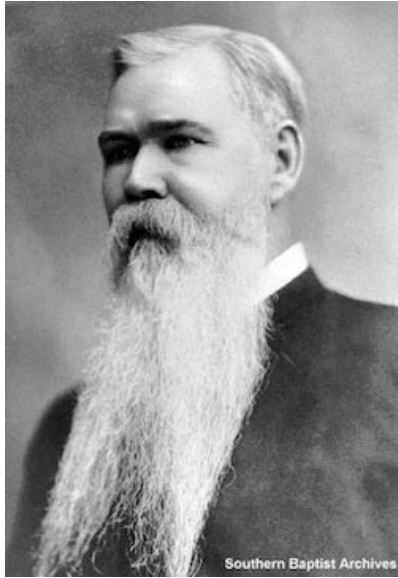


AN INTERPRETATION OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE



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VOLUME 6

**THE DIVIDED
KINGDOM AND THE
RESTORATION
PERIOD**

CONTENTS

- I General Introduction
- II The Disruption and Some General Observations
- III The Beginnings of the Two Kingdoms
- IV The Reign of Asa and the Parallel Fortunes of Israel
- V The Reign of Jehoshaphat, King of Judah
- VI The Reign of Jehoshaphat, King of Judah (Cont.)
- VII The House of Omri
- VIII Elijah Alone Against the World
- IX Elisha, the Successor of Elijah
- X Gathering Up the Fragments that Nothing Be Lost
- XI The Story of Naaman, the Siege of Samaria, and the Death of Jehoram (of Judah)
- XII The Reigns of Ahaziah (of Judah), Jehoram (of Israel) and the Rise of the House of Nimshi
- XIII From the Rise of Jehu to the Reign of Jehoash and the Corresponding History of Judah
- XIV The Reigns of Jehoash and Jeroboam (of Israel) and of Amaziah and Uzziah (of Judah)
- XV The Reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, and Thaz (of Judah) and Zechariah, Shallum, Pekahiah, and Peka (of Israel)
- XVI The Reigns of Hoshea (of Israel) and Hezekiah (of Judah)
- XVII The Reign of Hezekiah
- XVIII The Reigns of Manasseh, Amon, and Josiah
- XIX The Downfall of Judah and Jerusalem
- XX Ezra and Nehemiah -- An Introduction
- XXI The Return and Reorganization Under Zerubbabel
- XXII Ezra and His Great Reformation
- XXIII The Expedition of Nehemiah and His Work of Rebuilding
- XXIV The Reading of the Law and Resettlement of the Cities
- XXV The Story of Esther
- XXVI An Introduction to the Postexilian Prophets and an interpretation of Haggai.
- XXVII The Book of Zechariah
- XXVIII The Book of Zechariah (Continued)

XXIX The Book of Zechariah (Continued)
XXX The Book of Zechariah (Concluded)
XXXI The Book of Malachi
XXXII The Book of Malachi (Continued)

I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

GENERAL HELPS

It is well to name some general helps available and valuable to every ordinary student of the English Bible whose literary attainments are limited. For university graduates and riper scholars a much more extended bibliography would be appropriate. The helps here named should be in every preacher's library.

1. Wood's *Hebrew Monarchy*. This, in some respects, is a better textbook than Crockett's *Harmony*, because it places beside the texts the parallel passage from the Prophets and other books, giving a broader view of the subject, but it is an English book and has to be imported from England, and so costs a great deal more than Crockett's, which is a splendid book. If I were a young preacher, I certainly would send for Wood's *Hebrew Monarchy* and master it.

2. Edersheim's "History of Israel." This is the best general help. It is scholarly, conservative, and spiritual. The edition published in about nine small volumes, is easily handled, and volumes V and VI are the ones to use in this study.

3. Stanley's "Jewish Church." This is a very lively discussion of this history. It follows mainly Ewald's *History of Israel*, and hence, to a considerable extent, is poisoned with the German radical criticism. It is not nearly so conservative or safe as Edersheim. It would perhaps be better to leave it out, if the reader's general knowledge is not pretty well extended.

4. Geikie's "Hour with the Bible," in six volumes. Volume IV is the one for this study. The chief value of this book is its intimate acquaintance with the archeology of the surrounding nations. Geikie is a radical critic, and I do not class him at all with Edersheim, but I get a good deal of benefit from the book.

5. Hengstenberg's "History of the Kingdom of God in the Old Testament," in two volumes. Volume II is the one to study as collateral help. Hengstenberg was the chaplain of the emperor of Germany, a prominent teacher in the Theological Department of the Berlin University, and is one of the few Germans who did not go wild on radical criticism. I became so much attached to him that I ordered all of his books. He has a commentary on four or five of the prophets and on the Psalms, and he has a magnificent discussion on the Christology of the Old Testament. But his work bearing on this study is in the second volume of his history of the kingdom of God in the Old Testament.

6. *People's Bible History*. This is a very modern work, edited by the great Northern Baptist preacher, George C. Lorimer. William E. Gladstone wrote the introduction to the book. It gives a brief and valuable discussion of all the periods of Bible history. About one of the poorest of them is the one written by a Methodist preacher on this part here. I do not mean to say that this is bad – it is good – but it is about the poorest among a great many great documents.

COMMENTARIES

Now a word about commentaries. The Cambridge Bible is good on both Kings and Chronicles. That commentary is published in very small, handy volumes. Some of the volumes of the Cambridge commentary are utterly poisoned by radical criticism, but the volumes on Kings and Chronicles are both good.

Sometimes, but not nearly so often, I recommend a volume of the "Expositor's Bible," but I cannot do it on this period. That is written by Canon Farrar of England, and while he has written some splendid New Testament books – such as the *Life of Christ* and the *Life of Paul* – yet, we may skip anything on the Old Testament written by Farrar and never lose anything; he is a semi-infidel on the Old Testament. So I never refer to the "Expositor's Bible" for help on this section of the Bible.

There is a little commentary that I particularly recommend. It is so brief, so clear, so scholarly, and withal so conservative that I advise the reader to consult it. It is Murphy on Chronicles. I especially commend this one.

On this period the reader may profitably consult other commentaries. Not in every particular, but in general, I recommend the following: Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown. It is about the briefest commentary on the whole Bible I ever saw, but very critical, scholarly, and generally very sound. Second, the Bible (or Speaker's) Commentary, generally very good. Third, the Pulpit Commentary, which is very voluminous, and certain volumes of it better than others, but on the whole it is a very valuable commentary for a preacher to have, particularly the homiletical part of it. Fourth, one that I never leave out, is the Comprehensive Commentary, the basis of which is Matthew Henry. That is an old commentary, edited by a Baptist, named Jenkins. These old commentaries are generally far more spiritual than the modern commentaries. They are, of course, not up-to-date in some things, but we get the heart of the matter in them, and that is the main thing, because an irreverent commentary however scholarly, hurts spirituality. Not so, Matthew Henry.

HISTORIES

Now, having mentioned the general helps and the commentaries, I will mention the histories that have been favorites of mine. First, I mention Rollins' *Ancient History* on this period. For instance, Egypt, Phoenicia, Assyria, Babylon. Rollins looks at history from the standpoint of God and God's government of the nations.

The second general history, and I will mention only one other, is not so old as Rollins' history. It is written by a conservative critic, George Rawlinson on "The Five Great Monarchies of the Ancient World" and all of them touching the kingdom of God. Those five are Chaldea, Assyria, Babylonia, Media, and Persia, besides special histories of Egypt, Phoenicia, and Parthia.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

I repeat here some observations given in our study on the Hebrew monarchy. They bear particularly on the part of the history supplied by Chronicles. There are certain peculiarities of Chronicles which distinguish it, not only from the books of Samuel and Kings, but from all the other books before the destruction of the monarchy. I wish to make these matters plain for the object of this introduction is simply to show how to study.

First, the book of Kings was written by contemporary historians concerning the current events of the theocratic Jewish monarchy in which the civil and religious powers were united. It was necessary, therefore, for Kings to give the history of both the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom, of the ten tribes and the Kingdom of Judah, and also to set forth the work of the prophets in both kingdoms. Chronicles was written, or rather compiled, by Ezra, long after most of the events narrated therein, and from the viewpoint of a spiritual, rather than of a worldly kingdom, seeing that the worldly monarchy was ended forever. The viewpoint in Chronicles is very different from the viewpoint in Kings; before one word of Chronicles was written, or rather compiled, the monarchy was gone, never to be restored. Unless therefore, the kingdom idea is to be abandoned altogether, this new history must stress the spiritual idea of the kingdom, and hence prepare the way for the Messiah's spiritual kingdom to succeed David's. From the viewpoint of Chronicles the state ruler is a foreigner, a Persian, later to be a Greek, and still later, a Roman. Hence, it is on a line with the kingdom idea of the prophets on the exilic and the postexilic periods, particularly Daniel.

Chronicles has little to say of the Northern Kingdom, in fact, it does not touch it at all except at the few points of special contact with the Southern Kingdom. So we do not look to Chronicles to learn about the history of the ten tribes. Chronicles does not stress the ten tribes in their losing, but it does stress every return from the ten tribes of

Judah. We will notice that as one of the greatest peculiarities of the book. The object is to show that the ten tribes were not lost; a remnant was saved and returned to Judah.

Now, as the theocratic, worldly monarchy is dead forever, the book of Chronicles is needed to commence at the beginning of time and trace, through the Davidic line, the true conception of the Messiah's approaching kingdom. Hence, Chronicles commences with Adam, just as if there were no other history at all. Its first nine chapters are devoted to giving the genealogy down to David, then it gives at length the glorious reigns of David and Solomon, with which we do not have anything to do in this discussion. Only the last part of it is devoted to the history of Judah after the ten tribes had revolted and that is the part we have for consideration in this discussion.

Hence, the book of Chronicles largely supplements all past history of the Jews by the introduction of very new matter. In Chronicles are found twenty whole chapters and twenty-four parts of chapters that are not found anywhere else in the Bible. To be exact, I give the parts of the book that cannot be found anywhere else:

1 Chronicles 2:18-55; 3:19-24; 9; 11:41-47; 12; 15:1-26; 16; 22-29.

2 Chronicles 6:40-42; 11:5-53; 12:4-8; 13:3-21; 14:3-15; 15:1-15; 16:7-10; 17-19; 20:1-30; 21:2-4; 11-19; 24:15-22; 25:5-10, 12-16; 26:5-20; 27:4-6; 28:5-25; 29:3-36; 30-31; 32:22-23, 26-31; 33:11-19; 34:3-7; 35:2-17, 25; 36:11-23.

These passages show the differences in matter between Chronicles and all previous Old Testament histories. When we study a book we ought to know the object in view, and how it is distinguished from other books. On the way to a convention once I happened to refer to this enormous supplementary character of the book of Chronicles, and a preacher present stated that he knew I was mistaken, and I told him that if he had ever taught it as I had, word by word, he would not challenge my statement.

SOURCES

I have referred to the book of Chronicles as a compilation by Ezra long after most of the history had passed away. Now a very important matter to determine is, What were Ezra's sources of material for compiling this book? Of course, he had before him all the canonical books written before his time – every book written from Genesis to the end of Kings – historical, poetical, and prophetic. Ezra was living when the Old Testament ended, and indeed according to good tradition he put together the whole of the Old Testament in the form we now have it. The end of Chronicles is the beginning of Ezra and Nehemiah. But if twenty complete chapters and twenty-four parts of chapters are found nowhere else, what is his source for this considerable supplementary matter? The compiler himself refers, for the events of David's reign, to records by Samuel, Nathan, and Gad. For the reign of Solomon he refers to records by Nathan, the prophecy of Abijah and the visions of Iddo, the Seer. For the other reigns he refers to records by Iddo, Shemaiah, Jehu the son of Hanani, Isaiah, and others. So the radical critics never made a greater mistake in their lives than when they supposed that the Jewish nation was not abundantly supplied with contemporary records. No other nation in the world ever had such a systematic preservation of contemporaneous literature as the Jews.

CAUSES OF THE DIVISION

I must speak somewhat of the causes which led to the disruption of the kingdom. The kingdom was established in Saul, who reigned forty years; then followed David, forty years and Solomon, forty years. There was a period of 120 years of the united kingdom, all of which we discussed in the period of Hebrew monarchy.

The most glorious reign of any monarch known to history was the reign of Solomon. It filled the vision of the world. Its empire extended from a branch of the Nile to the Euphrates. The nations of the world sent their princes and their wise men to look upon his glory and to hear his wisdom. He had the sea commerce of the world

in two directions: First, from Joppa, Tyre, and Sidon on the Mediterranean coast, and he traded even with the British Isles; and then from Eziongeber, a port on the Arabian Gulf, his fleets went to the far east. From Egypt on the Nile to the Euphrates there were two great caravan routes, passing through Damascus and from Tyre another caravan route extending across into Arabia. Jerusalem was made the center and entrepot of these mighty tides of commerce by land and sea. And yet, in a few days after he died, the kingdom went to pieces.

We are to study this divided kingdom, and before we take up the history of the divided kingdom, I will point out some of the causes remote and near, that brought about so great a collapse in so short a time. There are no accidents in history; no man can put his finger on any historic name or event and tell just where it started. He does not know how far back he will have to go, nor can he tell just where it will stop. But the philosophy of history consists in seeing the reasons of things. I emphasize as the first cause the long-standing jealousy between the two great tribes, Ephraim and Judah. When Jacob went to bless Joseph's children, though he was blind, he crossed his hands in order to get his right hand on the head of Ephraim, the younger son, and in his blessing on the tribes, at the end of Genesis, we find a forecast of the power of the children of Joseph. And when Moses gives his blessing, at the end of Deuteronomy, he forecasts Judah and Ephraim. And in the history of the judges we see the pride of Ephraim continually coming to the front. In Saul's time, Ephraim supported Saul after God rejected him, and supported his son, Ishbosheth, after God had committed the kingdom to David. Ephraim prevented the consolidation of the kingdom under David for quite a while, but it finally came into line. Now, that long-standing Jealousy between Ephraim and Judah finally fruited into the division of the kingdom.

Second, the reluctance of the northern tribes to give up their holy places after Jerusalem was made, by David, the capital of the whole country. For instance, there was Shechem, a holy place in Abraham's

time, and the schools of the prophets, most of them at least, were located in the territory of the ten tribes. Gibeon, where Solomon worshiped, was in the territory of the ten tribes; Shiloh, where the ark rested so long was there. When a capital was selected which lay mostly in the tribes of Benjamin and partly in the tribe of Judah, this being the central site (the Temple was built there), it discounted all the other holy places, and those who had been accustomed to other places had a jealousy of Jerusalem.

Third, the memory of previous rebellions against the house of David still lived. Sheba's rebellion was evidently alive, for we will see in the next chapter that the seceding tribes adopt the very divisive war cry of Sheba. When Absalom rebelled the ten tribes sided with him. These are all remote causes. Now I will give you some nearer causes, and we commence with Solomon. In the first place, Solomon departed from the Mosaic Law of the Kingdom given in Deuteronomy 17:14-20. We can never understand the Jewish monarchy unless we fix on our hearts that paragraph in Deuteronomy which gives the law of the Kingdom: "He shall not multiply wives," and Solomon had about a thousand in all, wives and concubines, a pretty big violation there. "He shall not multiply horses," and yet we read the account of the palatial residences of Solomon's horses and chariots. "He shall not inter-marry with Canaanites." Look at the list of some of Solomon's wives. "He shall have a copy of the Pentateuch [the law] made and keep it by him and read it and meditate on it every day." Look at the number of times he violated that Pentateuch.

The second offensive thing that Solomon did was to enforce labor, that is, he drafted the population for labor and with enforced labor and very onerous taxes he erected many imposing public structures apart from the Temple. His own palace it took thirteen years to build. Then the enormous food supply for his court table and his laborers was a grievous tax. A summons had to go out all over the land: "You must furnish so many oxen," etc., and it tells the number of oxen they ate at Solomon's table every day. The people liked

public improvements, but when those improvements were all put up in one end of the country, at Jerusalem mainly, these other places felt that they were taxed out of house and home to build up another part of the country.

Third, there was a cosmopolitan atmosphere about the court of Solomon, which gendered a foreign spirit, alien to the simplicity of the isolated mission of Israel. Then, Solomon erected places of worship for his heathen wives and in Jerusalem at that. And judgment was pronounced on him for it. God foretold him through a prophet that the kingdom would be divided, but not in his day, and that he would lose ten of the tribes. Now, we come to the last observation that I want to make on the causes. Let the reader get first, a mental map, and then a mental history of the nations surrounding Solomon's kingdom. They have a great deal to do with the division of the kingdom.

Then let us look at Egypt first. Solomon tried to secure peace with Egypt by marrying a daughter of Pharaoh. But a new Pharaoh, Shishak, of a different dynasty, becomes king of Egypt, and every man in Solomon's kingdom that gets disgruntled flees to Egypt, and that king nourishes them, just as the kings of France would receive the house of the banished Stuarts and take care of them, all the time prepared to use them in an invasion of England. We cannot understand this period unless we know Egypt.

Then on the Mediterranean coast was Phoenicia, Tyre, and Sidon. The darkest hour for religion in the history of the world since the flood comes from Phoenician influence) as we shall see a little later. Then, just north, is Syria, coming into power in this period, and we will trace the rise of Syria. Then south was Edom, the children of Esau, and then Midian, the children of Abraham by Keturah; then the Ishmaelites, the children of Abraham by Hagar; then the descendants of Lot's incest with his daughters, the Ammonites and the Moabites, on the southwest.

Now, with that circle of enemies, always ready to take advantage, it is very important that the kingdom stand together, for if it ever divides we will see in a moment that Judah has to fortify itself south and west to protect against Egypt and Philistia. When the Northern Kingdom is mad at Judah it makes friends with Egypt, and Judah will rally itself with Syria. So each kingdom will be ready to persuade the outside enemy of the other to step on its tail in case of war.

QUESTIONS

1. What general helps commended?
2. What commentaries?
3. What histories?
4. Distinguish between Kings & Chronicles, bringing out clearly the peculiarities of Chronicles as to viewpoints, beginning and supplementary matter.
5. What are the sources of material for Chronicles, particularly for the supplementary matter?
6. How long had the monarchy lasted before the division, and what reigns?
7. Give a summary of Solomon's kingdom as to its glory, extent, caravan trade, and commerce.
8. Enumerate the causes, remote and near, of the sudden collapse and division of the kingdom.
9. What the contiguous nations contributing to the danger of Solomon's kingdom and necessitating union in order to safety and what the special danger from each?

II. THE DISRUPTION AND SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

1 Kings 12:1-24; 2 Chronicles 10:1 to 11:4

At the close of the introductory chapter we were considering the causes of the division, remote and near. I had not quite concluded that subject. The one man most to blame for this division was Solomon. The overruling cause was God. This was announced to Solomon, 1 Kings 11:9-13, as follows: "And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned away from the Lord, God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice. And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he kept not that which the Lord commanded. Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but I will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen." Mark that one tribe.

God's purpose was announced to Jeroboam with the conditions, 1 Kings 11:27-40, "And the man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valour: and Solomon saw the young man that he was industrious, and he gave him charge over all the labor of the house of Joseph. And this was the cause that he lifted up his hand against the king. And it came to pass at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way; now Ahijah had clad himself with a new garment; and they two were alone in the field. And Ahijah laid hold of the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces [mark the 12 pieces]. And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee: (but he

shall have one tribe, for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel) because that they have forsaken me, and have worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh, the God of Moab, and Milcom, the god of the children of Ammon; and they have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my judgments, as did David his father. Howbeit I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand: but I will make him prince all the days of his life, for David my servant's sake, whom I chose, because he kept my commandments and my statutes: but I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and give it unto thee, even ten tribes. And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a lamp always before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there. And I will take thee, and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel."

Now mark the conditions: "And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that which is right in mine eyes, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and will build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee. And I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not forever. Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam; but Jeroboam arose and fled into Egypt, unto Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon."

In pursuance of this overruling of God, an enemy did he raise up from the south against Solomon, 1 Kings 11:14, 21-22: "And the Lord raised up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he was of the king's seed in Edom. And when Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his fathers, and that Joab the captain of the host was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, Let me depart, that I may go to mine own country. Then Pharaoh said unto him, But what hast thou lacked with me, that, behold, thou seekest to go to thine own country? And he answered, Nothing: howbeit let me depart in any

wise." When Joab made war on Edom and almost extirpated the nation, one little boy – this boy Hadad – was saved. His mother and some friends got him into Egypt, and there he was raised up. Now, that is enemy number two; Jeroboam was the first.

An enemy was also raised up from the north by the Lord. In 1 Kings 11:23, 25 we read: "And God raised up another adversary unto him, Rezon the son of Eliada, which had fled from his lord Hadadezer king of Zobah. And he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, beside the mischief that Hadad did: and he abhorred Israel and reigned over Syria." Mark the rise of the Syrian government on the north; we will have a good deal to do with it in the history in connection with this man Rezon and his successors. Now, here are three men, and when a man has three deadly enemies he must walk prudently. From this northern enemy arose the Syrians.

The immediate occasion of the division was a great popular assembly of the whole nation, called to meet at Shechem, one of the holy places in the tribe of Ephraim, to consider the question of the kingdom; the immediate cause of the disruption took place at that popular assembly, which we will bring out more particularly. The law of selecting kings was as follows: First, God must appoint him. Second, the people in popular assembly must approve. That was not an absolute monarchy: it was both a monarchy and a democracy. The great congregation of Israel, the Jewish ecclesia or church, had a potential voice in public affairs. The proof of this is seen in the fact that the popular assembly approved Saul, David and Solomon, after God had appointed them. The reader will find that a great popular assembly met at Mizpeh (1 Sam. 10:17-21), and in that assembly the people ratified God's choice of Saul as king. Then when God made David king a great popular assembly came together at Hebron (2 Sam. 5:1-3; 1 Chron. II: 1-3) and ratified the divine choice. When Solomon was made king this popular assembly was held at Gihon (1 Kings 1:38-40). So we see that these assemblies were customary in order to commit the people by voluntary act to God's appointment. We find in Exodus 19 that the popular assembly

voted to enter into covenant with God. So we must not consider this convocation at Shechem as an irregular or unusual proceeding. Shechem, the place of the assembly, was a notable place in Jacob's time, and long after Jacob. It has long been a holy place and was situated in the hill country of Ephraim.

When Solomon died the tribes sent to Egypt for Jeroboam to come back. I have showed the great capacity and industry of this spokesman. He belonged to the tribe of Ephraim; and the prophet of the tribe of Ephraim at Shiloh had announced to him that he would be king of the ten tribes. Inasmuch as he had been assessor and collector over Ephraim and Manasseh, he had ample opportunity to get acquainted with the people, to know exactly what their burdens were under the Solomon rule, and they admired him very much. So it was quite natural that when this great assembly was held in the territory of the tribe of Ephraim, Jeroboam should be brought back to be the spokesman. And I am surprised in view of the prophecy made by Ahijah that the tribes were so temperate in that public meeting.

The proposition of the tribes to Rehoboam was as follows: "If you will lighten somewhat the burdens put on us by your father, we will serve you and will ratify your divine nomination as king." They had a real grievance; Solomon had imposed onerous taxes for the purpose of luxury) vainglory, and to pamper his heathen wives. It was a very just grievance; and they proposed only that the burden be lightened somewhat. Now, we may not expect a popular assembly to consent to being governed by a man who disregards their interests. Rehoboam said, "I will take it under advisement three days." That was a very wise thing to do. So he utilized the three days in seeking advice. First, he applied to the old men, the counsellors of his father. That also was a thoughtful thing to do. Action belongs to young men, but counsel belongs to old men; old men have more experience, and they are not apt to think that they have the world in a sling as young men are wont to do.

The parallel texts show a verbal difference in the counsel of the old men. 1 Kings 12:7 says, "If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and will serve them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants forever." That is, the old men counseled reciprocal service; the king must serve the people if he wants the people to serve him. Now the idea of serving does not appear in the Chronicles' account, but the "good words" does; about the serving 2 Chronicles 10:7 says, "If thou be kind unto these people, and please them, and speak good words – then they will be thy servants," but I stand upon what is said in Kings. No man need expect to be a ruler of a free people in a tyrannical sense; he is not there for his own good: he is there to serve the people, and whether he be a policeman, a constable, a judge, a legislator, a governor, or president, if he does not render equitable service to the people, he is not entitled to the respect of the people. That goes with all offices; that is the principle, and those were wise old men who gave that advice.

Now, if he had said to those people, "It is evident that these burdens on you are too heavy, and that the kingdom is not carried on sufficiently in your interest, and you have as much right to the protection of the king as he has to expect your cooperation," the matter would have been ended. But Rehoboam, raised up in that cosmopolitan, luxurious court of his father, in which the very air of the foreigner was breathed, and imbued with the ideas of Oriental despotism absorbed even in his youth, turned away from these old men and went to the young courtiers, the young fellows brought up with him, and said, "What do you say that I should reply to this popular assembly?" If ever on earth the folly of youth appears, it is in the suggestion of these young men. They looked on a king as a despot, as absolutely owning the people under him. Their counsel virtually was this: "Do not commence your reign with compromise and weak conciliation. Be a master. Speak roughly. Tell them plainly you will add to, instead of lightening, their yokes; that your little finger will be heavier than your father's loins, and whereas he chastized them with whips you will chastize them with scorpions."

What is the meaning of "chastize with scorpions"? There were two kinds of whipping: one with scourges, generally made with twisted leather or rods. The other was a stiff handle with ten or twelve leather thongs attached to it, pointed with pieces of wire crooked like fish hooks at the end of each piece of leather, like the "cat-o'-nine-tails" in the navy, or the Russian Knout. To strip a man and bring that iron-pointed whiplash down on his naked back, every stroke would cut into his flesh in ten or twelve places. That is whipping with a scorpion.

The reply of the ten tribes when that scorpion whip was held up was the very war cry of Sheba's rebellion: "What portion have we in David? Neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents O Israel: now see to thine own house, David." Well, that is a very natural response. Any popular assembly would have responded like that. Patrick Henry said that the colonies had exhausted every method of seeking redress of grievances; that they had prostrated themselves at the foot of the throne; that they had tried petition and argument, and in response to their petitions they had been spurned from the foot of the throne; instead of favors, fleets and armies had been sent to darken the waters and overshadow the land. What was their reply to a tyrannical throne? It was an appeal to arms from New England to Georgia. So Israel departed to their own tents.

The first attempt to enforce union was when Rehoboam sent his deputy, Hadoram, to go right on and collect the tribute, and when this collector came to enforce collections, they simply stoned him to death; that was their reply. The second attempt was when Rehoboam assembled an army of 180,000 men – like England assembled her armies – but before the battle commenced God's prophet, Shemaiah, came and forbade this war against their brethren, and announced that this division was of the Lord; that he overruled it. Thus the voice of God prevented an attempt to coerce a union.

The revolting ten tribes were Ephraim, Manasseh, Reuben, Gad, Dan, Issachar, Zebulun, Asher, Naphtali, and Benjamin. Now

doubtless some one will come back at me with the question: How is that? Benjamin was a part of the army Rehoboam raised. Yes, part of Benjamin was living in Judean cities – a small part of the tribe lived in Jerusalem – but the bulk of the tribe of Benjamin went with the ten tribes. Now there is Judah on one side and those ten tribes on the other side; that makes eleven tribes. Where is the twelfth tribe, Simeon? My answer is that his territory was inside of the territory of Judah, and when we say Judah we mean Judah and Simeon. How, then, does the division go? On one side is Judah including Simeon and a part of Benjamin, the city of Jerusalem and five miles around it to the north, including such of the ten tribes as dwelt in the territory of Judah. They came down to the Temple service, and finding it convenient, made their homes there. The record says in 2 Chronicles 10:17, "But as for the children of Israel that dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them." So there were two tribes and certain parts of tribes in Judah.

Now, that still does not account for one tribe. There were originally thirteen tribes, but God took the tribe of Levi to himself and made up the original number of twelve tribes by giving Joseph two tribes – Ephraim and Manasseh. What about the tribe of Levi? My answer is that the tribe of Levi was distributed in the Levitical cities all over the whole territory. That was God's tribe, and we will learn in the next chapter that the Levites went with the tribe of Judah, solid. Indeed we learn a remarkable piece of Judaic history in the next chapter with reference to these Levitical cities. When Jeroboam established his government and worship and created a priesthood out of the common people – anybody – the Levites who were distributed in all the cities all over the country, abandoned the ten tribes and sided with Judah forever. So now we have Judah, Levi, Simeon, a part of Benjamin and a resident part of the population of Israel living in Judah. In the following history we will see large secessions from Israel to Judah.

The ten tribes got all of that big territory east of the river Jordan, including Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh; then they

got from the northern point of the Dead Sea straight across the Mediterranean Sea, allowing Judah about five miles north of Jerusalem. Even Jericho fell to the ten tribes. There remained to Judah a little bit of a county affair; it was only five miles from Jerusalem to the northern line, and only about twenty miles in any other direction that they were enabled to hold. Rehoboam's circuit of fifteen fortified cities really delimited on the south and west. Most of the schools of the prophets were in the Northern Kingdom. But all through this history we will see that there is a steady stream of the ten tribes coming back to Judah. That is one of the things that Chronicles particularly notices.

The period of the divided kingdom was about 253 years. Only one dynasty reigned in Judah, the line of David; there were never any changes. There were nine dynasties in Israel. The ten tribes were always changing. They commenced with Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, and his son, and then all his family was killed. The second was Baasha and his son, Elah, and they were all killed; third, Zimri, and he was killed; fourth, Omri; there were two claimants, a man named Tibni contested with Omri. Omri had three successors in his family, Ahab, Ahaziah, Jehoram. The fifth dynasty was Jehu. He killed every man, woman, and child that belonged to the family of Omri. Jehu had the longest dynasty of any of the northern kings: Jehu, Jehoahaz, Jehoash, Jeroboam II and Zechariah. The sixth dynasty was Shallum. He held the fort but one month. The seventh dynasty was Manahem and his son Pekahiah, succeeded him. The eighth dynasty was Pekah: he was killed. The ninth dynasty, and the last, was Hoshea, and he was led away into captivity. Note the great difference: there was no settled government of the ten tribes throughout the period of all the 253 years, and not a good king. There were only three dynasties of the Northern Kingdom which were history makers: the dynasties of Jeroboam I, Omri, and Jehu. We will have a great deal to do with those three dynasties.

Certain prophets are named, some of whom wrote canonical books of the Bible. In the Northern Kingdom the following prophets are

named: Ahijah, Jehu, Elijah, Micaiah, Elisha, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Oded. Three of them wrote Bible books: Jonah, Amos, and Hosea. Some of the prophets north and south are unnamed. The prophets of the Southern Kingdom before the fall of Israel, who are named, were Shemaiah, Iddo, Azariah, Hanani, Jehu, Jahaziel, Eliezer, Obadiah, Joel, Zechariah (not the postexilic prophet), Isaiah, and Micah. Of these four wrote canonical books: Obadiah, Joel, Isaiah, Micah. In Israel where were the schools of the prophets they far exceeded by the hundreds. In both kingdoms they were the very life of the nation. They were the historians, poets, orators, reformers – the very voice of God to the conscience of king and people.

The difference in the attitude of the prophets in the two kingdoms toward the kings is very marked. In the Northern Kingdom every prophet was against the kings, except one – and he only a part of the time. The Northern Kingdom was always against God, and the prophets were always for God, and we see a fight between the prophets and the kings. Now, in the Southern Kingdom, four-fifths of the time the prophets and the kings worked together. That is a remarkable difference. The one notable exception in the Northern Kingdom was Elisha. Of the prophets named Jonah was a foreign missionary. Here the question of the ten tribes comes up. Were the ten tribes lost and what is the proof? I say the proof is found in the secessions from Israel to Judah and the later references to the several tribes. Hosea and Amos of the Northern Kingdom foretold the recovery of the ten tribes. See Hosea 1:10-11; 3:4-5; Amos 9:7-15.

One comment closes the record of most of the northern kings: "And he walked in the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to sin." We will find a sin bigger than the sin of Jeroboam after a while in the Northern Kingdom.

Judah had great advantages. First, it had the Temple and its services and its feasts. Second, it had the priests and Levites, we may say, the teachers; they were the great scholars. Third, it had the undying promise of God that the line of David should never fail.

QUESTIONS

1. What one man was most to blame for the division of the Kingdom?
2. What was the overruling cause?
3. How was this announced to Solomon?
4. How was God's purpose announced to Jeroboam, and what conditions thus stated?
5. In pursuance of this overruling of God, what enemy did he raise up from the south against Solomon and what of his history?
6. What enemy was raised up from the north by the Lord?
7. What nation arose from this northern enemy?
8. What was the immediate occasion of the division?
9. What law of selecting kings?
10. What proof that this was the law of selecting kings?
11. Who was the spokesman of the ten tribes in this popular assembly and what his special qualifications for this duty?
12. What proposition of the ten tribes to Rehoboam, what his immediate answer and what the wisdom of such a course?
13. What counsel of the old men and what its merits?
14. How did Rehoboam regard this counsel and what course did he pursue?
15. What is meant by "chastize with scorpions"?

16. What was the reply of the ten tribes to the threat of chastisement with scorpions and what example in modern history?
17. What was Rehoboam's first attempt to enforce union and what was the result?
18. What was his second attempt and what its result?
19. What the revolting tribes and of what did Judah consist? Explain fully.
20. What were the geographical limits of the two divisions?
21. To which side were adherents always coming from the other side?
22. How long the period of the divided kingdom?
23. How many and what dynasties in Judah?
24. How many and what dynasties in Israel?
25. What three dynasties of Israel were history makers?
26. What prophets are named in each kingdom and who of them wrote canonical books of the Bible?
27. What difference in the attitude of the prophets in the two kingdoms towards the kings?
28. What one notable exception in the Northern Kingdom?
29. Which of the prophets named was a foreign missionary?
30. Were the ten tribes lost and what the line of argument?
31. What prophets of the Northern Kingdom foretold the recovery of the ten tribes and what the passages?

32. What one comment closes the record of most of the northern kings?

33. What great advantages had Judah?

III. THE BEGINNINGS OF THE TWO KINGDOMS

1 Kings 12:25 to 15:8; 2 Chronicles 11:5 to 13:22

The theme of this section is the beginnings of the two rival kingdoms, or the measures adopted by the rival kings to establish their respective kingdoms. This is a period of twenty-four years and covers the reigns of Jeroboam and his son Nadab) kings of Israel, and of Rehoboam and his son Abijah, kings of Judah.

The initial measure adopted by Jeroboam to establish his kingdom was as follows: First, he built a city at Shechem, where the great popular assembly was held, and which was and had been since Jacob's time, a holy place. That, he made his capital. Second, as a large part of his territory, including two and a half tribes, was across the Jordan, he built another city and fortified it at Penuel, so as to command the fords of the Jordan, and this secured his kingdom on both sides of this river. Third, he established his residence at Tirzah, first mentioned in the book of Joshua, and in Solomon's Song we have the expression: "As beautiful as Tirzah." It was also in the hill country of Ephraim, and it was a beautiful mountain palace.

The initial measure of Rehoboam was to fortify and supply with provisions, garrisons, and munitions of war, fifteen cities on the southern and western frontiers, for a defense mainly against Egypt. A new dynasty had come to the front in Egypt. Shishak was a very formidable and vigorous opponent, not to be compared with the weak dynasty with which Solomon made an alliance by marriage. This Shishak was really a great man. Egypt was the power that Rehoboam and Judah feared.

Other measures of Jeroboam were political expedients in, order to keep the ten tribes from going to Jerusalem to the great feasts. He saw what had been the great power of Jerusalem and its Temple and worship as a unifying force, and he said to himself, "If my people go every year to Jerusalem they will imbibe its spirit, and the result will be that they will ultimately turn back to Rehoboam the king of

Judahä and will kill me. Now, how am I to stop this annual pilgrimage of my people to Jerusalem?" And these were the expedients that he devised: First, he established calf worship. He had two molten calves put up, viz: one at Dan, in the extreme upper part of his territory and one at Bethel, the place where Jacob was converted and a holy place. It will be remembered that when the tribe of Dan left the territory allotted to them, they migrated to the very northern part of the country, captured the places there, and worshiped the images they had taken there from Micah. There had been, then, ever since the times of the judges, a place of worship at Dan, but it was an image worship.

Second, he established a new order of priesthood. He refused to permit the Levites and their priests, left in the cities in his territory, to minister for him; he was afraid of them. And so he created a new order of priesthood by taking any man from any tribe that pleased him and making him a priest. Third, he made a new feast to take the place of the Feast of Tabernacles. That feast the Jews generally attended, and millions would go every year, and they would dwell in tents. Now, he determined to have a feast to take the place of the Feast of Tabernacles, and as the season of the year was later in the northern part of the country, he made his feast just one month later than that of Tabernacles, as the record tells us: "He ordained a feast devised in his own heart." The Feast of Tabernacles was on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, and he put his feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, just a month later.

Fourth, he established high places for worship of wooden images. In the book of Judges we learn how Gideon cut down the groves, that is, the forest of images. However, Jeroboam established what is called in the Revised Version, "he-goat worship." What is meant by it? Among the Greeks it was the worship of Pan. Pan is an image with a man's face and the form of a goat; these he-goats are sometimes called satyrs. These are heathen minor deities, and allusion is made to them in the book of Leviticus. They are sometimes called devils, and that is what they really were, i. e.,

demons: it was a kind of demon worship. Now, for his priesthood he made houses at Dan and at Bethel, and in all of these high places, and there this he-goat, or demon worship, was carried on. These were his political expedients.

The calf worship that he established was a mixture of calf and Jehovah worship. When Moses stayed up in the mountain so long, the people asked Aaron to mold a calf for them to worship, as a symbol of Jehovah. It was not an entire abandonment of Jehovah worship, but it was the worship of Jehovah under the symbol of a calf, and they said of that calf that Aaron made, "Behold the god that brought you up out of the land of Egypt." That was an express violation of the commandment, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven or molten image, in the likeness of anything in the heaven above or the earth beneath, and bow down and worship before it."

This fundamental innovation in religion weakened his kingdom and strengthened Judah. Now, 2 Chronicles 11:16-17 tells us as follows: "And after them, out of all the tribes of Israel, such as set their hearts to seek the Lord, the God of Israel, came to Jerusalem to sacrifice unto the Lord, the God of their fathers. So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, strong, three years: for they walked three years in the way of David and Solomon."

The priests and the Levites were the teaching forces, as well as the guides in religion. When they banish religious teachers from a kingdom, or expatriate its best men, they do a great harm to that kingdom; they take away those who have the power to keep up the religious idea. That was a tremendous loss to the nation of Israel. These were laymen, too, the best people of the land. As I have already said, one of the peculiarities of the book of Chronicles is to record every secession from Israel back to Judah, and we will come to many a one before we get through, and thus we will see that a remnant of the ten tribes was saved.

Now, it weakened Jeroboam in the following ways: It completely separated his people from God; second, it perpetuated a sin for 253 years that readily ate out the heart of the religious nature of the people and caused their ultimate downfall. Two passages of Scripture show how far-reaching the effect of this sin was. 1 Kings 14, commencing at v. 15 reads as follows: "The Lord shall smite Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water; and he shall root up Israel out of this good land, which he gave to their fathers. . . . And he shall give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, which he hath sinned, and wherewith he has made Israel to sin." Now, when we come to the end of the period of the divided kingdom, we will find the other passage, 2 Kings 17:21-23. This passage accounts for the downfall of the ten tribes. Commencing at v. 21: "For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam, the son of Nabat king: and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the Lord, and made them sin a great sin. And the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; until the Lord removed Israel out of his sight. . . . So Israel was carried away out of their own land to Assyria, unto this day." Now, we cannot overemphasize the magnitude of a sin that destroys a nation, and I do not know any sin but the sin of Adam more far-reaching in its consequences than the sin of Jeroboam.

How often at the end of a reign of an Israelitish king does this refrain come: "He did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin"? We may say that this was the inscription on the tomb of every Israelitish king, not one of them a good man. I used to say that sin is like Bermuda grass, indestructible, and that no man can commit a single sin; that it is a great breeder, it makes other sins. I have used this illustration: A hunter may think that he sees just one quail, but when he flushes him there is always a pair or a covey. And I have used this passage from Longfellow's "Hiawatha" to show the multiplying power of sin: Never swoops the soaring vulture Oil his quarry in the desert, on some Sick or wounded bison, but another vulture watching From his high aerial lookout Sees the

downward plunge and follows. And a third pursues the second; Coming from the invisible ether, first a speck, And then a vulture, till the air is dark with pinions.

All have witnessed the way in which buzzards flock to a car-cass. From these illustrations we get some conception of this multiplying power of sin. And I repeat that aside from the sin of Adam, no sin described in the Bible as I can now recall, has such a long fearful sweep as the sin of Jeroboam. Jehovah announced his displeasure by sending a man out of Judah, a man of God, it does not give his name – and he came to Bethel on the day that the worship of the calf was to commence, and came into the presence of Jeroboam who was about to officiate as high priest and used these words (what solemn words they are): "Oh, Altar, Altar, Thus saith the Lord: Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he sacrifice the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall they burn upon thee. And he gave a sign the same day, saying, This is the sign which the Lord hath spoken: Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out." How long before that was fulfilled? We have to turn forward to the reign of Josiah to find an exact fulfilment of it.

Let us see how Jeroboam received this announcement of the prophet of God. In 1 Kings 13:4 we have these words: "And it came to pass, when the king heard the saying of the man of God, which he cried against the altar at Beth-el, that Jeroboam put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him." And his hand which he put forth toward the prophet became rigid (he could not move it) and it dried up. There he stood with that dried up, shriveled arm. He then begged the prophet to pray for him, and the prophet prayed for him and the hand was healed.

The tragic end of the nameless prophet was as follows: Jeroboam asked this prophet to be his guest. He declined because God had told him not to go into anybody's house, and not to tarry in that place, but

to come straight back when he had delivered his message. The prophet refused to accept the invitation of Jeroboam. But there was an old man in Bethel, who was himself a prophet, there were schools of the prophets established over the land. Now, this prophet heard of the miracles performed by the prophet from Judah and sent after the man of God, urging him to come back and take bread with him. The nameless prophet said, "I have been commanded not to do that." The other said, "I also am a prophet, and bid you to come back," and he went back, and then came the warning to him that he should die. On leaving the house a lion met him and smote him from the ass upon which he was riding and killed him. The lion did not eat him – he was not mangled – but the people found his dead body there.

I shall never forget that when I was a little bit of a child this was the Sunday school lesson, "The Fate of the Disobedient Prophet." There was a picture of it in the Sunday school book. The old prophet that lived there at Bethel took him and buried him in a secret place, that his bones should not fall under the denunciation he had himself given. The old prophet said to his children, "When I die, bury me by the side of this man of God; I do not want my bones taken up and burned on that altar."

Jeroboam did not relent in his purpose on the announcement of this prophecy and its marvelous sign, for that very day the altar split wide open and the ashes fell out; and then there was the miracle of staying his hand, but he did not repent and give up his evil purpose. The record says, "After this thing Jeroboam returned not away from his evil ways, but made again from among all the people priests of the high places; whosoever would, he consecrated him that there might be priests of the high places. And this thing became a sin unto the house of Jeroboam," and he destroyed it off the face of the earth. So this sin not only destroyed the people ultimately, but it destroyed him and all of his house. His policy in the main accompanied his object. The record tells us that the people, the main body of them, quit going to Jerusalem, but joined in this idolatrous worship that Jeroboam had prescribed. The effect on Jeroboam himself was

destructive. The record says that the Lord smote him and all of his house perished – not a man, woman, or child was left. This is voiced by Jehovah himself, and the occasion of it was that his son was sick, and he told his wife to go to the prophet, Ahijah, who had announced to him that he would get ten tribes in the division of the kingdom. He told his wife to disguise herself, and take presents with her, and go and ask that prophet that the child might live. But the Spirit of God informed the prophet of the disguise before the woman got there, and he met her with this terrible announcement: "And it was so, when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, – he said, Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another? for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings. Go, tell Jeroboam, that because of this evil I will cut off every man child, him that is shut up and him that is left out, and I will utterly sweep away the house of Jeroboam, as a man sweepeth away refuse, and him that dieth in the city shall the dogs eat, and him that dieth in the fields shall the fowls eat. The Lord hath spoken. Rise and get thee to thine own house, and when thy feet enter into the city the child shall die. And all Israel shall mourn for him, for he alone of Jeroboam's family shall come to the grave." He is the only one of the family that shall ever receive burial. And then he goes on to say that this sin would destroy the entire nation. This is one of the most solemn utterances in the Bible.

The next measure adopted by Jeroboam to establish himself was an alliance with Shishak. It will be remembered that he fled to Egypt in the days of Solomon, and married into the family of this very Shishak. He made an alliance with Shishak to invade Judah, of which we will speak presently. Jeroboam himself reigned twenty-two years; his son reigned after him two years; his dynasty, therefore, lasted twenty-four years. Rehoboam and his son Abijah, and his son Asa, came to the throne before Jeroboam died. The attitude of the two kingdoms toward each other was war continually, all the days of Jeroboam's life and the life of his son. But Rehoboam prospered three years – just as long as the people remained faithful unto God. His sin and the sin of his people we find in 1 Kings

14:2224, and some of it is awful. Let us look at it: "And Judah did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord;... For they also built them high places on every high hill and under every green tree; and there were also Sodomites in the land: they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord drove out before the children of Israel."

This sin was punished. The record tells us that Shishak, the king of Egypt, invaded the land with a vast army, with much cavalry and many chariots of war. He easily broke through those fifteen cities of defense and came up to Jerusalem, and as his armies surrounded Jerusalem Rehoboam and all the people prayed to God and repented of their sins. Mark this difference between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. And God delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians. But Shishak carried away all of those rich treasures that had been gathered by Solomon; the golden shields he took away with him, and made the land tributary to Egypt.

