

were still remaining, the king of Babylon finally brought into his realm those mentioned in this paragraph.

Verse 31. *Captivity of Jehoiachin.* The taking of this king off the throne in Jerusalem marked the "2nd captivity" (2 Kings 24: 10-16), and the things about to be related here are dated from that event. In the meantime Nebuchadnezzar had died and his son Evil-merodach came to the throne. Frequently a new ruler will celebrate his first year in office by some special act and favor. *Brought him forth out of prison.* Although Jehoiachin had been permitted to live after being deposed, he was made a prisoner in the land of Babylon until Evil-merodach released him.

Verse 32. *Set his throne* does not mean that he was permitted to act as king. It means he was treated with more courtesy and distinction than other kings in captivity.

Verse 33. *Prison garments* were replaced by those worn by free men in civilian life. Since eating with another meant so much in ancient times, this dining with the king of Babylon meant much for Jehoiachin.

Verse 34. Jehoiachin not only dined with the king, but was given a daily serving out of the provisions that had been prepared for the Babylonian king. We are not given the information as to the cause of this special friendship between this captive and his master, a favor he enjoyed to the end of his life.

LAMENTATIONS 1

Verse 1. This book consists chiefly of the lamentations of Jeremiah over the sad condition of Jerusalem and the people for whom it was the capital. The book was written after the destruction of the city and thus after the "3rd captivity." In view of this fact all of the statements regarding that event should be regarded as history. Other remarks will occur in course of the book that are mournful predictions of future sorrows in store for his beloved people. Some statements will be made concerning the future of Babylon, and still others will come of a favorable character pertaining to the return of Israel from captivity. *City sit solitary* refers to the desolated and isolated situation of Jerusalem. This very condition was predicted in Isaiah 1: 8. *Become tributary* means to become in subjection to another country.

Verse 2. Israel had doted on many

nations but none of them stood by her now.

Verse 3. *Because* has no word in the original and if retained at all it should be understood in the light of the connection. The first clause should read, "Judah is gone into captivity to suffer affliction and servitude." *Overtook her between the straits* means her enemies found her in trouble and took advantage of it.

Verse 4. *Ways of Zion* means the roads leading to the city where the national feasts had been observed. They *mourned* (figuratively speaking) because no one was passing over them to attend the feasts. The rest of the verse is on the same subject.

Verse 5. *Her adversaries* means the Babylonians who had become *chief* or exalted above the people of Judah. But the prophet admits that such a sad state of affairs was just because it was from the Lord as a punishment for her many transgressions. *Her children* means the citizens of Judah who had gone into captivity.

Verse 6. *The beauty* referred to was the national and religious excellence of the city of Zion. The *hart* is of the deer family and is timid, especially when he is pursued in a wilderness in which he had become impoverished through the want of food. The princes or leaders are compared to this creature because they had been pursued by the enemies from a foreign land.

Verse 7. *Jerusalem remembered* means the people who had lived in that city but had been taken into a strange land. (See verse 8.) After they got to Babylon they fulfilled the statement of this verse, which was also prophesied in Psalms 137.

Verse 8. Jeremiah again admits that his people had sinned grievously and for that reason she had gone into captivity. To *despise* means to belittle or look upon with contempt. Jerusalem had been so humiliated that her former admirers now considered her condition to be one of disgrace.

Verse 9. *Filthiness is in her skirts* is a figurative way of saying the guilt of Jerusalem is evident, referring to the religious corruptions of the nation as well as the personal iniquity of the leaders. *Remembereth not her last end* means that Jerusalem was unthoughtful as to the outcome of her course. *Came down wonderfully* refers to the completeness of the fall of the city. The prophet then expresses his per-

sonal sense of *affliction* at the downfall of his countrymen.

Verse 10. This verse has direct reference to the event of 2 Kings 24: 13.

Verse 11. The invasion of Babylon into Judah resulted in conditions of famine in various places. This caused the people to offer their cherished personal belongings for food to *relieve the soul*, that is, to restore their vitality. And again the prophet "takes it to heart" and considers the condition of distress among his people as his own personal sorrow.

Verse 12. Jeremiah's personal affliction refers to the sympathy he has for his beloved people, therefore the language of the verse is a reflection of patriotism.

Verse 13. We know that Jeremiah was a righteous man and was never the direct target of the Lord's shafts of anger. Hence, while he was personally affected by the situation, most of his remarks were made on behalf of the people.

Verse 14. Being a member of the nation of Judah, Jeremiah would have to share in the national disgrace. However, God never forsook him but bestowed upon him and other righteous individuals the personal favor that had been promised. It will be well here for the reader to see the note in connection with 2 Kings 22: 17.

Verse 15. *Mighty men* refers to the princes and others who were leaders in the nation who had been taken into captivity (2 Kings 25: 14-16). When Jeremiah says *me* he is impersonating the nation as a whole. The last part of the verse is a figurative description of the siege of Jerusalem and the downfall that followed.

