(a)r(o)n, and the men

14. of M(e)kh(e)rth. And Chemosh said to me: Go, seize Nebo upon Israel; and

15. I went in the night and fought against it from the break of dawn till noon: and I took

16. it, and slew all, 7,000 men, [boys?], women, [girls?]

17. and female slaves, for to Ashtar-Chemosh I devoted them. And I took from it the Arels of Yahveh, and tore them before Chemosh. And the king of Israel built

18. Jahaz, and dwelt in it, while he waged war against me; Chemosh drove him out before me. And

19. I took from Moab 200 men, all chiefs, and transported them to Jahaz, which I took,

20. to add it to Dibon. I built Korkhah, the wall of the forests and the wall

21. of the citadel: I built its gates, and I built its towers. And

22. I built the house of Moloch, and I made sluices of the water-ditches in the middle

23. of the town. And there was no cistern in the middle of the town of Korkhah, and I said to all the people, Make for

24. yourselves every man a cistern in his house. And I dug the canals for Korkhah by means of the prisoners

25. of Israel. I built Aroer, and I made the road in [the province of] the Amon. [And]

26. I built Beth-Bamoth, for it was destroyed. I built Bezer, for in ruins

27. [it was. And all the chiefs] of Dibon were 50, for all Dibon is subject; and I placed

28. one hundred [chiefs] in the towns which I added to the land: I built

29. Beth-Medeba and Beth-diblathaim and Beth-Baal-Meon, and transported thereto the [shepherds]? ...

30. and the pastors) of the flocks of the land. And at Horonaim dwelt there

31. ... And Chemosh said to me, Go down, make war upon Horonaim. I went down [and made war]

32. ... And Chemosh dwelt in it during my days. I went up from thence..."