Archeology throws some light on this invasion of Shishak. Not a great while ago, in uncovering the ruins of the temple of Karnak on the Nile, there was found the inscription of Shishak on his return from this invasion. It shows what cities he captured, and how he had taken away the treasures from Jerusalem. But the important light that it throws on the period is this: Among the cities captured it gives the names of the Levitical cities in Israel. He did not destroy any of the cities of Jeroboam, but all the Levitical or Canaanite cities that remained faithful to Judah he captured. That is shown in the inscriptions – such of them as are discernible. Is it not strange that after thousands of years the spade keeps turning up proof of the truth of the Bible? When archeology first commenced the radical critics said that it would destroy the Bible. Inscriptions on monuments, deep carvings in rock that the dust of centuries has settled upon, are brought to light and demonstrate that this book does not deal in lies. We need to fear nothing as having the power to destroy the testimony of this book.

The length of Rehoboam's reign was seventeen years; that of his son was three years. The great event in Abijah's reign was the war with Jeroboam. He raised an army of 4,000,000 men and went into Ephraim and met Jeroboam with 8,000,000 men, and Jeroboam divided his forces into two parts, to take them on two sides. But before the battle commenced there was a prelude that to me has always been interesting. We find it in 2 Chronicles 13:4-12, as follows: "And Abijah stood up upon Mount Zemaraim, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, and said, Hear me, O Jeroboam and all Israel; ought ye not to know that Jehovah the God of Israel, gave the kingdom over Israel to David forever, even to him and his sons by a covenant of salt? Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, rose up, and rebelled against his Lord. And there were gathered unto him worthless men, base fellows, that strengthened themselves against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and tenderhearted, and could not withstand them. And now ye think to withstand the kingdom of Jehovah in the land of the sons of David; and ye are a great multitude) and there are with you the golden calves which Jeroboam made you for gods. Have ye not driven out the priests of Jehovah, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and have made you priests after the manner of the people of other lands? so that whosoever cometh to consecrate himself with a young bullock and seven rams, the same may be a priest of them that are no gods. But as for us, Jehovah is our God, and we have not forsaken him; and we have priests ministering unto Jehovah, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites in their work; and they burn unto the Lord every morning and every evening burnt offerings and sweet incense: the shewbread also they set in order upon the pure table; and the candlestick of gold with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening: for we keep the charge of Jehovah our God; but ye have forsaken him. And, behold, God is with us at our head, and his priests with the trumpets of alarm to sound an alarm against you. O children of Israel, fight ye not against Jehovah, the God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper."

That was a very hard message, and in the battle which followed Abijah's army killed more Israelites than there were in his own army – he had only 40,000 men and he killed half a million. The effect of this battle was terrific. The record tells us that Jeroboam never recovered from that battle. But Abijah was a very strong man, yet not as faithful to Jehovah as he boasts to Jeroboam.

The state of affairs at the end of the twenty-four years was as follows: Jeroboam was dead, smitten of God; his son, after an inglorious reign of two years, was murdered by Baasha, and only one of the family of Jeroboam ever received burial; Baasha killed every one of them that was alive. Now, in the other kingdom, Asa, one of the greatest of the kings of Judah, had come to the throne, and that is the way they stand at the end of the twenty-four years.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the time period of this chapter, who were the kings of Israel and Judah and the time each reigned respectively?
2. What were the initial measures adopted by Jeroboam to establish his kingdom?
3. What was the initial measure of Rehoboam and why this particular measure?
4. What other measures, or political expedients, adopted by Jeroboam?
5. What was the calf worship which he established?
6. What was the effect of this fundamental innovation and how do you account for it?
7. What was the sad refrain at the end of the reign of each of the Israelitish kings? Illustrate.

8. How did Jehovah show his displeasure and what was the fulfilment of the prophecy of the "nameless prophet"?
9. How did Jeroboam receive the message and what the result?
10. Relate the tragic story of the nameless prophet.
11. What was the effect of this great demonstration on Jeroboam?
12. Did his policy in the main accomplish his object?
13. What was the effect on Jeroboam himself?
14. How was this voiced by Jehovah and what the occasion of it?
15. What was the next measure adopted by Jeroboam to establish himself?
16. How long did Jeroboam reign, how many kings of Judah during his reign, how long his dynasty and what its end?
17. What was the attitude of the two kingdoms toward each other?
18. How long did Rehoboam prosper?
19. What was his sin and the sin of his people?
20. How was this sin punished?
21. What light does archeology throw on the invasion of Shishak?
22. What was the length of Rehoboam's reign, how long his son's reign and what great event of Abijah's reign?
23. What was the effect of the battle between Abijah and Jeroboam?
24. What were the characteristics of Abijah?

25. What was the state of affairs in each kingdom, respectively, at the end of twenty-four years?

IV. THE REIGN OF ASA AND THE PARALLEL FORTUNES OF ISRAEL

1 Kings 15:9-22; 2 Chronicles 14:1 to 16:14

In the introductory chapter I mentioned certain helpful books. Three of them I rename as very helpful on this lesson: Hengenstenberg's "Kingdom of God in the Old Testament," Vol. II; Geikie's "Hours with the Bible," Vol. IV; Edersheim's "History of Israel," Vol. V. On this section we need not look at Josephus. He has something to say about it, but it is worth very little. My advice is to master thoroughly 2 Chronicles 14:16; the Chronicles record is far better than the record in Kings.

The time period of Asa's reign is 955 B.C. to 914, forty-one years, and the contemporaneous kings of Israel, and the dynasties are as follows: Jeroboam and his son Nadab, first dynasty; Baasha and his son Elah, second dynasty; Zimri, third dynasty ùhe reigned just a week; Omri and his son Ahab, fourth dynasty. For a while there was a contestant against Omri, Tibni by name, but this contest lasted only three years.

The general character of Asa is: "And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father" (meaning his forefather). So we have a long and good reign, and it is a wonder that, while about half the kings of Judah were bad kings, the reign of the good men extended 200 years of the 253; so, that at least four to one, in time, Judah was governed by good men.

A great blessing marked the beginning of his reign. The record tells us that there were ten years of peace, resulting mainly from the great victory of his father, Abijah, gained over Jeroboam the son of Nebat. It is a great blessing when we have a peaceful opportunity to set in order a church or a nation, or to prepare for a great enterprise wisely.

This peace interval was graciously employed as follows: First, he put down idolatry in all its forms throughout his kingdom. Second,

he fortified many cities, and the record tells us that he made Jehovah his chief defense. Well does that psalm say, "He laboreth in vain to build a house except the Lord build the house; and they watch in vain to keep a city except the Lord keep the city." Third, he raised and disciplined an army consisting of 300,000 spearmen of the tribe of Judah, that is, they had long lances and heavy targets; a target is simply a big shield. Also he had 280,000 slingers and archers. These had a little shield, and carried bows and slings. They were of the tribe of Benjamin. That certainly shows that by this time the bulk of the tribe of Benjamin was standing with Judah. The Benjaminites were left-handed and were great archers and slingers. At one place back of us in the history we learned that they could sling stones a great distance with great accuracy. David was an adept with the sling himself. That is a big contingent from Benjamin, 280,000.

The second great event of his reign was the great victory over Zerah, the Ethiopian, who invaded Judah with a million men and three hundred chariots of war. The battle was fought at Maresha, a place between Hebron, a southern Jewish town, and Ashdod, an old Philistine town in the south.

Some say that this great number, a million men, is not credible, but we must remember that in those days, when war was made, the whole available male population went into the army like Indian tribes – and later we learn that Xerxes led three million men against the Greeks though by measurement, not count, only 1,800,000 of them were soldiers. And we learn still later in the interbiblical period, that the last Darius, king of Persia, at the battle of Arbela, had 1,400,000 men. The record says, "Zerah the Ethiopian." The word in the Hebrew is "Cushite." We get "Ethiopian" in our text from the Septuagint Version. The Greeks called the Cushites "Ethops," which meant "browned black in the sun." But where were the Cushites? In the northern part of Arabia, from which place they crossed the narrow intervening sea to Africa, and established themselves in what is now called upper Egypt – the Nile runs north toward the Mediterranean Sea; then upper Egypt would be southern

Egypt. 1 Kings 16:8 tells us that there were Lybians in the army, as well as Ethiopians, and we know that Lybia in Africa is on the Mediterranean coast of Egypt, west of the mouth of the Nile. Quite a number of my commentaries say that Zerah was the same as Ozorchon, the son of Shishak. But that is not quite clear to my mind. I do know from one of my histories that about 944 B.C., the Cushites, when they crossed over the intervening seas, invaded Egypt, and then passed back into Asia. We will have to leave it that way.

Asa's appeal to Jehovah when he saw this great host, and how God responded to him are found in 2 Chronicles 14:11: "And Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said, Lord, there is none to help beside thee . . . O Lord our God; for we rely on thee, and in thy name are we come out against this multitude. O Lord, thou art our God; let no man prevail against thee." I gave that to a professor of homiletics once and asked him to analyze it as he would a sermon, and he said that I put the question to him only to give me an opportunity to tell him how to do it. Well, now, let's analyze that: "There is none beside God who can help the weak against the mighty", that is a fine start for a prayer, the announcement of a great doctrine. "We rely upon thee", that is faith. "And in thy name we come out against this multitude", that identifies the people's case with God himself. "Therefore, Lord, let no man prevail against thee." It was a fine prayer, and the response was that the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled.

There were mighty results of this victory. The record says that there fell of the Ethiopians so many that they could not recover themselves, for they were destroyed before the Lord, and before his hosts; or as the margin puts it, "so that none remained alive." That must have been a terrific slaughter. The second result was that they carried away very much booty. Of course, the arms would be gathered up, the jewels and the camp equipage, and the munitions of war. Notice that these Egyptians fled toward Egypt, by the lower road toward Gerar; and so they smote all the cities about Gerar; and

the fear of the Lord came upon them) and they spoiled all the cities, and they carried away sheep in abundance and camels.

Verse 15 says, "They smote also the tents of the cattle." Now, what does that mean? It means that following such an army were herds of cattle for feeding the army, and the "tents" would be the shelters of the herdsmen. To smite the tents of the cattle is to smite the herdsmen that drove the cattle. Stonewall Jackson, in one of his hungry days, when his men were half-starved, having heard that Banks was coming with immense supply trains and herds of cattle, said, "This army can whip any army that has a herd of cattle along."

The warning of the prophet Azariah, who went to meet Asa returning from that great battle, we find in 2 Chronicles 15:1-7. The time we need to be most watchful is in the moment of a great victory. When the times are hard, when we are pressed to the wall, we are apt to be humble and look to God; but when it looks like everything is going our way, the danger is that we will be puffed up. Now the prophet of God met that army coming, with all those spoils and said, "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: the Lord is with you while you be with him; if ye seek him he will be found of you; if ye forsake him he will forsake you." What a warning, that! "God is with you while you are with God; but if you turn away from God, he will turn away from you." Notice verse 3 of that warning: "Now for long seasons Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest and without law. But when in their distress, they turned unto the Lord, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them. And in those days there was no peace to him that went out: nor to him that came in. but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the land. And they were broken in pieces, nation against nation, city against city; for God did vex them with all adversity." Here I raise this question: Is that a prophecy of future events, or is it a historical retrospect quoted to enforce the text, "If you are with God, he is with you, if you forsake him, he will forsake you"? It may surprise the reader that some commentaries construe it as prophecy: "For a long time Israel will be without the true God."

Henstenberg, one of my favorites, takes that position, but he is mistaken, I think: the tense forbids it. The prophet is enforcing his exhortation by the past history of the people, well known to those whom he addressed. Then I raise another question: If a retrospect, what events of the past verify it? My answer is that if we look to the period of the judges alone we may find every particular verified. Deborah says that before she came to the front the highways were not travelled; they were not safe; that the people were scattered; and in the time of Samson it is said that the Israelite was not only not allowed to have arms, but he must go to a Philistine to get permission to sharpen his ax or goad, on his grindstone, and that tribe was against tribe. There is abundant historical verification, looking at it as a retrospect. We are in a bad fix when we have to go to the enemies of religion to get a grindstone to sharpen our ax. One of Israel's later prophets foretells a similar condition. It is in the prophecy of Hosea. (See Hosea 4:1-5).

There is a remarkable date in 2 Chronicles 15:19 and 16:1, when compared with 1 Kings 16:8: "And there was no more war unto the fifth and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa." Now we know that another war comes before that date, so what about this date? I give you my method of reconciling the difficulty: the word "reign" in this passage should be translated "kingdom" (which is a good translation), "And there was no more war unto the fifth and thirtieth year of the kingdom of Asa." That means from Rehoboam's time, and that exactly corresponds with the facts, as may be demonstrated, because the very next war we are going to tell about occurred before the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign, and the man who conducted the war was dead before we get to the thirty-fifth year of Asa, and the cause of the war is an event of this section.

Azariah's prophecy is attributed to Oded, in 1 Chronicles 15:8, thus: "And when Asa heard these words of the prophecy of Oded the prophet." Above he is called Azariah, the son of Oded. My solution of this difficulty is that the father, himself a prophet, may have sent a son to deliver the prophecy.

Now let us look at the elements of the second great reformation under Asa: "And he put away the Sodomites out of the land; he took courage and put away all the abominations out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from the hill country of Ephraim [his father had captured them in the war with Jeroboam]; and he renewed the altar of the Lord which was before the porch of the Lord. And he brought into the house of God the things that his father had dedicated and he himself had dedicated, silver and gold and vessels. And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and them that sojourned with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the Lord his God was with him. So they gathered themselves together in Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa." And there was a great convocation including multitudes from Israel, and the record says that the object of that great convocation was to renew the covenant with God, and solemnly take oath that they would not only seek Jehovah alone, but would put to death him that suggested the worship of a false god. His grandmother, the queen regent, Maacah, the granddaughter of Absalom, had been the occasion of this idolatry, and had herself set up idols. He not only destroyed the idols of his grandmother, but he removed her from her position as queen regent in the realm. He burnt the idol that she worshiped, and poured out the ashes into the brook Kidron. This is a great reformation, and the result is expressed thus: "And they swore unto the Lord with a loud voice, and with shouting and with trumpets, and all Judah rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart and sought him with their whole desire, and he was found of them: and the Lord gave them rest round about." It is a solemn thing when one assembles a great convocation, and submits to the people the true worship of God, and induces them to enter into a covenant before God to follow him, and to turn aside from idols. Whenever anyone does that in any community, whenever he brings about such a result as that, already he has become one of earth's great reformers.

Now let us take up the occasion and reason of the war of Baasha, king of Israel, against Asa and the step taken in view of this reason, thus: "And Baasha, King of Israel, went up against Judah, and built Ramah, that he might not suffer anyone to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah." We have just learned the fact which disturbed Baasha: "For they fell to Asa out of Israel in abundance, when they saw the Lord his God was with him." Now, the king of Israel, when he saw that immense secession of his people going over to Judah, determined to make war to stop it. The step that he took was to build Ramah within five miles of Jerusalem, and to fortify it, so that it would command the entrance into Jerusalem.

Asa freed himself from this attack of Baasha, by taking the treasuries, even the sacred treasures out of Jerusalem, the Temple, and sending them as tribute to Benhadad, the king of Syria, whose country lay north of the ten tribes, and making an alliance with him, "to step on the tail of this army invading him." Note that 1 Kings 15:19 and 2 Chronicles 16:3, both commence this way: "There is a league between me and thee, between my father and thy father", or, "there is a league between me and thee as there was between my father and thy father." How shall we explain that? Notice that the words, "there is" are in italics: that shows that the translators supplied those words. Let us supply better words: "Let there be a league between thee and me as there was between my father and thy father." There was no league extant between Asa and Benhadad; on the contrary Benhadad had leagued with Baasha; and he says, "Now let there be a league between me and thee, and break your league with Baasha." The result of the bribe was that Benhadad marched an army against Israel, the ten tribes, took many of their cities, and Baasha had to leave Ramah and his fortifications and go back to fight for his own country. Asa disposed of Baasha's fortifications at Ramah, by having these fortifications taken down, and the material used in building two fortifications, or cities, that were to protect Jerusalem and hold these roads. There is an ancient and also a far future tragic event associated with Ramah. The ancient event was the death of Jacob's wife, Rachel, at that place, and the great

mourning that followed it. The far distant future event was the slaughter of the innocents at Bethlehem by Herod, where the New Testament says, "The voice of Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted because they were not."

The sin of Asa's alliance with Benhadad and how Jehovah announced his displeasure, are found in 2 Chronicles 16:7-9: "And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa, king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and hast not relied on the Lord thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thy hand. Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubim a huge host, with chariots and horsemen exceeding many? Yet, because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered them into thine hand? For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly; for from henceforth thou shalt have wars." Washington, President of the "United States, in his farewell address said, "Beware of entangling alliances." Well, Asa made such an entangling alliance, which proved very harmful to him; it would have been far better if he had relied upon Jehovah and whipped both of them.

Asa's added transgression was to put the prophet in prison who rebuked him. Now, when one gets mad at the truth being told to him and confesses that it is the truth; and when he tries to put away the truth by imprisoning the people who tell the truth, he should remember this: "The word of God cannot be bound." One may imprison the speaker, but the word of God that he told cannot be bound. And Asa oppressed some of the people at the same time. Of course, when one goes wrong in one thing, he will likely add another wrong. (I omit all the references to Israel just now because I have reserved for a later discussion the House of Omri).

A disease overtook Asa in his old age: "And in the ninth and thirtieth year of his reign, Asa was diseased in his feet; and his disease was exceeding great." I suppose he had the gout. Anyhow,

the gout comes to people who live luxuriously and especially those who drink much port wine are sure to have it. 2 Chronicles 16:12-13 seems to veil a sarcasm against the physicians: "Asa was diseased in his feet . . . yet in his disease he sought not Jehovah, but to the physicians. And Asa slept with his fathers." The New Testament has a similar passage, concerning the afflicted woman who "had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse" (Mark 5:26). I sometimes quote these passages when joking with my friends, the doctors. Dr. Broadus well says that nothing better could have been expected from the medical practice of that day. An intelligent modern physician would laugh to scorn the remedies prescribed by physicians of New Testament times, much less Asa's more distant days. The old-time symbol of a physician was a duck that looked like it was just about to say, "quack." The practice was a mixture of magic, witchcraft, and superstition, like the old granny's remedies in Edward Eggleston's *Hoosier Schoolmaster*.

In 2 Chronicles 16:14 we have the last reference to Asa: "And they buried him in his own sepulchre, which he had hewn out for himself in the city of David, and laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odors and divers kinds of spices prepared by the apothecaries' art: and they made a very great burning for him." Was he cremated? Some commentaries quote this to show how early the cremation of bodies commenced. But that is not the thought at all. He is following the Egyptian method of having the body embalmed. They put him in a bed of sweet odors and divers kinds of spices prepared by the apothecaries' art. The burning was the burning of incense at the mouth of the tomb. It was not the cremation of the body. The object was to preserve the body so it would not decay.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the theme of this section and what helps especially commended?

2. What was the time period of Asa's reign, who the contemporaneous kings of Israel, and how many and what dynasties?
3. What was the general character of Asa and how do the kings of Judah compare with those of Israel?
4. What great blessing marked the beginning of his reign and how was it obtained?
5. How was it utilized?
6. What was the second great event of his reign and where did it take place?
7. Is the great number of men given here credible and what is the proof?
8. What is the origin, meaning and application of the name "Ethiopian"?
9. Where were the Cushites?
10. What is the proof that this was also an Egyptian army?
11. Who, then, according to some, was this man, Zerah?
12. Give and analyze Asa's appeal to Jehovah when he saw the great host and God's response to him.
13. What were the mighty results of this victory?
14. What is the meaning of "tents of the cattle"?
15. Analyze the warning of the prophet, Azariah, who went to meet Asa returning from the great battle.

16. Is that a prophecy of future events or is it a historical retrospect, quoted to enforce the text?

17. If a retrospect, what events of the past verify it? Explain and illustrate.

18. Cite a passage from one of Israel's later prophets who foretells a similar condition.

19. Explain the remarkable date in 2 Chronicles 15:19 and 16:1, comparing with 1 Kings 16:8.

20. Winy is Azariah's prophecy attributed to Oded in 1 Chronicles 15:8?

21. Give an account of the second great reformation of Asa.

22. What was the occasion and reason for the war of Baasha, king of Israel, against Asa, and what step taken in view of this reason?

23. How did Asa free himself from this attack of Baasha? Explain fully his words to Benhadad.

24. How did Asa dispose of Baasha's fortifications at Ramah?

25. What ancient and what far distant future events associated with Ramah?

26. What was sin of Asa's alliance with Benhadad and how did Jehovah announce his displeasure?

27. What was Asa's added transgression?

28. What disease overtook Asa in his old age?

29. What is the author's sarcasm relative to Asa's sickness and death?

30. What was the last reference to Asa and what the meaning of "a great burning for him"?

V. THE REIGN OF JEHOSEPHAT, KING OF JUDAH

2 Chronicles 17-20; 1 Kings 22:1-61

The reader will observe that I omitted in the last chapter any special reference to the contemporaneous affairs in Israel, in the close of the reign of Asa, and do now limit this chapter to the record in 2 Chronicles 17-20. This limitation is to secure unity in the discussion of the two great kings of Judah: Asa and Jehoshaphat; and for the same purpose two or three later chapters will be devoted exclusively to the great house of Omri in Israel, and its battle royal with Elijah, the Tishbite.

I pause here to remark that there are some matters so very critical in this section, that I am not willing to trust myself in an offhand statement of the meaning, and so every word of this chapter is written out beforehand, just as I want it to stand verbatim, et liberatum, et punctuatum.

The glorious seven-teenth chapter of 2 Chronicles has no parallel in Kings, and well illustrates the valuable supplementary character of the later history. The history opens with Jehoshaphat devising military measures of defense against Israel. He placed regular garrisons in all the fortified cities of Judah, established and garrisoned new military posts in all the territory captured from Ephraim by his father, Asa, and grandfather, Abijah. This was the very beginning of his reign.

His moral measures of defense are far more sublime. They constitute a great lesson worthy of study in all subsequent ages. On this section, therefore, we must place our greatest emphasis. What, then, were these moral measures of defense adopted by Jehoshaphat?

(1) "He walked in the first ways of his father David" – David, the ideal king, not Solomon, was his model. And the first ways of David are followed, not the last. Thus, his pattern was his lost illustrious ancestor, the man after God's own heart, and he at his best, not at his

worst. We would do well while finding a perfect ideal in Jesus, to select some human model that reflects our highest ideals of manhood or womanhood. For instance, how many young preachers say in their hearts, "I will keep my eyes on William Carey, or on Adoniram Judson, or on Charles Spurgeon"?

(2) "He sought not unto Baalim" – that is the Hebrew plural, like Seraph – Seraphim; cherub – cherubim; so Baal – Baalim. "He sought not unto Baalim, but sought unto the God of his fathers." He whom one worships is more important than whom he makes his model. To him Jehovah alone was God. He counted as nothing Baalim, that is, the male and the female deities. Baalim being plural) that signified Baal, the male) and Astoreth the female. Astoreth has its own plural, Astoroth, and is about the same as the Venus of the Romans, or the Aphrodite of the Greeks. Baal and Ashtoreth, under some name or form, represented the world's debased and sensual idolatry.

(3) The record tells us that he refused to find in Israel an example for his people, which under the house of Omri, turned to these infamous Phoenician deities, the Baalim-Baal and Ashtoreth.

(4) The record says that his heart was lifted up in the ways of Jehovah. That is a strong expression in the original. It is not a perfunctory service; he gloried in it; his heart exulted in it; his fervor glowed like a furnace.

(5) In such a spirit and zeal there could be no compromise; hence the record says, "He took away the high places and the Asherim out of Judah." "The high places," that is, the top of the hills, even when Jehovah was the object of worship, detracted from the central place of worship in Jerusalem with its holy Temple, and its glorious unifying services and feasts. The Asherim were symbolized in wooden columns that sometimes stood like groves, as when Gideon went out and cut down a grove of them in one night. The Asherim stood as a perpetual temptation to superstition and idolatry.

(6) He made abundant and systematic provision for the instruction of the people of God in the Pentateuch, "The book of the law of Jehovah." Princes, priests, and Levites, were constituted as itinerant teaching corps. Up and down, to and fro, through all the land this great traveling faculty carried and taught the one great textbook, the Law of Moses. The word of God was not bound. Its precepts were brought by the mightiest and most honorable in the land into every village and home. And as the priests and Levites of all the tribes were assembled into one tribe, magnifying the teaching force of that tribe, Judah, under this itinerant system of instruction) became one great religious university – an itinerant theological seminary.

(7) He established a graded judicial system for the determination and enforcement of civil, criminal, and ecclesiastical law (10:5-8) and here is his charge to the judges of the lower courts: "Consider what ye do; for ye judge not for man, but Jehovah; and he is with you in the judgment you render. Now, therefore, let the fear of Jehovah be upon you; take heed and do it; for there is no iniquity with Jehovah our God, nor respect of persons nor taking of bribes." I would like to read that to all the judges of the lower courts of the United States. Here is what he says in his charge to the Supreme Court, the head of the judicial system in Jerusalem: "In the fear of Jehovah ye shall do faithfully, and with a perfect heart. And whensoever any controversy shall come to you from your brothers that dwell in the villages and cities, between blood and blood [that is, if it is a murder case], between the law [in its principles] and [their expression in] commandments) statutes, and ordinances, ye shall warn them that they be guilty toward Jehovah and so wrath come upon you [the judges] and your brethren [the appellants]. This do ye and ye shall not be guilty. Deal courageously and Jehovah be with the good in your judgment." I would like to read that to our state and national supreme courts.

I pause here to remark, first, that the civil and criminal code of Moses surpasses the codes of Lycurgus, Solon, Justinian, or Napoleon, and as a foundation it underlies all of the best of modern

law among the most civilized nations. I was boarding once with a very brilliant lawyer, and he asked if I could give him a digest of the Mosaic law, civil and criminal. I told him he would find it in Hitchcock's Analysis, and I made him a present of the book. I said to him, "Now, when you read this let your quick mind answer this question as you go over its constitution, the decalogue, or each statute. How much of your law does the principle of this statute underlie?" When he got through he said, "I find that all the best of our laws, at least in their principle, come from Moses."

Now, imagine the effect of such a trained force of teachers going over Judah teaching that law, and then such a judicial system interpreting and enforcing that law. I repeat again that mere human law, separated from the idea of responsibility to God, can never challenge respect nor be righteously enforced. The most shameful thing of modern civilization is that we cannot get Juries to render a verdict according to the law given by the judge and the evidence given by the witnesses. To this add the law's delay, the wrangling of the paid attorneys, and the wonder is explicable that the people dread the courts more than anything else. A man in Fort Worth recently remarked to his family: "If ever I am murdered I charge you to ask the grand jury not to indict the murderer; don't you have anything to do with the prosecution. For, if the murderer is never prosecuted, murder is all that comes to me. But if you put the case in the courts with the lawyers trying to justify the murderer, there will not be a shred of my reputation left. Not content with murdering my body, they will murder my good name."

(8) He did not isolate himself from his people, living luxuriously in a palace and leaving subordinates to watch over the affairs of the kingdom. But the text says that "he dwelt at Jerusalem, and went out again among the people from Beersheba [the most southern part] to the hill country of Ephraim [the most northern part] and brought them back unto Jehovah the God of their fathers." When kings become missionaries like that, and the princes become itinerant teachers like that, happy is the land.

(9) He organized and trained a vast militia corps, or war reserve, not indeed as a standing army, but ready at all times to respond to a call to arms in any emergency. Judging from the muster roll given in the record, it must have included like the German Landwehr, all the male population capable of bearing arms. There were three army corps from Judah, numbering respectively 300,000, 280,000, and 200,000: total from Judah 780,000. There were two corps from Benjamin, respectively, 200,000 and 180,000: total from Benjamin, 380,000: grand total from the two, 1,160,000 men, and all of them with a full quota of officers. The world never saw anything like the German system of war, as developed in 1870, between Germany and France. The very minute that Emperor William I signed his name to the declaration of war, that minute Von Moltke, the commander-in-chief, touched a button that rang a bell, and over a million men responded to it in twenty-four hours: and every man knew his company, colonel, regiment, major general, his division, his starting point, his line of travel) the system was so perfect.

Murphy's Commentary on Chronicles thus explains this immense number of Jehoshaphat's militia. He says, "First, every man fit to bear arms is enumerated. Second, Judah at this time included Simeon, part of Dan, and the auxiliaries from the Philistines and Arabs who were tributary; and Benjamin included the cities of Ephraim that were annexed to the Southern Kingdom. Third, many Israelites had, on religious grounds, attached themselves to the kingdom of Judah (15:9). Hence, there were three captains, or marshals, in Judah: one for Judah proper, one for Dan and the auxiliary Philistines, and one for Simeon and the auxiliary Arabs. There were two for Benjamin, one for Benjamin proper and one for the annexed part of Ephraim. Moreover, in the text (v. 16) Amasiah is described as a volunteer in the service of the Lord, and had under his command, no doubt, a body of volunteers from the north." The explanation by Murphy is very plausible in view of the context.

Now, that this 1,160,000 was a militia reserve is evident from the fact that it is contradistinguished from the regular army garrisoning the fortified cities.

The glorious results of these measures are thus set forth in the text: first, Jehovah was with Jehoshaphat, and established his kingdom; second, fear of Jehovah fell on all the kingdoms that were round about Judah, so they made no war on Jehoshaphat; third, all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat tribute; fourth, some of the Philistines brought to Jehoshaphat presents and silver for tribute; fifth, the Arabs brought him flocks of 15,400 rams and goats; sixth, and Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance, and waxed great exceedingly, and built in Judah castles and cities of stone, and he had many works in the cities of Judah.

If just here the record ended with "And Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers," we would have before us a faultless monarch; but as no man is perfect, fidelity to history requires that we pluck three roses from his wreath of glory, to wit:

First, beginning with chapter 18 the record says that "he made affinity" with the infamous Ahab, king of Israel. Thus by marrying his son and successor to Athaliah, the murderous daughter of Ahab and the wicked Jezebel, which led his son into idolatry, and into the shame that denied him burial with his fathers, and, as I think, into the loss of his soul, he later corrupted the kingdom of Judah and brought the seed of David down to one helpless baby, and helped to bring the kingdom of God nearer to destruction than at any period since the flood. That will be evident when we come to discuss Elijah the Tishbite.

Second, this marriage led him to visit Ahab (chapter 18) in Samaria, where he was beguiled to join Ahab in his disastrous war, that did not concern Judah, against the king of Syria. That war is set forth from 18:2 to 19:1.

Third, later in his reign he joined himself with Ahaziah, the wicked son of the wicked Ahab, to build ships at Eziongeber, "to go," as the text says, "to Tarshish" (but I say, "to go to Orphir"), thus seeking to revive the old commerce of Solomon (20:35-37).

I here raise this question on 2 Chronicles 20:35-37: Why build a fleet at Eziongeber to reach Tarshish? Eziongeber is at the head of the gulf of Akaba, a part of the Red Sea. Tarshish is in Spain, and to reach Spain the fleet would have to circumnavigate Africa – to reach Tarshish from Eziongeber. Jonah took shipping at Joppa to reach Tarshish (Jonah 1:3). Solomon reached Tarshish from the Phoenician ports of Tyre and Sidon. The explanation of this difficulty is that "Tarshish" is a model of a ship called Tarshish and the text in 2 Chronicles 20:36 is corrupted, it should read, "Ships of Tarshish" instead of "Ships to go to Tarshish."

These three acts of Jehoshaphat, which were the three roses plucked from the wreath of his fame, all deserve special treatment. The disastrous marriage, the most important one, will be considered in a later chapter on Elijah the Tishbite. The other two evils will be considered now. RAMOTH-GILEAD

The second evil was accepting the invitation of Ahab to visit him in Samaria. He was there beguiled into making an alliance with Ahab to go to war against Benhadad, the king of Syria, for the recovery of Ramothgilead, a town east of the Jordan.

I will relate now a part of the history which precedes this (but which we have not yet treated, as I am reserving the history of the house of Omri for a special chapter), that Ahab had captured the king of Syria and ought to have killed him, but let him go on the pledge that he would give up Ramothgilead, which he had stolen from Ahab. But when free he would not give it up, and now Ahab is considering the reconquest. We will now continue the discussion of chapter 18.

While royally entertained in Samaria by Ahab, the host embarrassed his guest by proposing joint action in the recovery of Ramoth-gilead,

still held against treaty stipulations by the king of Syria. On the impulse of the moment the enticed guest responded) "I am as thou art, and my people as thy people, and we will go with thee in this war." Sober reflection, however, imposed a condition which is stated in the next verse: "Inquire, first I pray thee, for the word of Jehovah," i.e., "I will go with you if Jehovah says so; inquire for the word of Jehovah." We must put this condition to the credit of the beguiled but pious Jehoshaphat.

What followed is most difficult to understand in several particulars, greatly perplexing the commentators, and calls for careful exposition. The reader should read attentively the whole paragraph of 2 Chronicles 18:4-27, and then note:

(1) Jehoshaphat demands an inquiry for the word of Jehovah, not for the word of Baal.

(2) Then, of course, the prophets who respond must be the prophets of Jehovah, not Baal's prophets.

(3) Four hundred prophets, assembled by Ahab, when asked: "Shall we go to Ramothgilead to battle or shall we forbear?" – unanimously responded, "Go up; for God will deliver it into the hand of the king."

(4) Jehoshaphat is not satisfied: the promptness of assembling 400 prophets, the readiness and the unanimity of their response, or something in their bearing, awakened suspicion on his part that something was wrong. Hence his question: "Is there not here a prophet of Jehovah besides, that we may inquire of him?" Now, does he imply by that question that the 400 are not Jehovah's prophets at all, or does the "besides" mean that they were Jehovah's prophets, but that he wants another one?

(5) Ahab's reply evidently claims that the 400 are Jehovah's prophets, but admits that there is one there in the city whom he hates, because he uniformly prophesies evil and not good against Ahab.

(6) Jehoshaphat's rejoinder, "Let not the king say so," plainly intimates his continued dissatisfaction, and he insists on hearing this other prophet, Micaiah, the son of Imlah. In the meanwhile, while waiting for Micaiah to be brought, Zedekiah, the leader of the 400 prophets recalled the famous promise of Moses concerning Joseph (Deut. 33:17), and put on the symbolic horns promised there, and acted out the manner in which the Syrian king would be gored to death, with all the other prophets shouting, "Go up to Ramothgilead and prosper." This dramatic action must have made an impression. Now the reader must not take my word for the horns promised by Moses, but let him turn back and read what Moses said. Evidently Zedekiah takes what Moses said concerning the children of Joseph, Manasseh, and Ephraim, to show that he is giving a true prophecy; he puts on those iron horns and shows just how the Ephraim bull will gore the Syrian king to destruction. It must have been a funny scene.

(7) The method of sending for Micaiah and disposing of him after he is heard, implies that he was in prison in the city at the time, and is remanded back to prison because he would not prophesy smooth things to Ahab.

(8) The officer hinted to him, while bringing him before the king, to conform his reply to that of the four hundred – like I have known sheriffs, when bringing in a witness, to whisper how he had better testify; to make a confession and to imply what he is going to say with what the 400 said, clearly shows how this officer, at least, was aware that the prophets around Ahab must prophesy as the king wished. It seems to place Ahab's conception of the prophetic office on a line with Balak's when he sent for Balaam to come and curse Israel: that a king's money or a king's favor could get just what he wanted from the subservient oracle. Or, it is on a line with any fortuneteller, who will gauge his forecast of the fortunes according to the fee, or according to his fear of the inquirer.

(9) We find it hard to reconcile Micaiah's grand reply to the officer, that he would not prophesy anything except as Jehovah gave it, – I say, we find it difficult to harmonize that grand reply to the officer with his first reply to Ahab, which is exactly in harmony with what the 400 advised. Now, was that first reply to Ahab sarcasm, and meant to be so understood? Did it mean: "You do not want to hear the truth, and you know it; you want to hear only what is pleasing, and I give it to you"? Or, does it mean that when a man incorrigibly insists upon being deluded, then Jehovah sends him a delusion? The last seems to be the true explanation and puts his reply in harmony with his reply to the officers. But Ahab evidently understands it according to the first explanation) and so he presumptuously demands Jehovah's true attitude toward the proposed expedition. Thus adjured, Micaiah turns a flood of light on the whole situation. He commences by recounting a vision of all Israel scattered upon the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. Ahab's side remark to Jehoshaphat did not stay him. He draws a vivid heaven counterpart over the earth scene. On earth, as our text tells us, the throned kings are sitting in the open space in the gates of Samaria, surrounded by a throng of courtiers, and inquiring, "Shall we go up to Ramothgilead?" Now, above this the prophet's vision sees Jehovah and his session of angels considering what answer to the question shall heaven inspire, and the means of that inspiration. More than once I have taught my students two great lessons, both illustrated right here: First, that evil angels, including Satan himself, must at intervals attend the convocations of angels on the summons of Jehovah, and must report at Jehovah's inquisition where they have been and what they have seen and done in regard to God's people, and must limit their deeds to what Jehovah permits (see Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7).

What then do they directly, since it is by the permission of God, he does indirectly. Second, that when Pharaoh continues to harden his heart, then will Jehovah himself harden it; that when men continue to shut their eyes to the truth, then Jehovah afflicts them with judicial blindness; and when men incorrigibly prefer delusion to the

truth, then Jehovah sends them a strong delusion that they may believe a lie and be damned (see 2 Thessalonians 2:11; Isaiah 66:4).

Now, in this convocation of angels Jehovah inquires for an angelic messenger, who will delude Ahab to his ruin. A lying angel responds, "I will inspire Ahab's prophets to answer him in a way that will destroy him," and Jehovah tells him to go and do it. Yes, the 400 prophets were inspired, but they were inspired of Satan to say, "Go up to Ramothgilead and prosper." Had these 400 been faithful to their prophetic office, and not subservient to Ahab's wishes, they would not have become the dupes of Satan; they would have tried the spirits attempting to inspire them, and would have been able to discern the evil kind. Micaiah thus exposes the source of the spiritual suggestion governing Zedekiah and the 400. They were conscious that an outside spirit was telling them to say what they said, and they supposed it to be Jehovah, but Micaiah shows from whom that inspiration comes.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the length of Jehoshaphat's reign?
2. Why in the latter part of Asa's reign and all of Jehoshaphat's does the author omit temporarily all scriptures that relate exclusively to Israel?
3. At the beginning of his reign, what were Jehoshaphat's measures of defense against Israel?
4. State in order the moral measures of defense.
5. Give an account of his militia organization and Murphy's explanation.
6. Give in order the glorious results of that measure.

7. What the meaning of 2 Chronicles 18:1, "he made affinity with Ahab"?
8. What, then, were the three acts of his life, condemned of Jehovah and which detract from his glory?
9. What were the results of the first act?
10. Tell how he was beguiled into the second act.
11. What condition did Jehoshaphat exact?
12. Were the 400 subservient prophets of Ahab prophets of Baal or of Jehovah?
13. Did they speak by inspiration?
14. What promise had Moses made concerning the tribes of Joseph, and how did Zedekiah act out what seemed to be a fulfilment?
15. Judging from Ahab's hatred of Micaiah, what must have been his conception of the prophetic office?
16. Where was Micaiah when sent for?
17. What suggestion did the officer make to him while conducting him before Ahab and what does this prove?
18. What was his reply to the officer and how do you harmonize it with his first reply to Ahab?
19. When adjured to give Jehovah's attitude toward the proposed expedition what his reply?
20. What two great truths concerning God's supreme rule have been diligently taught by the author and what the Scripture proof and application of both to Micaiah's revelation?

21. Who then inspired the 400 and why permitted?
22. Give dramatic setting of the earth scene and the heaven scene.
23. May men now be inspired by an evil spirit?
24. What is the condition of mind that makes one susceptible to such inspiration as evidenced in the 400?
25. What is the New Testament provision that enables a Christian to discern between an evil and a good inspiration?

VI. THE REIGN OF JEHOSEPHAT, KING OF JUDAH (CONTINUED)

In the preceding chapter we considered the marvelous prophecy of Micaiah, the son of Imlah, explaining how the 400 prophets of Ahab were deluded. The difficulties of that partakelar paragraph are so great that many commentaries skip it altogether – they do not try to expound it. Even the “Speaker's Bible” commentary, merely gives the text but does not give a word of exposition. Even my great favorite, Hengstenberg, from whom I supposed that I could get some help, passes it with a single allusion. Now, to me, there do not appear such great difficulties.

The questions of difficulty are these: Were these 400 men really the prophets of Jehovah? They were the prophets of Jehovah in the sense that they represented the calf worship in Israel: they pretended under the calf worship to still worship Jehovah. Another difficulty is Jehovah's permitting and even directing an evil spirit to inspire these 400 men to bring about the ruin of Ahab, a moral difficulty that is more seeming than real. It is on par with the existence of all evil in the world. A little child, for instance, asked the question: "Mama, is God greater than the devil?" "Yes." "Then why doesn't he kill the devil?" In other words, it is simply the inquisition into Jehovah's permission of moral evil in the world, and his inclusive government over everything, good and bad, in which he makes the wrath of man to praise him, and overrules the evil of both men and demons.

There are some other difficulties graver to my mind in the section before us. One is, to reconcile the text of certain places in Kings with the corresponding text in Chronicles. That appears in the records of events near the end of Jehoshaphat's reign. And a still greater difficulty is to reconcile the text of both of them with the Septuagint Version. The Septuagint Version is not inspired, and it follows its own sweet will every now and then in dealing with matters. Sometimes it makes marvelously good hints – and sometimes it simply follows Jewish legends and traditions.

We are now to consider the effect of Micaiah's exposure of Zedekiah, the leader of the 400 prophets, on Ahab and on Jehoshaphat. We have Zedekiah's effort to break the force of Micaiah's exposure and that prophet's response, as follows: "Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near, and smote Micaiah upon the cheek, and said, Which way went the spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee?" i.e., "since you say that an evil spirit inspired us, and that Jehovah inspired you, I put it to the test by this blow. Which way went the spirit of Jehovah from me and to you?" In other words, "Here are 400 of us, all conscious of inspiration, knowing that we speak from some impulse outside of ourselves. You stand up there by yourself and say that a lying spirit inspired us, and that Jehovah inspired you." To that Micaiah says, "Behold, thou shalt see on the day when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself." That means: "You wait until after the battle is over, and the army is defeated and Ahab is slain, and you are running to hide, and then you will know which one of us is speaking from Jehovah." All this seemed to have little effect on Ahab and Jehoshaphat.

Josephus accounts for the little effect of Micaiah's exposure on Ahab and Jehoshaphat (for we see they went right ahead into the war, both of them, notwithstanding Micaiah's marvelous representation of the scene in heaven on this day) thus: "When Zedekiah smote Micaiah he challenged his credentials by calling for a sign: If you represent Jehovah, paralyze my hand that smote your cheek, as the prophet of God dried up the hand of Jeroboam at the altar. And if you cannot accredit what you say by a miracle of that kind, then it is because you are false and we are true.' " Of course, I do not know where Josephus gets his information about that, certainly not from the Bible. But it is interesting to know that this is the way this Jewish writer accounts for it, and Josephus is following the tradition of his people in thus accounting for it. What he says at least accounts for Jehoshaphat's disregard of Micaiah. What Ahab said to Micaiah and his response are as follows: "And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son; and say, Thus saith the king, Put this

fellow in prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with the water of affliction, until I come in peace." So Ahab did not believe what Micaiah said because he did not want to believe it. Micaiah made this noble response: "If thou returnest at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me." He appeals to the old prophetic test: If a prophet shall foretell an event and it does not come to pass, then that prophet is a lying prophet, but if his word is fulfilled, then he is a true prophet.

A certain clause is wanting in the Septuagint and a conjecture is based on it in view of Micah 1:2. This is the clause that is not in the Septuagint: "And he said, Hear, ye peoples, all of you." That is, Micaiah appeals to both the men of Israel and to the men of Judah to listen to the text. Now, these words were not in the Septuagint, but they are in the Hebrew of both Chronicles and Kings. The conjecture based on it is exceedingly idle. Micah 1:2 uses precisely these words: "Hear, ye peoples, all of you," and so the conjecture is that Micah the prophet, whose book we have, is the same as the Micaiah here. But Micah the prophet belongs to a much later date. It was customary for the prophets to appeal to the people to bear witness to what they said.

There seems to have been no effect on Jehoshaphat. It was at his instance that Micaiah was called in; now he had heard Micaiah, but notwithstanding what he says, he goes right on to the war with Ahab. He must have been influenced by Zedekiah's smiting Micaiah. So Jehoshaphat leads a force of Judah into this battle, but I do not see a word anywhere that tells us just what that force was. There is certainly no summons to any of the tribes of Judah. It may be that Jehoshaphat simply took with him into the battle the guard that he had with him when he came to make this visit and in the absence of any historical notice I suppose that this is so. Ahab made a proposition to Jehoshaphat before they went into the battle. The text says this: "And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself and go into the battle, and put thou on thy robes." Now, the Septuagint says, "put thou on my robes." And I think the

Septuagint is right. And the Septuagint in a later verse says (where these captains center on Jehoshaphat), "it seemed to them that it was the king of Israel." Now the seeming could be only by external uniform; they would not have any other way of knowing. So, then his proposition was: "I will go into the battle disguised, and you put on my robes . . . you seem to be Ahab."

Readers of romance will recall in Scott's famous novel, *Quentin Durward*, that when the Wild Boar of Ardennes had captured the city of Ghent, and the Duke of Burgundy and Louis of France were coming to oust him, he disguised himself and had a number of men put on his garb, and also had a number of others put on the garb of the noted French knight, Dunoia, in order to make the Burgundians think that the French were fighting against them instead of with them. Readers of Shakespeare will recall that when Henry IV fought his battle with "Hotspur" Percy and Douglas, a number of men had on the armor of Henry IV, and that Douglas killed several of them, thinking he was killing the king. Now, that was Ahab's expedient, and I think Jehoshaphat was a very simple fellow to agree to it.