Verse 16. This verse refers to the personal grief of Jeremiah over the distress of the people of Judah. He calls those people *my children* as an expression of the affection he has for his fellow countrymen.

Verse 17. The spreading forth of the hands is a gesture calling for help in distress. Zion (or Jerusalem) is represented as a woman in pain and sorrow but seeking in vain for assistance. This is because the Lord had forsaken his people and regarded them as unclean. The comparison to a woman in this condition was based on a law of Moses concerning such women (Lev. 15: 19-33). Of course we should understand that she was classed as unclean ceremonially and hence was required to submit to the ritualistic formula for

cleansing. And the chief uncleanness of Judah was ceremonial or spiritual in that idolatry was the outstanding evil. And in keeping with the procedure under the law, Judah was put away from God for a period of national cleansing in the land of her captivity which did completely cleanse her of this iniquity.

Verse 18. The pronoun *I* is related to Jerusalem in the preceding verse. While Jeremiah is the framer of the language, he is speaking for the people who were guilty of the sins that have been the cause of God's wrath. The *virgins* and *young men* are especially named in the complaint about the captivity. They were not any more guilty of sin than the elders, but the growth of a nation depends on the reproduction of the species and the young persons are the ones upon whom the increase of citizens generally depends. For this reason it would be more regrettable for them to be taken.

Verse 19. *I* still refers to Jerusalem (as representative of the nation of Judah) and she is complaining of the unfaithfulness of her *lovers* which is a figurative reference to the idolatrous nations. In the Bible a comparison is made between spiritual and temporal love, and unfaithfulness in one is compared to that in the other. Judah had flirted with idolatrous nations and accepted them into her bosom (figuratively speaking), but now those nations had "jilted" her. They not only did that, but also took from her the necessities of life (had thrown the city into famine) which caused even the *priests* and *elders* to *give up the ghost* and die.

Verse 20. *Bowels* in the Bible means the affections when used figuratively. The sad experience that Judah was in was having a depressing effect on her affections and causing deep grief. But again the prophet makes her admit the rebellion that had provoked this punishment from God. Outside the city, *abroad*, the nation was suffering the effects of the sword, and in the capital the people were dying from famine.

Verse 21. The first half of this verse continues Judah's complaint of her enemies, and she even mentions the attitude of the enemies who had been the instrument in God's hand for the chastisement of His people. The rest of the verse is against that instrument because God never would tolerate any jubilant attitude from those whose services had been used for the punishment of the unfaithful nation.

Verse 22. The language truly represents the feeling of Judah against the Babylonians, but the remarks are worded by the prophet and are an inspired prediction of the vengeance of God upon that heathen people. That vengeance was destined to come upon them after the nation of the Jews has been put through the treatment necessary for the complete cure from her national corruption of idolatry.

LAMENTATIONS 2

Verse 1. This verse is a lamentation over the sad condition that was brought about through the righteous anger of the Lord. *Daughter of Zion* is an affectionate term for the people of the Lord who had their headquarters at Zion which was the principal district in Jerusalem. *Footstool* is an expression of humility which the prophet words on behalf of his people. *Remembered not* is used in the sense that the Lord did not spare his people when his anger was aroused to the extent of divine chastisement.

Verse 2. *Hath swallowed up* is a figurative reference to the overwhelming of the homes of the people. *Daughter of Judah* has the same meaning as *daughter of Zion* in the preceding verse. The Lord is said to have done these things, but we should understand that he accomplished it through the services of the Babylonians.

Verse 3. *Horn* in symbolic language is defined as "power" in Strong's lexicon. It means the power of Israel has been cut off, which was done when the kings in Jerusalem were taken from their throne. *Drawn back . . . from before the enemy* denotes that when the enemy approached against His people he withdrew his hand and left them to their fate. This was because they had sinned very grievously and caused His anger to burn like a *flaming fire*.

Verse 4. The Lord *bent his bow* by bringing the foreign army against the land of Judah. In the same way he *stood as an adversary* against the capital of the country.

Verse 5. All of these afflicting circumstances are attributed to the Lord which is correct. However, we should understand that He was dealing to his people the punishment due them for their abominable practices of idolatry.

Verse 6. *Tabernacle* is from a word that means a fence or barricade, and the idea is that God had withdrawn

his protection from his people and suffered the enemy to invade the land. The *solemn feasts* had been caused to cease in that the assembling place (Jerusalem) had been taken over by the enemy. To *despise* means to belittle or humiliate any person or thing. God had shown this attitude toward his rulers in the capital city where the kings and priests had their place of operations.