There are at least two reasons why Ahab disguised himself: First, there seemed to be a lingering fear that maybe Micaiah was right, and that the result of this battle would be that Israel would be without a shepherd, and he thought to thwart that prophecy, and in disguise thought to lessen the danger. And the other reason appears immediately after, as follows: "Now, the king of Syria had commanded the two and thirty captains of his chariots, saying, Fight with neither small nor great, save only with the king of Israel." Ahab had doubtless learned that special directions had been given to the Syrian officers to single him out. Jehoshaphat did not know it, but Ahab did. "Now, brother Jehoshaphat, my ally, put on my robe, and go into the fight; I will disguise myself."

The king of Syria had made an improvement in his army since the last battle with Ahab. We have not had that part of the history yet because we have not considered the house of Omri particularly, and

I will say this: that in the first battle in which he was defeated by Ahab, the Syrian king let the thirty-two subsidiary kings command their own forces, and kings are not necessarily good captains. Anyway, they turned tail and fled, and lost him the battle. So this time he substituted war men to command these troops. At the beginning of all wars we may notice that favorites have positions, but after they lose a few battles, and matters get desperate, the success of the war demands that only real generals be put in command. So, instead of thirty-two kings, he has thirty-two real soldiers commanding.

The result, then, to Jehoshaphat of this expedient of Ahab was that it put him in extreme danger. These thirty-two captains of the chariots turning not to the right nor to the left, struck at nobody else but Jehoshaphat, supposing him to be Ahab the king of Israel.

In vv. 31-32 of the Chronicles account, it is said that when the Syrian captains centered on Jehoshaphat, "He cried out" and they turned away. Now, on that account there are two questions: First, what was his cry and to whom; and second, what caused those captains to turn away from him? Was it an impulse from Jehovah, as v.31 gives it, or was it the mere fact that they perceived that the man they were after was not the king of Israel, as the next verse says? One commentator says, "When he saw them coming around him he cried out, I am not your man," or that he cried out, "Rally around me, men of Judah." But that was not his cry. My own answer is that he cried to God, and Jehovah's response is recorded in v. 31: "But Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord helped him; and God moved them to depart from him." They themselves were not conscious of that divine impulse, and they turned away because they believed that this was not the man they were after, as the next verse says. We frequently see these two forces combined: God overruling, and the natural human impulse governing at the same time.

The Vulgate, the Latin Version made in the fourth century, A.D., by Jerome, says that Jehoshaphat cried unto Jehovah. It says, "*clamavit*

ad Dominum," "He cried out to the Lord," and certainly the context supports the Latin Version.

The text says that the expedient of Ahab failed to save him: "And a certain man drew his bow at a venture and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness, wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand and carry me out of the host; for I am sore wounded."

May we attribute Ahab's death to chance, fate, or providence? That is, to chance because the man that shot did not know he was shooting at him, but drew his bow at a venture? Or, may we attribute it to fate, as Josephus says, "Fate, the inevitable, found Ahab out without his robes"? Or, may we attribute it to providence because of Micaiah's words in w. 16, 19? Micaiah said the result of that battle would be that Israel would be without a shepherd; and v. 19 represents Jehovah as saying, "Who will go and entice him to Ramothgilead that he may fall?"

Now, this question probes all the philosophies of the world as to the cause of things. The Epicureans say, "Chance" – that the world itself is the result of a fortuitous concourse of atoms. This is also the theory of modern evolution as expounded by such radicals as Haeckel and others – all design eliminated. Zeno, the stoic, says that everything happens according to fate, inexorable fate. The Bible says that with God, there is neither chance nor fate, but that providence overrules all things. So far as the archer himself is concerned he, in his simplicity, shot an arrow in the battle; we might say that it was an accident, so far as he was concerned, that he killed Ahab; but it was no accident so far as God was concerned, and it was not blind, inexorable fate; it was all according to the great purpose of God, who had foreseen it and foretold it.

There is a connection of providence with this death of Ahab, as shown by a previous prophecy, and by the history of the fulfilment of that prophecy, and there is an additional degradation which this imposes on the dead Ahab. Elijah the Tishbite, as we will show in a

subsequent discussion, when he met Ahab in Naboth's vineyard (Naboth through false testimony, having been put to death in order that Ahab might obtain possession of his property) said to Ahab, that as the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, so would they lick up his blood at the very same place. A passage from 1 Kings gives the fulfilment: "So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria. And they washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood: (now the harlots washed themselves there;) according unto the word of the Lord which he spake." That parenthetical remark is the additional degradation: "Now the harlots washed themselves there" – those obscene women that worshiped Ashtaroth; that was their place of bathing. Now, in this place, in the very pool, where these women bathed, shall your blood go, and the dogs shall lick up your blood. So, there is evident connection between that and the man drawing the bow at a venture, the arrow striking Ahab between the breastplate and the lower part of his armor. The history says that his blood ran down into the chariot, and that he stayed there in the chariot until the evening, when he died, and they took him, dead, in that chariot back to Samaria, and after he was taken out of the chariot they drove it to Naboth's vineyard, where this pool was, and the dogs came and licked up his blood, and the blood ran into the very pool in which the harlot worshipers of Ashtaroth bathed. That recalls the question, Did he die by chance, or by fate, or by providence?

Jehovah announced his displeasure at this alliance of Jehoshaphat with Ahab: "And Jehu the son of Hanani the Seer went out to meet him, and said to King Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the wicked, and love them that hate the Lord? for this thing wrath is upon thee from before the Lord. Nevertheless, there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast put away the Ashtaroth out of the land, and hast set thine heart to seek God." So God disapproved that alliance.

This wrath was fulfilled. In the same connection we see that the Moabites revolted against Israel when Israel lost the battle of

Ramothgilead, and counting Israel a negligible quantity in view of this defeat, they warred with Judah. A conspiracy was made between the Moabites, the Ammonites, and other tribes beyond the Ammonites, reaching into the Arabian Desert – all those wild hordes of people. A confederacy was made to strike secretly at Jehoshaphat; they became an ally of the house of Israel. That is the way the wrath came.

Now, in Chronicles 20:1 we have this statement: "And it came to pass after this, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them some of the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle." Now, we must account for the "and with them some of the Ammonites," after just saying "the children of Ammon." That is a corruption of the text. In one manuscript it reads: "The children of Moab, the children of Ammon, and others besides the Ammonites," and in another verse of that chapter it says, "The children of Moab, the children of Ammon, and the children of Mount Sier," which would mean the Edomites.

The story of that wrath is intensely interesting. This Ammonite confederacy, coming south of the Dead Sea where their approach would not be observed, had gained the western shore of the Dead Sea at Engedi, and before anybody knew they were at hand, they were within a few miles of Jerusalem. Whereupon Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast, got all the people to come up before Jehovah and pray, and one of the most remarkable prayers in the world is the prayer of Jehoshaphat to Jehovah to avert this wrath. He appealed to God as the ruler of the universe. He then appealed to him as the friend of Abraham (that is the first place in the Bible where Abraham is called the friend of God, though we find it in the New Testament and in Isaiah). He then appealed to God on the score of the covenant with David. He piles up the reasons. He then appealed because they had built him this Temple for his service, and this vast confederacy is formed to come and take away the place that God had given to these people in the land of Canaan. Then he adds, "When we would come into this country you would not let us smite the

children of Edom and of Ammon and of Moab, and now they are manifesting their gratitude by turning on us." It was a great gathering. One of the sons of Asaph, Jahaziel, answered for Jehovah. He says, "You will be delivered: it will not be your battle, you will not have to strike a blow. You simply stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. Do not go out like you are going to battle, but put your singers in front, and let them go singing praises to God. Go to a certain point, and you will overlook the destruction of this great host." The destruction of the host is accounted for by an ambush that some of the Edomites, tributary to Judah, had laid. While some of the Edomites were working with the king of Moab, others of them still faithful to Judah, laid the ambush and when they attacked, the Moabites and the Ammonites thought the same ones in their army would be against them, and they killed all of them. And when they had killed the Edomites in their own army, they began killing one another. It was a regular "Kilkenny cat fight," like an Irish wake. They turned their hands against each other until the whole army was destroyed, and Judah simply stood on the hill singing praises to God. The spoils that they gathered from the battle were immense, and when they came back they came back praising God. It was a marvelous demonstration of divine power. Psalm 83 commemorates this alliance with Moab and Ammon and these other nations. The Moabite Stone furnishes a remarkable confirmation of the Scripture story. It tells of this very king of Moab, and how he revolted against Israel, and how many cities he captured from Israel.

QUESTIONS

1. What can you say of the treatment of the difficulties in the account of Micaiah and the 400 prophets by the commentaries?
2. What are the questions of difficulty here and what is the solution of each respectively?
3. How did Micaiah expose Zedekiah, the leader of the 400 prophets, and what was the effect on Ahab and Jehoshaphat?

4. How does Josephus account for the little effect on Ahab and Jehoshaphat and what do you think of his account?

5. What did Ahab say to Micaiah and what was his response?

6. What clause is wanting in the Septuagint, what conjecture is based upon it in view of Micah 1:2 and what was the reply to such conjecture?

7. What was the effect on Jehoshaphat and what force did he lead into the battle?

8. What proposition did Ahab make to Jehoshaphat before they went into battle, what light from the Septuagint and what illustrations from profane history and literature?

9. Why did Ahab disguise himself?

10. What improvement had the king of Syria made in his army since the last battle with Ahab and what the result of this in view of the expedient of Ahab?

11. Explain Jehoshaphat's cry in 2 Chronicles 18:31 and the result of this cry.

12. What light on this from the Vulgate?

13. How did the expedient of Ahab fail to save him?

14. May we attribute the death of Ahab to chance, fate, or providence? Discuss.

15. What was the connection of providence with the death of Ahab as shown by a previous prophecy and the fulfilment of it and what the additional degradation imposed on the dead Ahab?

16. How did Jehovah show his displeasure at this alliance of Jehoshaphat with Ahab?

17. In what event was this wrath fulfilled?
18. Who were the "Ammonites" of 2 Chronicles 20:17? Explain.
19. Tell the story of the averted wrath of God here.
20. What psalm commemorates the alliance of Moab and Ammon with the other nations?
21. What testimony of the Moabite Stone?

VII. THE HOUSE OF OMRI

There were three dynasties only in Israel which were makers of history. First, the dynasty of Jeroboam; second, the dynasty of the house of Omri, which we are now to discuss; third, the dynasty of the house of Jehu. All of the rest of them we might put in a parenthesis – no history in them.

Only two of all the kings of Israel were appointed by Jehovah, viz.: Jeroboam and Jehu. The rest of them came to the throne, usually as the Praetorian Guard at Rome elected the Caesars – the army elected the king of Israel, and as soon as one was so declared by the army, he killed off all the family of his predecessor – that is the record of it. Only two of them had a dynasty that extended beyond a second generation.

The scriptural sources for a sketch of Omri, the sixth king of Israel are very short: 1 Kings 16:15-28, and half of a sentence in the prophecy of Micah (6:16) – two paragraphs in history and half of a sentence in prophecy. From this brief history we see that he was in command of the army of Israel besieging a Philistine city, when the news was brought that his fellow commander, Zimri, at Tirzah, had murdered the king, slain all of his family and usurped the throne. That is the news that came to Omri's camp, whereupon his army instantly proclaimed Omri king. He gave up the siege and marched hastily to Tirzah, one of the capitals of the nation, took that city, and then one week from the time that Zimri murdered the king he committed suicide by retiring into the palace and setting it on fire – the palace became his funeral pyre. Half of the people made Tibni king, and after four years of civil war between Tibni and Omri, Tibni perished and Omri became sole ruler of the ten tribes.

His personal reign was only twelve years, but in that time he achieved these momentous things: First, he established a dynasty that held the throne of Israel for about forty-five years, and controlled the foreign policy of the house of Judah for the same length of time, and dominated the throne of Judah for fourteen years,

and attracted more attention among the foreign nations than any other man since Solomon's time. Second, he built the city of Samaria which, in one way or another, became the rival of Jerusalem for a thousand years, even up to the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. Every visiting traveler has been impressed by it. All books on the Holy Land have much to say about Samaria.

Third, he enacted statutes of idolatry that corrupted Israel unto the downfall of the kingdom, a period of 200 years. Micah 6:16 tells us about that.

Fourth, by marrying his son Ahab to Jezebel, the princess of Tyre (or Sidon, as it is indifferently called, Tyre and Sidon being close together in the Phoenician kingdom), he prepared the way for Baal worship in both kingdoms, and for bringing the true religion to the lowest ebb since the flood.

Fifth, he inaugurated the unusual policy of alliance, instead of war, with the house of Judah, and that policy prevailed throughout his dynasty, Israel and Judah never being at war during the several reigns of the dynasty of Omri, and in this way he controlled the foreign policy of Judah, brought that nation into sin continually, and into conflicts with its prophets. There was no king of Judah that reigned during the dynasty of Omri that did not fall into some sin through this policy of alliance inaugurated by Omri.

There are other sources of material for a sketch of this remarkable man, about whom our Bible says so little, viz.: The Syrian, Assyrian, Moabite, and Tyrian records, inscribed on tablets and obelisks, all of which speak of Omri, and have more to say about him than the Bible does. Travelers in the Holy Land verify every geographical and topographical allusion in the history of his life. Two noted Greek historians give the history of Ethbaal, king of Tyre, as father-in-law of Ahab, and the date of their history perfectly harmonizes with the days of Omri and Ahab. Moreover, the Tyrian historians throw a very valuable sidelight on the Bible history. They show that Ethbaal, the father of Jezebel, was the high priest of the

Ashtoreth (or Astarte, or Venus) and his daughter being raised in that temple, in that atmosphere, it is easy to account for her religious fanaticism in favor of Baal worship. In Vergil, Dido recounts to Aeneas her migration from Tyre, and how it led to the founding of Carthage. That Dido of Vergil was a very close kinswoman to Jezebel. I think Jezebel was the great-aunt of Dido.

Now, there is a piece of history, which I have referred to before, that is about as remarkable as any in the world. About nine hundred years before Christ a contemporary of the Omri dynasty inscribed on a stone references to Omri and Ahab, and after it had been buried more than 2,500 years it was recently dug up. I give here a translation from the first part of it, and the very man that wrote it will appear in the next chapter. Indeed we have already considered him in the life of Jehoshaphat. He is Mesha, king of Moab, that invaded Judah – he is the man that wrote it. I shall never forget the interest stirred up by the discovery of the Moabite Stone. Infidels had been confidently trusting the spade to overturn the Bible, and lo! this stone confirmed it. Mesha set up that stone about twenty-five years after Omri died. Here is a part of the inscription, following the translation of Ginsburg, the archeologist as quoted by Rawlinson:

"I, Mesha, am son of Chemoshgad, king of Moab, the Dibonite. My father reigned over Moab thirty years, and I reigned after my father. And erected this stone at Karcha, a stone of salvation, for he saved me from all dispoilers, and let me see my desire on all mine enemies. And Omri, king of Israel, oppressed Moab many days, for Chemosh was angry with his land. His son succeeded him, and he also said, I will oppress Moab. In my days he said, Let us go and I will see my desire on him and his house: and Israel said I will destroy it forever.

Now, Omri took the land of Medeba and occupied it, he and his son, and his son's son, forty years. And Chemosh had mercy on it in my days."

Now, when Ahab was killed in the battle of Ramoth-gilead, Moab rebelled and sustained their rebellion permanently against Israel. We have already seen somewhat of this, and will see more. I often wonder as I read of the various excavations at Nineveh and Babylon, and on the Nile, and among the Canaanite states, what a marvelous providence that God permitted these buried inscriptions to come to light just at the time assault was being made upon the integrity of his Book. When I was a young fellow I heard a great infidel say, "Books? Moses write books? Why, there were no books in the times of Moses." Not a very great while after his lecture the spade turned up Canaanite library cities older than Moses. The books were only clay tablets, of course, piled up there in public libraries. One of these remarkable archeological monuments, now familiar to all students, is called the Black Obelisk, inscribed by an Assyrian. It names particularly the house of Omri. The obelisk makes interesting reading for a sidelight on this section.

The character of Omri is described in 1 Kings 16:25-26: "And Omri did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, and dealt wickedly above all that were before him." We will find soon that his son surpasses in wickedness, but just now he is more wicked than any previous one, "For he walked in all the ways of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sins wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger with their vanities." Here I raise the question as to the scriptural meaning of "vanities." We find many times in the Old Testament. the word, "vanities," and it nearly always refers to vain objects of worship. It is not the vanity in female attire, nor in the apparel of dudes, but it is vain objects of worship.

He sought affinity with the Phoenicians by marrying his son Ahab to Jezebel because he was a great politician. He had little conscience, and no religion, but the kingdom that he dreaded was Syria, lying just north of him. Later in the history the dread shifts to Assyria 'with its capital at Nineveh on the Tigris river. But in Omri's time the foe to dread was Syria with its capital at Damascus. Now, he could

not afford to have a strong enemy south of him, and another enemy west of him, all the time dreading that great enemy north of him, and so, as a shrewd politician, he secured peace effectively with the Phoenicians on the west and of Judah on the south, both ratified by marriages.

The character of Ahab, his son who succeeded him, is described in 1 Kings 16:30-33; 21:25-26, as follows: "And Ahab the son of Omri did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord above all that went before him. And he went and served Baal, and worshipped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made Asherah; and Ahab did yet more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him." They were getting worse, and the next passage says, "But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to do that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites did, whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel."

Now, there is a remarkable sentence: "Whom Jezebel stirred up." Ahab could have been a moderately good man with a good wife, for he was a notoriously weak man. But his wife was a strong woman, a woman of as strong character as is known to history. She wound him round her little finger: She was the boss of that house; an exceedingly imperious woman, raised as the proud princess, the daughter of the high priest of Astarte, and she determined that her religion should be the religion of Ahab and of Judah. She was utterly unscrupulous. A weak man if bossed by a good wife, may become passably good, but if the wife be both strong and evil, he will do more harm than if the evil came from himself. As Bismarck once said to a young diplomat who extenuated a mistake because it was not a crime: "You have done worse than commit a crime; you have blundered."

Another incident bears relation to his irreverent character. This we find in 1 Kings 16:34: "In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho; he laid the foundation thereof with the loss of Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof with the loss of his youngest son Segub; according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by the hand of Joshua the son of Nun." Now, in the history of Joshua we find that when he destroyed Jericho, he pronounced this curse on it: "Whoever shall rebuild Jericho shall lay its foundation in the blood of his firstborn." Ahab and Omri were builders; they built cities. So this Hiel in his day, that lived at Bethel, one of the cities of calf worship, concluded to rebuild the city of Jericho, which commanded the fords of Jordan, and was an exceedingly strong place. The Bible does not tell how, but in some way, God fulfilled the prophecy on him. Maybe in laying the foundation a stone crushed his first-born. Anyhow, before he got through with the building, all of his sons were dead.

The following lessons may be deducted from this incident: First, never embark on an enterprise that will cost you your dearest. I put my finger on that passage once and said to a church member who was keeping a retail liquor store, "You will lay the foundation of your financial success in the blood of your children." Not more than a week after that two drunken men in that saloon got to fighting and his son was killed, accidentally shot in the fight. Be careful that you do nothing that will entail a curse on your boy or the sweet little girl to come after you. I think it is a great lesson.

Another great lesson is to note how remarkable is the word of God. Ages had passed away since the blowing of rams' horns when the walls of Jericho fell down, and Joshua lifted up his hands and pronounced that curse on the man who should rebuild it. And that word of God lay there quiescent in ambush, but rose up to life and smote to death the children of a man that many centuries after tried to fight Jehovah's dictum. Julian, the apostate Roman emperor, read the prophecy about the walls of Jerusalem. He sneeringly put his finger on the passage in the prophecy, and said, "I will show you

that this prophecy is a liar." He sent a vast number of men to go and rebuild the wall. I am simply quoting Gibbon the infidel historian – and fire came out and devoured the men so that they left off the building of the wall. And consequently, when Julian was dying he used this language: "Thou Galilean, hast conquered," referring to Jesus. That reminds us of the passage in Acts: Herod slew James and imprisoned Peter, and put on a robe and made himself out to be God. The record says that the worms ate up Herod, but the word of God prevailed and multiplied. So we do not need to be very uneasy, fearing the destruction of the word of God.

The next wicked act of Ahab belongs to the history here, but is recorded elsewhere. It is found in 1 Kings 19: "And Elijah said, And the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, torn down thine altars, and have slain thy prophets with a sword. And I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away." That was one of the bitterest religious persecutions known in the history of the world.

I close this chapter with a touching incident of this great persecution. It is found in 1 Kings 18: "Now Obadiah, the master of the household of Ahab, feared the Lord greatly, for it was so that when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord that Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave, and fed them with bread and water." That verse is like an oasis in the desert, that little incident, and when we read the history of the Albigenses, the Waldenses, the Huguenots, the Dutch, and the Scotch, and of any other people, suffering religious persecution, we find some brave, bold man or woman that harbors these fugitives from the vengeance of the persecuting power; that opens the door to them; feeds them and takes care of them, though done under the penalty of death. It was the custom of the popes, when persecuting a people, to put a curse on any who sheltered them: "No man shall shelter him, no man shall give him a loaf of bread to eat, or even a drop of cold water." But this Obadiah, the master of the household of Ahab, in his heart, loved Jehovah. Now, when it comes to secreting men in two caves, fifty in each, and secretly getting food to them, knowing that

everything he did put his life in hazard¹ say, it is better to know of a man of that sort than to know of the conquests of military heroes – his record is worthy of going into history. There are many things in history we could afford to leave out, but we want everything of that kind on record.

In this great extremity, a mighty instrument of protest and reformation did the Lord raise up. He is the hero of the next chapter: "Elijah the Tishbite."

QUESTIONS

1. What three dynasties only of Israel were makers of history?
2. How many of all the kings of Israel were appointed by Jehovah?
3. How did the rest of them come to the throne?
4. What are the scriptural sources for a sketch of Omri, the sixth king of Israel, and how did his house arise?
5. What other sources of material for a sketch of Omri, and what is the additional information?
6. What was the character of Omri?
7. What is the meaning of "vanities" as used here and most everywhere else in the Old Testament?
8. Why did Omri seek affinity with Phoenicia and Judah by marriage and how was it affected?
9. What was the character of Ahab, his son, and what the greatest influence in his life for evil?
10. What other incident bears relation to his irreverent character?
11. What lessons may be deduced from this incident?

12. What was the next wicked act of Ahab?
13. Relate a touching incident of this great persecution?
14. In this great extremity what mighty instrument of protest ?

VIII. ELIJAH ALONE AGAINST THE WORLD

1 Kings 17:1 to 81:29

Elijah the Tishbite is the most dramatic personage in all history. He has left an ineffaceable impress on the imagination of the men of all times. He appears on the stage of action suddenly, rarely, startlingly, and disappears as suddenly and dramatically for long intervals of time, in which he is completely hidden from public sight. The ordinary life of the man never becomes commonplace because never familiar by association with the people. His successor lived much in a city, and never in seclusion, so that his everyday life was in the full glare of publicity. This intensely dramatic way of appearing, when coupled with his strange garb, stern manners and ascetic life, naturally impresses the imagination. We are not disappointed in the reasonable expectation that such a career would breed many traditions. Long after he passed away we find the Jews continually expecting his return. At the observance of the passover the door is left open that Elijah may enter if he should suddenly come, and a vacant chair is reserved for him at the circumcision of a child. When lost goods are discovered and the owner cannot be found, they are set aside until Elijah comes to identify the owner. In New Testament times, the Jews, unable to account for Jesus of Nazareth, supposed that he was Elijah, and when Christ cried out in the extreme agony of his crucifixion they supposed he was crying for Elijah.

In harmony with his marvelous career, we find the biblical period of his history the richest in homiletical value of all the scriptures. All the great preachers in the world have found thrilling themes in the incidents of Elijah's life, and not only the great preachers, but the preachers generally throughout the ages have gone into this deep rich mine for sermon themes. Perhaps no man in all the ministry' and throughout all the ages entirely omitted the life of Elijah in selecting topics for pulpit discussions. It would be quite easy to name at least fifty texts for sermons in this part of the Bible. The Scripture books which treat of this remarkable man are 1 Kings, 2 Chronicles,

Malachi, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Romans and James. The intense interest in his career is just as fresh and strong in our own time as in previous ages. Such long continued interest cannot wholly arise from the dramatic setting of his life. There must be some profounder reason for his unshaken hold on the imagination and thought of the religious world. We find that interest arising from the great world crisis of his time and his method of meeting it. Once only before, and never since, has true religion been in such danger of utter extinction as in Elijah's time. We may therefore properly inquire: What were the elements of this crisis and what effective measures employed by him in meeting its necessities?

Briefly stated, the elements of this crisis were:

1. Ahab's marriage with Jezebel, the Tyrian princess.
2. The marriage of Jezebel's daughter with Jehoram, prince royal of Judah.
3. The consequent unhallowed alliance between Judah and Israel.
4. The consequent establishment of Baal worship in both kingdoms.
5. The consequent and extraordinary persecution of the true religion and its prophets in both kingdoms.
6. The same murderous extinction of the seed royal of David by Athaliah's husband, the daughter of Jezebel until one child alone is left of all the male progeny of David.
7. The consequent eminent hazard of the extinction of the true religion in the world.

Elijah himself thus expresses the situation: "The children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away." It is true, in the great depression of his mind

following his flight from Jezebel, while under the juniper tree he prayed that he might die, feeling that his life had been a failure, that he exaggerated through ignorance his extreme loneliness. Some of the prophets had been saved alive by Obadiah, and the Almighty whose omniscience can read the hearts of the people in the most secret hiding places, assured him that there was a remnant according to grace of 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal. But he knew nothing of this secret following of Jehovah. His voice was the only voice in the whole wide world lifted up in favor of Jehovah, so that with some measure of truth he might well say: "Alone, alone, alone, one man against the world." In the days of Noah the remnant was even smaller than in the days of Elijah, but there has never been a period since his time when the true religion was reduced to as few flickering sparks.

After the revolt of the ten tribes under Jeroboam and the establishment of the dynasty of Omri and the marriage of Ahab, Omri's son, with Jezebel, the Tyrian princess, and the adoption of her Baal worship in the place of the worship of Jehovah, the doom of the ten tribes was fixed, and all the voices of the prophets could only briefly delay the swiftly coming ruin. One weak woman brought about the fall of the race, and this strong, cruel woman, Jezebel, could nearly bring about a second destruction. And when she had succeeded through her daughter, Athaliah, in establishing the Baal worship in Judah as well as in Israel, both streams of the national life became intensely corrupt. We are accustomed to admire the heroism of any sixteenth century reformer, who dared to lift his voice against the prevailing religious corruption of Romanism, but in no period of either pagan or papal persecution have the Christians been reduced to such small numbers and such scanty influence as in the days of Elijah. Neither Savonarola, nor Huss, nor Jerome, nor Prague, nor the Waldenses, nor Luther, nor Calvin, nor John Knox nor the Dissenters in the days of the Stuarts nor John Bunyan, nor Spurgeon was ever subjected to the extreme loneliness that afflicted the heart of Elijah. It is easy to go with the multitude, or even stand against the multitude if only a few stalwart friends unflinchingly

support us, but when one man has to put himself against the whole world, the swelling tide of public opinion, the inquisition of hate, the devouring power of persecution with no reserve to fall back on except his own unconquerable spirit; then when such a man stands like a rock against which the billows dash themselves in vain, he is a hero indeed. No man can make such a stand apart from the divine call and support. In his case, as in the case of all trials of religious heroes, the Scripture is fulfilled: "When the enemy comes in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord lifteth up a standard against him." In our admiration of this man's greatness and in our gratitude for the redemption wrought through his heroic courage and fidelity, we should not lose sight of the God-prompted measures employed by him to effectively stem the encroaching tide of evil.

THE EFFECTIVE MEASURES EMPLOYED BY ELIJAH

Briefly speaking, these were:

1. In his meeting with Ahab he startles the irreligious world with the announcement of a drought of three and a half years, which should not be broken except at his word, and then as suddenly as the drop of the curtain hides the arena of a theater from the sight of the people, he disappears and is lost to public view until the time comes for the breaking up of the drought. His name is unknown to history up to this sudden appearance with this awful denunciation. We know nothing of his father or his mother, or his kindred, or any of the early stages of his life. He emerges from total obscurity to stand as the mouthpiece of Jehovah, and then to be swallowed up into that obscurity for three and a half years more. The ravens knew the place of his retirement and furnished him food in his solitude, and a widow in the borders of Jezebel's home country sheltered him from human sight. He had said that at his word only the drought should be broken; he was gone and no one knew where, and the consuming drought kept up its burning logic of opposition to idolatry. No soothsayer, no diviner, no rainmaker, no god of the heathen could even fleck the burning sky with a spot of cloud. While the ground

parched and the water courses dried up, and all vegetation withered, and even kings spent their time in finding enough water to support the cattle of the royal household, well might the world wonder when this dramatic man would reappear and speak the word for rain to come. May we not account for Ahab's worldwide search for him, by the desire that he would come and break up the drought by a word, before the nation perished? This measure was exceedingly effective in stemming the tide of irreligion, and in destroying public confidence in the powerless heathen gods.

The method of his own nourishment during the famine of the drought adds much to the character of the test between opposing deities. Jehovah miraculously provides for his prophet. There is nothing too hard for him. He may employ ravens or widows as instruments. We may not attempt to shut out a miracle by different vowel pointing of the word "raven." The word is "ravens" and not angels, nor merchants, nor Arabs. These birds probably nested in the caves where Elijah went, and may have brought the food for their young. But that conjecture could not meet the Septuagint rendering: "They brought him bread in the morning and flesh in the evening." The God whose spirit assembled the animals in the ark could influence ravens. Elijah is called the first apostle to the Gentiles because of his saving sojourn with the widow of Zarephath. The fact that Jezebel's own country nourished the prophet adds emphasis to the test between opposing deities and as history counts it this widow is higher than Jezebel. The saving of the widow's son led to her own salvation: many widows in Israel perished, but electing love reached out its saving hand to this widow in Jezebel's country, as it did again in our Lord's day. Jewish tradition represents this restored boy as becoming a follower of Elijah and identifies him with the prophet Jonah, the second foreign missionary.

Toward the end of this drought period, when its lessons of preparation have been well learned, and when messengers had vainly sought for Elijah throughout the habitable world, he reappears with all the dramatic power of his first appearance, and his

second meeting with Ahab introduces his next effective measure of opposition to the irreligious life of his time.

2. He openly challenges Ahab to bring all the prophets of Baal together to put themselves against him alone in order to determine which god had the power to break this drought. The earth had never before seen such a single public test of the power of opposing deities. Elijah thus puts the case: "And Elijah came unto all the people and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. But the people answered him not a word. Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord, but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them, therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces and lay it on the wood and put no fire under; and I will dress the other bullock and lay it on wood and put no fire under, and call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord; and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken." Thousands of sermons have been preached on these thrilling words of Elijah. The first one my own boyish mind can recall was by my own father upon this theme. The demonstration of Elijah was complete, and all the people said, "Jehovah, he is God." In spite of their wickedness they found it impossible to blot out from their memories and from the memories of the race this great demonstration of divine power. And while the great reformation thus introduced seemed to be short-lived for these people, yet we, nearly 3,000 years later, feel the impress of the triumph of that day. Very rarely in a Bible story does a man of God indulge in sarcasm. The literature of the world cannot surpass this mockery of the false prophets of a false god: "And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is musing, or he has gone aside, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked." Certain heathen authors have imitated Elijah's mockery of false gods; for example:

"Jove went yesterday across the ocean to banquet with the Ethiopians." – HOMER. Jove on his couch reclined his awful head, And Juno slumbered on the golden bed.

"It is no wonder that the temple of Diana was burned; since she was absent at the time, employed in bringing Alexander into the world." – PLUTARCH.

"'Tis plain that the gods are not at home, and probably have taken a voyage to attend the feasts of Ethiopia's blameless race, for they are in the habit of inviting themselves as guests to those honest folks." (Lucian, *Testimony of the Ages*, p. 307.) Fire from heaven having attested the truth of Elijah and demonstrated the falsehood of Baal, the lying prophets were all slain at the word of Elijah and in the presence of the panic-stricken Ahab, Elijah went up to the top of Carmel, overlooking the sea, and prayed seven times for rain. What a lesson on the importunity of prayer, and what a text for another sermon on the little cloud no larger than a man's head at first, but rapidly darkening the heavens, and oh, the rain, the blessed rain that followed! At the word of Elijah the drought was broken. Though a man of like passions with ourselves, so great was his power of prayer, his pleadings attracted and condensed the clouds of the heavens, and the rain fell in torrents. The parched earth rejoiced under its downpour, the dying roots of vegetation revived, and burst forth in blade and bloom and fruit, and even men were not unmindful in at least their temporary gratitude for the relief that came to assuage their burning thirst. In every subsequent drought and thirst men remember Elijah and pray as Elijah prayed that God might relieve the suffering world. The lesson is titanic and far-reaching in its influence. It demonstrates that man's extreme need is God's opportunity. It uncovered to all human sight a throne of grace approached by human and suffering suppliants. Hundreds of thousands in the passing ages have Carmel to look on the sight of those great happenings. They put their feet where the old altar of Jehovah stood, which Jezebel destroyed, and Elijah here reconstructed. Even Tacitus, the Roman historian, ages afterward

speaks of Garmel's strange altar. These same thousands have climbed Carmel's crest, and marked the crest where Elijah, looking out over the Mediterranean Sea, by importunate prayer, called up the cloud.

It is true that at this high tide of this reformation, the daring and cruel Jezebel affrighted Elijah, and shook for the first and only time in his history his self-reliant spirit, and drove him in abject fear to another and distant retirement. But not even Jezebel could blot out the lesson. The wilderness has swallowed Elijah like the brook Cherith once hid him from sight. Under the juniper tree he may wish to die. In the cave of Horeb he would hear the howling of the storm, feel the shock of the earthquake, see the devouring fire, and listen again to the still small voice of God. Men may say that Elijah was defeated, that he was thoroughly panic-stricken. He is gone, but he will come again out of the silence of the desert, and the opposition will hear his voice again.

The record of this disappearance of Elijah is more marvelous than the first. That despair under the juniper tree; that voice of God: "What doest thou here, Elijah?" that deep sleep; that angel food in the strength of which he fasted forty days, like Moses before him and his Lord after him – all in that same desert, – the visit to Sinai, and the voice again: "What doest thou here, Elijah?" the theme of so many sermons. Spurgeon says of himself that when a boy, seeing a deacon in a questionable place, put his finger on his shoulder and startled him with, "What doest thou here, Elijah?"

3. Just as suddenly as on the previous occasion he appears before Ahab in Naboth's vineyard, and evokes from the trembling lips of the startled king: "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" How grim is his response: "I have found you." And then comes the next measure to stem the tide of irreligion. As an oracle of God he denounced the doom of the house of Ahab. It shall perish root and branch; man, woman, nor child shall be left, and Jezebel) though she may array herself in royal apparel and paint her face and attire her

head, yet shall the dogs eat her flesh. The word that had shut up the heavens, the word that had opened the heavens; that word now pronounces the downfall of this entire iniquitous house as certain and irrevocable. There is not space to rehearse the details of the execution of this doom. The records show that not a word of Elijah failed. The whole house of Ahab is blotted out and that lesson has power today. Even men who mock at God and deny the supernatural, and wade through blood to attain the goal of a tyrant's ambition, yet tremble when they read the record of the fall of the house of Ahab. The miser, the covetous man who is an idolater, the individual land grabber, and the corporation thief of national territory may well cherish the experience of Elijah when in the vineyard of Naboth. The quiver of Elijah is not yet empty; another shaft is fitted to his bow of Death.

4. The son of Ahab is on the throne, and he is sick unto death. He had not forgotten the power of the word of Elijah. Let all sons of tyrants remember it. There is ever some weak or broken lattice to cause a fall that brings on the sickness unto death. And this man would inquire of Baal whether he would recover, but from out of his obscurity Elijah intercepts the messenger of inquiry and sends him back with the message of death. The affrighted man inquires of the messenger the appearance of the man who sends him this awful message: "What manner of man was he that came up to meet you and told you these words?" And they answered him: "He was a hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about the loins, and he said, 'It is Elijah the Tishbite.'" The message was more impressive than the garb of the one who sent it and both are always recognizable by tyrants. The unhappy king seeks to arrest the prophet, but when two companies of fifty men have been consumed by fire, the man of God appears before the dying tyrant: "Thus saith Jehovah, forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to enquire of Baalzebub the God of Ekron, is it because there is no God in Israel to enquire of his word? therefore, thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die." So he died according to the word of Jehovah which Elijah had spoken. How significant this terrible

lesson! Not even the sick and dying shall inquire of another God but Jehovah! It was a lesson worthy of association with the lessons of the drought and the rain, and the fire from heaven, and of the vineyard of Naboth. Some men for a time, may forget this lesson, but mankind as a rule never forgets it. The oracles of the heathen have been abandoned to the moles and bats. The lesson of Elijah falls from many lips since his time, and we hear it thus from the lips of Isaiah: "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto the wizards that chirp and mutter; should not a people seek unto their God? On behalf of the living should they seek unto the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." But the effective measures of Elijah have not reached their climax. The leaven of the Baal worship had spread through Jezebel's daughter to the neighboring kingdom of Judah, and while Elijah's mission was to Israel, or to the ten tribes, yet he has a measure for the kindred nations.

5. And this is his letter to Jehoram, king of Judah, the husband of Jezebel's daughter. We have known Elijah as a man of deeds and of mighty words. We have not known him as a writer, but we do know that in this one case where he could not appear in person before the king of Judah, he wrote a letter, which, though not delivered until after his going away, yet found its object and was a posthumous bolt of lightning. This is the letter: "And there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah; but hast walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go a whoring, like to the whoredoms of the house of Ahab; and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father's house, which were better than thyself: behold, with a great plague will the Lord smite thy people, and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods: and thou shalt have great sickness by disease of the bowels, until thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness, day by day." This word was as much a missive of death as

the word to Ahaziah, and is a demonstration that Elijah, though alone against the world, is still triumphant in the great war against the house of Ahab and the Baal worship. Ahab, Jezebel, Ahaziah, and Jehoram, are gone. Jezebel's daughter and all the other offenders will follow later.

6. The sixth measure, God-prompted, which Elijah employed was even more powerful than the preceding ones. It is the measure of perpetuity. He is already informed that the time is at hand when he must leave the earth, and before leaving he must take steps to provide for the full prosecution of his work. This measure consists of a triple anointment. He anoints Elisha to be his own successor. He anoints Hazael, king of Syria, to afflict the idolatrous Israelites, and he anoints Jehu, king of Israel, to be his executor of all the remnants of the house of Ahab, so that his translation from this world to the one above does not put a stop to the effectiveness of the redemption of his race, and to the growth of the true religion. It seems to me however great things one may achieve in the short time of his earthly life, they cannot possibly be equal in effectiveness to those measures which provide for the successors and the perpetuity of the good work when one is gone. Only those who can leave behind them others to take up the work where they left it and who, through organizing power, can provide for an endless succession of workers – only these are the great men of the world. It matters little if Christ is crucified if he left apostles and if these were empowered to institute a larger ministry, so that Paul might commit his work to Timothy, and Timothy in turn to faithful men after him, and thus secure a perpetuity of ministers. Whitefield was a great orator in his day, but his day passed. Wesley was a great organizer, and through his organization he lived long after Whitefield passed away.

7. Elijah has yet one arrow in his quiver; he will not die at all; God will translate him. Not even the sons of the prophets can find him when they search for him. No spot on earth holds his remains; no tombstone marks his resting place, and thus we come to his last effective measure.

He so went away as to create an expectation of his return. The expectation is voiced in these words of Malachi, which is the closing paragraph of the Old Testament: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers; lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

When we come to the New Testament, the angel thus carries on the closing thought of the Old Testament to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist: "For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." The words of our Lord give the interpretation of Malachi's prophecy and of the angelic message to Zacharias. Concerning John the Baptist, Jesus said, "And if ye will receive it, this is Elijah which was to come." "And they asked him saying, Why say the Scribes that Elijah must first come? And he answered and told them, Elijah verily cometh first, and restoreth all things, and how it is written of the son of man, that he must suffer many things and be set at naught. But I say unto you, that Elijah is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him."

We have thus found the elements of the crisis in Elijah's time to be:

- (1) Ahab's marriage with Jezebel, the Tyrian princess.
- (2) The marriage of Jezebel's daughter with Jehoram, prince royal of Judah.
- (3) The consequent unhallowed alliance between Israel and Judah.

(4) The consequent establishment of Baal worship in both kingdoms.

(5) The consequent and extraordinary persecution of the true religion and its prophets in both kingdoms.

(6) The murderous extinction of the seed royal of David by Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel, until one child alone is left of all the male progeny of David.

(7) The consequent imminent hazard of the true religion and its prophets in the world.

And we have found Elijah's effective measures of resistance to be:

(1) The sending of the drought at his first meeting with Ahab.

(2) The triumph over the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, and the breaking of the drought.

(3) His confronting Ahab in the stolen vineyard of Naboth and denouncing the doom of all his house.

(4) His interception of the message of Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, and his denunciation of the doom of the wicked king.

(5) His letter to Jehoram, king of Judah.

(6) His appointment of successors to carry on his work.

(7) His departure from the earth in such a way as to create an expectation of his return in any similar crisis in the world's history.

Such a man not only left his impress in Jewish traditions, but supplied some of the most important New Testament lessons. The most notable of these are the following:

Christ's lesson from Elijah's time in his sermon at Nazareth: "And he said, Verily I say unto you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land) but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city near Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow." This important lesson itself has been the theme of many a timely sermon. The lesson is one of extreme sadness. It carries back the mind to that awful drought when the stock were suffering, and the poor widows suffering most of all. It establishes the truth that any starving, dying woman of Israel could have found relief in an appeal to God's prophet, but only a far-off stranger in Jezebel's country had the faith to make the appeal and be saved from distress.

The next great lesson is the reappearance of Elijah at Christ's transfiguration, where, with Moses, he appears in glory, and communes with the great Redeemer concerning his approaching death at Jerusalem (Matt. 17:34). So that Elijah not only fulfilled the public expectation in coming again in the person of John the Baptist, who had his spirit and his power, but he comes in his own person from the high courts of heaven to confer with our Lord concerning his expiatory death. What a lesson is this when the living apostles are protesting against his death; when the murderers are expecting his death to cut off his influence and stop the progress of his principles! From the realms of the invisible world, the great law giver and the great prophet appear to find in that death the world's only hope of salvation.

Another important New Testament lesson is Paul's use of the remnant of 7,000 in Elijah's day in discussing the great doctrine of "Election" (Rom. 11:2). And what a lesson of comfort this is when we feel our isolation and loneliness; when the reformers in the ages of corruption become discouraged, to look back to Elijah, and see him under the juniper tree wishing he might die in the thought that his life was a failure, and hear the words of God: "I have reserved

for myself seven thousand that have not bowed the knee to Baal." In the times of great moral and spiritual corruption we know that there is hidden away, known only to the omniscient sight, many men and women true to what is right, though the great centers of influence become corrupt and though the great leaders turn away from the simple truth as it is in Jesus.

Another important lesson is given by James the brother of our Lord: "Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months." What a lesson is here for human feebleness and doubt as to the power of prayer, and how much does the world need this lesson! Particularly is it helpful just now when it has become fashionable among the literary great to decry the power of prayer, when unsanctified science, falsely so-called, rebukes the helpless when they sink down on bended knee in dire extremities, saying, "It is vain to pray: all things move according to natural law. It is useless to cry unto God. What profit shall we have if we pray unto him?"

One other New Testament lesson which I refer to Elijah's time, is very sweet. We find the record of it in Matthew 10:41,42. Jesus had been saying that whosoever giveth even a cup of cold water to a disciple in the name of a disciple shall receive a disciple's reward, or whosoever shall receive a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. There seems to be allusion to the words of Elijah addressed to the widow of Sarepta, words spoken in times of famine and drought and thirst: "And give me, I pray thee, a cup of cold water." This lesson speaks to the lowliest and the poorest, those who have the least, and shows the mercy and grace of God in permitting the children of poverty even to find a blessing in helping somewhat the cause of the blessed God.

So that whether we consider the crisis of this man's time or the effective measures adopted by him to stem the tide of religious corruption, or the New Testament lessons borrowed from the record

of his life, or consider his period as an inexhaustible mine for digging up precious themes of pulpit power, we find Elijah and his times as supremely worthy of human study in any age. Such are some of the lessons to be learned from the man who stood alone against the world.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the theme and text of this lesson?
2. How do you account for the ineffaceable impress on the imagination of succeeding generations made by the life of Elijah?
3. Cite some of the traditions suggested by his life.
4. What is the relation of this life to homiletics and what books of Scripture furnish the material for the life of Elijah?
5. What proves that the abiding interest in Elijah is not due exclusively to the dramatic character of that life appealing to the imagination?
6. Give briefly the elements of the world crisis in his time,
7. How does Elijah himself express the situation?
8. How does Jehovah correct the exaggeration of this statement due to ignorance and morbid depression of mind?
9. Cite instances, apart from Jezebel's case, of great harm coming from a woman's influence, and then cite instances of great good resulting from a woman's influence.
10. "There is a Jewish proverb: "When the tale of brick is doubled, then cornea Moses." What scripture embodies the thought?
11. What was Elijah's first measure of meeting the world crisis and how did it fairly test the opposing religions and deities?