Verse 7. *Cast off his altar* took place when the Babylonians were suffered to interfere with the altar service in the *sanctuary* which means the temple. The *palaces* also were destroyed which were the personal residences of the kings. The history of this event is recorded in 2 Kings 25: 9. *Noise* is from *kole* and Strong defines it, "To call aloud; a voice or sound." The word does not necessarily mean a boisterous use of the voice for such as that would not be done on the days of solemn feasts. The meaning is that the enemy raised their shouts of triumph in the very house where God's people had expressed their joyful feelings on the feast days.

Verse 8. *Destroy the wall* means to forsake his defence of his people and their city. Such is the meaning of the entire verse, figuratively expressed.

Verse 9. *Gates are sunk into the ground* is somewhat figurative, meaning they are a mass of ruins and are useless as a means of defense. *Law is no more* means there is no one in position to enforce the law. The *Gentiles* were the Babylonians among whom the people of Judah were scattered. *Prophets found no vision* indicates that God would not communicate any vision to them because they had made such an unlawful use of their position.

Verse 10. This verse is a vivid picture of the dejected state of the leading men of the nation who were at that time captives in the land of Babylon. *Keep silence* shows how completely they were depressed over the conditions, so much so that they were silenced. This very situation was predicted in the 137th Psalm.

Verse 11. The people of Israel were generally aware of the miserable condition and expressed their feelings in more ways than one. The greater portion of the several passages of this book are truly the sentiments of the people. However, while writing down their sentiments for the infor-

mation of succeeding generations, Jeremiah is giving release for his own personal grief over the sorrowful plight of his beloved countrymen. *Fail with tears* means he had shed so many tears that his eyes were exhausted. *Bowels are troubled* denotes that his affections were stirred up over his concern for the nation. *Liver* is used figuratively and refers to the heavy load of worry that was agitating the prophet, caused by the fainting condition of the people, especially as it affected the children who were dependents.

Verse 12. *Where is corn and wine* was a literal plea the children were making with their mothers. Nothing could be any more pitiable than the sight of hungry children and the sound of their cry for food. These children were so undernourished that they became prostrated in the streets where they had been the victims of famine.

Verse 13. Jeremiah is without words to express fully his anxiety for his people or to say anything that would cause them to be consoled. *Thy breach* refers to the great gap that had been made in the defences and general provisions of security. *Who can heal it* indicates that nothing can be done for the present to head off the calamity facing the nation. It will be well for the reader to see the long note produced at 2 Kings 22: 17, volume 2 of this Commentary.

Verse 14. *Thy prophets* refers to the false prophets among the people who offered lying assurances of peace for them. (See Jer. 6: 14.) By thus delivering these flattering visions they prevented the people from feeling any fear of disaster, and consequently they did not make the reformation in their lives that might have *turned away their captivity* if they had started in time; now it was too late.

Verse 15. The central thought in this verse is the impression that was made on the nations of the world when they passed by and saw the situation. To *wag their head* was a gesture of mingled surprise and contempt over the downfall of such a wonderful nation that had so great a fame in the civilized world.

Verse 16. An outstanding characteristic of most nations is pride, hence the "face-saving" movements that we often hear of on the part of great national leaders. When a nation meets

with some misfortune, especially one in the nature of a disgrace, it is natural that others will express themselves on the situation. Some may do so out of friendly sympathy, but usually it is prompted by a motive of exultation. It is always from this last named motive when coming from enemies as is the case at hand. Judah has been terribly defeated and the Babylonians rejoice over it, even boasting that it had been their intention of causing such a day to arrive. But they will some day learn by sad experience that the Lord had suffered them to accomplish this end only because His people needed some chastisement.

Verse 17. The first clause of this verse confirms the closing portion of the preceding paragraph. *Caused enemy to rejoice* means that God caused the situation that gave Babylon the occasion for her rejoicing. However, that was not the motive the Lord had in the affair, therefore the exulting nation will finally suffer for her attitude toward Judah. *Set up the horn* means the Lord had given Babylon the power to accomplish her work against the corrupt nation in Palestine.

Verse 18. The misfortunes which the Lord suffered to come on Zion caused her to cry unto Him. The *wall* means the defences of Zion which had been demolished, and they are personified as being able to weep for themselves over the sorrowful situation. *Apple . . . not cease*. The eye is used in weeping and the figure means for the apple (or forces) of the eye to use its strength in weeping for the distressful situation.

Verse 19. The unfortunate nation is bidden to make its complaint before the Lord day and night. The special motive for the prayer indicated in this verse is the distressing condition of the children who were starving.

Verse 20. This verse is still on the subject of the condition in a famine and indicates that the people were in the depths of want and despair. It was feared that if it got worse or continued longer, the women would be forced to eat their own babies. Such a tragedy had been done in the past (2 Ki. 6: 29), and it was predicted that it would be done again (Deut. 28: 53; Ezk. 5: 10). The word *and* after *fruit* is not in the original and is out of place in the translation for there is no call for a conjunction. The

phrase that begins with *children* is merely explanatory of the one that ends with *fruit*. Also, *span long* is from *TIPPUCH*, which Strong defines with the single word "nursing." The clause should therefore read, "Shall women eat their nursing children?" The same mad hunger might induce some to slay the holy men who were engaged in the services of religious devotions.