12. Why did Ahab send all over the world to find Elijah?
13. How and where did Elijah hide himself during the three and a half years of the drought and how was he nourished?
14. Was his food supply at the brook Cherith brought by angels, Arabs, or birds?
15. What poor woman of this story eclipses Jezebel, and how did this incident add emphasis to the test between opposing deities?
16. Why is Elijah called the first apostle to the Gentiles?
17. What is the proof that this heathen woman was saved by Elijah's ministry?
18. What is the Jewish traditions about this woman's son?
19. What was Elijah's second test?
20. What is the meaning of the word "bait" in "How long halt ye between two opinions?"
21. What heathen authors have imitated Elijah's sarcasm and mockery of a false god?
22. How did Jezebel turn the tables on Elijah?
23. Have you read Henry Ward Beecher's sermon on this panic of Elijah?
24. What great lesson of the juniper tree and the cave in Horeb?
25. What was the third measure of Elijah?
26. What were the great lessons from it?
27. What was the fourth measure?

28. And what was its lesson?

29. What was the fifth measure and its lesson?

30. What was the sixth?

31. What was the seventh and last?

32. Restate the seven elements of the crisis and the seven measures opposing.

33. Cite five New Testament lessons from his life.

IX. ELISHA, THE SUCCESSOR OF ELIJAH

2 Kings 2:13 to 13:21; 2 Chronicles 21:1-20

For the sake of unity, this chapter, like the one on Elijah, will be confined to a single person, Elisha, who was the minister, the disciple, and the successor of the prophet Elijah. "Minister" means an attendant who serves another – generally a younger man accompanying and helping an older man. A passage illustrating this service is 2 Kings 3:11: "Elisha, who poured water on the hands of Elijah." We may here recall a situation when no wash basin was convenient, and the water was poured on our hands for our morning ablutions. A corresponding New Testament passage is Acts 13:5: "Paul and Barnabas had John Mark to their minister," that is, the young man, John Mark, attended the two older preachers, and rendered what service he could. Elisha was also a disciple of Elijah. A disciple is a student studying under a teacher. In the Latin we call the teacher magister. Elijah was Elisha's teacher in holy things. Then Elisha was a successor to Elijah. Elijah held the great office of prophet to Israel, and in view of his speedy departure, God told him to anoint Elisha to be his successor, that is, successor as prophet to the ten tribes.

About four years before the death of Ahab, 800 B.C., Elijah, acting under a commission from God, found Elisha plowing, and the record says, "with twelve yoke of oxen." I heard a cowman once say that it was sufficient evidence of a man's fitness to preach when he could plow twelve yoke of oxen and not swear. But the text may mean that Elisha himself plowed with one yoke, and superintended eleven other plowmen. Anyhow, Elijah approached him and dropped his mantle around him. That was a symbolic action, signifying, "When I pass away you must take my mantle and be my successor." Elisha asked permission to attend to a few household affairs. He called together all the family, and announced that God had called him to a work so life-filling he must give up the farm life and devote himself to the higher business. To symbolize the great change in vocation he

killed his own yoke of oxen and roasted them with his implements of husbandry; and had a feast of the family to celebrate his going into the ministry. It is a great thing when the preacher knows how to burn the bridges behind him, and when the family of the preacher recognizes the fulness and completeness of the call to the service of God.

The lesson of this and other calls is that no man can anticipate whom God will call to be his preacher. He called this man from the plow handles. He called Amos from the gathering of sycomore fruit; he called Matthew from the receipt of custom; he called the fishermen from their nets; he called a doctor in the person of Luke. We cannot foretell; the whole matter must be left to God and to God alone, for he alone may put a man into the ministry. I heard Dr. Broadus preach a great sermon on that once: "I thank Christ Jesus, my Lord, for that he hath enabled me and counted me faithful, putting me into this ministry, who was before a blasphemer."

Elijah served as a prophet fifty-five years. That is a long ministry. There were six kings of Israel before he passed away, as follows: Ahab, Ahaziah, Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, and Joash. There were five sovereigns of Judah, to wit: Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, Ahaziah, Athaliah (this one a woman) and Joash. Athaliah was queen by usurpation.

God said to Elijah, "Anoint Elisha to be thy successor; anoint Jehu to be king of Israel, and anoint Hazael to be king of Syria." Now here were two men God-appointed to the position of king, as this man was to the position of prophet, and we distinguish them in this way: It does not follow that because the providence of God makes a man to be king, that the man is conscious of his divine call, like the one who is called to be a preacher. For instance, he says, "I called Cyrus to do what I wanted done: I know him, though he does not know me." The lesson is that God's rule is supreme over all offices. Even the most wicked are overruled to serve his general purposes in the government of the world.

The biblical material for a sketch of Elisha's life is 1 Kings 19:16 to 2 Kings 13:21. Elisha means, "God the Saviour." The Greek form is *Elisaïos*; we find it in the Greek text of Luke 4:27, where our Lord says, "There were many widows in Israel in the days of *Elisaïos*." "Elijah" is Hebrew, and "Elias" is the corresponding Greek word; "Elisha" is Hebrew, and "*Elisaïos*" is the corresponding Greek form.

We will now distinguish between the work of Elijah and Elisha, giving some likenesses and some unlikenesses. In the chapter on Elijah attention has already been called to the one great unlikeness, viz: that Elijah did not live in public sight; he appeared only occasionally for a very short time. Elisha's whole life was in the sight of the public; he had a residence in the city of Samaria, and a residence at Gilgal; he was continually passing from one theological seminary to another; he was in the palaces of the kings, and they always knew where to find him. He had a great deal to do with the home life of the people, with the public life of the people and with the governmental life of the people. There were some points of likeness in their work, so obvious I need not now stop to enumerate them. Elijah's life was more ascetic, and his ministry was mainly a ministry of judgment, while Elisha's was one of mercy.

The New Testament likenesses of these two prophets are as follows: Elijah corresponds to John the Baptist, and Elisha's ministry is very much like the ministry of Jesus in many respects.

There were many schools of the prophets in the days of Elijah and Elisha. Commencing with Jericho we have one; the next was at Bethel; the third at Gilgal – not the Gilgal near Jericho but the one in the hill country of Ephraim – and there was one at Mount Carmel. These stretched across the whole width of the country – four theological seminaries. The history shows us that Elijah, just before his translation, visited every one of them in order, and that Elisha, as soon as Elijah was translated, visited the same ones in reverse order, and there is one passage in the text that tells us that he was continually doing this.

I think the greatest work of Elisha's life was this instruction work; it was the most far-reaching; it provided a great number of men to take up the work after he passed away. Indeed the schools of the prophets were the great bulwarks of the kingdom of God for 500 years during the Hebrew monarchy. We cannot put the finger on a reformation, except one, in that five hundred years that the prophets did not start. One priest carried on a reformation – we will come to it later. But the historians, the poets, the orators, the reformers, and the revivalists, all came from the prophets. Every book in the Bible is written by a man that had the prophetic spirit. Elisha was the voice of God to the conscience of the kings and the people, and when we study the details of his life we will see that as the government heard and obeyed Elisha it prospered, and as it went against his counsel it met disaster.

We have two beautiful stories that show his work in the homes. One of them is the greatest lesson on hospitality that I know of in the Bible. A wealthy family lived right on the path between the Gilgal seminary and the Mount Carmel seminary. The woman of the house called her husband's attention to the fact that the man of God, Elisha, was continually passing to and fro by their house; that he was a good man, and that they should build a little chamber on the wall to be the prophet's chamber. "We will put a little table in it, and a chair, and a bed, and we will say to him, Let this be your home when you are passing through." Elisha was very much impressed with this woman's thoughtfulness, and the reason for it. He asked her what he could do for her. But she lived among her own people, wanted no favor from the king nor the general of the army. Elisha's servant suggested that she was childless, so he prophesied to her that within a year she would be the mother of a son. The son was born and grew up to be a bright boy, and, like other boys, followed his father to the field. One hot day when they were reaping – and it was very hot in reaping time over there – he had a sunstroke and said, "My head! My head!" The father told his servant to take him to his mother – as usual, let a child get sick and the daddy is sure to say, "Take him to his mother." I don't know what would become of the children if the

mothers did not take care of them when they are sick. But the boy died. The woman had a beast saddled and went to the seminary at Mount Carmel. She knew Elisha was there for he had not passed back. It was a very touching story. Anyhow, Elisha restored the boy to life, and to show how it lingered in his mind, years afterward he sent word to her that there would be a famine of seven years, and she had better migrate until the famine was over. She went away for seven years, and when she came back a land-grabber had captured her home and her inheritance. She appealed the case to Elisha, and Elisha appealed the case to the king, and then the kin~ said, "Tell me, I pray thee, all the great things that Elisha hath done." When he had heard the full story of this man's work he said, "Let this woman have her home back again, and interest for all the time it has been used by another." This is a very sweet story of family life.

There is another story. One of the "*theologs*" – I do not know how young he was, for he had married and had children – the famine pressed so debt was incurred, and they had a law then – we find it in the Mosaic code – that they might make a bondman of the one who would not pay his debts. The wife of this "theolog" came to Elisha and said, "My husband is one of the prophets; the famine has brought very hard times, and my boys are about to be enslaved because we cannot pay the debt." Then he wrought the miracle that we will consider a little later, and provided for the payment of the debt of that wife of the prophet and for the sustenance of them until the famine passed away.

These two stories show how this man in going through the country affected the family life of the people; there may have been hundreds of others. I want to say that I have traveled around a good deal in my days, over every county in this state. It may be God's particular providence, but I have never been anywhere that I did not find good people. In the retrospect of every trip of my life there is a precious memory of godly men that I met on the trip. I found one in the brush in Parker County, where it looked like a "razor-back" hog could not make a living, and they were very poor. I was on my way to an

association, and must needs pass through this jungle, and stopped about noon at a small house in the brush, where I received the kindest hospitality in my life. They were God's children. They fixed the best they had to eat, and it was good, too – the best sausage I ever did eat. So this work of Elisha among the families pleases me. I have been over such ground, and I do know that the preacher who is unable to find good, homes and good people, and who is unable to leave a blessing behind him in the homes, is a very poor preacher. I have been entertained by the great governors of the state and the generals of armies, but I have never enjoyed any hospitality anywhere more precious than in that log cabin in the jungle.

The next great work of Elisha was the miracles wrought by him. There were two miracles of judgment. One was when he cursed the lads of Bethel – that place of idolatry – and turned two she-bears loose that tore up about forty of them. That is one judgment) and I will discuss that in the next chapter. Just now I am simply outlining the man's whole life for the sake of unity.

The second miracle of judgment was the inflicting on Gehazi the leprosy of Naaman. The rest of his miracles were miracles of patriotism or of mercy. The following is a list (not of every one, for every time he prophesied it was a miracle): 2 Kings 2:14 tells us that he divided the Jordan with the mantle of Elijah; 2 Kings 2:19, that he healed the bad springs of Jericho, the water that made the people sick and made the land barren, which was evidently a miracle of mercy. The third miracle recorded is in 2 Kings 2:23, his sending of the she-bears (referred to above) ; the fourth is recorded in 2 Kings 3:16, the miracle of the waters. Three armies led by three kings were in the mountains of Edom, on their way to attack Moab. There was no water, and they were about to perish, and they appealed to Elisha. He told them to go out to the dry torrent bed and dig trenches saying, "To-morrow all of those trenches will be full of water, and you won't see a cloud nor hear it thunder." It was a miracle in the sense that he foresaw how that water would come from rain in the mountains. I have seen that very thing happen. Away off in the

mountains there may be rain – one can't see it nor hear it from where he is in the valley. The river bed is as dry as a powder horn, and it looks as if there never will be any rain. I was standing in a river bed in West Texas once, heard a roaring, looked up and saw a wave coming down that looked to me to be about ten feet high – the first wave – and it was carrying rocks before it that seemed as big as a house, and rolling them just as one would roll a marble.. So his miracle consisted in his knowledge of that storm which they could not see nor hear. If they had not dug the trenches they would have still had no water for a mountain torrent is very swift to fall. In that place where I was, in fifteen minutes there was a river, and in two or three hours it had all passed away. But the trenches of Elisha were filled from the passing flood.

The fifth miracle is recorded in 2 Kings 4:2-7, the multiplying of the widow's oil, that prophet's wife that I have already referred to. The sixth miracle is recorded in 2 Kings 4:8-37, first the giving and then the restoring to life of the son of the Shunamite. The seventh is given in 2 Kings 4:38, the healing of the poisonous porridge: "Ah, man of God! there is death in the pot," or "theological seminaries and wild gourds." The eighth miracle is found in 2 Kings 5:1-4, the multiplying of the twenty loaves so as to feed 100 men. The ninth, 2 Kings 5:1-4, the healing of Naaman's leprosy, and the tenth, 2 Kings 5:26-27, the inflicting on Gehazi the leprosy of which Naaman was healed.

The eleventh miracle is found in 2 Kings 6:1-7, his making the ax to swim. One of the prophets borrowed an ax to increase the quarters; the seminary was growing and the place was too straight for them, and they had to enlarge it. They did not have axes enough, and one of them borrowed an ax. In going down to the stream to cut the wood, the head of the ax slipped off and fell into the water – and there is a text: "Alas, my master, for it was borrowed." The miracle in this case was his suspension of the law of gravity, and making that ax head to swim, so that the man who lost it could just reach out and get it.

Twelfth, 2 Kings 6:8-12, the revealing of the secret thought of the Syrian king, even the thoughts of his bedchamber. No matter what, at night, the Syrian king thought out for the next day, Elisha knew it by the time he thought it, and would safeguard the attack at that point.

Thirteenth, 2 Kings 6:15, his giving vision to his doubtful servant when the great host came to capture them. The servant was scared. Elisha said, "Open this young man's eyes, and let him see that they who are for us are more than those who are against us." What a text! His eyes were opened, and he saw that hilltop guarded with the chariots of God and his angels. We need these eye openers when we get scared.

Fourteenth, the blinding of that Syrian host that came to take him. He took them and prayed to the Lord to open their eyes again. An Irishman reported at the first battle of Manasseh, thus: "I surrounded six Yankees and captured them." Well, Elisha surrounded a little army and led them into captivity.

Fifteenth, 2 Kings 7:6, a mighty host of Syrians was besieging Samaria, until the women were eating their own children, the famine was so great. Elisha took the case to God, and that night, right over the Syrian camp was heard the sound of bugles and shouting, and the racing of chariots, and it scared them nearly to death. They thought a great army had been brought up, and a panic seized them, as a stampede seizes a herd of cattle, and they fled. They left their tents and their baggage: their provisions, their jewels, and the further they went the more things they dropped, all the way to the Jordan River, until they left a trail behind them of the cast-off incumbrances. The word "panic" comes from the heathen god, "Pan," and the conception is that these sudden demoralizations must come from deity. I once saw sixteen steers put an army of 4,000 to flight, and I was one of the men. We were in a lane with a high fence on one side and a bayou on the other side, and suddenly, up the lane we heard the most awful clatter, and saw the biggest cloud

of dust, and one of the men shouted, "The cavalry is on us! The cavalry is on us!" and without thinking everybody got scared. A lot of the men were found standing in the bayou up to their necks, others had gone over the fence and clear across the field without stopping. I did not get that far, but I got over the fence.

Sixteenth, 2 Kings 8:2-6, the foreseeing and foretelling of the seven years of famine.

Seventeenth, 2 Kings 8:11, the revelation of the very heart of Hazael to himself. He did not believe himself to be so bad a man. Elisha just looked at him and commenced weeping. Hazael could not understand. Elisha says, "I see how you are going to sweep over my country with fire and sword; I see the children that you will slay; I see the bloody trail behind you." Hazael says, "Am I a dog, that I should do these things?" But Elisha under inspiration read the real man) and saw what there was in the man. One of the best sermons that I ever heard was by a distinguished English clergyman on this subject.

Eighteenth, 2 Kings 13:14, his dying prophecy.

Nineteenth, the miracle from his bones after he was buried. We will discuss that more particularly later.

We have thus seen his great teaching work, his relation to the government, and his miracles.

Now, let us consider some of his miracles more particularly. The Romanists misuse the miracle of the bones of Elisha, and that passage in Acts 19:11-12, where Paul sent out handkerchiefs and aprons, and miracles were wrought by them. On these two passages they found all their teachings of the relics of the saints, attributing miraculous power to a bit of the cross, and they have splinters enough of that "true cross" now scattered about to make a forest of crosses. In New Orleans an' auctioneer said, "Today I have sold to seventeen men the cannon ball that killed Sir Edward Pakenham."

The greatest superstition and fraud of the ages is the Romanist theory of the miracle working power of the reputed relics of the saints. Some of Elisha's miracles were like some of our Lord's. The enlargement of the twenty loaves to suffice for 100 men reminds us of two miracles of our Lord, and his curing a case of leprosy reminds us of many miracles of our Lord like that. In the Bible, miracles are always numerous in the great religious crises, where credentials are needed for God's people, such as the great series of miracles in Egypt by Moses, the series of miracles in the days of Elisha and the miracles in the days of our Lord.

The greatest of Elisha's work is his teaching work, greater than his work in relation to the government, his work in the families, or his miracles. I think the more far-reaching power of his work was in his teaching. There were spoken similar words at the exodus of Elijah and Elisha. When Elijah went up, Elisha said, "My Father! My Father! The chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" The same words are used when Elisha died. What does it mean? It pays the greatest compliment to the departed: that they alone were worth more to Israel than all its chariots, and its cavalry; that they were the real defenders of the nation.

At one point his work touched the Southern Kingdom, viz: When Moab was invaded, and he wrought that miracle of the waters, filled the trenches and supplied the thirsty armies. Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah was along, and for his sake Elisha saved them.

There are many great pulpit themes in connection with Elisha's history. I suggest merely a few: First, "Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me" – that was his prayer when Elijah was leaving him; second, "The chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof"; third, when he came to the Jordan he did not say, "Where is Elijah?" but he smote the Jordan and said, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" for it made no difference if Elijah was gone, God was there yet; fourth, "The oil stayed" not as long as the woman has a vessel to put it in; fifth, the little chamber on the wall; sixth, "Ah, man of

God! There is death in the pot" – or "theological seminaries and wild gourds" – radical criticism, for instance – there is death in the pot whenever preachers are fed on that sort of food; seventh, "Is it well with thy husband?" "Is it well?" and I will have frequently commenced a meeting with that text; eighth, Elisha's staff in the hands of Gehazi, who was an unworthy man and the unworthy cannot wield the staff of the prophets; ninth, "Alas, my master, it was borrowed!"; tenth, the Growing Seminary – "The place is too straight for us"; eleventh, "Make this valley full of trenches," that is, the Lord will send the water, but there is something for us to do; let us have a place for it when it comes; twelfth, the secret thoughts of the bedchamber are known to God; thirteenth, "They that be with us are more than those that be against us"; fourteenth, "Tell me, I pray thee, all the great works done by Elisha."

These are just a few in the great mine of Elijah or Elisha where we may dig down for sermons. The sermons ought to be full of meat; that is why we preach – to feed the hungry. We should let our buckets down often into the well of salvation, for we cannot lower the well, and we may draw up a fresh sermon every Sunday. We should not keep on preaching the same sermon; it is first a dinner roast, then we give it cold for supper, then hash its fragments for breakfast, and make soup out of the bones for the next dinner, and next time we hold it over the pot and boil the shadow, and so the diet gets thinner and thinner. Let's get a fresh one every time.

QUESTIONS

1. Who was Elisha?
2. What is the meaning of "minister to Elijah"? Illustrate and give corresponding passage in the New Testament.
3. What is the meaning of "Elisha, a disciple of Elijah"?
4. What is the meaning of "Elisha, a successor to Elijah"?

5. Give the date, author, manner, and nature of Elisha's call, his response and how he celebrated the event.
6. What is the lesson of this and other calls? Illustrate.
7. How long his prophetic term of office and what kings of Israel and Judah were his contemporaries?
8. What secular calls accompanied his, how do you distinguish between his and the call of the others and what is the lesson therefrom?
9. What is the biblical material for a sketch of Elisha's life?
10. What is the meaning of his name?
11. What is the Greek and Hebrew forms of his name? Give other examples.
12. What likenesses and unlikenesses of the work of Elijah and Elisha?
13. What New Testament likenesses of these two prophets?
14. How many schools of the prophets in the days of Elijah and Elisha, and where were they located?
15. What was Elisha's great teaching work in the seminaries? Discuss.
16. What was Elisha's part in governmental affairs?
17. What of his work in the families? Illustrate.
18. What two classes of his miracles and what miracles of each class?

19. What is the Romanist misuse of the miracle of Elisha's bones and Acts 19:11-12?
20. What miracles were like some of our Lord's?
21. When and why were Bible miracles numerous?
22. Which of Elisha's works was the greatest?
23. What words spoken at the exodus of Elijah and Elisha and what their meaning?
24. At what point did Elisha's work touch the Southern Kingdom?
25. What New Testament lesson from the life of Elisha?
26. Give several pulpit themes from this section not given by the
27. What is the author's exhortation relative to preaching growing out of this discussion of Elisha?

X. GATHERING UP THE FRAGMENTS THAT NOTHING BE LOST

The title of this chapter is a New Testament text for an Old Testament discussion. For the sake of unity the last two chapters were devoted exclusively to Elijah and Elisha. It is the purpose of this discussion to call attention to some matters worthy of note that could not very well be incorporated in those personal matters, and yet should not be omitted altogether.

It is true, however, that the heart of the history is in the lives of these two great prophets of the Northern Kingdom. In bringing up the record we will follow the chronological order of the scriptures calling for exposition.

Jehoshaphat's Shipping Alliance with Ahaziah. We have two accounts of this: first, in 1 Kings 22:47-49, and second, in 2 Chronicles 20:35-37. I wish to explain, first of all, the locality of certain places named in these accounts. Tarshish, as a place, is in Spain. About that there can be no question. About Ophir, no man can be so confident. There was an Ophir in the southern part of Arabia; a man named Ophir settled there, but I do not think that to be the Ophir of this section. The Ophir referred to here is distinguished for the abundance and fine quality of its gold. Several books in the Bible refer to the excellency of "the gold of Ophir," and to the abundance of it. Quite a number of distinguished scholars would locate it in the eastern part of Africa. Some others would locate it in India, and still others as the Arabian Ophir. My own opinion is, and I give it as more than probable, that the southeastern coast of Africa is the right place for Ophir. Many traditions put it there, the romance of Rider Haggard, "King Solomon's Mines," follows the traditions. The now well-known conditions of the Transvaal would meet the case in some respects.

Ezion-geber is a seaport at the head of the Gulf of Akaba, which is a projection of the Red Sea. What is here attempted by these men is to re-establish the famous commerce of Solomon. I cite the passages in

the history of Solomon that tell about this commerce. In 1 Kings 9:26 we have this record: "And King Solomon made a navy of ships in Eziongeber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom. And Hiram (king of Tyre) sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon. And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to King Solomon." Now, 1 Kings 10:11 reads: "And the navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of Almug trees and precious stones." This "almug-trees" is supposed to be the famous sweet-scented sandalwood. The precious stones would agree particularly with the diamond mines at Kimberly in the Transvaal.

Then, 10:22 reads: "For the king had at sea a navy of Tarshish with the navy of Hiram: Once every three years came the navy of Tarshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks." The ivory and apes would fit very well with the African coast, but we would have to go to India to get the spices, which are mentioned elsewhere, and the peacocks. A three years' voyage for this traffic seems to forbid the near-by Arabian Ophir, and does make it reasonable that the merchant fleet touched many points – Arabia, Africa, and the East Indies. It is, therefore, not necessary to find one place notable for all these products – gold, jewels, sandalwood, ivory, apes, spices, and peacocks. Solomon, then, established as his only seaport on the south Eziongeber, a navy, manned partly by experienced seamen of Tyre, and these ships would make a voyage every three years. That is a long voyage and they might well go to Africa and to India to get these varied products, some at one point and some at another.

Now Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah (king of Israel) made an alliance to re-establish that commerce. The first difficulty, however, is that the Chronicles account says that these ships were to go to Tarshish, and the Kings account says that they were ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir. My explanation of that difficulty is this: It is quite evident

that no navy established at Eziongeber would try to reach Spain by circumnavigating Africa, when it would be so much easier to go from Joppa, Tyre, or Sidon over the Mediterranean Sea to Spain. "Tarshish ships" refers, not to the destination of the ships, but to the kind of ships, that is, the trade of the Mediterranean had given that name to a kind of merchant vessel, called "Ships of Tarshish." And the ships built for the Tarshish trade, as the name "Indianman" was rather loosely applied to certain great English and Dutch merchant vessels. It is an error in the text of Chronicles that these ships were to go to Tarshish. They were Tarshish ships, that is, built after the model of Tarshish ships, but these ships were built at Eziongeber for trade with Ophir, Africa, and India.

Verse 47 of the Kings account needs explanation: "And there was no king in Edom; a deputy was king." The relevancy of that verse is very pointed. If Edom had been free and had its own king, inasmuch as Eziongeber was in Edom, Judah never could have gone there to build a navy. But Edom at this time was subject to Judah, and a Judean deputy ruled over it. That explains why they could come to Eziongeber.

One other matter needs explanation. The account in Kings says, "Then said Ahaziah the son of Ahab unto Jehoshaphat, Let my servants go with thy servants in the ships. But Jehoshaphat would not." Ahaziah attributed the shipwreck of that fleet to the incompetency of the Judean seamen. He did not believe that there would have been a shipwreck if he had been allowed to furnish experienced mariners, as Hiram did. So Kings gives us what seems to be the human account of that shipwreck, viz: the incompetency of the mariners; but Chronicles gives us the divine account, thus: "Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath destroyed thy works. And the ships were broken." How often do we see these two things: the human explanation of the thing, and the divine explanation of the same thing. Ahaziah had no true conception of God, and he would at once attribute that shipwreck to human incompetency, but Jehoshaphat knew better; he knew that

shipwreck came because he had done wickedly in keeping up this alliance with the idolatrous kings of the ten tribes.

THE TRANSLATION OF ELIJAH

Let us consider several important matters in connection with the translation of Elijah, 2 Kings 2:1-18. First, why the course followed by Elijah? Why does he go from Carmel to Gilgal and try to leave Elisha there, and from Gilgal to Bethel and try to leave Elisha there, and from Bethel to Jericho and try to leave Elisha there? The explanation is that the old prophet, having been warned of God that his ministry was ended and that the time of his exodus was at hand, wished to revisit in succession all of these seminaries. These were his stopping places, and he goes from one seminary to another. It must have been a very solemn thing for each of these schools of the prophets, when Elisha and Elijah came up to them, for by the inspiration of God as we see from the record, each school of the prophets knew what was going to happen. At two different places they say to Elisha, "Do you know that your master will be taken away to-day?" Now, the same Spirit of God that notified Elijah that his time of departure was at hand, also notified Elisha, also notified each school of the prophets; they knew.

But why keep saying to Elisha, "You stay here at Gilgal; the Lord hath sent me to Bethel," and, "You stay here at Bethel; the Lord hath sent me to Jericho," and "You stay here at Jericho; the Lord hath sent me to the Jordan"? It was a test of the faith of Elisha. Ruth said to Naomi, "Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to forsake thee; for where thou goest, I will go; and God do so to me, if thy God be my God, and thy people my people, and where thou diest there will I die also." With such spirit as that, Elisha, as the minister to Elijah, and as the disciple of Elijah, and wishing to qualify himself to be the successor of Elijah, steadfastly replied: "As the Lord liveth and thy soul liveth, I will not forsake thee." "I am going with you just as far as I can go; we may come to a point of separation, but I will go with you to that point." All of us, when we leave this world, find a place

where the departing soul must be without human companionship. Friends may attend us to that border line but they cannot pass over with us.

We have already discussed the miracle of the crossing of the Jordan. Elijah smote the Jordan with his mantle and it divided; that was doubtless his lesson to Elisha, and we will see that he learned the lesson. I heard a Methodist preacher once, taking that as a text, say, "We oftentimes complain that our cross is too heavy for us, and groan under it, and wish to be relieved from it." "But," says he, "brethren, when we come to the Jordan of death, with that cross that we groaned under we will smite that river, and we will pass over dry-shod, and leave the cross behind forever, and go home to a crown to wear."

The next notable thing in this account is Elijah's question to Elisha: "Have you anything to ask from me?" "Now, this is the last time; what do you want me to do for you?" And he says, "I pray thee leave a double portion of thy spirit on me." We see that he is seeking qualification to be the successor. "Double" here does not mean twice as much as Elijah had, but the reference is probably to the first-born share of an inheritance. The first-born always gets a double share, and Elisha means by asking a double portion of his spirit that it may accredit him as successor. Or possibly "double" may be rendered "duplicate," for the same purpose of attenuation. The other prophets would get one share, but Elisha asks for the first-born portion. Elijah suggests a difficulty, not in himself, but in Elisha ; he said, "You ask a hard thing of me, yet if you see me when I go away, you will get the double portion of my spirit," that is, it was a matter depending on the faith of the petitioner, his power of personal perception. "When I go up, if your eyes are open enough to see my transit from this world to a higher, that will show that you are qualified to have this double portion of my spirit." We have something similar in the life of our Lord. The father of the demoniac boy says to our Lord, "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Jesus

replied, "If thou canst! All things are possible to him that believeth." It was not a question of Christ's ability, but of the supplicant's faith.

The next thing is the translation itself. What is meant by it? In the Old Testament history two men never died; they passed into the other world, soul and body without death: Enoch and Elijah. And at the second coming of Christ every Christian living at that time will do the same thing. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, they shall be changed." Now, what is that change of the body by virtue of which without death, it may ascend into heaven? It is a spiritualization of the body eliminating its mortality, equivalent to what takes place in the resurrection and glorification of the dead bodies. I preached a sermon once on "How Death [personified] Was Twice Startled." In the account of Adam it is said, "And he died" and so of every other man, "and he died." Methuselah lived 969 years, but he died. And death pursuing all the members of the race, strikes them down, whether king or pauper, whether prophet or priest. But when he comes to Enoch his dart missed the mark and he did not get him. And when he came to Elijah he missed again. Now the translations of Enoch and Elijah are an absolute demonstration of two things: First, the immortality of the soul, the continuance of life; that death makes no break in the continuity of being. Second, that God intended from the beginning to save the body. The tree of life was put in the garden of Eden, that by eating of it the mortality of the body might be eliminated. Sin separated man from that tree of life, but it is the purpose of God that the normal man, soul and body, shall be saved. The tradition of the Jews is very rich on the spiritual significance of the translation of Enoch and Elijah. In Enoch's case it is said, "He was not found because God took him," and in this case fifty of the sons of the prophets went out to see if when Elijah went to heaven his body was not left behind, and they looked all over the country to find his body. Elisha knew; he saw the body go up.

Now, in Revelation we have the Cherubim as the chariot of God. This chariot that met Elijah at the death station was the chariot of God, the Cherubim. Just as the angels met Lazarus and took his soul

up to heaven, and it is to this wonderful passage that the Negro hymn belongs: "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot."

Elisha cried as the great prophet ascended, "My Father! My Father! The chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof," the meaning of which is that thus had gone up to heaven he who in his life had been the defense of Israel, worth more than all of its chariots and all of its cavalry. Now these very words "were used when Elisha died. "My Father! My Father! The chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof," signifying that he had been the bulwark of the nation as Elijah had been before him.

ELISHA'S MINISTRY, 2 KINGS 2:19-25

As Elijah went up something dropped – not his body, but just his mantle – his mantle fell, and it fell on Elisha, symbolic of the transfer of prophetic leadership from one to the other. Now, he wants to test it, a test that will accredit him; so he goes back to the same Jordan, folds that same mantle up just as Elijah had done, and smites the Jordan. But, mark you, he did not say, "Where is Elijah" – the man, Elijah, was gone, but, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" and the waters divided and he came over. There he stood accredited with a repetition of the miracle just a little before performed by Elijah, which demonstrated that he was to be to the people what Elijah had been. And this was so evident that the sons of the prophets recognized it and remarked on it: "The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha." It is a touching thing to me, this account of more than fifty of these prophets, as the president of their seminary is about to disappear, came down the last hill that overlooks the Jordan, watching to see what became of him. And they witness the passage of the Jordan – they may have seen the illumination of the descent of the chariot of fire. They wanted to go and get the body – the idea of his body going up they had not taken in, and they could not be content until Elisha, grieved at their persistence) finally let them go and find out for themselves that the body had gone to heaven.

I have just two things to say on the healing of the noxious waters at Jericho. The first is that neither the new cruse nor the salt put in it healed the water. It was a symbolic act to indicate that the healing would be by the power of God. Just as when Moses cast a branch into the bitter waters of Marah, as a symbolic act. The healing power comes from God. The other re-mark is on that expression, "unto this day," which we so frequently meet in these books. Its frequent recurrence is positive proof that the compiler of Kings and the compiler of Chronicles are quoting from the original documents. "Unto this day" means the day of the original writer. It does not mean unto the day of Ezra wherever it appears in Chronicles, but it means unto the day of the writer of the part of history that he is quoting from. More than one great conservative scholar has called attention to this as proof that whoever compiled these histories is quoting the inspired documents of the prophets.

THE CHILDREN OF BETHEL AND THE SHE-BEARS

Perhaps a thousand infidels have referred Elisha's curse to vindictiveness and inhumanity. The word rendered "little children" is precisely the word Solomon uses in his prayer at Gibeon when he says, "I am a little child" – he was then a grown man. Childhood with the Hebrews extended over a much greater period of time than it does with us. The word may signify "young men" in our modern use of the term. And notice the place was Bethel, the place of calf worship, where the spirit of the city was against the schools of the prophets, and these young fellows¹ call them "street Arabs," "toughs," whom it suited to follow this man and mock him: "Go up, thou bald bead; go up, thou bald head." Elisha did not resent an indignity against himself, but here is the point: these hostile idolaters at Bethel, through their children are challenging the act of God in making Elisha the head of the prophetic line. He turned and looked at them and he saw the spirit that animated them – saw that it was an issue between Bethel calf worship and Bethel, the school of the prophets, and that the parents of these children doubtless sympathized in the mockery, and saw it to be necessary that they

should learn that sacrilege and blasphemy against God should not go unpunished. So, in the name of the Lord he pronounces a curse on them – had it been his curse, no result would have followed. One man asks, "What were these she-bears doing so close to Bethel?" The answer is that in several places in the history is noted the prevalence of wild animals in Israel. We have seen how the old prophet who went to this very Bethel to rebuke Jeroboam and turned back to visit the other prophet, was killed by a lion close to the city.

Another infidel question is, "How could God make a she bear obey him?" Well, let the infidel answer how God's Spirit could influence a single pair of all the animals to go into the ark. Over and over again in the Bible the dominance of the Spirit of God over inanimate things and over the brute creation is repeatedly affirmed. The bears could not understand, but they would follow an impulse of their own anger without attempting to account for it.

THE INCREASE IN THE WIDOW'S OIL, 2 KINGS 4:1-7

We have already considered this miracle somewhat in the chapter on Elisha, and now note particularly:

1. It often happens that the widow of a man of God, whether prophet or preacher, is left in destitution. Sometimes the fault lies in the imprudence of the preacher or in the extravagance of his family, but more frequently, perhaps, in the inadequate provision for ministerial support. This destitution is greatly aggravated if there be debt. The influence of a preacher is handicapped to a painful degree, when, from any cause, he fails to meet his financial obligations promptly. In a commercial age this handicap becomes much more serious.

2. The Mosaic Law (Lev. 25:39-41; see allusion, Matt. 18:25) permitted a creditor to make bond-servant of a debtor and his children. For a long time the English law permitted imprisonment for debt. This widow of a prophet appeals to Elisha, the head of the prophetic school, for relief, affirming that her husband did fear God. In other words, he was faultless in the matter of debt. The

enforcement of the law by the creditor under such circumstances indicates a merciless heart.

3. The one great lesson of the miracle is that the flow of the increased oil never stayed as long as there was a vessel to receive it. God wastes not his grace if we have no place to put it: according to our faith in preparation is his blessing. He will fill all the vessels we set before him.

DEATH IN THE POT, 2 KINGS 4:38-41

We recall this miracle to deepen a lesson barely alluded to in the chapter on Elisha. The seminaries at that time lived a much more simple life than the seminaries of the present time; it did not take such a large fund to keep them up. Elisha said, "Set on the great pot," and one of the sons of the prophets went out to gather vegetables. He got some wild vegetables he knew nothing about – here called wild gourd – and shred them into the pot, not knowing they were poisonous. Hence the text: "O man of God, there is death in the pot." I once took that as the text for a sermon on "Theological Seminaries and Wild Gourds," showing that the power of seminaries depends much on the kind of food the teachers give them. If they teach them that the story of Adam and Eve is an allegory, then they might just as well make the second Adam an allegory, for his mission is dependent on the failure of the first. If they teach them the radical criticism; if they teach anything that takes away from inspiration and infallibility of the divine Word of God or from any of its great doctrines – then, "O man of God, there is death in the pot" – that will be a sick seminary.

In a conversation once with a radical critic I submitted for his criticism, without naming the author, the exact words of Tom Paine in his "Age of Reason," denying that the story of Adam and Eve was history. He accepted it as eminently correct. Then I gave the author, and inquired if it would be well for preachers and commentators to revert to such authorities on biblical interpretation. He made no reply. We find Paine's words not only in the first part of the "Age of

Reason," written in a French prison without a Bible before him, but repeated in the second part after he was free and had access to Bibles. I gave this man a practical illustration, saying, "You may take the three thousand published sermons of Spurgeon, two sets of them, and arrange them, one set according to the books from which the texts are taken – Genesis 1, 2, 3, etc., and make a commentary on the Bible. By arranging the other set of them in topical order, you have a body of systematic theology." Now this man Spurgeon believed in the historical integrity and infallibility of the Bible, in its inspiration of God, and he preached that, just that. As the old saying goes, "The proof of the pudding is in the chewing of the bag." He preached just that, and what was the result? Thousands and thousands of converts wherever he preached, no matter what part of the Bible he was preaching from; preachers felt called to enter the ministry, orphan homes rose up, almshouses for aged widows, colportage systems established, missionaries sent out, and all over the wide world his missionaries die in the cause. One man was found in the Alps, frozen to death, with a sermon of Spurgeon in his hand. One man was found shot through the heart by bush rangers of Australia, and the bullet passed through Spurgeon's sermon on "The Blood of Jesus." Now, I said to this man, "Get all your radical critics together, and let them preach three thousand sermons on your line of teaching. How many will be converted? How many backsliders will be reclaimed? How many almshouses and orphanages will be opened? How many colportage systems established? Ah! the proof of the pudding is in the chewing of the bag. If what you say is the best thing to teach about the Bible is true, then when you preach, it will have the best results. But does it?"

We have considered Elisha's miracle for providing water for the allied armies of Israel, Judah, and Edom, when invading Moab (2 Kings 3:10-19). We revert to it to note partakelary this passage: "And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew sword, to break through unto the king of Edom: but they could not. Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for

a burnt offering upon the wall. And there was great wrath against Israel: and they departed from him, and returned to their own land" (2 Kings 3:26-27). On this passage I submit two observations:

1. Not long after this time the prophet Micah indignantly inquires, "Shall I give my firstborn for my transgressions, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" The context is a strong denunciation of the offering of human sacrifices to appease an angry deity. The Mosaic law strongly condemned the heathen custom of causing their children to pass through the fire of Molech. Both this book of Kings and Jeremiah denounce judgment on those guilty of this horrible practice. The Greek and Roman classics, and the histories of Egypt and Phoenicia, show how widespread was this awful custom.

2. But our chief difficulty is to expound the words, "There was great wrath against Israel." But what was its connection with the impious sacrifice of the king of Moab? Whose the wrath? The questions are not easy to answer. It is probable that the armies of Edom and Judah were angry at Israel for pressing the king of Moab to such dire extremity, and so horrified at the sacrifice that they refused longer to co-operate in the campaign. This explanation, while not altogether satisfactory, is preferred to others more improbable. It cannot mean the wrath of God, nor the wrath of the Moabites against Israel. It must mean, therefore, the wrath of the men of Judah and Edom against Israel for pressing Mesha to such an extent that he would offer his own son as a sacrifice.

QUESTIONS

I. On the two accounts of Jehoshaphat's shipping alliance with Ahaziah, 2 Kings 22; 2 Chronicles 20, answer:

1. Where is Tarshish?
2. Where is Ophir?
3. Where is Ezion-geber?

4. What is the relevance of v. 47 in Kings?
5. Explain "ships of Tarshish" in Kings, and "to go to Tarshish" in Chronicles.
6. What commerce were they seeking to revive, and what passage from 1 Kings bearing thereon?
7. How does the book of Kings seem to account for the wreck of the fleet, and how does Chronicles give a better reason?

II. On the account of Elijah's translation (2 Kings 2:1-18) answer:

1. Why the course taken by Elijah by way of Gilgal, Bethel, and Jericho?
2. How did both Elisha and the schools of the prophets know about the impending event?
3. What was the object of Elijah in telling Elisha to tarry at each stopping place while he went on?
4. What was the meaning of Elisha's request for "a double portion" of Elijah's spirit and why was this a hard thing to ask, i.e., wherein the difficulty? Illustrate by a New Testament lesson.
5. What was the meaning of Elijah's translation, and what other cases, past or prospective?
6. What was the meaning of Elisha's expression, "My Father! My Father! The chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof," and who and when applied the same language to Elisha?
7. How does Elisha seek a test of his succession to Elijah and how do others recognize the credentials?

III. How do you explain the seeming inhumanity of Elisha's cursing the children of Bethel?

IV. On the widow's oil (2 Kings 4:1-7), answer:

1. What often happens to the widow of a prophet or preacher, and what circumstance greatly aggravates the trouble?
2. What is the Mosaic law relative to debtors and creditors?
3. What one great lesson of the miracle?

V. On "Death in the Pot" answer:

1. What the incident of the wild gourds?
2. What application does the author make of this?
3. What comparison does the author make between Spurgeon and the Radical Critics?

VI. On Elisha's miracle, the water supply, answer:

1. What is the allusion in Micah's words, "Shall I give my first-born," etc.?
2. What the meaning of "There was great wrath against Israel"?

XI. THE STORY OF NAAMAN, THE SIEGE OF SAMARIA, AND THE DEATH OF JEHORAM (OF JUDAH)

2 Kings 5:1 to 8:24

We commence this chapter with the story of Naaman, recorded in 2 Kings 5:1-24, which is a continuation of the record of Elisha's miracles. In this passage we have a very graphic and complete account of two miracles which are especially remarkable in their relation to each other. One was the cure of leprosy and the other was the infliction of leprosy. One was wrought on a foreigner and a man of prominence; the other, on a Hebrew and a servant. The second was consequential on the first and the two together must have given Elisha a great reputation at home and abroad, and at the same time extolled Jehovah as the great God in the surrounding nations.

This Naaman was by nationality a Syrian, by position a captain, a great and honorable man. "He was also a mighty man of valor," one who had rendered valuable services to his country in giving deliverance (Hebrew salvation) from an oppressor. Here arises the question, "What was this deliverance of Naaman?" To this question we find no reply in the Scriptures but there is evidence enough from the Assyrian monuments. Prior to this time an Assyrian monarch had pushed his conquests as far west as Syria bringing this country into subjection, but Syria revolted after a few years and once more gained her independence. It was this deliverance that was wrought by Naaman in which he distinguished himself and won the special favor of the Syrian king.

But Naaman had one serious defect. He was a leper. The way this fact is introduced is most natural, viz.: by the adversative conjunction *but*. It is true that the conjunction is in italics, showing that the word does not occur in the original, yet the adversative idea is there. It is suggestive of the fact that too often people spoil a splendid recommendation of other people with the introduction of some defect; as, Byron was a great poet but was clubfooted. Or that man is an excellent gentleman but he has one failing, etc. So we go

on describing people, saying all the good things we know about them, and then marring their fine reputation by pointing out some fault, altogether unlike the spirit of the inspired historian here in the case of Naaman. This thought is further illustrated in the case of David. Nathan said to him, "Jehovah hath put away thy sin, howbeit," and then follows with a long list of consequences of the sin which would come upon David. We find the adversative conjunction used to introduce good qualities also, as in 2 Chronicles 19:3. After Jehu the prophet had rebuked Jehoshaphat for his sin, he said, "Nevertheless there are good things found in thee," etc. Other examples might be given but these are enough. To sum up what I have said: But may be used adversely to introduce the bad when the good is mentioned first, and to introduce the good when the bad is mentioned first. A fact generally admitted by all, is that both qualities are found in varying ratios in all of us. Therefore we should remember the saying, "There is so much good in the worst of us and so much bad in the best of us that it scarcely behooves any of us to say anything about the rest of us."

As has already been stated, this defect of Naaman was leprosy, which comes from the Hebrew word meaning a stroke, because the ancients regarded this disease as a stroke from God. Of course it carried with it the idea of penalty for sin committed, just as the three friends of Job reasoned with respect to his case. They said, "This stroke is from God because of your sins." They thus attributed all afflictions to sin as the cause and to God as inflicting the penalty. The Greek word from which we get our word leprosy means "a scale" and thus indicates a certain characteristic of the disease, viz: that in certain stages of the disease the skin becomes scaly.

There is a most impressive lesson here for us in the instrumentality of this miracle. On some one of their marauding expeditions into northern Israel they had captured a little Jewish maiden who was made servant to Naaman's wife. The beauty and radiance of her life are seen in the few words here said about her. She expressed a most ardent desire that her master might be healed and pointed out the

source of such healing as her God, who would effect such a cure through his servant, Elisha, the prophet in Samaria. All this is an expression of affection, the affection of a servant for her master. How sublime such affection under such conditions! A captive maiden, with the loyalty of a child for a parent, reveals to her master the true source of healing. May we not think of this little Jewish maid in her love for and her loyalty to her oppressors, as a kind of type of Christians in their relation to the world? Surely the human instrumentality in this great divine transaction should not be underestimated. Neither can we fail to recognize the human in God's plan for the salvation of the world. This little maid played her part and played it well. Are we doing our part in the great plan of God as well as she?

The transactions from this point in the story are rapid and interesting. Naaman appeals to the Syrian king who in turn sends a letter to Jehoram the king of Israel asking for the recovery of Naaman of his leprosy. This royal courtesy of the Syrian king was misunderstood by the king of Israel, who thought that the king of Syria was seeking a quarrel with him. Just here Elisha intervenes to save the day, by offering to do what Jeroboam in his royalty could not do, viz: to heal Naaman of his loathsome disease. But how simple the prescription! Dip in the Jordan seven times. Why seven? Seven was a symbol of perfection and here symbolized the perfect obedience required upon the part of Naaman. But Naaman was wroth and went away saying, "Behold, I thought, he would surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place and recover the leper. Are not . . . the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?" This reply shows what was in Naaman's mind. He expected Elisha to make a great display, and he seems also to have expected an incantation by which the cure would be effected, but the prophet understood human nature too well to be engulfed into violating the law of his God. The captain's anger was most natural; it was the result of a keen disappointment,

but it prepared the way for a hearing from his servants, which resulted in his cure.

There are several lessons here for us: (1) Human nature calls for display. This is true often in the most vital matters, such as the salvation of the soul; (2) May we not find in this incident an illustration of the simplicity of the plan of salvation? Upon this point many stumble. They say, "What shall I do to be saved?" or "What shall I give?" (3) Healing is obtained by taking the remedy: "He that believeth on him is not condemned: he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).

It is noteworthy in this connection that the servants of Naaman interceded with him as children begging a father and this influenced him to try the offered remedy. Their reasoning with him was simple and effective: "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather then when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean"? This was sufficient. He went down, dipped himself and was healed. Here arises the question of the virtue of his cure. It was not in the Jordan, nor in the seven dips, but in the power of God. Of course, it came in response to conditions met, just as in the case of all other blessings.

May we not find here a parallel case to the New Testament teaching on baptismal regeneration? Hardly; here the dipping was made a condition of Naaman's healing, but in the New Testament we do not find baptism a condition of salvation, but the conditions of salvation are repentance and faith. However there is this parallel: that God's own prescribed conditions must be met before there is any blessing. In this connection it is well to note also that the word for "dip" here, in the Septuagint, is *bapto* from which comes the New Testament word "baptize," and that this word means the same as the original Hebrew word, viz: to dip, to immerse. This Old Testament incident is an illustration of the meaning of *bapto* and baptize and thus confirms the New Testament teaching of baptism by immersion.

Naaman's gratitude for his healing is very beautifully and impressively expressed: (1) He returned from the Jordan to Elisha, a journey of forty or fifty miles out of his way; (2) he offered the prophet the presents which he had brought from Damascus; (3) he embraced the Jehovah religion and made a vow to renounce all other gods but Jehovah; (4) he honored the request of Elisha (as he thought) by his servant, Gehazi. In all this one is reminded of the incident in the New Testament where the one leper returned to thank our Lord for his healing, evidencing the additional blessing of salvation, yet this act of Naaman involved far more trouble and inconvenience than that of the Samaritan leper..

It should also be noted here that Elisha refused his presents, not because he was not worthy to receive them, but to show this heathen man that not all of God's prophets were mercenary, as was the case with the priests of other religions. It sets forth Elisha in a beautiful light. We see here the spirit of self-denial which reminds us of Paul's life and teaching. One could wish that he might always be able to find just such a spirit in the prophets of Jehovah in this twentieth century. Alas, too often the spirit of Gehazi possesses them rather than the spirit of Elisha. But we thank God that the majority are walking in the steps of Elisha.

But what did Naaman mean by wanting "Two mules' burden of earth"? It cannot be definitely known just what was in his mind, but of all the theories proposed, the context seems to have a great bearing on the one which says that he wanted this earth from the land of Israel to erect an altar to Jehovah in the land of Syria or, perchance, to sprinkle it upon a certain area of his own land, thereby making it "holy ground" and suitable for the worship of Jehovah. History tells us that some of the Jews carried earth from their own land when they were carried into captivity to Babylon. This seems to have been the prevailing idea among the Orientals. Yet another matter should be considered here, viz: If Naaman here embraced the Jehovah religion, why should he bow himself down in the house of Rimmon? This seems to be a reference to his work, as an attendant

upon the king of Syria, to perform certain duties relative to his master in the house of Rimmon. He seemed to realize that Jehovah was a jealous God, but he was not strong enough to become a martyr to the Jehovah religion. In this we may not judge Naaman too severely, especially in view of the fact that Naaman was a heathen, reared in a heathen religion, and going back to a heathen environment, and may we not confidently expect to meet Naaman in the "Sweet By and By" as one of God's jewels gathered out of a foreign land? One could wish that he might greet this Syrian general and this little Jewish maid along with Elijah's widow of Zarephath, Elisha's Shunammite woman and our Lord's Syro-Phoenician woman on the bright shores of everlasting deliverance.

Over against this cheering picture of Elisha and Naaman hangs the blighting picture of Gehazi, a renegade Jew. With the spirit of avarice he seized his opportunity to get the presents offered his master. His sin was manifold. He was guilty of lying, covetousness, and sacrilege. He lied to Naaman outright in the matter of the presents; he was prompted in it all by the spirit of covetousness; and he committed sacrilege in the ill use he made of the name of his master and in his profane oath. But the eye of the seer was there and he was completely caught. May we not rejoice that justice found her own, or shall we revolt at the severity of the penalty inflicted? If the latter, then must we pass by the case of Ananias and Sapphira and a multitude of others like unto them? We will rejoice rather in the prophetic and apostolic judgments since they are strokes of God through his own appointed executioners. But what of the descendants of Gehazi involved in this penalty? Here comes in the law of heredity which he could escape only by denying himself of the privilege of marriage which he may have done; we do not know. One could wish that he might lift the curtain and see further into the course of Naaman and Gehazi, but we must be content with whatever revelation has disclosed, and dare not to intrude into the precincts of the Most Holy uninvited. Here they pass from our view never to reappear.

Turning to the Scriptures we meet again Benhadad II, king of Syria, who was under treaty with Israel twelve years during which time Ahab furnished troops in a league against Assyria, but now he breaks the treaty and invades Israel according to the prophecy given Ahab when he let Ben-hadad go (1 Kings 20:35-43). What a pity Ahab did not obey the Lord and put an end to him. But we should not have had this great lesson of national sin and its penalty.

This Benhadad comes now, besieges Samaria and causes sufferings in Israel unparalleled in their history. The head of an ass, the most undesirable part of the most undesirable animal, sold for 80 shekels, about \$50.00; a kab of doves' dung sold for 5 shekels, about \$3.00; and the women killed their own sons and ate them. Such indicates the horrors of this terrible siege. But this is the fulfilment of the prophecy of Deuteronomy 28:56-57, which has three literal fulfilments in the history of the Jewish people, viz: (1) in this instance, the siege of Samaria by Benhadad; (2) in the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and (3) in the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, A.D. 70. The story here of the two women and the appeal of one of them to the king is very pathetic. Who can censure the mother for hiding her son? The mystery is that the other one ever gave up hers. All this shows the dire straights into which they had become because of this siege.

For all this the king of Israel proposes a remedy, viz: that the head of Elisha be taken from his shoulders. But we note the fact that this was contrary to law. An Oriental monarch might do such a thing consistently. Beheading was practiced in Egypt, Assyria, and Babylonia, but it was positively forbidden by the Jewish law. Why should he strike for Elisha when such a calamity came? He evidently thought that Elisha was to blame for their condition. He may have associated this instance with the drought which came at the word of Elijah, or he may have thought that Elisha could work miracles at will and that he purposely refused to relieve the people. However the case may be, it is the common plea of the enemies of God's

cause against his agents and ministers. So with an oath he vows to take the head of God's prophet.

But Elisha was not to be so ill-treated. He was a seer and the Spirit of God in him was sufficient for every emergency. He saw the plan before the messenger of vengeance arrived and made counterplans to defeat the whole purpose of the king. The story of this incident is beautifully told in the record: how Elisha stopped the messenger and even his master, and with keen insight into the future made a most interesting prediction, viz: that on the morrow they would be amply supplied at reasonable prices. The messenger was doubtful but this prediction allowed for Elisha a probation and a respite from the wrath of the king.

The fulfilment of this prediction is found in the incident of the lepers, the story of which is given in the record. The lesson of this incident is illustrative of the condition of the sinner: "Why sit we here until we die? If we say we will enter the city, when the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit here, we shall die also . . . if the Syrians kill us, we shall but die." This pictures the state of the sinner and his reasoning when he faces the question of decision: "I can but die; therefore, will I trust him." This text has been used by hundreds of preachers to illustrate the point of decision. There is also another fine text in this connection, viz: "We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace." What a good missionary text! They told it and so should we. The world, like Samaria, is perishing for the necessaries of life, and we know where there is plenty. Let us tell it, lest when the blessed light of God's eternal morning bursts forth upon us our sin of omission will overtake us.

They did tell it, but as is often the case when we preach, they did not believe it. It was received with distrust; they thought the Syrians had set a trap for them and so they sent messengers and chariots after them to ascertain the facts in the case. The report of these messengers was convincing. They pursued the Syrians as far as the

Jordan and found garments and vessels scattered all along the way. Evidently the Syrians had gotten a good "scare" but this is easily explained when we take into consideration that it was the Lord's "scare." He made them to hear a great noise of chariots, of horsemen and of a great host. It is no wonder that they ran for their lives. In this connection we find the fulfilment of the prophecy of Elisha to the messenger of vengeance in two important aspects, viz: (1) the price of flour and barley became reasonable; (2) the messenger of vengeance was made gatekeeper by the king and was trodden to death, thus fulfilling Elisha's statement that he should see it with his eyes but should not eat thereof. This must have been a horrible death, to be trampled to death while starving and yet in sight of plenty. We may think of this as illustrating another class of sinners, those who die in sight of plenty and yet because of their previous course in sin are altogether unable to get to the table of God's kingdom. This man died because of his unbelief, 2 Kings 7:2; 7:19f.

The next event according to our study of this section is the death of Jehoram king of Judah and his sad funeral. He had a complication of dreadful diseases, which are mentioned in any good commentary. The sad feature of his funeral is the fact that he was not buried in the usual way in which they buried their kings. He had no burning for him, and was not interred in the sepulchers of the kings. It is sad to have such distinction in one's death. But such must be the lot of those who sin against Jehovah. We may be sure our sins will find us out.

It is well to note that the book of Obadiah falls in this period, and will be studied in the light of this history when we take up the prophets of the Assyrian period.

QUESTIONS

1. Tell the story of Naaman, the leper.
2. Who was Naaman and what was his standing?

3. What was Naaman's victory for God?
4. What word introduces the defect in Naaman, what play on it and what the lesson?
5. What this defect and why was it considered such a misfortune?
6. What was the instrumentality of his healing and what the lessons?
7. What was Elisha's prescription, what was Naaman's reply, and what the lesson?
8. How was he finally induced to take the remedy and in what was the virtue of his healing?
9. What was the word here in the Septuagint translated "dipped," and what was the bearing on the New Testament usage of the word?
10. What was the effect of this healing on Naaman and how did he show his gratitude?
11. Explain Naaman's request for "two mules' burden of earth" and his bowing himself in the house of Rimmon.
12. How did Gehazi get the reward, what was his sin and what was his punishment?
13. Who was Benhadad and what was his relation to Israel at this time?
14. What indicates the great suffering in the siege of Samaria?
15. What was the king's proposed remedy and what the meaning of it?
16. Give the story of the king's messenger of vengeance and Elisha's promise of plenty.

17. Give the story of the four lepers at the gate. What was the lesson?

18. What missionary text in this connection?

19. How was the message of the lepers received, how was it verified, and how were Elisha's promise and prophecy fulfilled?

20. Describe the awful sickness and death of Jehoram, and his sad funeral.

21. What prophetic book has its setting here?

XII. THE REIGNS OF AHAZIAH (OF JUDAH), JEHORAM (OF ISRAEL) AND THE RISE OF THE HOUSE OF NIMSHI

2 Kings 8:25 to 10:17; 2 Chronicles 22:1-8

In the scriptures cited for this chapter there are some apparent discrepancies which first claim our attention. Second Kings 8:25 says, "In the twelfth year of Jehoram the son of Ahab king of Israel did Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah begin to reign," while 2 Kings 9:29 says, "And in the eleventh year of Joram the son of Ahab began Ahaziah to reign over Judah." There are two possible solutions of this difficulty: (1) it may be accounted for by their method of reckoning in which they counted the king's "first year" twice; first, from the accession to the end of the civil year and second, from the accession to the same day of the next year; (2) he may have begun to reign with his father as viceroy in the eleventh year and as full king in the twelfth year. Either of these explanations relieves us from the difficulty of an apparent discrepancy.

A second apparent discrepancy occurs in 2 Kings 8:26 and 2 Chronicles 22:2. The Kings passage says that Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he began to reign, while the Chronicles passage says that he was forty-two. The latter statement is impossible because his father was only forty years old when he died. So the only explanation of this difference in statement is that it must be an error of the copyist. Twenty-two is more advanced than we would ordinarily expect but it is probable in view of the early marriages in the Orient and also that each prince had, besides his wife, several concubines. That Jehoram had several appears from 2 Chronicles 21:17.

The character of Ahaziah is set forth in the record with the author's accustomed clearness showing some of the antecedent forces that operated in his life. The first thing mentioned is the fact that his mother's name was Athaliah, the daughter (granddaughter) of Omri, who is here mentioned because of his prominence. She was a

daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, passing on to this king the full benefit of the law of heredity. So we are not surprised that the record says that he walked in the ways of the house of Ahab. The Kings account says, "for he was the son-in-law of the house of Ahab," i.e., he was related to the house of Ahab by marriage. An added reason for this course of Ahaziah is given by the Chronicles account: "for his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly . . . for they [the house of Ahab] were his counsellors after the death of his father, to his destruction." Our sympathy goes out to Ahaziah in view of these conditions. How could he, in view of these hereditary traits and special maternal instruction) have done otherwise than to walk in the "ways of the house of Ahab"? Only by the grace of God which is able to overcome all the forces of the past, whether they be hereditary or environmental.

On Elisha's interview with Hazael we need to note: (1) this visit of the prophet to Damascus was perhaps for protection, but it is not definitely known as to why he went there; (2) that Elisha, whatever his reason for going, did not hide himself but was recognized upon his arrival; (3) that in his answer to Hazael he sarcastically told him to tell his master just what Hazael wanted to tell him and then gave him the true revelation of the case; (4) that Hazael did not tell his master all that Elisha said and thus falsified to him, but it was not the fault of the prophet; (5) that Elisha here showed his great heart of sympathy for his people in their sufferings, and (6) that God revealed the future of Benhadad, Hazael and Israel to Elisha, a clear proof of predictive prophecy.

The next topic for our discussion is the aid rendered Jehoram by Ahaziah in the defense of Ramothgilead; then follows the other events leading up to the anointing of Jehu as king over Israel. In the defense of Ramothgilead Ahaziah and Jehoram co-operate, uniting their forces against Hazael, king of Syria. Here Jehoram was wounded. Then the two kings withdrew – Ahaziah to Jerusalem and Jehoram to Jezreel to be nursed. Soon after this Ahaziah visited Jehoram there and Just at this time Elisha appears upon the scene

and commissions a son of the prophets to anoint Jehu. Thus the events pass in rapid succession leading to the destruction of the house of Ahab. We should note in this connection the striking fact that Jehu was not in the regular line of succession and was one of the two kings of Israel selected by Jehovah.

The circumstances and events of his anointing are graphically told by the author of Kings. The prophet who had been commissioned by Elisha went to Ramothgilead, found the captains sitting, called out Jehu, anointed him, gave him his commission, outlined his work and fled. According to this prophecy Jehu was to avenge the blood of the prophets against the house of Ahab by destroying every man child, as in the case of Jehoram and Baasha, and the dogs were to eat Jezebel in Jezreel. Immediately Jehu returned to the servants, his fellow captains, and made known unto them the prophet's message and they arose at once and proclaimed him king. This involved the duty of preaching righteousness and executing God's orders as sheriff, a very great responsibility and no small task. Later we see that Jehu was equal to the task thrust upon him, and God is abundantly vindicated in making this selection.

The chief characteristic of Jehu's work is, that it is iconoclastic. He was an image smasher, a great revolutionist. Was he pious? Not very pious, i.e. in the sense of reverencing the traditions of the past. He was, perhaps, filial toward his parents; we don't know, but he had full regard for his mission under God. If he was not pious he was religious in that he executed the program that God handed to him through the prophet. To be sure he was not a "sissy" but was a kind of "dare-devil" in spirit, a stern, John the Baptist sort of fellow. Such are the characteristics of the men who have led great revolutionary movements.

The first act of his reign was the slaying of Jehoram which is vividly presented in 2 Kings 9:14-26. The salient points in this story are: (1) Jehu's journey to Jezreel and his approach recognized by the watchman in the tower; (2) Jehoram's messengers to Jehu and his

disposition of them; (3) Jehoram and Ahaziah's advance to meet Jehu, Jehoram's greeting and Jehu's reply; (4) Jehu's execution of Jehoram and Ahaziah's escape, and (5) the disposition of the body of Jehoram and the fulfilment of prophecy. The second act of his reign was the slaying of Ahaziah. After the death of Jehoram Jehu pursued Ahaziah who had fled by the way of the "garden house" or perhaps a better translation would be, "Beth-Gan," a town at the foot of the hills bounding the plain of Esdraelon, south of Jezreel, and on the road to Samaria. It is somewhat difficult, but not impossible, to harmonize the Kings account with the Chronicles account of this episode. Omitting the italics in 2 Kings 9:27 and inserting 2 Chronicles 22:9a just after "and he fled to Megiddo," we may conceive of this transaction as follows: Jehu ordered Ahaziah to be smitten at the ascent of Gur, but he fled to Megiddo where he was wounded, then carried to Samaria and concealed but was discovered by the emissaries of Jehu who carried him to Megiddo where Jehu was at this time; then and there Jehu put him to death. Such is a possible combination of the two accounts and removes the difficulty so far as a contradiction is concerned. Second Chronicles 22:7 explains Ahaziah's death as the direct cause of his alliance with Jehoram and his untimely death was a judgment upon him for his idolatry. Murphy (Handbook on Chronicles) explains his hiding in Samaria thus, "And he was about to hide in Samaria," but he was turned aside by his pursuers, was wounded and went to Megiddo where he died. There is one fault with this explanation: it does not provide for the expression, "they caught him and carried him to Jehu," etc. So withal the method of combining, as given above, is more satisfactory.

Here may be raised the question of the morality of the action of Jehu in killing Jehoram and Ahaziah. The answer is simple and easy. It was clearly God's execution, and was therefore nothing more than the stroke of the law. The Jehovah religion was very much endangered by the house of Ahab and these kings, one of Israel and the other of Judah, were branches of that house. If Jehu sinned, it was in the method or spirit in which he did the work, rather than in

the taking of the life of these men. That was clearly his commission from Jehovah. He did not sin in this transaction any more than a sheriff does who executes a criminal under the penalty of the law. God had rendered the verdict and appointed Jehu the executioner. But if he used unnecessary cruelty in this execution, or did it in the spirit of vengeance, then we would admit that he sinned, because God has said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay" and no man, mob, or court of men has the right to execute a criminal in the spirit of vengeance. The cruel fate of Jezebel is horrifying and bloodcurdling. Her cunning attempt to thwart her predicted fate is repulsing and disgusting. Upon learning of Jehu's approach, Cleopatra-like, she painted her eyes, attired her head, and from a window saluted her executioner with, "Is it peace?" From Jehu came the prompt and decisive response, "Who is on my side? Throw her down," and down she came with a crash, spattering her blood upon the wall and upon the horses. Then Jehu drove right over her body trampling her underfoot. She was so mangled that the dogs found her body an easy prey and when they went to take her up to bury her there was nothing left except the skull, the palms of her hands and her feet. What a horrible picture, but it was the just recompense for sin. She was the greatest enemy of the Jehovah religion after the days of Pharaoh, and God made Pharaoh an example to the world; so did he make Jezebel, and in Revelation we find her followers given space to repent and then sternly threatened with eternal destruction. All this was according to the prophecy of Elijah, 1 Kings 21:17ff. How definitely and surely God forecasts the fate of the wicked. We should not be deceived. "God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." When one walks the streets of a modern city and beholds the painted faces of our own American women, he is constrained to ask, "Have all our women become Jezebels, and what will the harvest of this generation be?"

Jehu did not stop with the execution of Jehoram, Ahaziah and Jezebel but pursued his destructive work in the judgment on the house of Ahab. The record says that Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria, meaning descendants, sons and grandsons, whom Jehu

ordered the elders or rulers of Jezreel to slay. He first challenged them to select one for a king and "put up" their fight, but they declared their allegiance to Jehu. Then he wrote them to execute these sons at once and bring him their heads. This they did, upon which Jehu justified his course by citing a prophecy (1 Kings 21:17ff), and then extended his destructive course so as to include the rest of Ahab's house at Jezreel: his great men, his familiar friends and his priests. What a sweep of destruction in human life! But he did not stop there. The princes of Judah were a menace to his reign and therefore he must dispose of them. This he did in wholesale massacre at the shearing house of the shepherds. These princes royal of Judah were on their way to see their relatives at Samaria when they met Jehu who took them in charge at once and put them to death. Pursuing his course, Jehu met Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him, and after an exchange of greetings he found in this man a suitable companion and associate in his "zeal for the Lord," as Jehu called it.

With Jehonadab originated the Rechabites, taking the name from Rechab, Jehonadab's father. They were descended from a family of the Kenites and were a very sturdy people, with some remarkable characteristics. They drank no wine, built no permanent dwelling houses, planted no vineyards, sowed no seed, but lived in tents and followed the most simple habits of life. In Jeremiah's day they were still holding to the tenets of Jehonadab in teaching and practice and because of their faithfulness in obeying the commandments of Jehonadab, Jehovah promised that Jehonadab should never want a man to stand before him. This promise is being fulfilled to this day. In the vicinity of Medina are to be found today the descendants of the Rechabites with the same characteristics and habits. This is a remarkable fulfilment of promise, but it is just what may come to any people who will keep the commands of Jehovah. He will not suffer his faithfulness to fail, and consistent with his holy nature, "He never denies himself, but he abideth faithful."

Jehonadab's character is not hard to determine in the light of his affiliations. Two cannot walk together except they be agreed. Jehu was a "dare-devil" sort of character, and he found his match in Jehonadab. They were partners and coworkers from this time on and the work of Jehu was the work of Jehonadab.

Jehu's last act of establishing himself on the throne of Israel is recorded in 2 Kings 10:17, and refers, perhaps, to the destruction of the female descendants of Ahab. Thus was finally completed the political revolution which transferred the throne from the house of Omri to that of Nimshi, the fifth of the royal families of Israel.

QUESTIONS

1. How harmonize the apparent discrepancies in 2 Kings 8:25 and 2 Kings 9:29; 2 Kings 8:26 and 2 Chronicles 22:2?
2. What was the character of Ahaziah and what were the examples of a mother's influence here?
3. Describe the interview of Elisha with Hazael and explain the difficulty of this passage.
4. What were the events which led to the anointing of Jehu as king over Israel? . .
5. What striking fact with reference to Jehu's anointing?
6. Recite the circumstances and events of his anointing.
7. According to this prophecy what was Jehu to do and what was to be the fate of Jezebel?
8. How was he made king and what involved in his call to be king?

9. What were the chief characteristics of his work, was he pious, what is the meaning of piety and what kind of character necessary to a resolution.
10. What was the first act of his reign and how was this accomplished?
11. What was the second act of his reign and how was this accomplished?
12. How does Chronicles explain Ahaziah's death?
13. What question of ethics relative to Jehu's slaying Jehoram and Ahaziah and what the explanation?
14. What was Jezebel's fate and what prophecy was fulfilled in her death?
15. What was the judgment on the house of Ahab?
16. What prophecy fulfilled in the judgment on the house of Ahab?
17. What was the judgment on the princes Royal of Judah?
18. Whom did Jehu attach to his support, and what is the origin of the Rechabites and what were their practices?
19. What was the character and work of Jehonadab?
20. What was Jehu's last act in establishing himself on the throne of Israel?

XIII. FROM THE RISE OF JEHU TO THE REIGN OF JEHOASH AND THE CORRESPONDING HISTORY OF JUDAH

2 Kings 10:18 to 13:9; 2 Chronicles 22:9 to 24:24.

Israel is now on a rapid decline, while Judah is under the sway of a wicked woman. There are some antecedent facts which relate to the Southern Kingdom, Judah, and the story of her fortunes which we need to review here. In previous chapters we have considered the character and reign of Jehoshaphat. He is described as a good man, a great king, an eminently righteous and successful king, one of the best kings that Judah ever had, and the record tells of the various reforms which he instituted, the cities which he built, the new system of judiciary which he established and the various other great improvements in his kingdom. But Jehoshaphat made three mistakes in his reign:

First, he married his son to the daughter of Jezebel. It was the cause of great disaster to his realm, almost to the extinction of his dynasty and the wrecking of his kingdom. Second, he made an alliance with Ahab to reconquer Ramothgilead, and take it from Syria. The 400 false prophets all promised him victory, but Micaiah prophesied failure, and that prophecy came true as they failed to take Ramothgilead and Ahab was slain, and Jehoshaphat returned home to Jerusalem in partial disgrace. There is no question but that Jehoshaphat lost a great deal of popularity by that mistake and failure.

Third, he made an alliance with Jehoram, son of Ahab, in an attempt to reconquer and subject Moab to the northern realm. But for Elisha who told them to make the valley full of trenches and thus make room for water to flow down that their hosts might have drink he would there have suffered probably an ignominious defeat. Through Elisha and the providence of God he was saved but the expedition proved fruitless. The king of Moab sacrificed his first-born son and great wrath came upon Israel and they retired from the siege and

went home and left King Mesha still master of his own country. Shortly before his death we find Jehoshaphat appoints his son Jehoram as king with him and they are joint kings over southern Israel. Jehoram becomes co-regent with Jehoshaphat when thirty-two years of age. Very soon we find the influence of Athaliah his wife. She had him under her control even more than Jezebel had Ahab under her control. She was a vicious, strong-minded, self-willed, determined, and depraved woman. Here is Athaliah's influence. We can almost see Jezebel herself here. Under the influence of this northern woman Jehoram begins his murderous work by shedding the blood of six of his brothers. We find his character described thus: "He had the daughter of Ahab to wife, and he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord." Notice further: "Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and made the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go a whoring, and led Judah astray." That is, he attempted to lead all southern Israel after the worship of Baal, just as Jezebel had tried to lead all northern Israel after the worship of Baal. Athaliah is her mother's daughter.

All this leads to great troubles. His dynasty is in danger. The first thing we read is that disaster befalls the kingdom. In the same account we have the story of the revolt of Edom, one of his provinces which paid him heavy tribute. He undertakes to put down the rebellion, and, in a desperate conflict the Edomites with their chariots and horsemen having surrounded him, he rises up at night and breaks through the rank of the enemy and saves himself, but Edom passes out of his hands and is lost to his realm, and a large revenue is, of course, lost with it. This is the first stage of the downfall of himself and kingdom.

The next stage is the revolt of Libnah. This Philistine city had been paying tribute no doubt and now revolts against him and secures its freedom and thus another stronghold is cut off from his kingdom. This added to his unpopularity still more.

Shortly after this we have the story of the posthumous message from Elijah the prophet written before the going away of the great servant of God, doubtless preserved by Elisha and now sent to Jehoram. It is the prophet Elijah's message of doom to this wicked king: "Behold, the Lord will smite with a great plague thy people, and thy children and thy wives, and all thy substance," and Jehoram is to be smitten with a horrible and loathsome disease, too loathsome to be mentioned. We don't know what that plague was nor how many people perished because of it. These things would add greatly to the unpopularity of Jehoram throughout his realm.

Another invasion takes place: "And the Lord stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines, and of the Arabians, which are beside the Ethiopians: and they came up against Judah, and brake into it, and carried away all the substance that was found in the king's house, and his sons also, and his wives; so that there was never a son left him, save Jehoahaz, the youngest of the sons." They invaded his capital, took his treasures, and his harem, and carried them away, only one son left, Jehoahaz, known more correctly as Ahaziah.

Shortly after this Jehoram falls a prey to his sickness or disease and dies, unlamented, undesired. In some respects a blessed death, that is, to those who were left. He is refused burial in the sepulchers of the kings. They buried him in the City of David but not in the sepulchers of the kings. He is too loathsome to be buried in the sacred burying grounds of the kings of Israel where David was buried. This reign is one of the first fruitages of that ill-fated alliance of Jehoshaphat with the house of Ahab.

Then follows the reign of Ahaziah his son, which lasts about one year. He is a worthy son of his unspeakable mother. We find his record very short and is all a failure and ends in disgrace and murder. The record says that he entered into an alliance with Jehoram, his uncle, of northern Israel to fight against Ramothgilead, and bring it back into subjection out of the hands of Syria. Evidently

their onslaught is successful. Ramothgilead is captured and Jehu left in charge of it. Jehoram is wounded and has to return to Jezreel in order that he might be healed, and while he is recovering Ahaziah goes back to Jerusalem, then pays a visit to Jehoram at Jezreel, and while they are at Jezreel we have enacted a scene which we discussed in a previous chapter. Jehoram is slain by an arrow shot from the bow of Jehu. Ahaziah flees for his life and is pursued by Jehu's men, wounded in his chariot, escapes to Megiddo, and there dies. This is the end of the second of the kings of Judah that came under the influence of this unholy alliance of northern Israel.

Now we take up the reign of Athaliah. As soon as Athaliah heard of the death of Ahaziah her son, and knowing that all of Ahaziah's brothers had been captured and taken away by the Arabians and Philistines, and there was no proper heir to the throne excepting her grandsons, the narrative says that she arose and destroyed all the seed royal, that is, all her own grandsons. A woman that would do that is a monster rather than a woman. Fortunately, however, providence interposes. The chief priest of the nation, Jehoiada, a man of great influence and power, had married a sister of Ahaziah, and daughter of Athaliah, and by means of intimacy which this relationship permitted, took the only son of Ahaziah, just one year old, and hid him. Thus the dynasty is preserved.

Now let us look at Jehu's reign. The first great act which he performs is the destruction of Baal and Baal-worshippers, and he does it under false pretense. He does it in a most treacherous manner under the guise of zeal for their religion and he deceives them. He says, "Ahab served Baal little, Jehu shall serve him much," and in that way gains the popularity of all those in favor of Baal worship. In that way he manages to secure the presence of a great host of Baal worshippers, but took pains to see that none of the Jehovah worshippers were there. All the priests of Baal are butchered. That is different from the death of the 450 prophets of Baal and the 450 prophets of Asherah by Elijah at Mount Carmel. That was a fair feat by Elijah, but they failed, and therefore deserved death. This was

treachery on the part of Jehu, treachery that was inexcusable, and having done that, he breaks down the altars of Baal, destroys all the Baal worshipers in the capital of Samaria. But that does not imply that there were no Baal worshipers anywhere else in the kingdom for there were Baal cults in various sections still. Although Jehu had destroyed Baal worship as a state religion he institutes one very little better. He is a worshiper of Jehovah but it is a corrupt worship of the calves of Dan and Bethel and he follows in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin. It is awful how all of these men are said to have followed Jeroboam the son of Nebat in that he made Israel to sin. Every one of them does the same thing. There is a sermon on that statement entitled, "The Monotony of Sin." All for generations doing the same thing and they are doing the same thing now; they have been doing the same thing for thousands of years. Jehu's reign is on the whole an evil reign. The religion of Jehovah made little progress under his rule.

Now Athaliah reigns and we have the strange spectacle of a woman on the throne of Judah, the daughter of Jezebel with Phoenician blood in her veins. We would expect that she would try to do what Jezebel did, viz: install, as the state religion of Judah, the worship of Baal, and so she did. There was no persecution of the prophets in southern Israel. She evidently could not do that, but she partly destroyed the Temple, took the sacred vessels out of it, established priests in her own temple of Baal and set up Baal worship, using the vessels that had been dedicated to Jehovah. Shrines were built throughout the whole kingdom, and now southern Judah is in danger of being brought under the sway of Baal as northern Israel was before Elijah appeared upon the scene. But there was one man in the realm raised up by divine providence to save the situation. Jehoiada is the son-in-law of Athaliah, a -man of influence and power, and evidently a man of great wisdom and piety, the foremost counsellor in the realm, the wisest and best man in the kingdom, the high priest. Six years of silence passes, and Jehoiada is wise enough to know how to hold his tongue and hold his wife's tongue all that time. It is something for a man to be able to hold his tongue on such a great

secret as he possessed, for six years. When little Joash had grown to be seven years old we find that Jehoiada began to strengthen himself in the kingdom and to mature his plans to set Joash upon the throne and destroy his mother-in-law, Athaliah. The time is ripe for action, the people are evidently dissatisfied with the reign of Athaliah, and are ready for the change. Jehoiada matures his plans with great deliberation, extreme caution and great shrewdness. We can't understand all the details of the situation, the exact relation of the house and the Temple, but we find that he divides the Temple guards and palace guards into three companies, and stations them in separate places surrounding the king, so that he is perfectly safe, and no enemies can get to him. A way is left open by which Athaliah may come into the Temple and any who may follow her, but they will at once be slain as they attempt to pass through. At a given time and a given signal, all the soldiers in their places, the people throng around and raise the shout, Joash is set upon the throne; he is handed the testimony of the law according to the command of Moses, the crown is placed upon his head, and Joash is proclaimed king. Athaliah does not know what is taking place, she hears the noise, rushes forth and pretends to be horrified, tears her clothes and shouts, "Treason! Treason!" Was it treason? How many people there are who know they are in the wrong, and yet when the people turn against them, are ready to cry out like that. They put on an air of injured innocence. Hypocrites! This avails her nothing. She is in the Temple courts and they will not spill Phoenician blood there. "Have her forth between the ranks," says Jehoiada, and as they made way for her she went to the entry of the horse gate and there she is slain. Jehoiada matured his plans as perfectly as Jehu and carried them out almost as quickly and successfully. That ends the reign of Phoenician blood upon the throne of Israel. There is no doubt that most of the people of Israel felt that a great crisis had passed.

Now let us look at the reign of Joash. He reigned for forty years beginning when a boy only seven. Joash was a grandson of Athaliah on his father's side, so there was a little of the Phoenician blood in his veins. It is not all pure Hebrew blood, and as blood will tell

sooner or later, we find that his Phoenician, corrupt, heathen blood manifests itself in the life of Joash afterward.

His great religious revolutions and reforms were instituted by Jehoiada. As soon as Joash is made king, Jehoiada renews the covenant thus: "And Jehoiada made a covenant between himself and all the people, and the king, that they should be the Lord's people." That covenant had been broken through Athaliah's introduction of Baal worship, through the breaking up of the Temple services and the defection of the people to Baal. Now Jehoiada must renew the covenant between God and Judah. The covenant made at Sinai had been broken more than once, and had been renewed. He establishes a covenant between the king and the people, and between the king and Jehovah on the basis of the law of Moses. The king is to be representative of Jehovah and must rule as Jehovah directs through his prophets. Now there is a revival of true religion and a reformation is begun. The first thing to be done is to destroy Baal: "And all the people of the land went to the house of Baal, and brake it down; his altars and his images brake they in pieces thoroughly, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. And the priest appointed officers over the house of the Lord." They carried out a work in southern Israel almost similar to what Jehu did in northern Israel: the priests of Baal are slain, the temple of Baal is broken down, and the shrines of Baal destroyed, and Baal worship is given a severe blow in southern Israel, but it is not extinguished; there are still Baal worshipers in high places, shrines here and there throughout the country where they carry on this vile and licentious worship of their deity.

The next thing was to reorganize the Temple service: "And Jehoiada appointed the officers of the house of the Lord under the hand of the priests and Levites whom David had distributed in the house of the Lord, to offer the burnt sacrifices of the Lord, as it is written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, according to the order of David." The reorganization of the Temple service, a reinstatement of the sacrifices of the burnt offerings and thus once

more the nation is brought back to the worship of the true God, Jehovah. Again, it is said, "So all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet." A brief pointed statement, but there is a history behind it. There must have been turmoil, strife, confusion, bloodshed, and unrest in the city of Jerusalem as this revolution in religion was going on, but Jehoiada's hands have hold of the reigns of power and the city calms down and is quiet. Joash is a good and faithful king so long as he is under the influence of Jehoiada, who did the strange thing to take two wives for Joash, which is very hard to account for.

There were great reforms instituted by Joash. Notice what the king himself institutes. He begins first to repair the Temple that had been broken down during the reign of Athaliah and Jehoram, and in order to do that he must raise money, and to raise money he commands the priests to bring in the revenue which they receive from the people. Under the law of Moses every man of Israel had to pay a shekel or a half-shekel every year. Now the priests or Levites were to receive that money and bring it to the king to be utilized in repairing the Temple. Joash depends upon the honesty of the priests. We see here a very inefficient organization, and it doesn't work. "Howbeit the Levites hastened it not." They pocketed the money. It didn't go into the treasury and therefore the house of the Lord could not be repaired. That scheme failed because the priests lacked honesty and integrity.

Now let us look at Jehu's political relations. We find by consulting Price's *The Monuments and the Old Testament*, that Jehu was forced to pay heavy tribute to Shalmaneser, king of Assyria. Shalmaneser says himself at that time, "I received tribute of the Tyreans and the Sidonians and of Jehu the son of Omri," in one of his inscriptions and on the back of an obelisk left by Shalmaneser we have pictures of Jehu bringing to him presents of gold, basins of gold, bowls of gold, cups of gold, lead, a royal scepter and staves. Thus we see that Jehu had to pay heavy tribute in order to maintain the integrity of his kingdom after thus securing it. We have no record that Jehu ever

fought against Shalmaneser or that Shalmaneser ever fought against Jehu; but Shalmaneser had gained a great victory over Damascus and Syria, and Jehu had to pay him this heavy tribute to keep him away from Israel. Thus Jehu's reign was not all peace and prosperity. He is in a sense under the iron heel of Assyria. We also see from 2 Kings 10:32-33 that Jehu lost all eastern Palestine, which was smitten by Hazael, king of Syria, and thus his kingdom was stripped and there was left to him only a small portion of western Palestine: "In those days the Lord began to cut Israel short; and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel; from Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the valley of Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan." Thus Jehu is stripped of all of his possessions east of the Jordan. Though one of the ablest of the monarchs of northern Israel, Jehu was also the one that led Israel into sin, and his kingdom was in worse condition at the end than it was at the beginning.

Now let us take up the reign of Jehoahaz. Jehu reigned twenty-eight years, and was succeeded by Jehoahaz his son, who reigned only seventeen years, and followed in the footsteps of his father and Jeroboam the son of Nebat which made Israel to sin. In the reign of Jehoahaz we read: "And Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel and he delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Benhadad the son of Hazael, continually "That means that they were compelled to pay tribute, heavy tribute to their conquerors, which drained them of all their resources and left them little better than slaves.

Jehoiada brings forth a new scheme. He is a wise man, and when he finds this other plan of Joash will not work, he suggests that they make a great chest, or box, and bore a hole in the top of it so that no man can get his hand into it, and place this box beside the altar near the entrance to the house of the Lord where the people come and go so that every man could put his tax into the box. It is not long before they find a large amount of money in it, and they are very careful

how it should be counted and paid out, and very careful about the men who are to count it and hand it over to the workmen. We see how they go on with the details of the work, and they found enough money to repair the breaches of the Temple that had been broken down, and to provide the various vessels, the cups of silver, snuffers, basins, trumpets, vessels of gold, or vessels of silver. Then we find that the Temple worship is resumed, and the burnt offerings were offered continually as it had been for several years previous. Then follows an account of the death of Jehoiada, an old man, 130 years old. They buried him in the city of David among the kings as he was a king's son-in-law, and was honored as few other Israelites have been who were not of the royal family.

After his death the bad blood flowing in the veins of Joash is manifest. A change comes; the pressure is off; the wise counsellor is gone, and Joash now begins to show what is his true nature and character. He comes under the influence of the princes of Judah, the upper ten or the upper 400, who secretly or openly preferred the worship of Baal to the worship of Jehovah, possibly because of its licentiousness. Joash is foolish enough to listen to them, sanctions the worship of Baal and of Asherah, turns his back upon the worship of Jehovah. Worse than that, Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, a prophet of God, is raised up to rebuke and reprove Joash for his sin, but Joash commands that Zechariah be stoned to death in the Temple area because he has dared to warn and admonish the king. Base ingratitude. "O, what a falling off was this!" Zechariah's last words, "The Lord look upon it and require it," were remembered and recorded, as was the dying statement of Jesus Christ and of Stephen, the martyr. Some scholars think that when Jesus Christ was speaking to the Pharisees about the blood of Zechariah, which should be required of their generation, that he referred to this same Zechariah. Joash has incurred the hostility of the prophets and the worshipers of Jehovah in his realm. The best people of his country conspired against him, and very soon he is put to death. Israel is in a desperate condition during the reign of Jehoahaz. Hazael and Benhadad have assaulted him and-defeated him to such an extent

that only fifty horsemen and ten chariots and ten thousand footmen are left. For the king of Syria destroyed them and made them like the dust in the threshing. The kingdom could hardly be lower and exist at all. It is at its lowest ebb. Joash's reign ends in misery and defeat. Hazael whom Elijah had anointed in Damascus, that ruthless monarch of Syria, who has crushed northern Israel under his feet and ground it to dust, advances as far south as Judah and Jerusalem and meets a large army of Joash and defeats it utterly, kills the princes of the people, and sends all the spoil that he captures back to Damascus. Then Hazael goes down to Philistia and takes the strong city of Gath, then he turns his eye upon Jerusalem with its vast treasures and is intending to advance up one of those mountain defiles to the hilltop whereon Jerusalem is situated and conquer the capital and take all its treasures. The only thing Joash can do, is to buy Hazael off. Then Joash strips the Temple of all the hallowed things, takes the gold and the treasure and hands it over to Hazael. Hazael is satisfied, as all he wants is the plunder and the treasure of the Temple, and in this way he got it without fighting for it.

Joash perishes by the hands of his own servants who had become disgusted with him because of his apostasy and evil reign. They buried him with the family in the City of David, but it does not say in the sepulchers of the kings.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the condition of Israel at this time?
2. What were the antecedent facts in the history of Judah bearing on this period?
3. After the death of Ahaziah who reigned in his stead, how did she get the throne, and how was God's promise to David made sure?
4. What was Jehu's policy and what was his scheme to destroy Baal?
5. What right had Jehu to destroy so many people?

6. What do you think of his method and what did God command in Jehu?
7. How did the Lord reward Jehu for his service and wherein did Jehu fail?
8. Recite the story of how the royal line of David was restored.
9. How did Athaliah meet with her deserts?
10. Who was Joash's mother and what was the bearing on the life of Joash?
11. What was the character of Jehoiada and what were his works?
12. What was Jehoiada's influence over Joash, what was the spiritual condition of the kingdom of Judah at this time, what strange thing did Jehoiada do and how do you account for it?
13. What command did Joash give and what was his plan for carrying it out?
14. What happened to Israel during the reign of Joash and what was the character of the Syrians.
15. Who succeeded Jehu, what was his character, who oppressed Israel during this time and what were the events in his reign?
16. How did Joash's plan for repairing the Temple work, what was the fault with the plans and what was the lesson?
17. What new plan did they adopt and what custom perhaps originated here?
18. What order did he here reset?
19. What was the lesson here of the value of the preacher to the world?

20. What prophetic book has its setting here?
21. What distinction in Jehoiada's burial?
22. What was his sin of omission; his sin of commission?
23. What indicates Joash's weakness, what were his sins, what was the origin of the high places and groves, and what was the palliation for the sins of Joash?
24. How did the Lord try to bring them back, how did they receive the Lord's prophet's what special case cited, how did Joash show his ingratitude in his case, and what New Testament use of this incident?
25. What was the judgment executed on Joash and how did he escape?
26. Rewrite the story of Joash's death and contrast this death with that of Jehoiada.

XIV. THE REIGNS OF JEHOASH AND JEROBOAM (OF ISRAEL) AND OF AMAZIAH AND UZZIAH (OF JUDAH)

2 Kings 13:10 to 14:29; 2 Chronicles 24:25 to 26:15

Jehoahaz was followed by Jehoash his son who was a better man and an abler man and more successful. He had great encouragement from Elisha to fight with Syria and to redeem his kingdom from the iron grasp of Benhadad. Jehoash was encouraged at the outset. Elisha told him to shoot his arrows against Syria, and three times he smote upon the ground. The prophecy came true. Three times Jehoash smote the Syrian army and recovered the cities taken from his father by Benhadad. In the meanwhile Syria and Damascus had been assaulted by Assyria and were brought almost to the verge of extinction. Assyrian annals tell how the king of Assyria took Damascus and almost destroyed it, and it was largely because Syria was thus weakened by Assyria that Jehoash was able to recover and relieve Israel from its oppression.

Amaziah succeeded Joash on the throne of Judah. His character is described as one who was wicked and lazy, though he was better than the general run of the northern kings. His policy was to destroy the servants who killed his father, but he spared their children in accordance with the positive prohibition found in Deuteronomy 24:16. Here arises a question of the morality of the killing of Achan's sons, Naboth's sons and Ahab's sons. Two causes operated in favor of the exception to this prohibition: (1) the sons were apt to be accessories to the crimes of their fathers and thus incriminate themselves; and (2) the "blood feud" that was to follow. Then we should consider these cases either under the direct command of God or in the hands of Oriental monarchs.