Verse 21. The pain of destitution is still the subject of the prophet. So many of the homes had been burned that the occupants had to lie in the streets. The young men had been pushed to the front in the wars and had been slain by the enemy. *Thou hast slain* means God had brought the enemy army against the land of Judah to punish the people for their transgressions.

Verse 22. Jeremiah uses the first person in forming his sentences of address to God, but he is speaking on behalf of the nation whose people are so very near to the prophet. *Called as in a solemn day* refers to the call that God had made for the enemy to come into His service of punishing the disobedient nation. The *terrors round about* were those that the Babylonians had brought against Jerusalem. *Those that I have swaddled* is a figurative reference to the rising generations of the kingdom of Judah. They had become the victims of the enemy which means the Babylonian army.

LAMENTATIONS 3

Verse 1. It will be well for us to keep in mind both the personal experiences of Jeremiah and those of his countrymen. The prophet suffered some unpleasantness that his people did not because he "took it to heart" more than did they. Had they been as serious over the situation as he there would have been more genuine regret on their part over the state of affairs. Another thing that will assist us is the fact that Jeremiah had to feel the sting of divine chastisement on account of being a member of the nation and not as punishment for any personal wrongs of his. *Rod of his wrath* means the wrath of God against the sins of the people of Judah.

Verse 2. *Darkness* and *light* are figurative and are used in the sense of sunshine and gloom with reference to the conditions surrounding the case.

Verse 3. Jeremiah feels the weight of God's hand as it is extended against the doers of iniquity in the nation, particularly the princes or leaders among them.

Verse 4. No physical violence is meant here for the prophet was not suffering in that manner. Even when he was cast into the mire he was not harmed in this way. But the distress of his people bore down on him so that it gave him the feeling that is suggested in the expression "old before his time."

Verse 5. *Builded against me* means that God had reared up a wall of chastisement as to the nation in general, and surrounded the prophet with conditions like *gall* (bitterness), and *travail* which means weariness.

Verse 6. *Dark places* is said in the same figurative sense as *darkness* in verse 2, meaning the situation of gloom. This was true of Jeremiah personally and of the nation as a whole because of the official corruptions that had been practiced.

Verse 7. As to the prophet himself, there was no escape from the *hedge* of heaviness with which he was surrounded. The nation was literally taken captive and there was no way of escape. The *chain* was the shackle of anxiety which was so heavy and strong that resistance would be in vain.

Verse 8. Jeremiah had been told that his prayer on behalf of his countrymen would be in vain for they would not hear him (Jer. 7: 16).

Verse 9. Here is some more figurative language. *Hewn stone* indicates not only a strong substance for a barricade, but also is dressed so as to form a still firmer wall. Every way he would try to go the victim would be met with this wall of obstruction, making him turn here and there to look for escape; that would cause his ways to be crooked or uncertain.

Verse 10. The helplessness of one who is attacked by a wild beast that was unseen is compared to that of Jeremiah personally and of Judah as a whole.

Verse 11. This verse is virtually the same in meaning as verse 9.

Verse 12. This verse may be understood literally and figuratively. The Babylonian army had attacked the city with material weapons which included the bow and arrow, and that

would constitute the application. The arrow has long been named as a symbol of persecution and other distress (Deut. 32: 42; Job 6: 4; Psa. 38: 2; Jer. 9: 8), hence the figurative sense is true here as it pertains to the prophet.

Verse 13. This is a repetition of the preceding verse in the sense of its main thought. A *quiver* is a case for holding arrows.

Verse 14. Yes, even as righteous a man as Jeremiah could not escape persecution from his own people. They falsified against him and even mistreated him by thrusting him into the mire (Jer. 37: 13, 14; 38: 6). To be a *derision* means to be treated sneeringly, and that was done to the prophet by his own countrymen as may be seen in the passages cited above.

Verse 15. *Wormwood* is an herb that has a bitter juice, and it is used in symbolic language to illustrate any bitter or unpleasant experience. The prophet regards himself as having to taste it through the chastisement which the Lord had brought upon the nation of which he was a member.

Verse 16. If a man were to attempt grinding gravel with his teeth he would get into serious trouble. The idea is used to compare the hard lot that Jeremiah and his people had been undergoing from the enemy. There was an old custom of using *ashes* literally in times of anxiety and distress. From this custom was brought the word into use figuratively under the like circumstances that called for the literal use.

Verse 17. *Soul* is from NEPHESH which Strong defines, "A breathing creature, i.e. animal or (abstractly) vitality; used very widely in a literal, accommodated or figurative sense (bodily or mental)." From this definition we understand the passage means that Jeremiah's entire being was denied peace. *Forgat* means to be removed and *prosperity* means the good things of life generally; these had been removed from the prophet through his connection with the nation.