In 2 Kings 13:20-21, we have recorded the last miracle of Elisha, viz: that in his tomb. This occurred, perhaps, to give special light to the heathen, a testimony to the power of the God of Israel, and to encourage the king and the people with respect to Elisha's unfulfilled prophecies. Close upon this follows the account of the

fulfilment of Elisha's dying prophecy and Joash's success over Benhadad (2 Kings 13:23-25). In this we note that, notwithstanding the sins of Israel, God gave them victory over Syria for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; that the "as yet" shows his mercy still extended to Israel; that Hazael, king of Syria) died, and that Benhadad III, his son, reigned in his stead.

We will find that Amaziah in the latter part of his reign committed a very grievous and particular sin that brought a host of evil consequences. The sin committed by him was that, when he proposed to wage war against Edom lying south of his territory, he hired a hundred thousand mercenary soldiers of the Northern Kingdom to aid him in the war, and when an unnamed prophet of God comes and rebukes him, he says, "If I don't take these men now that I have paid for them, I will lose my hundred talents of money." The prophet replied, "The Lord can give you more than that." So he yielded to the protest of the prophet and rejected the services of the men – a hundred thousand – whom he had already paid for. That of course made the mercenaries very mad. They were not only buoyed up with the hope of their pay but the hope of capturing a great deal of booty in the war, and when they were not permitted to go to the war, on their return home they swept all that part of Judah that lay between them and their own land as dry as if a fire had passed over it. Now Amaziah having committed the sin, first, of relying upon the mercenaries instead of relying upon Jehovah, committed a second sin by importing the gods of Edom for which a prophet rebuked him, and he made him forbear. Stirred up in his mind by these degradations that had been committed upon his people by the hundred thousand mercenaries on their way home and the prophet's rebuke, without consulting God or any prophet he sends a braggadocio challenge to the king of Israel, and says, "Come, set your face up before mine," and the king of Israel replied, "Why should you make this challenge? It will likely prove to be very disastrous to you." Well, Amaziah shook his fist at him and told him to come on and set his face up, and he did come and set his face up, and he wiped the army of Amaziah off the face of the earth in the

great battle that followed, and Judah was sorely straightened by that defeat; even Jerusalem was captured, her walls broken down, and all her vast treasures plundered and carried away. All this indicates that Jehoash was one of the most fortunate, most successful, most able, and most kind and benevolent rulers northern Israel ever had, but at the same time southern Israel had a foolish king.

Jehoash was succeeded by Jeroboam II, Jehoash had saved his country from the terrible oppression of Syria, had conquered Judah, had obtained enormous spoils which almost set the kingdom again upon its feet) and ushered in a period of prosperity. He was followed by his grandson Jeroboam II, the greatest of all the monarchs of northern Israel. Jeroboam II was the most successful of all, for in his day nearly all of northern Israel that had previously belonged to Solomon's kingdom was recovered and he reigned to the north as far as Hamath and to the south all the land of the Jordan and reconquered the land on the east side of the Jordan. The kingdom was at the height of its prosperity under Jeroboam II.

There have been four kings of the dynasty of Jehu, and only in the latter part of the reign of the third king, Jehoash, has Israel in any way succeeded in loosing herself from the bonds of oppression at the hand of Syria. The record says, "The Lord gave Israel a saviour, so that they went out from under the hands of the Syrians: and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents as before time." Who was that saviour? Some think probably it was Jehoash, the preceding king and father of Jeroboam II, who was the means of a threefold defeat of the Syrian army. But it may be interpreted as referring to Jeroboam II, the greatest of all the northern kings, who freed his country entirely from the dominion of Syria. Price in *The Monuments and the Old Testament*, thinks it refers to an Assyrian king, Adad Nirari, who at about this time made an onslaught on the kingdom of Syria and especially the city of Damascus and almost totally destroyed it. In that case he was indeed saviour, in that he destroyed the country that was oppressing Israel. The dynasty of Jehu lasted altogether about 102 years and in that time there were

five kings. Jeroboam II is the fourth and greatest of all. He reigned forty-one years, the longest reign in the history of the Northern Kingdom.

In 2 Kings 14:25 reference is made to Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet which was of Gathhepher. This is the time in which Jonah the prophet lived. About this time he made his strange expedition to Nineveh the capital of Assyria, and preached there. He had doubtless preached in northern Israel also. At this time arises also a greater prophet, Amos, and in the pictures which Amos gives we have a vivid and lurid representation of the sins of northern Israel. So the reign of Jeroboam II, though the most glorious in the history of northern Israel, was attended by these two great prophets who pronounced the inevitable and irretrievable doom of the nation. Just as this time occurred the death of Amaziah at the hand of his conspirators and Uzziah his son succeeded him. But according to some authorities there was an interregnum between Uzziah and Amaziah. This conclusion is based upon the following facts as given in the record: First, it says that Amaziah died and that he had reigned fifteen years before Jeroboam II, king of Israel. Kings and Chronicles both say that he reigned twenty-nine years in all and that the last fifteen years of the twenty-nine was contemporaneous with the reign of Jeroboam II. In other words, he died in the fifteenth year of Jeroboam, but 2 Kings 15:1 says that Uzziah his successor did not begin to reign until the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam, so if both statements be correct then Judah had no king from the fifteenth year of Jeroboam to the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam, a period of at least eleven years and possibly twelve. The whole question turns on the accuracy of the text in 2 Kings 15:1 where it says that Uzziah began to reign in the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam. Now, if we accept that text as accurate, then there was an interregnum of eleven years. Josephus does not accept it. He says the number is wrong; that it ought to be in the fourteenth year instead of the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam. But it is quite easy to accept this text, not question it at all, and then we account for that interregnum of eleven years by the extreme youth of Uzziah when Amaziah died. He was

only five years old when Amaziah died. They seem to have deferred making him king until he was sixteen. In other words, there was a regency for that period of eleven years. Now, that is the only chronological difficulty in the whole period and it is not a very serious one.

Amaziah's son, Uzziah, at a very tender age became king and he reigned fifty-two years. That is a long period, over half a century. The record about it is very fine on a number of points. While he did not destroy the high places, he did walk in the ways of David so far as relates to the worship of Jehovah in the appointed place in the Temple. He was a great builder of fortifications and towns and cities. One thing said about him constitutes a fine text: He loved husbandry. In his wars he had conquered a fine section of country, very fruitful, all the Philistine country clear on to the entrance of Egypt and that Negeb, or south country, from the days of Isaac was remarkable for the yield of its crops. It is said of Isaac that he reaped a hundredfold, i.e., if he sowed one bushel of wheat, he would reap a hundred bushels from that one. Uzziah devoted a great deal of attention to matters of that kind. He was very successful in his wars, not only against Philistia but against the Arabians and against the Ammonites. He became exalted in his power.

In 2 Kings 14:28-29 we have a summary of the reign of Jeroboam and an account of his death. The condition of Syria during the reign of Jeroboam II was one of weakness and consequent inactivity. The great kings had come and gone, and some weak monarchs sat on the throne which had been almost crushed by Assyria, and was in no position to oppress Israel. This gave Jeroboam II his opportunity. Being a great man, an able general and administrator he carried the boundaries of northern Israel almost as far north as David and Solomon had done, capturing all the northern part that had been taken by Syria. He retook all eastern Palestine as far as the land of Moab, and likewise he recaptured the land of Moab that had revolted and freed itself from the dynasty of Omri. The extent of his kingdom was almost as great as that of David's with the exception,

of course) of southern Israel, and with this great extension of his kingdom there was a great influx of wealth and prosperity. The depression of the three reigns preceding was followed by an abundance of prosperity and the result was a corresponding excess of luxury and sin. Their prosperity produced all the evils of civilization, and they went to excess with it. Jeroboam died and after an interregnum of twenty-two years, was succeeded by his son Zechariah. This interregnum is determined by comparing 2 Kings 14:23 and 2 Kings 15:1, 2,8.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the character of Jehoash?
2. What was Elisha's encouraging prophecy on his deathbed, and what incidents of its delivery?
3. Who succeeded Joash and what was his character?
4. What was his policy, and where in the book of Moses is found the statement which occurs in 2 Kings 14:6 and 2 Chronicles 25:4, and how do you harmonize this passage in Deuteronomy with the killing of Achan's sons, Naboth's sons, and Ahab's sons?
5. What was the last miracle of Elisha and why this miracle?
6. Notwithstanding the sins of Israel what the Lord's dealings with them and why, what change occurred just at this time in Syria, and what prophecy of Elisha was here fulfilled?
7. What were Amaziah's plans against Edom, what was the result of each step taken and what can you say of the cruelty of Judah?
8. How did the Israelitish mercenaries deport themselves when sent back?

9. What was Amaziah's further wickedness, what was his warning and how did he receive it?

10. Recite the account of the war between Amaziah and Jehoash, and what was the parable of Jehoash and its application, what was the result and what is the modern name of stealing?

11. Who succeeded Jehoash and what was his character?

12. What were the possibilities of Jeroboam II, and what did he accomplish for Israel?

13. What prophet comes in here, what was his commission and how did he receive and discharge it?

14. Give an account of the death of Amaziah.

15. What of the interregnum in Judah here and how does the author determine it?

16. Uzziah – what was his other name, how was he made king, how long his reign, and how does it compare with the reigns of others?

17. What of his character and prosperity and wherein did he fail?

18. During his prosperous years what (1) of his building of Eloth, (2) of his success of war, (3) of his building and husbandry, (4) of his army, (5) of his fame?

19. Give an account of the death of Jeroboam II.

20. What of the interregnum here in Israel and how determined by the author?

XV. THE REIGNS OF UZZIAH, JOTHAM, AND THAZ (OF JUDAH) AND ZECHARIAH, SHALLUM, PEKAHIAH, AND PEKA (OF ISRAEL)

2 Kings 15:1 to 16:20; 2 Chronicles 26:16 to 28:17

In this chapter we begin with the brief reign of Zechariah who was the last king of the dynasty of Jehu. He was a weakling preceded by four strong men, but himself very inferior to his predecessors. Zechariah reigned only six months, and during that six months we have the same story of sin and corruption repeated as we have had in all the reigns previous to him. He was murdered by a usurper named Shallum, and thus ends the dynasty of Jehu as had been prophesied: that his children to the fourth generation only should sit upon the throne.

Then follows the brief reign of Shallum. The usurper succeeds in removing Zechariah and seizes the throne. His reign is short lived, but during that time we have an even more terrible picture of the condition of the people as described in the book of Hosea, chapters 4 to 14. It is during this period and after, that Hosea gives us the bulk of his prophecy. In Hosea 10:3, referring to one of these revolutions when the dynasty was changed, we find this statement: "Surely now shall they say, We have no king; for we fear not the Lord; and the king, what can he do for us?" which indicates that the people felt themselves without a king. They cared not for God nor for the king. The kingdom was without a head) without a central government, the result of such condition of affairs is the anarchy which he describes. In Hosea 4:1-2 we have a catalogue of the sins of the people: "Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel; for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land; nought but swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery; they break out, and blood toucheth blood." So frequent were the murders that the blood of one is not dried up before another one takes place and there is a continuous stream of blood.

Next comes the brief reign of Menahem, who seized the throne through murder, destroyed all the dynasty preceding him, and the brief statement made in regard to his character would indicate that he was a man, barbarous in his ferocity, a murderer and a relentless freebooter.

The record tells us that when Uzziah was exalted, his heart was lifted up with pride, and he assumed to perform the functions of the priesthood. He thrust himself into the Temple to offer the incense which the law placed in other hands. There the priest met him, bravely stood in the way of that offering, and while the spirit of persistence was upon him, God smote him with leprosy, and from the day that leprosy struck him he had to be isolated from the throne and the people and though he lived years afterward a regency was established by his son, Jotham. It is called Uzziah's reign, but Jotham acted as king until his leprosy killed him.

In 2 Kings 15:19-20 and 1 Chronicles 5:26 we find that Pul, king of Assyria, or the great Tiglath-Pileser, approaches the Northern Kingdom, and Menahem had to pay a large tribute in order to maintain his kingdom, a thousand talents of silver: "And Menahem exacted the money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria, so the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there in the land." Thus he was able to maintain his throne and kingdom by paying Tiglath-Pileser a heavy tribute. Then follows the reign of Pekahiah, the son of Menahem. He was a little improvement upon his father. In a short time he was himself butchered by Pekah who seized the throne and established another dynasty. His character was in line with the other kings of Israel in general: "He departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat."

About this time Uzziah died. It is notable that he was buried "in the field of burial with his fathers, for they said, He was a leper." Just at this time, Isaiah, the greatest of Old Testament prophets, had his vision, and also the prophetic work of Amos and Hosea of Israel and

Micah of Judah falls in this period. From these prophets we get a fine description of the customs and practices of this time.

Upon the death of Uzziah, his son Jotham, reigned in his stead. His mother's name was Jerusha, the daughter of Zadok. His character was ahead of any other king in the period except Hezekiah. He didn't put down the high places, but he didn't commit particular sins to aggravate the condition of the people. He carried forward some important building enterprises. He built the upper gate of the Temple, the wall of Ophel, cities in the hill country of Judah and castles and towers in the forest. He was also successful in war with the Ammonites who paid him large tribute.

During the reign of Pekah several things happened. The kingdom was now nearing its end and we read that Pul, the great Assyrian king approached eastern Palestine, conquered it, deported the entire population "and brought them unto Halah, and Habor and Hara, and to the river of Gozan," and there they remained. Tiglath-Pileser was the first of the great Assyrians that inaugurated the system of deporting a rebellious people, thus rendering them powerless to oppose him. He picked them up, and transported them to other countries, and brought in others to take their places, simply transferred whole nations. Thus all eastern Palestine had gone into exile.

We now come to Ahaz and the whole picture is black. He reigned sixteen years and he crowded into that time as much meanness, vileness, as a man can put into sixteen years. Let us glance at the record itself to see some of the things that he did. In the sketch of his character it is said, "He did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord his God, like David his father. But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel. And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree." There was a confederacy formed against him to which the

prophets give particular notice. The king of Israel and the king of Syria entered into an alliance to destroy Judah. Here the prophet Oded comes in and the record says, "Behold, because the Lord, the God of your fathers, was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand, and ye have slain them in a rage which hath reached up unto heaven. And now ye purpose to keep the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bondwomen unto you: but are there not even with you trespasses of your own against the Lord your God?" You acted as the sword of God against Judah. Ought it not to put you to thinking that God would make some other nation the sword against you? 'Spurgeon has a great sermon on that text: "Are there not even with you trespasses of your own against the Lord your God?" Spurgeon preached his sermon to those harsh censorious people who with an eye of a buzzard can detect anything fowl, or dead, or decaying in the character of other people, and he made this charge in the sermon: "You that condemn others, you who are so ready to pass a harsh and inexorable judgment upon them, are there not even with you some trespasses against the Lord your God?" Our Lord carried out the thought thus: "What judgment ye mete unto others shall be measured unto you." Not only was Ahaz smitten by this confederacy from the north, but the Edomites on the south revolted against him; on every side the enemies came in and smote him.

Now we come to his next sin. Instead of turning to God with repentance and asking the Lord to help him he seeks an alliance with Tiglath-pileser, the king of Assyria, and invites him to smite Syria for a consideration: "Now I will foot the bills." In order to foot the bills he strips the house of God of all of its precious ornaments and with that gold he buys the service of the Assyrian king to smite the Syrians and the Assyrian was ready enough to do the smiting. He had an eye in that direction already and he did smite, but he demanded that Ahaz should come up to Damascus and pay tribute to him.

So we come to the third great sin of Ahaz. When in Damascus he studied the form of the altar of burnt offerings that the idolaters had up there and was very much pleased with it; so before he leaves he sends a plan of it to a certain priest and instructs him to make one just like it, and when he gets home he moves God's altar off to one side, and puts up this heathen altar that he had copied. He didn't stop at that; he shut up the holy place, and closed up all the services of the worship of the true God. That gives some idea of his sins.

In 2 Kings 15:29 we have the account of another terrible deportation by Tiglath-Pileser. He came "and took Ijon, and Abel-beth-maacah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all of the land of Naphtali, and he carried them captive to Assyria." Thus we see that northern Israel was stripped of all of its land east of the Jordan and of all its land north of the plain of Esdraelon, and only the hill country of Ephraim was left, about one-tenth perhaps of the entire dominion. So the kingdom is going, falling, being stripped of its possessions gradually.

In 2 Kings 15:30-31, we have an account of the death of Pekah, which was the result of a conspiracy of Hoshea, the son of Remaliah. But between Pekah and Hoshea we find, according to good authority," another interregnum of nine years which is determined by comparing 2 Kings 15:27, 30 and 2 Kings 17:1.

QUESTIONS

1. Who succeeded Jeroboam II, and what was his character?
2. How long did he reign, what was the manner of his death, and what promise of Jehovah was fulfilled in him?
3. Who succeeded Zechariah and what was the story of his reign and death?
4. Who succeeded Shallum and what was his character?

5. What was Uzziah's sin, what was its punishment and what is meant by "several house"?
6. Who became king regent and what was his special work as such?
7. What invasion of Israel just here and what results?
8. Who succeeded Menahem, what was his character and what the manner of his death?
9. Who succeeded Pekahiah and what was his character?
10. What is notable in the death and burial of Uzziah, what great prophet had his vision in the year of Uzziah's death, and what other prophets came in this period?
11. Who succeeded Uzziah, who his mother and what his character?
12. What was the spiritual condition of his people, what of his building enterprises and what of his conquest and result?
13. What deportation of Israel here, who took them and where, and what the market condition of Judah at this time?
14. Who succeeded Jotham, what was his character, and what horrible thing did he practice?
15. Recite the account of the war between Ahaz and Rezin and Pekah including the account of Isaiah and the work of Oded the prophet.
16. What invasion here of Judah, what was the result and what reason assigned?
17. What distressed condition of Ahaz at this time, to what source did he turn for relief and what result?
18. What second deportation of Israel, who took them and where?

19. Recite the story of Ahaz's sacrilege and its lessons.

20. What of the interregnum between Pekah and Hoshea and how determined by the author?

XVI. THE REIGNS OF HOSHEA (OF ISRAEL) AND HEZEKIAH (OF JUDAH)

8 Kings 16:20 to 17:41; 8 Chronicles 28:27 to 31:21

The reign of Hoshea is another new dynasty since Pekah was murdered; his dynasty has ended and Hoshea comes to the throne. Tiglath-Pileser says in his inscriptions that it was at his instigation that Hoshea rose up against Pekah and murdered him, and that it was upon his word that Hoshea was placed upon the throne and established there. So say the monumental inscriptions. This is the last dynasty and the last king in this awful history of the downfall of Israel. We come now to look at the first six years of the reign of Hezekiah. From this part of his reign we gather the following points:

First of all, let us look at his character as described thus: "He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord according to all that David his father had done. He removed the high places and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made, for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it; and he called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. For he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments which the Lord commanded Moses. And the Lord was with him and he prospered whithersoever he went forth." On Sunday night when I was a young pastor in Waco, I announced that as my text, "Nehushtan," meaning, "It is only a piece of brass." Moses made the serpent and it served admirably for -the healing of the people, and it was right to wish to keep a memorial of such a marvelous thing as the deliverance from the snakes in the desert, but there is a spirit in the world to worship the antique, to gather relics and to worship them, and so in later days that happened. The serpent that Moses had made became an object of worship. It became one of their gods. Now Hezekiah says, "It is just a piece of brass," and he brake it in pieces. In the sermon I applied that to the misuses that are

made of baptism and the Lord's Supper; that when a priest stands over a wafer and mumbles a few words and says to the bread, "Thou art my God," then it is time to say, "It is just a piece of bread"; time to say, "Nehushtan," and when a man magnifies baptism until he finds the remission of his sins in a pool of water, and when it becomes such a sacrament that just to touch a wet finger to the brow of an unconscious babe will make it a member of Christ, then it is time to say, "Nehushtan." That was the direction of my sermon.

Now let us see the great things done by Hezekiah. In his reformation he destroyed those high places throughout the whole country, so that Jehovah only was worshiped. Second, he destroyed not only the brazen serpent but he brought about a widespread spirit of iconoclasm. "Icon" means an image, and "Iconoclast," an image breaker. One of the most notable features of the revolts against the Spaniards and against Rome in the lower countries was that the Iconoclasts came to the front. Crosses, images, anything in the world that men bow down to and worship violates the command, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image and bow down before it to worship it"; all these the Iconoclasts broke to pieces. It intensified the bitterness between the Protestants in the Low Country and the Spaniards, and there were periods of Iconoclastic outbreakings in many other countries, but Hezekiah determined so far as he was concerned in the sense of his responsibility to God that no image however sacred in its memory, even as sacred as that of the brazen serpent, should be the object of worship, and to prevent it he would destroy the image. Image worship is exceedingly convenient. History tells us about an ancient people whose god was a piece of dough, flour dough, molded into form. There was this virtue about that god: that in a time of famine they could eat him. Isaiah uses sarcasm where he describes the image worship and how those gods were made; that having eyes they see not, and having ears they hear not. Bob Ingersoll was fond of quoting rather than originating the saying, "A god is the noblest work of man." In other words, he was saying that gods are made by men, and not men by gods. Well,

anyhow, the gods that men make are not deities and we should break them as fast as we come to them.

The next thing that he did was to cleanse and renovate the Temple, inasmuch as his father had defiled it by putting in a new altar and closing up the holy place and breaking up all the services. So Hezekiah cleansed the Temple with great formality and publicity, and then reconsecrated it to the service of God. He put all of its furniture back into its proper place. He revised every important part of the worship, even the service of music. He re-established the Levitical choir and the Levitical instruments of praise and the use of the psalter was in existence before Hezekiah's time. Then as the clouds were darkening around the Northern Kingdom, as their doom was impending, he sent out an invitation to all the true worshipers of God in the Northern Kingdom inviting them to come and join him in the great passover to be celebrated according to the law of Moses, and the record tells us that a multitude of the Northern Kingdom did come and align themselves with him in the observance of the Passover, and in connection with that we have this Scripture: "A multitude of the people even men of Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written; but Hezekiah prayed for them saying, The Lord God pardon every one, that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary, and the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people." I call attention to that passage particularly on account of the use made of it by pedobaptists in replying to Baptists on the subject of communion. They say, "You Baptists insist upon the water cleansing before communion; that a man should not partake of the communion unless there has been the previous ablution of baptism. And as the communion was established on a Passover occasion it meant a transition from the Passover of the Old Testament to the Lord's Supper of the New Testament, and as here in the days of Hezekiah were people who did partake of the Passover not according to the law, and God forgave them, so it ought to be in the communion."

The Baptist reply to it is, "You should not plead in defense of a custom of historical violation of the law, confessed to be a violation of the law, confessed to be a sin, a sin that had to be presented to God and for which pardon had to be obtained. Your Hezekiah case is against you." So the Baptists have the best of it in this case.

Following that Passover he kept an additional seven days and this is said about it: "So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem. Then the priests and the Levites arose and blessed the people; and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to the holy dwelling place, even unto heaven." To me this account of the reformation wrought by Hezekiah has always been a most interesting section of the Bible to read and a most profitable one. I never read it without being impressed in my mind profoundly with the good that comes in going back to the first principles, in going back to God's written word and there on the strength of that word sending up a petition to the throne of grace for mercy and being convinced that mercy and help and the power of God will come down upon us.

The next item in his reformation is that he restores all the original Levitical services and the whole tithe system for the support of those services. Now that is all I have to say here about the reign of Hezekiah.

We learn from the prophets that three mighty natural events occurred in this period. In 1:1 we have the statement that Amos commenced his prophecy in the second year before the great earthquake. There was an earthquake that figured in the memory of the people for a long time. In Zechariah 14 a much later prophecy, we find a reference to that great earthquake that came to pass during this period. Then in Amos 8:9 we have an account of an eclipse of the sun at midday which took place in this period, about 763 B.C. The sun went down at noon. That eclipse is not only mentioned in the Bible, but we find in the inscriptions on the monuments raised

by neighboring nations a reference to that eclipse at that very date. Not only that, but modern astronomers by a mathematical calculation prove that just at that date an eclipse became visible to all parts of Palestine, a total eclipse of the sun.

Another great event that occurred during this period was the visit of the locusts set forth in Joel, one of the most vivid descriptions in human literature. There is much literature on the subject of locust plagues, from Moses' account of them in the plague on Pharaoh to the latest account by travelers in Africa, but Joel's description is the most remarkable in the world, except the one in Revelation which is a plague of symbolic locusts.

In connection with the reigns of Uzziah, Ahaz, and Hezekiah there comes out on the stage the greatest of the prophets. The most evangelistic of all the prophets, Isaiah. The record tells us that he wrote the latter part of the history of Uzziah. Now it is in Isaiah particularly that we find the best description of the moral condition of the people during this period.

Now let us turn to Hoshea and the Northern Kingdom. In order to maintain the integrity of his kingdom, Hoshea pays tribute to Tiglath-Pileser. On the death of Tiglath-Pileser and the ascendancy of Shalmaneser he continues to pay a heavy tribute: "Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria, and Hoshea became his servant and brought him presents," which means the paying of heavy tribute. He might have been secure upon his throne for years had he continued to pay this tribute, but he did not. He began to conspire with Egypt to throw off the yoke of Shalmaneser: "And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea; for he had sent messengers to the king of Egypt, and offered no presents to the king of Assyria as he had done year by year." He conspired with the king of Egypt and refused to pay his tribute to Shalmaneser. This is the occasion of the downfall of Hoshea and of the end of the Northern Kingdom. Shalmaneser at once set in motion his armed force. Samaria is encompassed and besieged, and after a terrible siege with all the

horrors attendant upon a siege in that country and age, Samaria fell into the hands of Shalmaneser. Shalmaneser dies and is succeeded by Sargon who captures Samaria and deports the inhabitants, and he says in one of his inscriptions that he carried off 27,290 people and placed them in the land of Assyria, leaving only the poorer classes in the country. This occurred in 722 B.C., the date of the fall of Samaria, and the end of the Northern Kingdom. We have the causes which led to it pictured in the prophecies of Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah. Hosea's conspiring with Egypt and refusing to pay tribute to Assyria is the occasion for the destruction of the kingdom.

Notice the re-peopling of the country: "And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Awa, and from Hamath and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof." Now notice that the population is so scattered that the wild animals increase, the lions become so plentiful that they devour them, and the people feel that they haven't the right god. They do not know the god of these hills, and they want to be taught how to worship him in the right way. So they appeal to the king of Assyria and he sends them a priest to teach them how to worship the god of this land, and the result is that we have a mixture, a conglomeration, a mongrel race, and a mongrel religion, described thus: "Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt. . . . They feared the Lord and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away." They feared Jehovah whom they thought to be the god of this hill country, but they served other gods. So we have the strange mixture of these people brought from the various parts of Assyria, Jews who were residents of Israel, and all these other various forms of gods mixed up with Jehovah worship, a strange mixture indeed. These were the forerunners, or ancestors of the Samaritans, whom we find in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah and in the New Testament. We know something of their attitude toward Israel. They

have remained there from the time they were transported by Sargon unto this day, and today there is a colony of them there, about one hundred and seventy people, the remnant of this old mongrel race. They still have their old customs, their patriarchs, the Pentateuch, the law of Moses, and they keep the sabbath even more strictly than the Pharisees did. This closes the history of northern Israel.

QUESTIONS

1. Who was the last king of Israel and what was his character?
2. Who was king of Judah when Israel was carried into captivity and what was his character?
3. What did he do that no other king had done since the division of the kingdom?
4. What relic of Moses was worshiped by Israel and what did he do with it?
5. In what particulars did his religious reformation consist?
6. What were the essential points in the cleansing of the Temple?
7. Describe the reconsecration service.
8. Describe his keeping of the Passover, (1) as to the preparation, (2) as to celebration, (3) as to "other seven days," (4) as to the results.
9. What were the essential points in Hezekiah's further religious
10. What three remarkable events fall within this period and what their significance? .
11. What great prophet comes on the stage here and what was his greatest characteristic? , .
12. What was his relation to Uzziah and to this period of history!

13. What was the condition of Israel at this time, how did Hoshea try to extricate himself and what was the result?

14. Who was the king of Assyria at this time and where did he carry the children of Israel? .

15. What were the sins of Israel for which they were carried away into captivity? . .

16. What were God's efforts to save them from their sins and what were the results?

17. How was Samaria re-peopled?

18. What was their idea of God? 19 How did God rebuke the disregard of him by the new inhabitant?

20. What of the mixed character of the religion of the Samaritans?

XVII. THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH

2 Kings 18:7 to 20:21; 2 Chronicles 32:1-33

In the preceding chapter we have briefly considered the first six years of the reign of Hezekiah noting particularly the great religious reformation wrought by him.

Now we are going to consider the reign of Hezekiah after the Northern Kingdom was destroyed. The first thing for us to do is to get clearly before our minds the prevalent political relations of the time. Syria which had been a powerful factor, has gone out of sight, and Assyria with its capital at Nineveh was now the great northern power. We have seen that Assyrian power destroy the Northern Kingdom and in the days of Ahaz we have seen an alliance between Assyria and Ahaz. Ahaz appealed to the Assyrian king to help him against Israel and Syria. Now when the Assyrian king, for his own purpose, entered into this alliance and destroyed both Syria and Israel, he naturally wanted Judah also, and we have seen that Ahaz became tributary to the Assyrian king. Ahaz king of Judah was the father of Hezekiah who inherited from this wicked father this subordination to the Assyrian king paying tribute to him. Now, on the south, Egypt, which had varied fortunes from before the days of Abraham, was once more a great world power; so we see the little kingdom of Judah, with Hezekiah at the head of it, as a grain of corn between an upper and a nether millstone. Judah lies right in the path between Egypt and Assyria. The Assyrian king wanted Judah, not only to guarantee the safety of his possessions in the Northern Kingdom, but also as a base from which to strike his rival, the kingdom of Egypt, and the king of Egypt wanted Judah as a base for striking the king of Assyria. That is the political relation, except that just now was rising at Babylon a power that would absorb Assyria. It had not come largely to the front yet, but it was coming fast, and when it did come to the front as the world power there was no Assyria, and the two powers then were Egypt and Babylon, and

Egypt and Babylon had Judah in between them. Now that is a glance at the chief political relations.

Subordinate political relations are these: Philistia, of course, never altogether conquered, was there as a thorn in the side of Judah. Edom, or Esau, to the south, was also a thorn in the side of Judah. And various governments of Arabia – the Ishmaelitish descendants – were ready at any time to strike a blow at Judah. In the same way Moab and Ammon descendants of Lot to the east of the Dead Sea, were ready to strike at Judah. Then there was Tyre and Phoenicia, another great world power, which had been for a long time, ever since the days of Hiram and even before Hiram's time, and the later history of Judah will have much to do with Phoenicia and not on the friendly terms that it had with Phoenicia in the days of David and Solomon.

Now the next thing to look at is the religious status at the time Hezekiah came to the throne. From the beginning the religious status in the Northern Kingdom was bad, and going all the time from bad to worse until purely on religious grounds, turning away from Jehovah, that nation was wiped out, but before it was wiped out, through the marriage of the daughter of Jezebel the queen of the Israelitish kingdom to the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah – through that marriage various religious evils came into the Southern Kingdom. Now when Ahaz, a descendant of that unrighteous marriage, came to the throne, he, on becoming tributary to the king of Assyria, became tributary in religion as well as in territory and in political suzerainty. He adopted the gods of the people. We have then this picture: All of the high places where stone pillars and wooden images called "Asherim" were worshiped that had never been abated by the kings of Judah before Hezekiah's time. The worship of Jehovah had ceased in its songs, particularly the Davidic psalter. The door of the Temple was closed. The altar of sacrifice was removed, and the altar of a heathen god was put in its place. All of the regular servants that conducted the religious worship were either degraded from office or persuaded or compelled to become

the officiating ministers at the altars of the false religion. Not merely was this so, but Ahaz had erected in the valley of Hinnom an image of Molech, the Ammonite god, and a hideous fellow he was. It was a hollow iron image with a furnace under the bottom of it and with iron arms extended, and when that furnace heated this image red hot they would worship their god by laying naked babies in the arms of that image, and to drown their cries they would beat drums and make all kinds of noise. Ahaz burned one or two of his babies that way.

Now from this valley of Hinnom we get the New Testament idea of the eternal hell, Gehenna. On account of the desecration through the worship of Molech in that valley a later curse made it the ground in which the refuse from the city was dumped and burned, and as the refuse never ceased accumulating, the decaying meats, the rotting bones, the off-scourings, fire had to be kept burning all the time, and wherever there are rotting meats there will be worms; so it became an eternal fire, and an undying worm in that valley which suggested or foreshadowed the description of the real, final hell, Gehenna, in which soul and body are destroyed, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.

Not only was this true, but they had adopted methods of ascertaining the future, sorcery, witchcraft, and in order to get a clear view of either the political or religious situation of the time we must study the contemporary prophets. I give here a passage on that idea of the religious condition from Isaiah 8. He is prophesying concerning this very period: "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits and unto the wizards, that chirp and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? on behalf of the living, should any seek unto the dead? To the law and to the testimony! If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The old Mosaic law had taken cognizance of the disposition of the people to make inquisition concerning the future from the alleged spirits of the dead. Just as in modern times people through rappings and mediums and trances try to find out the state

of their own departed and their own prospects in the future world. It is an awful offense against God.

In addition to this is another innovation, and I am not right sure that I or anybody else fully understands the significance of it. Ahaz had constructed on the Temple steps that led up to the platform on which a shadow would fall from the sun, a dial, and it has been conjectured by many intelligent commentators that, through that shadow and that dial, he worshiped the signs of the Zodiac. The dial was put there by Ahaz. We find that Dr. Thirtle of England, in a new book entitled, *Old Testament Problems*, attributes an entire section of the Psalms to an incident in Hezekiah's life connected with this dial of Ahaz.

Just now we want to understand, not only the religious forms of worship, but also the moral condition of the people, and here again we get our best information from the prophets. Passages in Hosea give the immoralities of the contemporary Northern Kingdom, but having also some references to Judah, and likewise in Joel and in Amos, and considerable in Micah. Micah comes in largely in the history of Hezekiah and from his prophecy and Isaiah we find out the fearful religious and moral decadence of the people. But turning aside from other prophets, let us, as an example, consider the picture given of the times by Isaiah. In the first five chapters of Isaiah we have a summary of that condition, religious and moral, during all the period from Uzziah to Hezekiah. That is a part of the book that used this language: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass its master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. I have smitten them until the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint, and from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot there is nothing but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores." Then he gives a description of the leading women of the country. We know that from the women in high society we may get an idea of the depravity of the times. A picture of the ladies of any period is always very helpful to an understanding of that period. Here it is: "The daughters of Zion are haughty, and they walk with outstretched necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and

making a tinkling with their feet." We have read about the old woman That has rings on her fingers, And bells on her toes, So that she makes music Wherever she goes. These women of Judah had tinkling anklets so that every step was a jingle like a cowboy's inch-in-diameter spurs with the tags hanging to them. Isaiah goes on: "Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and Jehovah will lay bare their secret parts. In that day the Lord will take away the beauty of their anklets, and the cauls, and the crescents; the pendants, and the bracelets, and the mufflers; the head-tires, and the ankle chains, and the sashes, and the perfume boxes, and the amulets; the rings and the nose-jewels; the festival robes, and the mantles, and the shawls, and the satchels; the hand-mirrors, and the fine linens, and the turbans, and the veils. And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet spices there shall be rottenness; and instead of a girdle, a rope; and instead of well set hair, baldness; and instead of a robe, a girding of sackcloth; branding instead of beauty." Now wherever that is the case among the ladies of the upper class that land is sick. We may get a view of the men from the prophetic woes denounced by Isaiah. I read these woes to U. S. Senator Coke of Waco (found in Isaiah 5). He asked me to copy for him the one relating to monopoly on land as containing a suggestion that he had never had from any other direction before and that he wanted to use.

Now that picture of woes gives us a conception of the moral condition of the time when Hezekiah began to reign. Idols on every hill, the Temple of God closed, no inquirers at the oracle of God, but looking out for witches and spirit rappers, mediums, and appealing to the dead. That was the awful state of affairs. Now when Hezekiah, the son of the wicked king came, he was more commended of God than any other king in the dynasty of David until Jesus came. It is expressly said that there was none like him before and none like him after, and that he sought the Lord with his whole heart, and when it came to political relations his policy was not diplomacy but obedience to Jehovah. Once or twice in his life he was led to turn somewhat from that but came back quickly to his old

original policy, and the best diplomacy in the world is to be true to God and the principles of righteousness. Bismarck startled all the diplomats of Europe by simply telling the truth and announcing in plain language the policy of Germany. None of them believed it. They said, "Of course, he is telling a lie. All diplomats lie," and he couldn't possibly have startled them more than by using absolute candor.

Hezekiah was not only a righteous king, but he was a great poet. Isaiah preserves one of his grand poems at full length, found in Isaiah 38. Not only was he a literary genius but he revived literature. In his day there was a constellation of literary geniuses. He revived all of the great psalter of David, and particularly did he exercise himself to put in order the canon of the Scripture up to his time. A sample is found in Proverbs 25; here we have this statement: "These also are proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah copied out." Now from chapter 25 on, all the books of Proverbs was compiled in the days of Hezekiah, and we find in another reference that which we have briefly considered in a preceding chapter, that in the same way he revised the psalms of the first two books of the psalter. The psalms of David are divided into five books. The first two books of the psalms were used as songs in the Temple in the days of Hezekiah, and the book entitled *Problems of the Old Testament*, by Dr. Thirtle of England, brings out more light on the days of Hezekiah and his reign than all the commentaries ever written by other men put together. It is an essential contribution to biblical literature. It explains as no other book explains, what are called the songs of degrees in the psalter. But I would have the reader take with more than a grain of salt what Dr. Thirtle's book says of the Cyrus references in the prophecy of Isaiah.

Now taking up our lesson proper, the chief events of the reign of Hezekiah, let us study them seriatim.

In 2 Kings 18:7 it says that he rebelled against the king of Assyria. Ahaz, in order to strengthen and protect himself against the coalition of Pekah king of Israel and Rezin king of Damascus, had appealed to Tiglath-Pileser the king of Assyria for protection. In order to secure that protection from the Assyrian king, Ahaz had to pay a large tribute annually, so that when Hezekiah came to the throne, there was no question but that he had also to pay annual tribute to the king of Assyria to preserve the integrity of his realm. Then he waged a successful war against the Philistines, the old enemies of Israel. They had been gaining in strength for some time. The kingdom of Israel had been somewhat weakened and now Hezekiah attacked them and completely defeated them. Why he did this we are not sure. Probably he did it in order to bring them to unite with him and the other kingdoms in throwing off the yoke of Assyria. It is certain from secular history that Hezekiah seized one of the kings of Philistia and shut him up in prison at Jerusalem because he was friendly to the king of Assyria. We find this in Sennacherib's own account of his relationship with the Philistines. But Hezekiah could not withstand Sennacherib's first invasion, and therefore he became tributary to Assyria, taking the treasures of the Temple, and cutting off the gold from the doors and pillars of the Temple, he gave them to the king of Assyria.

Now we come to consider the crisis in the life of Hezekiah; his sickness, recovery, and songs, 2 Kings 20:1-11. We don't know just when this occurred, but probably somewhere about 711 or 710 B.C. He had been reigning about fourteen years. "Sick unto death," it says. And from what we see later in verse 7, there was a boil upon him. Bennett, in his book on the diseases of the Bible, says that it was a carbuncle. Some have maintained that it was a cancer. Thirtle believed that it was a form of leprosy. The same Hebrew word is used to describe it as is used to describe the boils on the people of Egypt. There are certain kinds of boils that appear with leprosy. So we are not sure just what the trouble was, but it was something serious. The word comes to Hezekiah, "Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die and not live." Hezekiah felt

the effect of these words. It was a staggering blow. It meant that he would be cut off in the middle of his days; it meant that there would be no heir left to the throne of David; it meant that the splendid religious reformation would die out and be lost; it meant that in this critical period of Israel's life the throne would be vacant, and then what would become of the kingdom? Is it any wonder that he turned his face toward the wall and prayed? Now, what is his argument? It is this: that since he had been righteous, since he had obeyed Jehovah, since he had been true, he therefore ought to live to a ripe old age. Hezekiah thought that he was entitled to a long life, and he was in terrible gloom and despair. He presents that argument in his prayer: "Remember now, O Lord I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight." The Lord heard that prayer, and as Isaiah was departing and in the midst of the city, the Lord said unto him, "Isaiah, turn again, and say to Hezekiah the prince of my people, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the Lord. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and 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." That was such a gracious promise to Hezekiah, he could hardly believe it. "In three days you will go up to the house of Jehovah." Hezekiah says, "What sign will there be to assure me?" So Isaiah makes the statement that the sign shall be that the shadow of the dial of Ahaz will go forward ten or backward ten steps or degrees. And Hezekiah replies, "It is nothing for it to go forward ten steps, it will naturally go that way as the sun goes down." "All right," says Isaiah, "the shadow of the steps shall go backward ten degrees." No doubt Hezekiah could see this dial from the window of his palace. Ahaz set this sundial near his palace and evidently some sort of a pillar was arranged, so that the shadow would be cast on so many steps. We do not know how many there were, but there were more than twenty, and as the sun rose it would cast its shadow upon those steps and mark periods of

time. As the sun set in the evening the shadow would be cast in a different way, and each step would mark a period of time.

Now if the shadow on those steps was sent backward, that would be a sign sufficient. How could it be possible for the shadow to be thrown backward, as if the sun were rising instead of setting? It can be explained by the laws of refraction, but it was a miracle just the same. Hezekiah saw it and doubtless he was in the Temple worshiping Jehovah in three days. Now let us consider the visitors or the ambassadors from Babylon. The record says, "At that time Merodachbaladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick." The real object was to see the condition of his kingdom, to find out Hezekiah's strength, to find out what treasures he had, and if possible to secure his co-operation in a league against Assyria, for Babylon at this time was nearly independent of Assyria, and was seeking to throw off her yoke entirely. There is no question but what that was the real object. We are told that Hezekiah showed them all his treasures, and they were well pleased. Isaiah didn't like it and he said, "You are very courteous to them because they have come so far. They didn't come from such a great distance; you may make a league now but before very long the king of Babylon shall come and take your descendants, and all your treasures and people, your children, and shall carry them away." This was, of course, fulfilled literally within almost a hundred years.

Hezekiah accumulates great wealth and engages in many building enterprises: "Hezekiah had exceeding riches and honor." He built him treasuries for all his riches, storehouses for the increase of corn and wine, etc., stalls for beasts and flocks, provided him cities and had possession of flocks and beasts in abundance, strengthened and improved the water works around about Jerusalem making more direct the connection between the waters of Sihon and the city of David. All this indicates that Hezekiah was something like Solomon in his prosperity, wealth and enterprises, as well as in name, fame and honor.

Now we come to the revolt against Assyria and the invasion of Judah by the Assyrian king. As we have already noted, "He rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not." Somewhere about this time Hezekiah made up his mind no longer to pay tribute but to throw off the yoke of Assyria, and of course that means that the king of Assyria would at once take steps to bring him back into subjection. It means also that other nations besides Hezekiah's would throw off the yoke, and Assyria makes a swift march to Palestine along the coast down to Philistia, and there gains a great victory over the Philistines. We see that from his situation there in Philistia he sent an army and captured all the cities and villages of Judah except Jerusalem, and in Sennacherib's own record we have this statement: "But Hezekiah of Judah, who had not submitted to my yoke – forty-six of his fenced cities and fortresses, and small towns in their vicinity without number, by breaking them out with battering rams, and the bows of . . . and the strokes of axes and hammers, I besieged and took 200,150 persons, – small and great, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, large cattle, small cattle, without number, I brought forth from the midst of them, and counted as spoil. As for Hezekiah himself, like a bird in a cage, in Jerusalem, his royal city, I shut him up. I threw up forts against him, and whoever would come out of the gates of the city I turned back. As for Hezekiah himself the fear of the glory of my sovereignty overwhelmed him; and the Arabs and his other allies, whom he had brought to strengthen Jerusalem, the city of his royal residence, deserted him. Thirty talents of gold, and eight hundred talents of silver, . . . great stores of lapis-lazuli, couches of ivory, arm-chairs of ivory [covered] with elephant's hide, ivory tusks, ussu wood, and the like, an immense treasure, and his daughters, his palace women, men singers, women singers, to Nineveh, my royal city, I made him bring, and for the delivery of the tribute, and rendering homage, he sent his ambassador."

Allowing for the boastfulness of the Assyrian, there is still a great difference between the account of Sennacherib and the sacred writer. In some respects however, they supplement each other.

The Bible account says, "And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold." The difference in the quantity of silver may be accounted for by a difference in the size of the talent. The sacred writer omits the other items including the deportation of over 200,000 inhabitants. He merely says that he came up against all the fenced cities of Judah and took them. Thus we find fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah in an earlier chapter. Assyria is God's hired razor that will shave all the cities of Judah except Jerusalem, and will overwhelm it and overflow it right up to the neck, leaving Jerusalem alone (Isa. 7:20; 8:7-8).

Hezekiah takes great precautions against the onslaught of the Assyrian. When he saw that Sennacherib had come he at once began to strengthen Jerusalem; to see that the water supply was made good. He cut off all the outward sources of water and brought them within the walls of the city, reorganized the army, stirred up his people and made them ready for the attack of the Assyrians. That was a terrible time. The Assyrians were near and what did that mean? The Assyrian with his invincible host! The people would be in a panic all around the country, the strangers and stragglers would come into the city, soldiers would come from there and the couriers would come from the Philistine Plain, and the whole people was in a state of turmoil and anguish.

Very soon word comes that they are coming up the defiles, and quickly the large army of Assyria appears before the walls of Jerusalem, and the choice valleys around are filled with foreign soldiers. Sennacherib sends three of his officers, one of whom was a great diplomat. Hezekiah is within his palace) Isaiah within his home, the army is before the city walls, and three messengers of Hezekiah are at the wall to hear the chief of the officers sent by Sennacherib Rabshakeh. He is an Assyrian, he has been trained in her schools, he knows three languages, he is a master in the art of diplomacy, and here is a great opportunity for him to try his skill; he stands before the walls and makes his speech. Hezekiah's men give

him no answer. They have Isaiah's words that Jerusalem should be saved. He had prophesied two or three times that the Assyrian would be destroyed, before he could make his onslaught on Jerusalem.