Verse 18. *Perished from the Lord* recognizes the hand of God in all the distress of which the prophet is complaining. There is no criticism against the circumstance, for he elsewhere admits the justice of it because of the misconduct of the nation.

Verse 19. *Wormwood* is explained at verse 15; *gall* has the same meaning.

Verse 20. *Soul* means the whole human being as in verse 17. The afflictions had *humbled* him which is used in the sense of bearing him down with discouragement.

Verse 21. *Recalling* to his mind the purpose of these afflictions the prophet took hope in the outcome. He knew that God had brought them upon his countrymen for their own good, and that cheered him on to endure his own personal lot.

Verse 22. Had the nation been dealt with strictly as its iniquities deserved it would have meant its complete destruction. But the compassion of the Lord saved the people as a whole from being consumed.

Verse 23. This means the evidences of God's compassion appears anew every morning. *Thy faithfulness* denotes the Lord's constant attention to the welfare of Judah.

Verse 24. *Soul* is again used for the whole man, and Jeremiah has hope that the Lord will supply his every need, both temporal and spiritual. *Portion* is from a Hebrew word that is defined "an allotment" in Strong's lexicon.

Verse 25. To *wait* for the Lord means to rely upon him and seek to do his will. Upon all such *souls* God will bestow that which is *good*.

Verse 26. To *hope* and *quietly wait* are logically connected. If a man is restless and impatient regarding a desired blessing it indicates that his hope is weak. This very truth is taught by Paul in Romans 8: 24, 25.

Verse 27. *Yoke* is figurative and is used with reference to the burdens of adversity. If a man has that experience while he is young and strong, it will prepare him for the future when he will need the benefit of strength that experience gives.

Verse 28. *Sitteth alone and keepeth silence* means that when adversity comes he will not be overcome by it. Having accepted the *yoke* in his youth he is "prepared for the worst" or has himself "armed" for it in the sense of 1 Peter 4: 1.

Verse 29. This verse is one of the strongest kind of figures of speech. *Dust* refers to a condition of humility and distress, and putting the mouth in it means to "bite the dust" according to an old saying, yet stopping

short of actual death. But the idea is that if a man learns the wholesome lessons the "hard way," he may have to right to hope for better times ahead.

Verse 30. The spirit of resignation to an unavoidable lot is the lesson here.

Verses 31, 32. This paragraph is a prediction of the return from captivity. Having said so much along the line of hope for better things to come, the prophet considers it an appropriate time to make some direct reference to those things.

Verse 33. *Not afflict willingly* denotes that God does not chastise his people just for the sake of causing them grief. The final good that might come from the afflictions is the sole object in view.

Verse 34. Many of the verses have a similar meaning which is to distinguish between different kinds of affliction. For instance, it is not God's desire to *crush* all the *prisoners* which refers to those in the prison of the captivity.

Verse 35. It is not God's purpose to deprive his people of any of their "rights," but only to punish them sufficiently to bring them to repentance.

Verse 36. *Cause* means a contest and *subvert* means to win the contest merely by force whether right or wrong. The Lord would not *approve* such an act on the part of man, so He would not do so against his people. It is true that the divine forces are infinitely greater than the human, but God does not use such force merely because he can, but it is because it is just and for the ultimate good of mankind.

Verse 37. The Jewish nation had many false prophets who threw the people into confusion very often. Those men were exposed by the failure of their predictions to be fulfilled. A noted example of such a character is described in Jeremiah 28.

Verse 38. *Evil and good*. The thought will be grasped if the conjunction is given the emphasis. God does not act inconsistently, so if his children deserve *evil* (meaning unpleasant experiences) for purposes of chastisement, they are not given the good or pleasant, for that would encourage them to go on in their evil course.

Verse 39. This verse is an indirect rebuke of any man who would murmur at the just punishment for his sins.

Verse 40. Instead of resenting the punishment, the wise thing to do is to find out what is wrong with us. Of course it will be expected that when we learn what it is, we will cease doing it and turn again to serve the Lord.

Verse 41. The point in this verse is that our prayers should be sincere. When we lift up our hands in prayer to God our hearts should be in it.

Verse 42. *Thou hast not pardoned* applies to the nation as a whole, and means that it must suffer the captivity until its end has been accomplished. See the note at 2 Kings 22: 17 in volume 2 of this Commentary.

Verse 43. *Persecute* is from a Hebrew word that means to pursue with hostile intent. The hostility might be justified which it was in the case of the Lord pursuing his disobedient people. His *anger* was in the form of righteous indignation. *Hast not pitied* is used in the sense that God did not spare his corrupt nation when it became so bad as to need chastisement.

Verse 44. We are sure this is another figure of speech. The literal truth is that their prayer for escaping the captivity was not heard, and it is represented by a cloud so dense that even sound could not penetrate it.

Verse 45. God has cast off his people as being unfit for His presence. They were turned over to the *people* which is from a word meaning nation; it here refers to the Babylonian nation.

Verse 46. It has always been a matter of reproach for a nation to be subdued. The nation of Judah had been brought under by the heathen and the others *opened their mouths* or looked staringly at them as if in derision.

Verse 47. Under the circumstances of enforced exile it was natural that Judah would be affected with fear, and the nation would realize it was in a *snare* or trap. That left their cities and country at home suffering the results of desolating ruin.

Verse 48. This strong figure has been used previously by the prophet, and is an expression of the deep personal feeling he had concerning his people. (See Jer. 9: 1.)

Verse 49. Jeremiah wished for a fountain of tears to shed on behalf of his people. That not being granted him, his eyes *trickled* or constantly shed the water that was induced by his profound grief.

Verse 50. The prophet did not look for any relief from his grief until the Lord *looked down*. This evidently means to look with pity and to remove the condition causing the tears. Such a time was to come after the nation was chastised enough.

Verse 51. Jeremiah was forced to weep so much that it was affecting his very heart or being. This was in sympathy for the citizens of Jerusalem.

Verse 52. *Without cause* means that the Babylonians did not have any personal reason for attacking Judah. They were only acting (unconsciously) as the agency of God for the punishment of Judah.

Verse 53. Jeremiah's personal sufferings would justify this language, for he had been cast into the mire. And it was also true of Judah in a more indirect sense, for the nation had its national life cut off by the captivity.

Verse 54. *Waters of affliction* is the meaning of this verse.

Verse 55. The prophet was personally cared for by the Lord because he was a righteous man. And the nation was also promised relief after suffering for a while.

Verse 56. This verse shows the answer to the prayer of the preceding verse.

Verse 57. God is not slack in his care for his own. When the righteous prophet appealed to Him he was heard promptly.

Verse 58. We should not forget the thought suggested frequently in the comments of this book of Jeremiah, that he writes in a way that much of his complaint and pleading may have a twofold bearing. It may apply to him personally, or it may mean the nation as a whole. Beginning with verse 55 and through the end of the chapter, the verses may appropriately form a bracket and be applied to the nation in captivity. In that view of the subject I suggest that the bracket be so marked and given the reference to the 137th Psalm.

Verse 59. This verse will give the reader a reason for the twofold ap-

plication of these passages as a whole. The present verse could not apply to Jeremiah personally and hence refers to the nation. The people in Babylon will see their wrong and call upon the Lord to help them out of trouble.

Verse 60. The enemy took the wrong attitude toward the captives, and God was asked to consider it. The Babylonians had no national grievance against Judah and had no right to exercise any vengeance.

Verse 61. Even the reproaches that were uttered by the Babylonians were displeasing to God and he was determined to judge them for it.

Verse 62. This refers to the reproaches mentioned in the preceding verse.

Verse 63. *Sitting down and rising up* signifies the Babylonians took the situation lightly, and drew amusement from the pitiable state of Judah.

Verse 64. The Lord was always displeased when a heathen nation rejoiced over the misfortunes of His people. The Babylonians were serving a divine purpose by holding the Jews in captivity, but they were destined to feel the sting of God's vengeance.

Verse 65. This is a true picture of the attitude of the Jews with regard to the Babylonians. It is also a prediction of what God was going to do against them.

Verse 66. *Persecute* is from a Hebrew word that means to pursue with hostile intent. That is just what the Lord predicted he would do toward the Babylonians after they had served the end desired for the chastisement of the Jews.

LAMENTATIONS 4

Verse 1. The materials named in this verse have a somewhat figurative meaning. The passage denotes the loss by Jerusalem of her glory.

Verse 2. As clay is inferior to gold, so the *sons of Zion* (citizens of the capital city) had been demoted from the glory of free citizens to the state of captivity.

Verse 3. The state of destitution brought upon the Jews was so extreme that many of the natural emotions were quenched, and human mothers became colder toward their young than sea monsters were to theirs.

Verse 4. The famine is the subject being considered by the prophet. Hav-

ing no nourishment due to the dry breasts of their mothers, the tongues of the babes stuck to the roofs of their mouths. When the other children cried for bread it was not given to them. Instead, the women even consumed their helpless babes as food for themselves. (See chapter 2: 20 and comments for this subject.)

Verse 5. The fallen state of the people is still the subject of the prophet expressed in figurative terms. Some had been accustomed to living on dainties and were not exposed to the rough side of life, but now they were wandering in the streets and were stunned with undernourishment. *Embrace dunghills* is a symbolic description of the condition expressed in the forepart of this verse.