The officers of Jerusalem said to Rabshakeh, "Don't talk to us in the Jews' language; talk to us in the Syrian language," but Rabshakeh pays no attention to this; he cries out to the shrinking people in the Hebrew language, showing that he is a skilled diplomat and master of several languages. He says to them, "Hearken not to Hezekiah; for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make your peace with me, and come out to me, and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one of the waters of his own cistern; until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive oil and of honey." That is a fine stroke of diplomatic reasoning to induce them to surrender. It would have its effect on the multitude. The ambassadors on the walls went back weeping and told Hezekiah. Hezekiah rent his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth, and went to the house of Jehovah. Then he sent for the prophet. What does he say? "This is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of contumely: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth." Faith has come to its trying moment and it seems as if it were going to fail. How many a man's faith has sustained him till the crisis comes and then fails him. Isaiah has been prophesying for years that the Assyrian shall be destroyed. He says, "It is all right. I will put a spirit in him [Sennacherib], and he will hear a rumor and will leave Jerusalem and go out to his own land," He will hear something about the condition of his empire somewhere else and he will start for home. That has been done more than once. Charlemagne once left his campaign in Spain and hurried home because of a rumor that he had heard. Napoleon did this three times ostensibly because of a rumor. He pretended to have retreated from Moscow because he had heard a rumor from Paris.

Sennacherib finds that his schemes fail and that Hezekiah will not surrender. He learns also that Tirhakah, the king of Ethiopia, is

coming up against him, and he sends a letter to Hezekiah, "Now there is no use in your trusting in Jehovah. You had better surrender and save your people." Hezekiah takes the letter into the house of God and lays it upon the altar before the Lord. He prays to God, he has faith, he has been buoyed up by Isaiah, that masterful spirit. It is a critical period. Isaiah now speaks one of his fearful prophecies against him: "Woe unto thee that spoilest, and thou was not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they deal not treacherously with thee: when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee." A critical moment in the life of Hezekiah is on, one of the turning points in the history is before us. Isaiah is still prophesying that Israel will be saved and Assyria shall be destroyed. What is the result? Sennacherib with his large army retreats from Jerusalem, is marching toward Egypt to meet Tirhakah who is advancing against him with a large army. He advances toward that awful stretch of country near Pelusium, a place of disease and death, where whole armies have been destroyed by pestilences or overwhelmed in the sands of the desert. The account says an angel of the Lord in one night blew a blast of death over his army, and in the morning 185,000 lay dead, and the rest hurried with Sennacherib at their head, back to Assyria. This is one of the great events of history, and one of the victories of faith. Psalms 46-48 were probably written in commemoration of this event: "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." Beautiful and precious psalms are they. Israel is saved, the Assyrian army is destroyed, one of the turning points in the history of God's people, and in the history of the world has been passed, and all because of one man's faith) one man who believed in God and was steadfast in his faith.

QUESTIONS

1. What were Judah's chief political relations at the fall of the Northern Kingdom?

2. What subordinate political relations?
3. What religious status in the time of Hezekiah?
4. What New Testament reference to this time? Explain fully.
5. What was their method of ascertaining the future and what prophetic proof?
6. What says the author here about the dial of Ahaz?
7. Where do we find a summary of the condition, religious and moral, from Uzziah to Hezekiah and what conditions therein described?
8. What was Hezekiah's policy? Illustrate.
9. What literary accomplishments of Hezekiah?
10. What book on this section commended?
11. What were Hezekiah's first successes in war?
12. What his disease, how cured and was it a "faith cure"?
13. What is the meaning of "Set thy house in order"?
14. Is it right to crave to live?
15. Is it right to ask a token of God and what difference between faith and assurance?
16. What scheme of BerodachBeladan and what condition that made the success of the scheme possible?
17. What was Isaiah's rebuke to Hezekiah and what was his prophecy concerning Judah?

18. What precautions of Hezekiah against Sennacherib's second invasion?
19. What were Hezekiah's building enterprises?
20. What was Rabshakeh's message and what the reply?
21. What was Rabshakeh's further insolence and what despair of Hezekiah's ministers?
22. What did Hezekiah do and what result?
23. What was Sennacherib's next step and Hezekiah's response?
24. What was God's answer to Hezekiah and the fulfilment?

XVIII. THE REIGNS OF MANASSEH, AMON, AND JOSIAH

2 Kings 21:1 to 23-30; 2 Chronicles 33:1 to 35:27

We take up in this chapter the reigns of Manasseh, Amon, and Josiah. We saw at the close of the last chapter the complete vindication of Isaiah as a prophet, the miraculous deliverance of Judah and Jerusalem from the hand of the Assyrians by the destruction of the army, and the apparent triumph of the principles of right and of good in the kingdom of Judah, the continued prosperity of the reign of Hezekiah, and the paramount influence of the prophet Isaiah.

One would naturally expect a period of great religious revival and national prosperity to follow such a good king as Hezekiah; that he would leave an heir worthy of his name, also that Judah would now enter upon a long career of prosperity and ascendancy among the nations of the world. But we must not deceive ourselves as to the condition of the people in Judah and Jerusalem. We read in Isaiah a description of the people: "In that day did the Lord God of Hosts, call to weeping and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: and, behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine: Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we may die." There is still an utter absence of faith in Jehovah: "And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts. Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, said the Lord God of Israel." We see by this that the masses of the people were still practically incorrigible in their religious deterioration. "Wherefore, the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men, therefore behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people." These passages give a little glimpse into the inner life of the people. But the magnificent work of Isaiah and the goodness of Hezekiah have had one splendid result, viz: Judah and Jerusalem have been saved from the yoke of the Assyrians.

They are now free and for many years they pay no tribute to that foreign power.

Manasseh was twelve years old when he came to the throne and his was the longest reign – fifty and five years – of any king of Judah. Uzziah reigned fifty-two years altogether. We would expect a good boy to be raised up in such a home as that of Hezekiah, but instead, he was just the opposite of his father in almost every respect, which shows that, perhaps, even in the palace of Jerusalem there was a taint of Baal worship and there were those who adhered to it and taught it to the young prince. The description of Manasseh's reign is terrible. The idolatrous party attains the ascendancy almost as soon as he comes to the throne, and Manasseh begins at once to undo all the work that had been done by Isaiah and Hezekiah. There is a great revival of idolatry. We are reminded of Revelation 20: 1-10, the first resurrection representing a great revival of righteousness throughout the world as if there were life from the dead, and the second resurrection the loosing of Satan ushering in a revival of evil. This is on a small scale the same thing. Notice what Manasseh did: "For he built again the high places which Hezekiah destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made an Asherah" – an image representing the female deity, the worship of which was really licentiousness. He worshiped all the hosts of heaven, something apparently new among those kings. Probably this kind of worship was imported from Assyria or from Babylon, quite probably from Babylon. We recall that Ahaz imported something from Damarcus, a new style of altar. Now Manasseh imports the new system of worship of the hosts of heaven from Assyria or Babylon. He built altars in the house of Jehovah, equaling Ahaz in his desecration of that sacred place. He built altars for all the hosts of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord, "And he made his son to pass through the fire, and practiced augury, and used enchantments, and dealt with them that had familiar spirits, and with wizards" – went after the fortunetellers, which is about as sure a sign of the deterioration of character as we find. It is a great offense against Almighty God to go to these people to find out his will, when he has given right ways

of finding it out. "And he set the graven image of Asherah, that he made, in the house of which the Lord said to David and to Solomon his son. In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name forever." Thus we see the idol worship re-established in Judah with its center in the Temple, and the result is: "And Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, so that they did evil more than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel."

Next we notice the change of rulers in Assyria. Sennacherib was slain by his two sons in an insurrection that was intended to place a new monarch on the throne of Assyria. They escaped, and after five months of insurrection and revolt and disturbance Esarhaddon, another son, took his place upon the throne. We are told in one of the lists of Esarhaddon that Manasseh king of Judah paid him tribute. We are not sure just when Manasseh began to pay tribute, but in one of his western expeditions Esarhaddon must have come close to Judah and Jerusalem, and Manasseh in order to keep his throne, began to pay him regular tribute. How long he did this we are not told, but we know that Esarhaddon conquered Egypt with all the western states of Asia and made them pay tribute, and we know also that when his son succeeded him upon the throne, that was a signal for a general revolt among those nations, and it seems almost certain that Manasseh was one of those who revolted and refused to pay tribute. As a consequence Manasseh was taken captive by the king of Assyria and led away in chains to Babylon. During all this time there were some servants of God, prophets, warning him: "And the Lord spake by his servants the prophets, saying, Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which were before him and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols: therefore thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold I bring such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, and whosoever hears of it, both his ears shall tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. And I will cast

off the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies." That was to be the result of Manasseh's idolatry and wicked reign. The doom is settled, the fate of Jerusalem is inevitable. The seeds of idolatry have been sown in the people's hearts, and so grown in their hearts and lives that they are incorrigible and salvation is impossible. It is possible for a nation to go so far into sin that God must withdraw his mercy from it; it is also possible for an individual to go so far that even the Spirit of God cannot stem the tide of evil within him.

As a result of this rebellion Manasseh is taken captive by the king of Assyria, and as a result of his captivity and imprisonment Manasseh comes to himself and repents. When he was in distress "He sought the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers and he prayed unto him." In the Apocrypha we have that prayer. Here is a part of it: "O Lord Almighty, that art in heaven, thou God of our fathers, of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and of their righteous seed. . . . Thou, O Lord, according to thy great goodness hast promised repentance and forgiveness to them that have sinned against thee: and of thine infinite mercies hast appointed repentance unto sinners, that they may be saved. Thou therefore, O Lord, thou art the God of the just, hast not appointed repentance to the just, to Abraham, and Jacob, which have not sinned against thee. But thou hast appointed repentance unto me that am a sinner: for I have sinned above the number of the sands of the sea. My transgressions are multiplied, O Lord: my transgressions are multiplied and I am not worthy to behold and see the height of heaven for the multitude of iniquities. . . . I have provoked thy wrath and done that which is evil in thy sight. I did not thy will neither kept I thy commandments. . . . I bow the knee of mine heart, beseeching thee of grace; I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned, and I acknowledge mine iniquities: but, I humbly beseech thee, forgive me, O Lord, forgive me, and destroy me not with mine iniquities." That prayer may or may not be genuine, but it certainly is a penitent one. It is not an inspired prayer. Manasseh was restored to his kingdom on his pledge of fealty and payment of tribute to the

Assyrian monarch, for under no other conditions would an Assyrian king release him and restore him to his kingdom.

Now he seeks to undo in the rest of his life all the evil that he had done. He builds the outer wall of the city of David, which had doubtless been thrown down or injured by the Assyrians. He compassed about Ophel, which is the southeastern division of the city of Jerusalem, put captains in all the fenced cities of Judah, "And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the Lord, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the Lord, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city. And he built up the altar of the Lord, and offered thereon sacrifices of peace offerings and of thanksgiving, and commanded Judah to serve the Lord, the God of Israel." But it was too late. Manasseh died, having to some extent redeemed the evil of his early reign, but was not buried in the sepulchers of the kings. During that terrible revival of idolatry and of evil, there was a severe persecution against all the righteous people, especially the prophets, so severe that the blood of the prophets and righteous people was spilled like water in Jerusalem. During that period, tradition says, Isaiah was sawn asunder. It is a tradition which goes far back, and is probably true. Thus during that terrible persecution in the reign of Manasseh, Isaiah met his death.

Now we take up the reign of Amon, son of Manasseh. He reigned but two years and walked in the footsteps of his father Manasseh, kept up the idolatrous worship, promulgated heathenism, learned no lessons from his father's sins, repentance, remorse, and reformation, and at the end of two years by means of a palace insurrection – not an insurrection among the people, but a palace insurrection – he was put to death. Why this insurrection came, and why they sought to put Amon to death we do not know. Certainly it could not have been the work of the prophetic class, who were true to Jehovah. That class of men do not murder, and yet what class of people were there who desired the death of Amon since he favored idolatry? We have so little light that we cannot settle the question. The people at once

rose up and the murderers of the king were put to death, and Josiah, only eight years old) the son of Amon was put on the throne.

So now we come to the reign of Josiah, the best of all the kings, a man against whom nothing can be said; we have a description of his character: "And he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.

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 the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him." But in spite of the fact that there was such a king upon the throne, as nearly perfect in character as any king ever was, the sin of Judah still remained, too deep dyed and too great to be forgiven by the Lord, though God defers the evil day till Josiah has passed from the earth. Josiah began in the eighth year of his reign to make reformations in his kingdom, and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from all its high places, and the image of Asherah, and the graven images and the molten images, and brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence, and even took the bones of the priests that were buried there, and burned them upon the altars, desecrating them so that they would not use them any more. He carried on a drastic reformation as early as he was able to do so, beginning at sixteen years of age, and when twenty, redoubling his vigor. The next work was to repair the Temple. When twenty-six years of age he gave orders for it to be repaired, and the man that carried on the reformation and renovation of the Temple was Hilkiah of whom we shall speak later. Behind Josiah, working with and among the people, is another great prophet, Jeremiah. No doubt he was one of the powers behind the throne, one of the great forces which inspired Josiah to carry on his work, for in this period Jeremiah was in the first part of his career. So Josiah, helped by Hilkiah and Jeremiah, repaired the Temple, built it, rededicated it, sacrificed and kept the Passover, etc.

While that was going on one of the principal events of his reign occurred. The Temple had been desecrated for nearly forty years. It had been broken down, and now while they were repairing it, clearing away the rubbish from the altars, perhaps into the holy of holies, and to the ark of the covenant, Hilkiah the high priest found a book. It was the book of the Law given by the hand of Moses. Hilkiah at once spoke to Shaphan the scribe and handed the book to him, and Shaphan took it before the king. It is certain that the book discovered there contained the book of Deuteronomy. The book of Deuteronomy (chapters 27-28) contains the curses that would come upon the nation (Israel) if it forsook the law of God. I have no doubt that this section was read before king Josiah, and no monarch could but tremble and shudder if he heard those words of Moses. Josiah rent his clothes, and he sent for the prophetess, Huldah. Josiah remembered that the kingdom had committed all the sins Moses here mentioned. He knew that the evils threatened must inevitably come, and that meant his kingdom and his throne would go down in utter and overwhelming shame.

They went to the prophetess, Huldah, and she said, "These things are true; they shall come to pass," but adds this: "Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you unto me, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah; because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore is my wrath poured out upon this place, and it shall not be quenched. But unto the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel: as touching the words which thou hast heard, because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his word against this place and against the inhabitants thereof, and hast humbled thyself before me, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me, I also have heard thee, saith the Lord. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered

to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place."

Thus Josiah trembling beneath the terrible curse that must inevitably come, had this assurance, which leaves some hope and courage in his heart, that it would not come in his day, but that he should see peace. Then what does Josiah do? The next thing is to gather together all the elders of all Judah and Jerusalem and have the book read before them. There were probably many idolatrous men among them, but when summoned thus by the king they came and on hearing the book of the law read with curses there pronounced, they concurred with Josiah and the nation thus represented, renewed its covenant with God. The old covenant that had been broken was now renewed and they vowed that they would keep his commandments and testimonies and statutes with all their heart and soul. This was an epoch in the life of Josiah and of the nation and in the life of Jeremiah also, for we find in Jeremiah 11 that it had a great effect upon his preaching. He had been prophesying several years before this, and in chapter II we see that his preaching took a new turn: "Thus saith the Lord, hear ye the words of his covenant, and speak unto the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

This furnished Jeremiah with a text, and he goes forth preaching with marvelous power on the basis of this great covenant renewed because of the finding of the Law. As soon as the Law was found Josiah carried on his reformation even more drastically than before. The work had never been completed. Now Josiah carries it to completion. Notice what he does: brings forth out of the Temple of the Lord all the vessels that were made for the worship of Baal and for the Asherah and all the hosts of heaven; put down all the idolatrous priests; brought out the image of Asherah from the Temple; broke down the houses of the Sodomites where they carried on their abominations under the name of religion; degraded the priests that had been officiating at the high places; defiled Topheth, the place where they had been causing their sons to pass through the fire to the god, Molech; took away the horses that the king of Judah

had made and had given to the sun, images of horses representing a part of the idolatrous worship of some of their deities; removed all the altars and destroyed the high places and desecrated them by burning the bones of the priests thereon. It was as drastic and as complete as could be made.

But it is only outward. Josiah didn't turn the people's hearts, and Jeremiah who had been prophesying all this time at last comes to the conclusion – the first man in the history of revelation – that "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?" And the only way that Israel could be saved was to be saved through a new covenant which would write the laws of God upon their hearts and put them in their minds.

In connection with his great reformation Josiah went to the Northern Kingdom and defiled the altar of Bethel in fulfilment of the prophecy of the old man of God who had come up from Judah and warned Jeroboam against his departure from the worship of Jehovah in going after the calves of Dan and Bethel. But he spared the old prophet's monument. Now he kept the Passover as it had not been kept for many years; he gathered together all the people of Israel far and near, even from the north. Notice in verse 7 that he "gave to the children of the people, of the flock, lambs and kids, all of them for the passover." To the poor people who could not afford it, Josiah gave offerings for the passover, "and the princes gave freewill offerings." The Passover was kept, as it had not been kept since the days of Samuel.

Now we would expect this to result in a revival, a long period of blessing and of the true worship of God, but it was only outward; it was not deep in heart; it was not lasting; Josiah did his noblest, and his name is one of the most blessed in all the annals of kings. He tried to prevent the awful doom of Judah, but "the times were out of joint," and the sin of Judah was so deep and terrible that nothing could check it. The tears of Jeremiah, the most pathetic of all the figures in prophetic history, after forty years of effort, failed to do it.

We now come to the death of Josiah. It is quite probable that Josiah had to pay tribute to the kingdom of Assyria during all his reign. Manasseh did, and it is quite probable that Josiah felt himself under obligation to the king of Assyria, and this fact may account for the strange action which led to his death. During this time Egypt had risen to power; a very able king was on the throne, Pharaoh-necho, and the old time rivalry between Egypt and Assyria had revived. Egypt wanted all the world and Assyria wanted all the land next to hers, and those two great nations, one in the Nile Valley and the other in the Mesopotamian Valley, were always trying to conquer each other. Now Pharaoh-necho was coming up the coast of Palestine to meet the Assyrians. It seems that Josiah felt himself duty bound to help Assyria and check Pharaoh's progress, for he marched out against him to fight – a little kingdom, Judah, little more than the city of Jerusalem itself – against the king of Egypt. The king of Egypt warned him: "Now, don't you meddle with me. I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war; and God hath commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me: that he destroy thee not." For some reason Josiah determined to fight him and check him on his way. They met in the valley of Esdraelon, then called the valley of Megiddo; the battle was joined; Josiah, though he disguised himself, was wounded by the archers and turned about to flee to Jerusalem and died. He was cut off after a reign of not more than thirty years, in the middle of one of the most glorious and useful reigns that Judah ever witnessed. There was great grief. All Jerusalem and Judah mourned for Josiah. Jeremiah lamented sorely, and we can understand why. Jeremiah wept because he could see plainly the hope of the kingdom was gone, and the doom now was swift and sure. "All the singing men and singing women speak of Josiah in their lamentations until this day," meaning, of course, when this was written. "And they made them an ordinance in Israel: and, behold, they are written in the lamentations." The book of Lamentations written by Jeremiah, is not referred to here; it must have been a collection of songs of that nature written and preserved. We do not possess them now, as they have been lost. It seemed that

the light of Judah had gone out, and the only thing to be done was to wait patiently until the end came, and it came before very long.

QUESTIONS

1. Give a general statement of the condition of Judah at the end of Hezekiah's reign.
2. What was the result of the work of Isaiah and Hezekiah?
3. Who succeeded Hezekiah, what was his mother's name and what its meaning?
4. What was his character and work?
5. What change in the throne of Assyria during his reign?
6. What was Jehovah's message to Judah through the prophets?
7. Give an account of Manasseh's further crimes, imprisonment, and
8. What was the spiritual condition of the people at this time?
9. What of his repentance and where do we find his prayer recorded?
10. Who succeeded Manasseh and what was his character and death?
11. Who succeeded Amon, and what his character, how old was he when he began to reign and when was he converted?
12. What of his early reformation?
13. What book found in repairing the Temple and what effect of the discovery on Josiah?
14. What great prophet begins his work in this period and what other contemporaneous with him?

15. What prophetess appears here and what were her prophecies?
16. Give an account of the making of the covenant.
17. What was Josiah's further reformation?
18. Why did he send the ashes of the images of Baal to Bethel?
19. What did he do with the powder of Asherah?
20. What was the meaning of "horses given to the sun"?
21. What prophecy fulfilled in Josiah's acts at Bethel?
22. Who was the prophet "that came out of Samaria"?
23. Give an account of Josiah's passover.
24. What circumstances of Josiah's death?

XIX. THE DOWNFALL OF JUDAH AND JERUSALEM

2 Kings 23:30 to 25:30; 2 Chronicles 36:1-28

We take up now the downfall of Judah and Jerusalem. The causes which led to this downfall are almost identical with the causes which led to the fall of Samaria and the Northern Kingdom: the idolatry and wickedness of the people, their departure from the worship of Jehovah, their apparent determination to pay no attention to the words of the prophets, the conspiracy of the last king, Hoshea, with Egypt and his revolt against the king of Assyria. These were the causes remote and near which led to the fall of Samaria. The same causes operated in bringing about the fall of Judah and Jerusalem: the wickedness, the perverseness, the determination and incorrigibility of the people – their refusal to give heed to the voice of the prophets, especially Jeremiah, the conspiracy of the last king with Egypt to form an alliance, and his attempt to throw off the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. These are the remote and near causes which brought about the destruction of the Southern Kingdom.

Let us look at the situation at the death of Josiah. That sad event occurred in the year 608 B.C. It was a death blow to the hopes of the prophets and the prophetic party and all the righteous ones of Judah. It was a death blow to the hopes of the nation, and the sadness and mourning that resulted from the death of Josiah is suggested to us by Zechariah 12:11. Judah never forgot the death of this good king. Zechariah, prophesying of the times of the restoration and messianic age, when all Israel would repent and mourn for their sins, says, "In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon." The mourning of all Israel in the future when it shall repent of its sins and be restored is compared to the mourning of Judah at the death of Josiah.

Now let us glance at the political horizon as well. The great empire of Assyria had reached the climax of its conquests, and its

oppressions, and was not hastening to its end. The Babylonian Empire had risen; they had formed a league with the Median Empire, and the two combined, with the help of many other small nations, had at last concentrated their energies upon old Nineveh, and it was soon to be destroyed.

Zephaniah 2:13-14 gives a distinct prophecy of the destruction of Nineveh, the capital of the great Assyrian Empire. Zephaniah lived probably in the time of Josiah, possibly earlier. Let us read what he says in his prophecy: "And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria, and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness. And herds shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations: both the pelican and the porcupine shall lodge in the capitals thereof; their voice shall sing in the windows; desolation shall be in the thresholds: for he hath laid bare the cedar work."

The entire prophecy of Nahum is on this one subject – the downfall of Nineveh. Nahum is a poet, who gives a vivid description of the siege and fall of Nineveh. The world rejoiced when old Nineveh was destroyed. That occurred about 607 or 606 B.C.

Now looking more closely at Judah and Jerusalem, our first point is the Egyptian supremacy in Judah. I have called attention to the successes of Pharaohnecho, king of Egypt, and noted that it was to hinder his advance north that Josiah came out against him and was slain. Pharaohnecho pursued his victorious career north as far as the land of Hamath and conquered that country, and extended his kingdom as far north as the Euphrates River, thus subjecting all Syria to his sway and establishing his headquarters at Riblah in the valley of Hamath.

Jehoahaz, the son of Josiah, was put on the throne by the people, doubtless because of his popularity. He had a reign of only three months. During these three months he was under tribute to Pharaohnecho who had conquered all this country, and he made him prisoner and carried him away to Egypt. His older brother,

Jehoiakim, was put upon the throne by Pharaoh. Jehoahaz had a brief reign and a very wicked one. His end is unspeakably sad. Jeremiah 22:10-12 gives an account of him.

Jeremiah at this time was a prophet of Judah and Jerusalem, and he was very active. Here is what he says about the end of Jehoahaz: "Weep not for the dead [that means Josiah], neither bemoan him; but weep sore for him that goeth away [Jehoahaz] ; for he shall return no more, nor see his native country. For thus saith Jehovah touching Shallum [another name for Jehoahaz] the son of Josiah, king of Judah, who reigned instead of Josiah his father, and who went forth out of this place: He shall not return thither any more; but in the place whither they have led him captive there he shall die, and he shall see this land no more."

In Ezekiel 19:3-8 we have a striking statement also. Ezekiel was in Babylon prophesying to the exiles. He says, "And she brought up one of her whelps [Judah and Jerusalem represented as a lioness]: he became a young lion, and he learned to catch the prey; he devoured men, . . ." It is Ezekiel's description of the capture of Jehoahaz, a young lion that Pharaoh caught and took away to Egypt.

Jehoiakim, two or three years his senior, was placed upon the throne by Pharaoh-necho, paid him tribute doubtless, and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. He was just the opposite of his father, King Josiah, in almost every particular. It seems remarkable that such good kings as Hezekiah and Josiah should have such bad sons, utterly reprobate sons, & Manasseh and Jehoiakim, but we see that even today.

Nebuchadnezzar, the great Babylonian, rose up in the year 608 B.C. Nabopolassar, the king of Babylon, and the Medes destroyed Nineveh and left her such an utter ruin that the very place of her existence was soon forgotten. It was completely overwhelmed and devastated by the Babylonians and the Medes, who for centuries had been looking for a chance to get a blow at the ferocious Assyrians.

Nabopolassar was in the East undertaking that great work, and his son Nebuchadnezzar was sent to the West to check the advance of the Egyptian king. We have already stated that Pharaohnecho had extended his empire to the Euphrates River, and now he was ready to go farther. Nebuchadnezzar was sent with a large army to check him. They met near Carchemish, 605 B.C., and here one of the great decisive battles of the world was fought. We find an account of this in Jeremiah 46, beginning with the second verse. It was the greatest event of that time: "Against Egypt, came the army of Pharaohnecho king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah."

Our next point is the supremacy of Babylon. The result, of course, was that the army of Nebuchadnezzar swept down in hot pursuit of the fleeing Egyptians and all the country was transferred into the hands of the Babylonians again. At once Jehoiakim began to pay tribute. Every nation in this region was compelled to pay heavy tribute to Nebuchadnezzar, the invincible head of the Babylonian army. Thus the allegiance of Judah and Jerusalem was transferred, at it where, in a moment from Egypt to Babylon. Now at that time there occurred a raid of the Babylonians upon Judah and Jerusalem and evidently many of the nobles and princes of the people were taken away. Daniel 1:1 shows that in this raid upon Judah and Jerusalem Daniel with others was among those that were taken to Babylon: "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it." Then it goes on with the story of Daniel and his three friends. This is one of the first deportations leading up to the final downfall. Jeremiah 52:28 is a reference probably to the same deportation by Nebuchadnezzar: "This is the people whom Nebuchadnezzar carried away captive: in the seventh year three thousand Jews and three and twenty." That may refer to the first one or it may possibly refer to a later one, we cannot be positive as to the chronology.

The next thing we note about Jehoiakim is that he rebels against the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar. Perhaps he felt that he could make an alliance with Egypt, that old shame which Isaiah denounced, and which was one of the main things that caused the downfall of Samaria. Jehoiakim was evidently conspiring with Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar was in the far east engaged in his conquests; Jehoiakim, led on by his nobles and princes, thought he could free himself again from the galling yoke of Babylon and in spite of all Jeremiah's entreaties he was determined to do so. In Jeremiah 36 there is a little story of the prophecies which Jeremiah wrote and which were read in the presence of Jehoiakim as he was sitting in his winter palace before an open fire. When the roll was read to him, he took his penknife and cut it in pieces and threw it into the fire. Nearly all of those present with him seemed to approve of his action; only two or three are said to have begged him not to do it. This is the character of Jehoiakim and his attitude toward Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 22:13-19 we have Jeremiah's own description of Jehoiakim; also a reference to Jehoiakim in 26:20-23.

All this indicates Jehoiakim's character, bold and incorrigibly defiant of God's word and of every principle of right and truth. The result we find in 2 Kings 24:2-4: "And the Lord sent against him bands of the Chaldeans, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by the hand of his servants the prophets." They did not destroy it utterly, but they carried away a good many captives and much spoil. Jehoiakim died in the year 598 B.C., and the manner of his death is a mystery. There is some difficulty in reconciling the Bible accounts. In 2 Chronicles 36:6 we find: "Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon." Jeremiah said that he should be cast out, drawn forth out of the city and buried as a beast. In Jeremiah 36:30 we also have a statement similar: "Therefore thus saith the Lord of Jehoiakim king of Judah: He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat,

and in the night to the frost." The explanation possibly is that Nebuchadnezzar found him to be such a traitor and such a wretch and villain that he would not take him to Babylon, but had him slain and his body cast forth as refuse out of the city of Jerusalem.

In the next place we have the brief reign of Jehoiachin. Judah and Jerusalem are still under the yoke of Babylon, but the people rise up and put Jehoiachin on the throne, a boy only eighteen years old, and he reigns but three months. Evidently Nebuchadnezzar found something false or treacherous about him; so he comes to the city and besieges it. Jehoiachin surrenders the city, with all his family, and is taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar and carried in chains to Babylon; there lodged in the palace prison spending the rest of his life in captivity. At last the king of Babylon brings him out from his dungeon, lifts up his head, speaks kindly to him, and gives him a place among the other kings, tributary to Babylon.

Now comes the reign of Zedekiah, last of the kings of Judah. He is made king by Nebuchadnezzar and at the same time there is a great deportation of treasures and of nobles and of artisans from Jerusalem. This is the second deportation, and the most important one of this period. Treasures – all the treasures of the house of the Lord and the king's house at Jerusalem – all the princes and mighty men, craftsmen and smiths, all the artisans, the best and most skillful minds of Jerusalem, were taken and there was left only the poor and laboring classes. Nebuchadnezzar took away all these because he had a great deal of building to do in his own land, completing the walls of Babylon, and other general work, irrigating the lands of the country, etc. But there is another object in it also, viz: With all the best blood gone, Jerusalem could not offer much resistance.

Afterward Zedekiah rebels, doubtless because he had some hope of a league with Egypt and that he might throw off the yoke of Babylon. Jeremiah 27:12, 17 gives Jeremiah's advice to Zedekiah and all the other small nations telling them in substance: "You keep on yourselves the yoke of Babylon, for that is the only thing that

will save your kingdom from destruction." But Zedekiah did not heed Jeremiah any more than Jehoiakim did.

The result is just what we might expect. Nebuchadnezzar sets his army in motion, and in a few years the armies of Nebuchadnezzar are again surrounding the city and this time he means business. Jeremiah pleads with Zedekiah to surrender and take upon himself the yoke of Babylon but the influence of the princes that surround the weak Zedekiah counteracts all the influence of Jeremiah and he goes out on his final rebellion. We find that discussed in Jeremiah 36-37.

But now a ray of hope dawns upon the people of Jerusalem; the siege has been on some time. They hear that the king of Egypt, at last, is coming up to help them. The siege is raised, Nebuchadnezzar moves his army away from Jerusalem in order to meet the Egyptians, but he very soon defeats the Egyptian army and again the walls of Jerusalem are encompassed with his hosts, and Jeremiah (37:5-11) gives what the prophet says about it at the time. The siege was raised, but he warns them against false hopes: "For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire." "The doom is inevitable, if you carry out your principle of rebellion." Zedekiah refuses the advice absolutely and for eighteen months Jerusalem endures the horrors of a siege. The fourth chapter of the book of Lamentations describes this. It speaks about the pitiful mother boiling her own children, and those who have been brought up in scarlet as embracing the dunghills to find something to eat, the nobleman's skin is blackened, going about like a walking skeleton, the babes crying after the mothers' breasts, and the people perishing.

After eighteen months they try to escape by breaking through, and Zedekiah and his army flee down into the valley of the Jordan and are overtaken by the Chaldeans; he is captured and his army scattered. He is brought before Nebuchadnezzar and Zedekiah's last

vision is his sons slaughtered before his eyes, and then (according to the Assyrians) he is laid upon his back, a short spear driven through each eye, and Zedekiah's day becomes night, and he sees no more in this world. He is taken to Babylon and there held a prisoner.

Nebuchadnezzar makes a thorough work of the destruction of Jerusalem. He sends his captain, Nebuzaradan, and destroys the entire city, burning up everything that would burn, throwing down everything that can be thrown down, and the best of the people: the priests, the scribes, old and young, young men and maidens, are slain. All these nobles who had been Zedekiah's advisers in his intrigues with Egypt are slain. They deserved it. Had it not been for them, Jeremiah might have influenced Zedekiah to surrender to Nebuchadnezzar, and thus saved the city and the people. All the treasurers were taken -- everything that was worth anything -- and what could not be taken was broken to pieces. The description given in 2 Kings 25:13-21.

In connection with that event a large number of the best people of Jerusalem are again deported to Babylon and only the poor are left in the land that they may keep and dress the vineyards. This is the third deportation to Babylon; so the exile from Judah and Jerusalem was a process extending over about twenty years, altogether.

In the meantime, what happens to Jeremiah? Jeremiah 40:1-6, we have an account of the captain of the Babylonians, who took Jeremiah in chains, but he remembered the good services rendered Babylon by Jeremiah in trying to persuade Zedekiah to surrender to Babylon. So he gave Jeremiah the choice of going with him as a prisoner to Babylon where he would be well treated, or remaining at Jerusalem with the remnant of poor people left there. He remained with God's people in his own land.

Next we have the governorship of Gedaliah. Jeremiah had prophesied that the captivity would last only seventy years, and he wrote the captives at Babylon a letter telling them what to do during that period, advising them to remain there and settle down and make

the very best of it because seventy years was the appointed time for remaining in captivity. Gedaliah was made governor of the almost completely depopulated land. In a few months he was murdered by one of the Jewish princes that had survived, and others were murdered with him who were loyal to Babylon, and Ishmael and his friends gathered together to take advice. Jeremiah advises them to remain in the land and if they were faithful and true even yet, they would be blessed, but they paid no attention to Jeremiah, fled to Egypt taking Jeremiah with them.

That forty or more years of preaching by Jeremiah was without apparent success, but he stayed with it to the end. Down in Egypt they still worshiped idols and burnt incense to the queen of heaven in spite of all that Jeremiah could do, as is found in Jeremiah 43-44 and at last, according to tradition, the people became so incensed against him that they rose up and stoned him to death. Tradition says that such was the end of Jeremiah and it is quite probable. A picture of Jerusalem is found in Lamentations 1-3. What a picture of the desolation of Judah and Jerusalem! There is nothing superior to it in all literature.

How many deportations of Israel to the Far East were there altogether? The first great deportation was that of Tiglathpileser when he removed all the inhabitants east of the Jordan. The next one was that of Tiglathpileser when he carried away the inhabitants of the northern part of the Northern Kingdom, and the next was the deportation of Sargon after he had captured Samaria; the next one was that of Sennacherib when he came down in the reign of Hezekiah and swept all Judah and carried away two hundred thousand or more inhabitants. Then one was in the time when Daniel was taken away. The next one was in the time of Jehoiachin, and the last one recorded in Kings and Chronicles was at the end of the reign of Zedekiah. So we may reckon that there were several deportations of the Jewish people to the Far East; to Assyria, Babylon, Persia, etc. Thus more than a quarter of a million of Jews were deported to

various places in central Asia, and some of their descendants, perhaps, are there yet.

The Exile, as we have said, was a process rather than an event. The people were brought into Babylon and there put to use in serving. They helped Nebuchadnezzar build his cities, his great treasuries, they helped to dig canals, as mentioned in Psalm 137: "By the rivers [or canals] of Babylon, we sat down and wept." They helped to irrigate that vast plain between the two rivers.

This captivity did several things for Israel:

1. It permanently cured the nation of its idolatries. I mean that part of the nation that returned after the captivity and built up the Jewish nation at the period of the restoration. The vast multitude that remained in the East adhered to their idolatries.

2. It spiritualized religion. No Temple, no altar, no priesthood, no sacrifices, no holy of holies, no atonement! They were thrown upon their own individual responsibility and individual relation to God, and in this period we have the rise of what we call individualism in religion. We find that discussed at length by Jeremiah and Ezekiel. This is a period when mankind found that it could do without the externals of religion and made it an affair of the heart only, something new in the history of the world.

3. It made the problem of suffering an acute and real one; they were suffering because of their father's sins, and complained about it: "In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own sin, every man that eateth sour grapes, his own teeth shall be set on edge." "The soul that sinneth it shall surely die."

4. It enlarged their conception of God. We find the noblest and highest and loftiest conception of God in Isaiah 40-66. These were written to meet the needs of the people in this trying period. God is pictured as the God of the world, the God of history, and the God of

nations; God is pictured as raising up Cyrus as his own servant in order that he might conquer and subdue Babylon and let Israel go free.

5. It gave a truer conception of the mission of Israel to the world. Here we have the rise of the idea of the Suffering Servant of God, as the Servant suffering for the sins of Israel. Here we have the conception of Israel as being the means of bringing all the world to a knowledge of God.

The seventy years close. In the closing verses of 2 Chronicles it refers to Cyrus releasing the captives at Babylon, enabling them to return to rebuild their Temple and to restore their nation.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the religious conditions of Judah at the death of Josiah?
2. What was the political situation?
3. Who succeeded Josiah and how was he made king?
4. What was his character?
5. How was he deposed, what became of him, who succeeded him, how was he made king and what was his character?
6. What was Pharaohnecoh's relation to Judah and who severed this relation?
7. Give an account of Jehoiakim's rebellion and death.
8. Who succeeded Jehoiakim, what was his character and end?
9. Who was the last king of Judah and how was he made king?
10. Describe the first great deportation, stating who, what, and where carried.

11. What was Zedekiah's character, what were his efforts to free himself and what results?
12. What reason here assigned for the ruin of Judah and Jerusalem?
13. Describe the siege of Jerusalem and Zedekiah's captivity.
14. Describe the final overthrow of Jerusalem.
15. What disposition did they make of the nobles?
16. Give a list of the treasures taken by the Chaldeans.
17. What disposition did they make of the residue of the people?
18. Is this the last deportation? If not, what?
19. What was the length of the captivity and what determined it?
20. Did they carry all the people into captivity? If not, what provision was made for them?
21. What became of Gedaliah and what was the result?
22. What became of Jehoiachin?
23. How did these people get back to their land and when?
24. What prophet foretold this event and where do we find his prophecies?
25. What was the significance of the Exile, and what the several things it did for Israel?

XX. EZRA AND NEHEMIAH – AN INTRODUCTION HELPS COMMENDED

- (1) Hurlbut's "Bible Atlas."
- (2) The "Pulpit Commentary."
- (3) Articles in the *Popular and Critical Encyclopedia*.
- (4) "Smith's Dictionary of the Bible" on "Ezra and Nehemiah."

The subject of this discussion is "The Restoration of Israel until the rebuilding of the Temple." The history of this period in the life of Israel is contained in the books known as Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.

By comparing the last verses of 2 Chronicles with the first of the book of Ezra we observe that these books are simply a continuation of the history of the book of Chronicles. Since many of the same words are repeated in both it indicates that the latter is simply a continuation of the former history. Formerly Ezra and Nehemiah constituted one book. They were so regarded in all the earlier editions of the Hebrew Bible. The Massarites always appended them to Chronicles. The Talmud speaks of them as one book, called "The Book of Ezra." Jerome speaks of them as one book, called "The Book of Esdras."

Ezra was written by Ezra, the author of I and 2 Chronicles, in the fifth century B.C., about the middle of the century. Nehemiah was written by Nehemiah a few years later, perhaps 431-430 B.C. The Apocryphal books of 1 and 2 Esdras cover the same period of Israelitish history. 1 Esdras especially is a repetition of much of the material found in Ezra and Nehemiah. These two books, Ezra and Nehemiah, consist of historical accounts, written by the authors named and contain personal memoirs by both Ezra and Nehemiah as is shown by the use of the first personal pronoun and genealogical tables. They are simple, plain history and a striking thing about them

is that there is no record of a miracle in them, though there seems to have been some occasion for miracles, since the Jews were so oppressed and depressed. A portion of the book of Ezra is still in Aramaic. The sections referred to are 4:6 to 8:18 and 7:12-26. This is accounted for in a most natural way, viz: The Hebrew had assumed the form of the Chaldee during the captivity.

Ezra was a thoroughly earnest, God-fearing, man-loving priest and scribe without a flaw, and with authority under the king. Nehemiah was a zealous, enterprising, pious cupbearer to Artaxerxes and governor of Judah. In the history of Ezra and Nehemiah we have an account of the Persian period of Jewish life. We have preceding this period the early Babylonian, the Assyrian, and the later Babylonian periods. Israel was in subjection to two of those great nations. Under each of them there was a great modification of national life. These nations were Semitic. Persia was of the Aryan race. Cyrus, the great Persian king, was of Aryan blood; he was generous, free, liberty loving and progressive. The Semitic world had no such king to this time.

The time covered by the book of Ezra was seventy-nine years, by Nehemiah, twelve years, and the time between them was twelve years. The whole time covered by the two books and the interval between was 103 years. During this time six Persian kings appeared, viz:

1. Cyrus, 537-529 B.C., or 8 yrs.
2. Cambyses (Ahasuerus) 529-522 B.C., or 7 yrs.
3. Smeirdis, 8 or 10 months
4. Darius Hystaspes, 522-487 B.C., or 35 yrs.
5. Xerxes (Ahasuerus) 486-466 B.C., or 20 yrs.
6. Artaxerxes Longimanus, 465-424 B.C., or 41 yrs.

This gives a total of 111 years of Persian rule. The purpose of these books is to give a history of re-establishment of God's people in the land. The general contents of the book of Ezra are as follows:

1. Ezra 1:1 to 4:5: This portion tells of the decree of Cyrus, the first return, gives the lists of the heads of the families, the getting up of the altar for worship, the arrangements for sacrifice, the efforts to rebuild the Temple and the opposition on the part of the Samaritans.
2. Ezra 5-6: The people roused by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah begin the rebuilding of the Temple under leadership of Joshua, the Priest, and Zerubbabel, the governor; enemies try to stop them but Darius the King respects the decree of Cyrus, and the Temple is completed and dedicated about 516 B.C.
3. Ezra 7-10: These treat of a return of Ezra with a larger company, the decree of Artaxerxes, empowering him to perform his mission, and the divorcing of the foreign wives.. This occurred about 457 B.C., nearly sixty years after the first return.
4. Nehemiah 1:1 to 7:72: Nehemiah received permission from Artaxerxes to be governor of Judea and to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. He inspects the city by night, organizes for the work and in spite of every opposition fortifies the city and completes the walls by 444 B.C.
5. Nehemiah 7:73 to 10:39: Ezra and Nehemiah promulgate the law. The people make a covenant and all the leaders are sealed. A great confession is made by the people, and Judaism is now finally established, and the people to a man pledge themselves to observe the law of Moses in all its details.
6. Nehemiah 11:1 to 12:26: This contains a list very similar to that found in Ezra 2, and in the Apocryphal book, First Esdras.
7. Nehemiah 12:27 to 13:3: Dedication of the walls of Jerusalem and the completion of the Temple service, probably occurring 444 B.C.

8. Nehemiah 13:4-31: Nehemiah's second visit to Jerusalem about 432 B.C. and his reformatory measures.

The first return of the people from Babylon was to rebuild the Temple, a religious purpose solely. The second return, under Ezra, was to re-establish the law of Moses in all its details and rigor. The third expedition, under Nehemiah, was to rebuild the walls of the city. Thus the mission at first was purely religious, but the mission of Nehemiah was both religious and civil.

In all this revival of Judaism Ezra is the chief figure. It may be called the Pentecost of Judaism. The law of Moses seemed to be a new law, as at the great revival in the time of the Reformation, the Bible seemed to be a new book. The revival under Ezra established Judaism. It was brought about by the people seeking to do God's will, by the keeping of the Law, and thus living in fellowship with God. There was a certain grandeur in it. They sought to live so that every act of life was regulated by and according to the will of God. The following are fine, brief outlines of Ezra and Nehemiah (not my own):

EZRA – RETURNING REMNANT

I. Zerubbabel, I-VI

1. Return, 1-2
2. Reorganization, 3-6

II. Ezra, VII-X

1. Return, 7-8
2. Reformation, 9-10

NEHEMIAH – REORGANIZATION

I. Rebuilding the Walls, I-VII

1. Initiation, 1-2
2. Operation, 3-5
3. Consummation. 6-7

II. Reading the Law, VIII-X

1. Information, 8
2. Invocation, 9
3. Consecration, 10

III. Resettlement of the Cities, XI-XIII

1. Population, 11:1-12:26
2. Dedication, 12:27-13:3
3. Reformation, 13:4-31

QUESTIONS

1. What is the name of this period of Jewish history?
2. What books contain the history of this period?
3. What was their relation to the book of Chronicles and what the proof?
4. What relation of Ezra and Nehemiah and how regarded by the earlier Hebrews as indicated in their Bible?
5. What testimony of the Talmud and Jerome?

6. Who was the author of each, respectively, and when was each written?
7. What was the general character of these and what one striking thing about their history?
8. What Apocryphal books cover the same period of Israelitish history?
9. In what languages were these books written and how may we account for the fact?
10. What was the position and character of the author of each of these books, respectively?
11. During the Old Testament History from Abraham to Ezra what four great Oriental empires arose and how does the one in power during this period compare with the preceding ones?
12. What time covered by each book and what Persian king reigned during this time?
13. What purpose of these books?
14. What general contents of these books and what brief outline of each?