Verse 6. *Punishment of iniquity* is all from the Hebrew word *AVON* and has been translated by the one word "iniquity" more than 200 times. It has been rendered also by "punishment" 6 times, and by our present phrase 4 times. It can thus be seen that the word might sometimes mean the results or consequences, likewise the retribution for the sin, as well as the sin itself. This verse means the punishment that Judah received for her sin was greater than was that put upon Sodom, not necessarily that the sin was greater. And yet, the people had committed idolatry for years, and that might be regarded as a more serious offence against God than sins of a moral nature such as that of Sodom. However, the Jews suffered national disgrace which reproached them for a century, while Sodom was destroyed in one day. Of the two instances of punishment that of the former might be considered the greater.

Verse 7. *Nazarite* is from a Hebrew word that Strong defines, "Separate; i.e. consecrated." The word in its primary use meant a special kind of vow but came to be used of all persons consecrated to the service of God, and it has that meaning in this verse. It describes in strong adjectives the former purity and glory of these persons while they were faithfully serving the Lord. It continued so while their lives were pleasing to Him, and he bestowed upon them more luster than the finest of gems.

Verse 8. After these consecrated men corrupted themselves with their abominable idolatries, the Lord de-

prived them of their glory. The figures of speech in this verse are a description of their state which contrasted from what it was before.

Verse 9. The ceremonial glory was taken from these men, and also they were exposed to the sword of the enemy. Of the two misfortunes, to perish with hunger was worse than to be slain outright with the sword.

Verse 10. See the comments at chapter 2: 20 for this verse.

Verse 11. This verse is both prophecy and history. The city of Jerusalem (or Zion) was then in the hands of the Babylonians, and the people were about all in the foreign land. But they were doomed to stay there until they served out the sentence of the 70-year captivity; and all this was because of the Lord's anger at their sins.

Verse 12. Jerusalem had been well known for centuries as the headquarters for a great nation. The histories of David and Solomon and their many important successors had raised the city to a high standing in the estimation of the world. In view of these facts the people of other countries were surprised to see the Jewish capital invaded and completely subdued as the Babylonians had done.

Verse 13. According to Jeremiah 5: 31; 6: 13, 14 these public men were chiefly responsible for the sins of the nation. If these wicked men were opposed by the righteous citizens they "won out" against them by causing them to be slain.

Verse 14. The word for *streets* is also rendered "abroad" in the common version. These corrupt men roved about with the guilt of blood upon them. (See Jeremiah 2: 34.) *Could not touch their garments*. The law of Moses (Numbers 19: 16) regarded one unclean who touched another person who had blood upon him.

Verse 15. *They* refers to men in general who observed the uncleanness of these murderers and bade them depart. When they were exiled among the heathen (the Babylonians) the remark was made by those learning of the situation that these Jews were no longer permitted to sojourn in their own land because of their uncleanness.

Verse 16. The men of the world (*they* of the preceding verse) are still talking and accounting for the dispersion of these wicked priests and

prophets. They understood that the Lord's anger had caused it as a punishment. *They* now means these evil priests who disrespected the ones who were still righteous. (See 2 Chronicles 24: 18-21.)

Verse 17. The people of Judah are the ones talking now as if they were reminding themselves of some of their past mistakes. *Watched for a nation that could not save us.* While Judah was threatened by the presence of the Babylonians the Jews looked for help from Egypt (2 Kings 24: 7; Isaiah 30: 7; Jeremiah 37: 5-11); but the Egyptians could not save Judah from the captivity.

Verse 18. *They* means the Babylonians, and the people of Judah are still speaking. The presence of the invaders makes it difficult for the local citizens to be upon their own streets. *End is near.* The 70-year captivity began in the early days of the reign of Jehoiakim and the entire subjugation was accomplished in the 11th year of Zedekiah. (2 Kings 24: 1; 25: 2-7.) In course of this period Jeremiah did most of his writing, which explains why so much of it seems to be history and prophecy mixed.

Verse 19. This verse is a complaint of Judah about the treatment which they were receiving from their captors. They represent the attack as being so swift and general that there was no way of escape.

Verse 20. *Pits* means the pitfalls or snares the Babylonians used to capture the people of Judah whom they named *the anointed of the Lord.* *Breath . . . taken* denotes that the enemy was taking the breath of life from the unfortunate Jews.

Verse 21. The reader has been frequently reminded that God would not tolerate the attitude of the nations who rejoiced at the misfortunes of His people. This verse describes such an evil attitude on the part of the Edomites who had long been enemies of Israel. Edom is ironically told to do her rejoicing against the unfortunate nation while she had the opportunity. The *cup* (of affliction) was finally to come upon this nation as an expression of God's vengeance. *Drunken* and *naked* are terms borrowed from the literal results that often come from too much use of the cup of wine. It is applied to the staggering and shameful condition that was to come upon Edom.

Verse 22. In this one verse the prophet predicts the punishment of Edom and also the restoration of Israel. See verse 6 on *punishment of thine iniquity.*

LAMENTATIONS 5

Verse 1. The prophet is still lamenting the distressful conditions of his people in the siege. According to 2 Kings 25: 1-3 the siege lasted two years and threw the city of Jerusalem into the horrors of famine and pestilence. These forms of distress had been predicted as a warning more than once (Isaiah 14: 30; Jeremiah 14: 12); now the people cry unto the Lord for mercy.

Verse 2. Their property had been taken over by *strangers* which means those from the outside, and their houses were being occupied by *aliens* or foreigners.

Verse 3. These complaints were literal, for the men had been slain in the conflict.

Verse 4. In a siege all necessities of life are always rationed and often then they are not obtainable. Under such conditions the prices of the important items are increased by those taking advantage of the emergency.

Verse 5. *Neck* is from a word that Strong defines, "The back of the neck (as that on which burdens are bound)." The verse refers to the hardships imposed on them.

Verse 6. *Given the hand* denotes a gesture of submission, and the people of Judah had done this toward these foreign nations in their distress for the lack of food.

Verse 7. This generation is confessing the sins of the preceding one. *Borne their iniquities* means they were suffering the results of the iniquities of the fathers.

Verse 8. An instance of the subjugation to servants is recorded in Nehemiah 5: 15, and it shows the state of humiliation to which they were reduced.

Verse 9. After the city of Jerusalem had been overthrown by the siege it left the remaining inhabitants in a state of destitution. They had to brave the wilderness in search of food and it was at the risk of the sword in the hands of the Arabs.

Verse 10. The ravages of famine on the conditions of health can scarcely be imagined. It will cause a form of

irritating heat that will be reflected from the skin. That is why the comparison is made to an oven.

Verse 11. It is an almost universal rule that where undue power is obtained, the commission of sex crimes takes place. The women of Judah were sacrificed to the lust of the Babylonian invaders.

Verse 12. Cruel tortures were inflicted upon the leading men, and no respect was paid to old age, the invaders being interested only in themselves.

Verse 13. *To grind* is from *TECHOWN* which Strong defines, "A hand mill; hence a millstone." This was what the young men had to work, and others had to carry such heavy loads of wood that they *fell* (staggered) under the load.

Verse 14. The gates of cities were the places of communication between them, and the elders or older men were the ones who occupied that position (Job 29: 7, 8). But that setup was absent, for the elders had been carried into captivity. Under these conditions the musicians would have no inclination to play.

Verse 15. This verse is somewhat general and refers to the same sadness of heart the other verses describe concerning their situation after the invasion.

Verse 16. This verse was true literally and figuratively. The king on the throne in Jerusalem was taken off to the land of Babylon. Also, the crown or glory of the nation had been removed by the humiliation of the exile.

Verse 17. The people of Judah had a prostrated feeling from both physical and mental causes. Their eyes had become dim through much weeping.

Verse 18. *Mountain* is sometimes used figuratively; it is so used here. Zion was the capital of Judah and it had been made so desolate that wild creatures ran over it.

Verse 19. The mourning people of Judah could not refrain from noting the great contrast between the throne of God and those of men. The changing from one generation to another does not affect the throne of God, for he is infinite and perpetual in power.

Verse 20. The disconsolate people of Judah are stinging under the thoughts of their fallen state. *Wherefore* is from *MAH* which Strong defines, "Properly in interrogation. What?

how? why? when? Also an exclamation, what!" The Jews seemed to be astonished that their fortunes had fallen so low in view of the power of God. The term *for ever* is explained to mean *so long time*. Human experience tells one that a few years seem like many when he is in discomfort.

Verse 21. This verse may properly be regarded both as prophecy and present desire. The unfortunate citizens of Judah were then in a state of complete dejection; those especially who were in the land of Babylon. They did not have the heart to sing religious songs, but instead they hanged their harps on the willows of the streams and sat down on the banks to meditate. This was also prophesied hundreds of years before by David in the 137th Psalm.

Verse 22. The book and chapter closes with a repetition of the terrible state of mind possessed by the cast-off nation of God. The expressions represent the personal feelings of the righteous Jeremiah, a faithful prophet, and also those of the sinful nation who were suffering the just chastisement for their evil conduct.

EZEKIEL 1

General remarks. Before beginning my manuscript on this book, and especially the first chapter, I spent a considerable amount of time in study. I have consulted various commentaries and other works of reference such as histories and dictionaries. I was aware that most of the explanations that are offered as to the four creatures and their significance, insisted on recognizing the characteristics of the God of all creation, and this in opposition to the idea that they could signify any governments among men. However, there need be no difficulty on this point, for all of the glory and other greatness attributed to these powers of the world must be acknowledged as coming from God because He was concerned with the progress of them in view of the relations they had with His people. (See Daniel 2: 37; 4: 17, 32; 5: 18.)

Here is another thought that should be given consideration. Any explanation that is offered on a passage of the Bible should agree with the historical facts that may be learned from authentic sources. The interpretation that will be given on the meaning of the symbols shown in this chapter should be virtually true historically