XXI. THE RETURN AND REORGANIZATION UNDER ZERUBBABEL

Ezra 1-6

This section embraces the return unto the dedication of the Temple, 536-516 B.C. (Ezra 1-6). First, we have the decree of Cyrus, 1:1-4, issued 536 B.C. In this remarkable decree Cyrus gives his authority for issuing it, as Jehovah, the God of Israel. This does not imply that Cyrus was a monotheist or a believer in the God of Israel, but it does imply that he recognized the existence of the God of the Hebrews and acknowledged him as the promoter of their welfare.

There are five remarkable things about this decree, viz: (1) It was promulgated by a heathen king. (2) It recognized Jehovah as the dispenser of the kingdoms of the world, saying, "All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me." (3) It declares that the supreme God had "charged" him to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem. (4) It originated in a "stir" of the king's spirit by God himself. (5) It provided for money and free will offerings for the Temple. All this may have been brought about as tradition says, by Daniel showing Cyrus the prophecy of Isaiah, thus causing him to issue this decree. However this may be, we have here some great lessons on God's government of the world, viz: First, God's universal sovereignty over the kings of the earth. Second, these heathen people had some light of the true God which perhaps, they received from the Jews. Third, God's prophecy cannot fail and his promise is made sure, as in the case of Caesar Augustus, who issued the decree that all the world should be enrolled, fulfilling a prophecy of Micah some five hundred years before. It may be added that all this shows that the Persians during this period recognized the one supreme God, though they worshiped others gods, and that Isaiah had foretold this decree giving the very name of the king and bringing us the lesson that God's foreknowledge is unlimited making possible all predictive prophecy.

Next follows the first return and genealogy, 1:5 to 2:67. The company was composed of those whom the Spirit of God stirred up, which was not large comparatively speaking, perhaps, because the larger part of them were engaged in commerce and did not wish to take chances on transferring their business interests. He charged their friends to help them freely, which has a parallel in the case of the children of Israel leaving Egypt, though without order from the king. Cyrus was honest in his decree. All the vessels that had been taken by Nebuchadnezzar were returned. They numbered in all 5,400. A partial list of them is given, but only the best materials are mentioned, such as the silver and the gold.

The genealogy in the second chapter gives only the heads of the various tribes or representatives of them: this list had been carefully preserved through the Exile. This company of returning pilgrims is the "remnant" so frequently spoken of by the prophet Isaiah. The total number was 42,360 Jews, and 7,337 servants. Their beasts numbered 736 horses, 250 mules, 435 cattle, 6,720 asses – a large caravan. The mention of the actual heads of the tribes in Ezra 2:2 and Nehemiah 7:7, gives evidence that the twelve tribes were represented in this return, the prophetic proof of which is found in Jeremiah 3:18,16:15; 30:3; Ezekiel 11:15, 17. These prophecies show that Israel and Judah both were to return to their land. There is also abundant historical proof that Israel returned with Judah. After the division of the kingdom and before the captivity 'of Israel there were four defections from Israel to Judah. Then the history of the Jews after their return proves it (See Zech. 11:14) ; the twelve tribes were there in Christ's day, and James addresses the twelve tribes. This exact numbering here in Ezra has the historical value of preserving the genealogy and the details here given show the poor and insignificant beginning they had upon their return.

The first attempt was to rebuild the Temple, 2:68 to 3:13. There was a considerable amount of wealth among those who returned in this company. The larger part of them settled in the various cities of Judah, comparatively few of them in the city of Jerusalem. We have

an account of the first offering toward the rebuilding of the Temple (v. 69) amounting to about \$450,000.00. In the seventh month they gathered together under the leadership of Joshua and Zerubbabel and erected an altar; the starting of the worshipping of God in sacrifices. They had learned in the Exile that it was impossible to have a religion without a temple. It is probable that the stone upon which this altar was erected is the stone now under "The Dome of the Rock." They offered their burnt offerings and then kept the "Feast of the Tabernacles" as best they could. In the next year under the direction of the leaders they laid the foundation of the Temple. This probably occurred in 535 B.C. It was attended with joyful ceremonies as recorded in verse 10. It is possible that the song they sang then was the whole or part of Psalm 136. There were those present who remembered the former Temple and they thought of the destruction of that grand building and doubtless they lived over again the fifty years intervening. The younger members of the congregation were overjoyed at the present success, and the old men as truly were grateful, but gave vent to their feeling with a wailing of sorrow at the memory of the former Temple. Fifty years had passed since their former beautiful Temple had been destroyed, and they could not but think over the awful past, when it went down in ruins. So the younger men rejoiced but the older men wept and wailed.

We find the first hindrance to the work in 4:5-24. This is by the Samaritans (a mixed race to the north of Judah). Their first offer was friendly, to co-operate with and help the Jews build the Temple, and from chapter 4 we see that Zerubbabel did not accept their offer, but promptly rejected it because they saw the outcome of such an alliance; then, they showed that the decree of Cyrus had appointed them to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. The refusal angered the Samaritans and they succeeded in putting a stop to the work of erecting the sacred edifice. In 4:24 we are told that the work on the house of the Lord ended until the second year of the reign of Darius the king of Persia. This would be 520 or 519 B.C.

In 4:4-5 we have a general statement of the opposition in this language: "Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, and hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia." Then follows the opposition in particular: In a letter to Ahasuerus (Cambyses) they bring an accusation against Judah and Jerusalem, but there are no particulars given. Then in a second letter to Artaxerxes (Pseudo-Smerdis), they brought an accusation against Jerusalem with the following particulars: (1) they are building the rebellious and bad city; (2) they have finished the walls; (3) the people are preparing to avoid tribute, custom and toll; (4) the records show this to be a rebellious and hurtful city, and there should be an investigation to see if these things are so; (5) this means that Persia will have no portion beyond the river Euphrates. The result was that Artaxerxes responded that he had examined and found records as they had charged, and therefore he ordered the work stopped, and did stop it by force.

There are some critical matters just here that call for consideration: (1) "Ahasuerus" and "Artaxerxes" are royal titles and are applied to various monarchs of Persia; (2) these are not the "Ahasuerus" and "Artaxerxes" of Esther and Nehemiah, making Ezra 4:6-23 parenthetical as some say, but they refer to "Cambyses" and "Pseudo-Smerdis" as indicated above, and Ezra 4:6-22 connects directly with the preceding and following verses; (3) "the rebellious city" has a certain basis of truth in three instances: It rebelled (a) in the reign of Jehoiakim, (b) in the reign of Jehoiakin, and (c) in the reign of Zedekiah; (4) the statement, "have finished the walls," is an Oriental exaggeration (see v. 25 and 5:3) ; (5) "no portion beyond the river" has basis of truth in the reigns of Solomon and Menahem.

The work was stopped, for probably seventeen or eighteen years, and apparently no efforts were made to continue it. At this time there appeared two prophets upon the scene, Haggai, an older prophet, and Zechariah a younger one. They aroused the people to

activity by a series of prophecies which we find recorded in their books. Haggai says, "The time has come for you to build God's house." The trouble was they had taken time to build houses for themselves and neglected God's house. He says they ought to consider their ways; that the present drought and hard circumstances existed because they had neglected the building of the house of God (Haggai 1:7-11). Zechariah by a series of visions co-operates with Haggai and the people are at length aroused to a genuine effort to build, or rather rebuild the Temple.

As they were rebuilding the Temple the matter was reported to Tattenai, the Satrap, who had charge of all this part of the Persian Empire. It caused him some apprehension. He wished to know for certain whether the Jews had authority to rebuild the Temple or not. They answered that the decree of Cyrus was their authority. Then Tattenai entered into correspondence with the king about the matter.

The history of the old Temple, the Jews' disobedience and captivity, and the decree of Cyrus was all recited in the correspondence between Tattenai and Darius. The king ordered a search for the Cyrus decree, the decree was found, and the work was ordered to go forward. This decree granted all that the Cyrus decree did and added the help of the governor with gifts of various kinds and for various purposes. The date of this decree was 519 B.C. If we compare this letter of Tattenai to Darius with the former one, we find that there is a vast difference. The former was characterized by bitterness and false accusations, while the latter was a fair statement and a legitimate inquiry into the merits of the case.

We note here that credit is given to the prophets for the success of the work, though it was four years, five months, and ten days after they began to prophesy before the work was completed. It is well to note here also the points made by the prophets bearing directly on the work of rebuilding the Temple. Haggai reproves them for excusing themselves from the building under the plea that it was not time to build and refers to their building themselves houses to live in

and neglecting the house of God. Zechariah by a series of visions confirms Haggai's work and encourages them to undertake the great task of building. (Here the student should read Haggai and Zechariah – they will be interpreted later in the course).

The Temple was finished and dedicated 516 B.C. (Ezra 6:13-22). This great event occurred about seventy years after the destruction of the first Temple by Nebuchadnezzar. The nation now had a religious center. A new era for Judaism dawned. This Temple remained until A.D. 70, when it was destroyed by the Romans. Haggai promised that the desire of all the nations should come into it. In the courts of this same building Jesus of Nazareth walked and talked. There was a note of joy in this dedication. They offered sacrifices as they did at the dedication of Solomon's Temple, but this exercise did not compare with Solomon's in magnificence. There was also a resetting here of the priests and Levites in the service of the Temple. Then followed a great celebration of the Passover. Few other such celebrations of this feast are recorded in sacred history. Along with this one may be named the one in Egypt at its institution, the one at Gilgal upon the entrance into the land, another in the days of Hezekiah, yet another in the days of Josiah, and the last one in the days of Jesus when he instituted his Supper to take the place of the Passover.

QUESTIONS

1. By whose decree did the first exiled Jews return to their country and what was the date of this decree?
2. What five remarkable things about this decree and how brought about?
3. What great lessons here on God's government of the world?
4. What light does this give us on the religious condition of Persia during this period?

5. What great prophet had foretold this decree giving the very name of this king and what the lesson?
6. What, in general, was the response to this decree, what kindness shown to them by the Persians, what parallel found in earlier Jewish history and why was the response so small?
7. Who were the men named in Ezra 2:2 (cf. Nehemiah 7:7), counting the regular Israelites, the Nethinim, the servants and singers, how many people and how many beasts of burden in this first return, and what evidence that all the twelve tribes were represented in this return?
8. What prophetic proof that the ten tribes were not wholly lost?
9. What historical proof?
10. Why this exactness in numbering and detail?
11. What was the first thing they did upon their arrival in Jerusalem and what was the amount of this offering?
12. When did they set the altar and inaugurate regular service, who were the leaders, what was the first feast kept, what was the next step, what steps did they take now toward rebuilding the Temple, and where did they get their material? (See your Bible.)
13. When did they lay the foundation, what correspondence here (see 1 Kings 6:1), what the ceremonial on this occasion, what Psalm did they sing; how did they sing it and how did the people give expression to their emotion?
14. From whom did opposition come to the work of rebuilding the Temple, what proposition did they make, what the subtlety of it, how was it met and why?

15. Where do we have a general statement of the opposition, in what form does the opposition appear in particular, what points made, what result and what critical matters in this connection?

16. How long did the work of building cease, who stirred them up to renew the work, what new opposition arose, what form did it take, what history was recited in the correspondence, what was the result, what enlargement of this decree over the Cyrus decree, what was the date of this decree and how does the correspondence here compare with the former letter to the king?

17. What credit is here given to the prophets for the success of the work, and how long after they began to prophesy to the completion of the work.?

18. What were the points made by these prophets bearing directly upon the work or rebuilding the Temple?

19. Describe the dedication service, contrast it with Solomon's dedication of his Temple and note the resetting here in the service of this Temple.

20. What great Jewish festival did they keep at this time and how many great occasions of a like celebration in the history of Israel can you name?

XXII. EZRA AND HIS GREAT REFORMATION

Ezra 6-10

In the previous chapter we considered the history on this period up to the time the Temple was rebuilt and dedicated and the first Passover after the return was celebrated. This event occurred about 516 B.C. In this chapter we make a leap of nearly sixty years. This is ascertained by comparing the dates in Persia. The first verse of the seventh chapter begins thus: "After these things" and goes on to record the events which occurred about 458 B.C. In the meantime the work had lagged. The people had become lax. Numbers of foreign marriages had been contracted; many moral delinquencies had crept in.

In Persia several events of importance had transpired. Xerxes had become king (488-465 B.C.) . Esther had become queen, the incidents of Mordecai and Haman had taken place and Artaxerxes Longimanus (465-425 B.C.) had succeeded Xerxes on the throne. So we are now to consider the events in Judah during the reign of Artaxerxes of Persia, to whom Nehemiah was cupbearer.

First, we will consider the person and character of Ezra, 7:110. We have the record of his genealogy from Ezra himself. He traces his lineage back directly to Aaron, the brother of Moses. He is thus of genuinely priestly blood. His business was that of a scribe: a writer, a recorder, a codifier of the laws. He was an expert in Jewish law. He was doubtless a teacher and a man of high personal character and scholarship. There had been no revival during this period of nearly sixty years among the colonists in Judah and Jerusalem, and when God would stir up a revival among them, he began by arousing a man in faraway Babylon. He impressed upon this man the importance of the work, and stirred him up to lead the people into the complete adoption of the law of Moses among the Jews in Judah. They had no great leaders there. Ezra was among the exiles in Babylon and as a result of long and profound study of the matter, determined that the complete law of Moses must be made effective

in Judah and Jerusalem, which was over eight hundred miles away and required about four months for the journey.

Next comes the decree of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:11-26). Ezra must have been a man of great reputation and influence, highly respected by the king and nobility, for in some manner, we know not how, he secured from Artaxerxes the king this remarkable decree. He granted Ezra his whole request. We find two kinds of provisions in this decree, viz: the temporary and the more permanent ones. The following were the temporary provisions:

1. Like Cyrus, his predecessor, he made it a matter of choice to every one as to whether he would return or not.
2. He was to carry the silver and the gold which the king had freely offered for the establishment of the Law.
3. He was to buy with this money all the animals which he required for the performing of the sacrifices and ceremonies.
4. The money not required for this they were at liberty to use as they thought best.
5. The vessels were given them to be brought back to Jerusalem.
6. What other money was required Ezra was at liberty to draw upon the king's treasure house.
7. All the treasurers who are beyond the rivers are commanded to give Ezra whatever he may require of them, with no restrictions as to the amount of salt he should need.

The following constitute the permanent provisions:

1. Priests and Levites and Temple officers were excused from taxation.

2. Ezra was empowered to appoint magistrates and judges to enforce the law of God, and to teach those who might not know it.

3. Whoever refused to obey this law might be punished by death or banishment or the confiscation of his goods or imprisonment.

The date of this decree is 457 B.C. and it is the most liberal decree yet. No wonder that Ezra breaks forth into that matchless song of thanksgiving! What marvelous powers had been granted to him by the great king of Persia! He blessed God that he had put such things into the king's heart.

In Ezra 8:1-14 we have the genealogy of those who returned with Ezra. This account is taken from the personal memoirs of Ezra himself. Here he uses the first personal pronoun. Comparing this list with Zerubbabel's list we find 17,073 males, making in all, perhaps 9,000 people; fewer families, though three new ones added, instead of eleven chiefs, or heads of families, we find eighteen, and there appears one remarkable name, "Hattush," a descendant of David and the great-great-grandson of Zerubbabel.

In 8:15-36 Ezra describes how he himself gathered the caravan together on the banks of a certain river, how he found no Levites among them, how he found certain Levites at a place called Casiphia and thus adds to his company a considerable number of Levites and singers. He proclaims a fast of three days at this camping place, and doubtless the fast was accompanied by earnest prayer. There was a long and dangerous journey before him, and he fully realized it. Ezra knew that a considerable portion of that desert would be infested by roving bands of robbers who would watch for just such caravans as his. He had a large amount of money with him and might have asked for a band of soldiers to accompany them, but he says, "I was ashamed to ask of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against enemies in the way, because we had spoken to the king saying, The hand of our God is upon all those who serve him." Such faith could not fail, and the journey was safely made, requiring about four months. It was in 458 B.C. The first thing they did was to

turn over the money; the next thing was to offer sacrifices, and the third thing was to deliver the king's commission.

At this time a considerable amount of laxity prevailed among the priestly families of Judah and Jerusalem. Many of the princes and the chiefs and priests had married daughters of the alien tribes that settled in and around Judah. The law of the priesthood was that they should marry only among the priestly families, and they were violating the law openly and flagrantly. For such a state of affairs to continue would mean the entire dissolution of the race and the obliteration of their religion. The princes, the civil heads, made the complaint because the priests and Levites were guilty. Ezra was dumbfounded. His actions are described in 9:3 where he says, "I rent my garments and my mantle and plucked out the hair of my head and beard and sat down astounded." In this attitude he attracted a great deal of attention. And in spite of the crowd that collected about him, he remained in this position until the time of the evening oblation. That hour arriving, it was time for prayer. He stretched forth his hands in an earnest confession. That confession gives a glimpse into the heart of the man. It shows us his whole intense honesty and integrity of purpose. It shows how he identified himself with the people, for in his confession of the sins of the people he included himself with the others. He realized that if this state of affairs continued, the race would deteriorate, the religion of Jehovah would be lost among the foreign elements; that it would be practically impossible for him to impress the law of Moses upon the community; that the nation would justly die, for God would drive them into exile again. As might be expected, a great awe-stricken crowd gathered about the man so humiliated and grieved. They knew full well the cause. One young man, named Shecaniah, speaks. He thinks there is hope for Israel concerning this thing; that all that is necessary is for these men to put away their wives and the children born of such wives; only let it be done in a legal fashion, according to the law of Moses. Ezra revived. He roused himself up and issued a proclamation, calling an assembly of the people to consider the matter. He commands that they make confession of

their guilt and separate themselves from the strange women, whom they have married. A divorce court is appointed whose duty it is to carry into effect this command. Two men refuse to obey (v. 15) and the same verse tells us that they had their friends. The work is completed. Homes are broken up. Wives are torn from their husbands and sent back to their homes. Children were torn from their fathers; husbands sat in the gloom of their homes, childless. It is difficult for us to even imagine the full results of such a rigid decree. According to the law of Moses it was the only thing that he could do to save the race and the law of God. The list of those who were guilty of this sin was formidable, but this radical measure was necessary to preserve Israel for her mission in giving the religion of Jehovah to the world.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the time period between the events of chapters 6 and 7, how ascertained and what changes occurred during this period?
2. Who was Ezra, what did he do for Jerusalem and how long on the journey?
3. What was the nature of the decree of Artaxerxes concerning Ezra, what was the temporary provisions, what was the more permanent provisions, what date and how does this decree compare with the two preceding ones?
4. What of Ezra's exultation in 7:27-28?
5. Compare the list of those who returned with Ezra with Zerubbabel's list as to number, as to families, as to the chiefs, and as to the remarkable names.
6. What was the course of Ezra's journey and what were the incidents and details of the journey?

7. Upon their arrival at Jerusalem what were the first things they did?

8. What immoral condition did Ezra find in Israel when he arrived in Jerusalem, who made the complaint and why, how did it affect Ezra, and how did he manifest his grief?

9. What course did he pursue and what are the striking features of his prayer?

10. How did God answer his prayer and what measures recom

11. How then did they proceed and what was the details of the work?

12. What do you think of the list of those who were guilty of this

13. What was the ground of justification for this radical measure by Ezra?

XXIII. THE EXPEDITION OF NEHEMIAH AND HIS WORK OF REBUILDING

Nehemiah 1-7

The period of time between the books of Ezra and Nehemiah is about twelve years. The leader of this expedition was Nehemiah, who was in all probability a man of princely Jewish blood, brought up and trained in a foreign land, a man of fine presence and splendid ability. He was a favorite of the king, Artaxerxes, and he was a true Jewish patriot. He was the "cupbearer" of the king. This was a position of great responsibility, and yet of great authority. He was skilled in the diplomacy and trickery of the Oriental courts, a man who knew men and affairs.

He received word from his brother, Hanani, that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and the people afflicted. This news produced a remarkable effect upon him, and he prayed to the God of heaven and fasted, confessing the sins of the people. He prayed that God would enable him to speak to Artaxerxes the king at the right time and that he might receive favors from him.

About two months Nehemiah continued to pray, waiting for his opportunity, though he dared not manifest that sadness in his face. Kings do not like for their servants to be sad in their presence. But the deep grief of Nehemiah could not be completely hid. The king noticed it, asking him why he looked so sad, stating that it could only be sadness of heart. He gave his reason for his sadness. Then the king asked him if he had any request to make,, and in that moment Nehemiah prayed to the God of 'heaven for help. He had matured his plans and had come to a conclusion as to what he should ask of Artaxerxes. So he requested that he be sent to Jerusalem and that the king give him letters so that he might safely go on his way without being hindered by their enemies.

The date of this decree is 445 B.C. It gave to "Nehemiah the special commission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, including letters to

Asaph, the keeper of 'the king's forest, which also caused much grief to the enemy. This is the first sign of opposition which grew more and more intense as the work went on. After some time Nehemiah with his bodyguard arrived safely. He was a man of great position in the empire, and must have had a strong guard with him. He makes no mention of his mission on his arrival. He preserves a very tactful silence. If his purpose had been known, his enemies would have at once set to work to defeat it. His practical turn of mind is shown in the fact that he chose the secret hours of the night to ascertain the condition of the walls of Jerusalem, thus being able to mature his plans, no one suspecting his purpose. When he had surveyed and noted the condition of the walls, and had seen just what had to be done, he summoned the leaders of the people, made his purpose known and organized his forces for the rebuilding. Then followed an appeal to the elders to consider their evil case and to arise and build and then he told them how the good hand of his God had been upon him. "So they strengthened their hands for the good work" but the opposition now is more manifest. They laughed them to scorn, but Nehemiah replied, "God will prosper us . . . you have no portion or right or memorial in Jerusalem."

Nehemiah had organized his forces to perfection. The priestly families began to build by the sheep gate which was the portion nearest to the Temple. They had a double incentive to work, viz: the protection of the city in which they dwelt, and the protection of that part of the city where their interests were. Nehemiah mentions many of the gates, e.g., the Fish Gate, which was probably at the northeastern entrance of the city. It was called the Fish Gate because the fish from the river Jordan and the Sea of Galilee were brought to the city from that side and through that gate. He mentions the old gate which was probably to the north of the city. The "tower of the furnace" probably refers to the potteries which existed in that day. The Valley Gate overlooking the valley of Ninnom opened west. The Dung Gate led out to the lower end of the valley of Hinnom on the southwest. The Fountain Gate probably led down to the Tyropean Valley on the south. The stairs led to the City of David.

The next was the Horse Gate, but we do not know just where it was located. Thus he built the walls beginning at the east side and going around to the west and south. It is impossible to follow the construction exactly as Nehemiah built it. Only a small portion of this wall has been discovered, and that part is near Ophel. Hurlbut's Bible Atlas is helpful here.

They built the walls in the face of opposition. No one knew that this would arise better than Nehemiah. He felt that the work must be rushed. The attitude of his enemies was characteristic. Anger in the first place gave place to scorn and contempt. Now Sanballat gathers his forces together to oppose Nehemiah. It was a trying time. The enemy mocked them (4:1-3), but Nehemiah set his prayers against the enemy and went forward.

Their third opposition was a conspiracy to fight, which was met on the part of Nehemiah by prayer and setting a watch against them, but just here a complaint came from Judah evidencing his lack of faith. It was threefold, viz: (1) The strength of the burden bearer is gone; (2) there is much rubbish; (3) the enemy is threatening. In view of this, Nehemiah made provisions for their safety, arming the people and setting them in battle array after their families and then he made a moat masterful plea: "Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, who is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses." The effect of this plea is seen in their vigilance and diligence. Half of them worked while the other half held the arms; those that worked had on the sword and worked with one hand and held a weapon in the other. Nehemiah set trumpeters for signal purposes; they did not take off their clothes nor lay down their weapons for water, but with sleepless vigilance they pressed the work to completion and were able to say, "And so we built the wall . . . for the people had a mind to work."

Now we have followed Nehemiah's work to the time that the walls were rebuilt. Almost as soon as this work had been completed there

occurred great destitution. This is set forth in chapter 5. Nehemiah had been devoting his energies to the fortification of the city; now he must give his attention to the matters in the city.

So we now take up the reforms of commercial and social abuses by Nehemiah. In this fifth chapter we come face to face with conditions that give us a painful surprise. One would think that they would be happy indeed, now, but instead, they were sorely downcast by serious circumstances, in that great wrongs were heaped upon them. Nehemiah was brought face to face with a serious condition of affairs. A great cry was raised by both men and women who were concerned. They said that they were in dire straits of poverty. They had no food, and were in danger of starvation. The suffering was intense. Others said, "We have mortgaged our fields, and vineyards and houses." The implication really is that some of these had been taken away from them. Then they were without fields and vineyards, also without corn and wheat, things necessary to life. Then again, others said, "We have borrowed money for the king's tribute upon our fields and vineyards." They even had to borrow money to pay the king's tribute. Now we see that they were in sore straits when they had to borrow money to pay their taxes. But their distress does not stop here. We are told that some of them had to sell their own children in order to get bread to eat. "Lo, we bring unto bondage our sons and our daughters . . . for other men have our fields and our vineyards." This is the condition with which Nehemiah was brought face to face.

Nehemiah was angry and said, "Then I consulted with myself and contended with the nobles and the rulers and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother." He saw what had led to this state of affairs. It was just common greed and covetousness. Nehemiah was enraged. He called an assembly of the people, something like the old fashioned "Town Meeting" of New England. He says to them: "The thing ye do is not good: . . . I likewise, my brethren, and my servants, do lend them money and grain. I pray you, let us leave off this usury." The interest was about 12 per cent.

All such interest was forbidden by the law of Moses. So Nehemiah issued a command ordering them to restore all this property. He called the priests together and took an oath of them that they were to see that this thing was done. Now this shows that the priests were the leading men in national life. They were to enforce the law. In order to impress it he says, "I shook out my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house who does not do this." Just as one would take an apron with articles in it and shake them out, so God would do to them, which meant excommunication. They were to restore the fields and the vineyards which the people sorely needed and ought to have. Then he cites his own example (vv. 14-19): "From the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah . . . I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor," that is, he had not been collecting any salary. "But," he says, "the former governors were chargeable unto the people, and took of them bread and wine, and forty shekels of silver, but instead of that I fed one hundred and fifty of them at my own expense." Then in verse 19 he says, "Remember unto me, O my God, for good, all that I have done for this people."

During all this time, Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem had been trying to entrap him. They sought some way to entangle Nehemiah and stop the work. But Nehemiah had been trained in an Oriental court. He was used to trickery and deception, common in the life of an Oriental palace. Sanballat and Tobiah invited him down to the plain of Ono for a conference. That sounds like they wanted to be friends with Nehemiah. But he says, "I cannot come down: why should the work cease while I leave it, and come down to you?" He saw through the plan. Four times they sent him that invitation, but each time he replied that he could not come down. In verse 5 he says that they sent him an open letter in which Geshem says, "You think to rebel. You have appointed prophets to preach among the people that you are to be king in Judah." That is a clever story. The letter informs Nehemiah that they were going to report to Artaxerxes that he was planning to be king; that prophets were preaching in Jerusalem that Nehemiah was to be king. That is the same threat that

the Pharisees used on Pilate: "Pilate, if you let this man go you are not Caesar's friend." It would have frightened an ordinary man. That very thing drove Pilate to put Jesus to death, when he knew that he was innocent. They sought to stop the work in that way, but Nehemiah prayed: "Now, O God, strengthen thou my hands." So the work went right on. In verse 10 is the record of another attempt. They employed a certain prophet to help them. He was one of those men who made divinations and was secured to entice Nehemiah. Nehemiah went down to the house of this man, who had been shut up under a vow. Then the prophet said to him, "Let us meet together in the house of God; . . . let us shut the doors of the Temple: for they will come to slay thee." That was a very subtle proposition. But Nehemiah was too wise even for this trap. He says, "Should such a man as I flee? I have no right to go into the Temple. Am I going to do wrong to save my life?" No wonder God cared for and used this man! Then he discovered that God had not sent the prophet, but he had been hired by Tobiah and Sanballat.

The work went right on, and the wall was completed on the fifty-second day. Now what was going on in the city? Verse 17 tells us that the nobles of Judah sent letters to Tobiah and he to them. Nehemiah says, "They spake of his good deeds before me and reported my words to him." Now that was treachery, but Nehemiah paid no attention to that. He saw clearly through it all. They were simply trying to make him afraid.

Now when the wall had been built he set up the doors and appointed porters and singers and Levites. He appointed his own brother to be governor over the city. This brother was appointed because he was a God-fearing man. He gives instruction about the city gates, as to their opening and so on. Now we are told about the houses and the inhabitants. The record says, "Now the city was wide and large but the people were few therein." Many Texas cities are like Jerusalem in that they are large and wide, but the houses are not yet built and the people few.

Now he had built the walls and set up the gates. Next he finds the book of the genealogy. That is the same as the list in Ezra 7. The Apocryphal book, 1 Esdras, also contains a similar list. But why was it repeated here? It was taken from the same list from which Ezra's was taken and is in accord with the great emphasis which the Jews put on their genealogies. This was necessary for the identification of all who had thus come to Jerusalem and confirms the account given by Ezra. There are no important differences – no more than we might expect in two separate genealogical lists prepared by different persons. But there is a special advantage in having the two lists, viz: they enable us to make out a more complete catalogue of those who came at the first, though either list was sufficient for the purpose of identification.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the time period between the books of Ezra and Nehemiah?
2. How did Nehemiah come to know the condition of Jerusalem and according to this report what was the condition?
3. How did this affect Nehemiah and what did he do?
4. What of the providence of God in answer to his prayer and what was the lesson on the relation of prayer and works?
5. What date of this decree and what special commission did it give?
6. What effect of this decree on the enemy?
7. How did Nehemiah commence the work of Jerusalem?
8. What his appeal, what was the first opposition of the enemy and what was Nehemiah's reply?
9. How did Nehemiah distribute the work and what was the lesson?

10. Locate as nearly as you can the parts of the wall which were assigned to the various companies to build.

11. What was the second opposition of the enemy and what was Nehemiah's reply?

12. What was the third opposition of the enemy and how did Nehemiah meet it?

13. What was Judah's complaint and what was the masterful plea made by Nehemiah in reply?

14. What indicates their great vigilance and diligence?

15. What complaint came to Nehemiah from the people?

16. How did this affect Nehemiah, what course did he take and what the result?

17. How does Nehemiah show his spirit of generosity and unselfishness?

18. After the wall was completed what artful proposition came from the enemy to Nehemiah, what was his course in the matter and what lesson for us?

19. How then did they try to entrap Nehemiah and what saved him from their scheme?

20. How long was the wall in building, what effect on the enemies, what embarrassing fact to Nehemiah here revealed, and what provision was made for the continued safety of Jerusalem?

21. Why should Zerubbabel's register of names occur here also, are there any important differences between the two lists, and what the special advantage in having the two lists?

XXIV. THE READING OF THE LAW AND RESETTLEMENT OF THE CITIES

Nehemiah 8-13

In Nehemiah 8 we have Ezra coming on the scene again. The date of this appearance is 444 B.C., and we have not heard from him since 456 B.C. He had dropped out of this history for about twelve years. He must have been called away just after his work in 456 B.C. and after a space of about twelve years returned to Jerusalem. The occasion that called him forth then was the reading of the Law.

We come now to look at the work of Ezra, with Nehemiah sustaining him in his work of reform. The great task of Ezra was the bringing of the law of Moses to Jerusalem and the adoption of that as the law of the land for the people. By this law of Moses is doubtless meant the Pentateuch. Ezra had not produced this book of the law thus far. The time had not been ripe for the reading of the Law and its explanation to the people. But the city was now fortified and organization perfected. Then Ezra went forth and produced this book of the Law. We are told in chapter 8 that the people asked him to bring forth the book of the Law and read it.

Now we have a remarkable scene. It is unprecedented in history. One of the greatest revivals in the world now opened. He proceeded to organize the people. He had Levites and other officers to help him. A great assembly of all the people was convened. A pulpit had been built and Ezra took his place before all the people. He opened the book which was simply a roll. It was the law of Moses, that is, the laws of the Pentateuch. The great meeting went on. The Law was read by Ezra, and it was explained by the Levites.

The effect of the reading upon the people was that they began to weep. Why should they weep? Perhaps the reading was the setting forth of those awful chapters in Deuteronomy where the awful curses upon those who violated this Law were set forth. With their remembrance of what God had already done to them because they

had violated this Law, and their remembrance of the sins they had committed, was enough to bring tears. Now Ezra tells them that they are not to weep; that this is a holy day, holy unto the Lord; so they should rejoice and not weep; that it was the joy of fellowship with God that was their strength.

Then follows the story of how they built booths and kept the feast. This was according to the law of Moses that had been read. They lived in these booths during the time of the feast, which was called the Feast of Tabernacles.

As soon as the feast was over the people again assembled. Six hours were spent in this meeting. Three hours in the reading of the Law, and three hours in the confessions of their sins and praying. This is a wonderful revival of religion. Chapter 9 deals with confession and prayer. It is the recounting of a series of acts in the drama of redemption. There are three scenes in every act: God's goodness in caring for his people, the people sinning and turning away from God, and God's forgiveness and offer of restoration. The people at last read the lessons of their history and learn them well. Verse 37 speaks about their present condition: "It yields much increase to the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins; they have power over our bodies and over our cattle, and we are in great distress." As an effect of this repentance (v. 8) they made a covenant and wrote it, and the princes, the Levites and the priests set seal unto it.

The first twenty-seven verses of chapter 10 give a list of those that sealed the covenant. These were the leading men of the nation. The rest of chapter 10 tells how they attempted to keep that covenant, how they gave the payment of the tithe regularly, and observed the sabbath. All this was in perfect keeping with the law of Moses. Thus Moses' law was established in Jerusalem, and Judaism starts off on its great career.

They followed this with two ordinances: (1) They set aside one-third of a shekel for the Temple tax, and provided for the wood to be used

in the sacrifice; (2) they instituted measures to increase the population. They wanted more men in the city. Many came to live in Jerusalem. In that way they increased the population considerably. The priests lived there, but not many of the people. We have this statement: "In Jerusalem dwelt certain of the children of Judah and Benjamin." Of the priests, some of them lived in the city; the majority of them lived in the country villages outside of the city. A large majority of the common people also lived in the cities around Jerusalem.

Now the problem we have to deal with regarding the cities is not how to increase the population, but how to decrease it. People are rushing to the cities and crowding them. The measure that did most to bring the people to Jerusalem was the draft of one out of each ten who volunteered, and these were compelled to come and live in Jerusalem.

Then followed the account of the dedication of the walls. Now the manner of procedure was about this: They gathered together all the Levites, and brought them to Jerusalem. They came together at a certain signal, and the people, all of them that would come, were divided into two companies, Nehemiah at the head of one of the companies himself, and Ezra at the head of the other company. They marched upon the walls. The walls of the city were broad, and there was plenty of room for them to march upon them. They marched thus about the walls, one company one way and the other company the other way. They went on around until they met. This was a joyous occasion, a glorious day. Jerusalem had now been inaugurated as a fortified city, the city of Jehovah, the holy city of Jerusalem.

With that great dedication the first great work of Nehemiah was completed, but he attended to a few other matters, such as the appointment of Temple officers, treasurers, singers, chief singers as in the time of David, the separation of the foreign element, Ammonites and Moabites, from the congregation, and then he

returned to Persia by authority of Artaxerxes and remained about one year, after which he returned to Jerusalem and found certain things in bad condition. The people had backslidden. He found that Eliashib the priest had prepared for Tobiah a great chamber in the Temple, where the treasures were kept. Nehemiah finds that he is allied with Tobiah, and casts him out with all the stuff of Tobiah, and cleanses the Temple.

Next, he orders that their portion be given to the Levites. They had failed to bring in all the tithes and the Levites were actually suffering. Nehemiah contends with the rulers saying, "Why is the house of God forsaken?"

Then he enforces the sabbath laws. People were working on the sabbath day. They were bringing in their produce on that day to have it ready for the market the next morning. Nehemiah prohibits that. They came up to the outside of the city walls on the sabbath day and waited there to enter bright and early on the morrow. Nehemiah found this out and put a stop to this also. Next he compels the Jews to put away their foreign wives. Ezra had dealt with that thing before. He went about weeping and bewailing the sins of the people in this matter. Now when Nehemiah came he did not cover himself with his mantle and weep. He cursed them and plucked off their hair and beard, and made them swear that they would not do this thing. He had back of him the authority of the great king. He also chased away the son-in-law of Sanballat. Here was a priest who had married the daughter of his enemy. When Nehemiah found that out he chased him away. We do not know how fast he ran, but he lost no time in escaping. The last item of Nehemiah's reform is the cleansing of the priesthood, and thus he closes his book: "Remember me, O my God, for good." He offered what he had done to the Lord and petitioned his kindly regard.

The book of Malachi has its setting right in these last verses of Nehemiah, and reflects the conditions herein set forth in a most emphatic condemnation of these evils.

QUESTIONS

1. How may we account for Ezra not appearing in the history before chapter 8, and what occasion brought him forth before the people here?
2. Where did the people assemble on this occasion?
3. Who constituted this marvelous assembly?
4. How long did this continue and what was the method?
5. How did the people show their reverence for the Word of God? 6, What was the effect upon the people of the hearing of the Law, why did Ezra suppress their emotions and what did he recommend?
7. What great feast was here reset and how was it celebrated?
8. Describe the fast kept by the Jews, and the prayer which followed.
9. Recite the history from the creation to Abraham as recorded here.
10. Recite their history from Egypt to the establishment in the land as given here.
11. What was their history in the period of the judges according to Nehemiah?
12. What acknowledgment do they make here relative to Jehovah's dealings with them?
13. Describe the covenant which followed.
14. What the ordinances made here also?
15. What methods did they adopt in populating Jerusalem and the cities round about?

16. Describe the dedication of the walls of Jerusalem.
17. What officers were appointed on this day of the dedication of the wall?
18. What law was discovered concerning the Ammonite and Moabite and what was the result?
19. What was the proof of Nehemiah's leave of absence from Jerusalem and how long was he away?
20. Upon his return what evils did he find and how did he correct them?
21. What prophet comes in this period and what was his special message?

XXV. THE STORY OF ESTHER

Esther

Our subject for this discussion is "The Story of Esther." First, a few words by way of general introduction to the book. The book of Esther belongs to what is called The Haggiographa, that is, the writings. The books of the Old Testament are divided into three groups: The Law, The Prophets, and The Writings. This book belongs to the third group. The time of this book is during the sixty years of silence between the dedication of the Temple and Ezra's return. It should be located right between the sixth and seventh chapters of Ezra) perhaps about thirty-eight or thirty-nine years after the dedication, or 478 B.C.

The author is unknown, but unquestionably he was a Jew, possibly Ezra or Mordecai, but probably neither of them. The style is against Ezra as author, while the high praise of Mordecai is against Mordecai as author and, besides there are no first personal pronouns in the book referring to the author. It was evidently written by a Jew contemporary with Mordecai. Some say Joakim, the high priest, wrote it, but this is hardly probable, since he does not seem to have had a knowledge of the Persian court sufficient for such a task. The date is about 450 B.C.

There is a great deal of difference in the way the book of Esther is regarded by scholars and others. Many Gentiles have but little use for it, because it is such a Jewish book. Ewald, a great German critic, says that it is like coming down from heaven to earth to read Esther. Luther said he wished the book had never been written – it is so Judaizing. So you see this book is variously estimated. The Jews value it highly. They maintain that the book of Esther will last when the prophets have perished. They always read it with great joy and say its place in the canon of the Holy Scriptures is unquestioned. But in many editions of the Bible it was not included; it was not considered worthy of a place. But by a large majority of the scholars

it is included in the canon, as rightfully belonging to the Holy Scriptures.

The book was undoubtedly written to give a historical basis or ground for the Feast of Purim. This feast was observed for centuries before Christ in the month of March. The book was written by a Jewish patriot to give the occasion of this feast. This book has some peculiarities. The name of God is not once mentioned. There is no mention of prayer in it. There is not even a reference to Jerusalem nor the Temple. But it must be remembered that it is a national book; written for national purposes and from a national motive. It is intensely Jewish, referring to a tragic incident in their history, recounting the marvelous way in which they escaped from a great crisis. There are two allusions in the book to facts in previous Jewish history, viz: Mordecai's captivity (2:6) and the dispersion of the Jews in all the provinces (3:8).

The book is real history. The arguments against the historicity of book are as follows:

1. According to the history of Herodotus, and that is our chief authority for the history of this period, especially Persian history, the queen of Ahasuerus at this time was Amastris, whom he married many years before the events found in the book of Esther could have happened, and she never was put away, but maintained a great influence over him and largely shaped the course of his life. She was a Persian woman of very bad personal traits: unscrupulous and crafty, controlling the king in many matters. She was entirely different from what Esther is pictured as being. Our reply to that argument will come up in a later reply to it.

2. The law of the land compelled the Persian monarchy to marry in the families of his own relatives, or five of the noblest Persian favorites. Thus it would have been impossible for a Jewish woman to have been made the queen.

3. Esther is regarded as the queen in this book. But she could only have been the chief favorite in the royal harem. This is probably the only position in which we can place her and be in harmony with the facts.

4. It is argued that the book clearly indicates that Haman knew the race of Mordecai, but not that of Esther. How could he be ignorant of the race?

5. The appalling massacre of their enemies by the Jews, seventy-five thousand at one time, seems incredible. It looks like the fancy picture of a novelist. The reasonable thing is to deny that seventy-five thousand citizens of the Persian Empire could be killed or butchered in such a way.

6. It is highly improbable that the massacre should have been deferred for eleven months after it was decreed. Lots were cast, and according to the lot Haman fixed the date of the decree which he had secured from the king. It is neither improbable nor by any means impossible, but perfectly true.

7. The story is so well knit together as to resemble a fairy tale. But cannot God arrange his providences as well as a writer could arrange them? Is God's mind inferior to a novelist's?

8. The religious element is in the background, and scarcely referred to either directly or indirectly. It is true that God is not directly referred to, nor is prayer mentioned, but God is implied, and there may be a reason for the silence in the matter of religion. The writer may have found it better to conceal the element of the Jewish religion than to reveal the power behind the throne.

9. Its moral tone is unworthy of Scripture. The best characters in the book are represented as ruthlessly demanding this massacre and then demanding its repetition, not satisfied with the butchery of five hundred people in one city alone, only satisfied when three hundred

more were put to death. Such is at variance with the Scripture, and seems to be unworthy of a place in the canon, they say.

Now the arguments in favor of the historicity of the book are as follows:

1. It is true to the Persian manners and customs, even down to the minutest details. It is true to the life, times, and customs of the Persian people. No man could have written this book unless he was familiar with the Persian life in all of its details. So at once it is evident that it cannot be fiction.

2. The character of Xerxes, or Ahasuerus, is correctly pictured. Point by point this king can be matched with the picture and record of Herodotus, the great historian. The man who wrote this book must have known this king, or he never could have written the book as we have it.

3. The existence of the Feast of Purim itself must have some historical occasion and is a mighty argument for the historicity of the book. Critics have tried to account for this feast which has existed now for twenty-three or twenty-four hundred years in other ways, but have utterly failed. The only way to account for the feast is to accept the feast as actual history.

4. The great council in the third year in the reign of Ahasuerus mentioned in the first of the book of Esther, that is, the feast actually occurred and was called together to plan an expedition against Greece. That expedition he carried out as secular history plainly records. Then were fought the battles of Thermopylae and Marathon on the land, and the sea contest at Salamis, when the hosts of Persia were scattered like chaff before the Greek patriots. It is a historic fact that this great assembly came together in the third year of the reign of Ahasuerus.

5. There is no historical discrepancy in the book. The most critical of the German critics has failed to point out a single incident which contradicts history.

6. It makes its appeals to the chronicles of the kings of Persia, as found in the last chapter. The writer would not have dared to do that writing as he did in the land of Persia, if his record had not been true and he had not authority for what he wrote.

7. It tacitly, though not openly, recognizes a providence in history, and was written to record the divine providence in relation to God's chosen people. Much scripture is written for the very purpose of recording God's dealings with his people in their preservation, and the incidents of their natural existence. Why should not one book then be written with this great event as its real background?

8. The ruthless demand of Mordecai and Esther for the massacre of their enemies must be studied in the light of their age and the circumstances that had been forced upon them.

9. God's providences may produce as good and as well knit a story as the imagination of a novelist. To deny that is really to deny the workings of divine providence, or to deny that God is as great as man.

The classic name of Ahasuerus is Xerxes, the boundaries of whose empire were India and Ethiopia. The places of the scenes of the book are Shushan, the palace of the Persian king, and the provinces.

We may now pursue our study of the book itself by taking up the story chapter by chapter as follows:

Chapter 1: In the palace of Artaxerxes there is a great feast, lasting 180 days; his magnificence is displayed. A second great feast is made for the people of Shushan. There are revelling and drinking till the men are all drunken. The king is intoxicated. He commands to bring his wife, Vashti, for his drunken lords to look at, that he might

display her beauty. The refusal of the queen to come and be insulted, the anger of the king, the advice of one of his counsellors, the issuing of the decree that all women, throughout the Persian Empire should ever after obey their husbands – about as foolish a decree as any man ever made.

Chapter 2: A new queen is sought. A bevy of beautiful girls is brought one by one before the king. Among them is Esther, a Jewess, brought up by Mordecai. She succeeds in pleasing the king and becomes queen. A great feast is made in honor of her. About that time a plot is discovered by Mordecai in which two of the king's chamberlains plan to assassinate the king. Mordecai reveals the plot.

Chapter 3: The promotion of Haman, the Agagite, to be prime minister. Mordecai, the Jew, refuses to bow down to him. Haman is angered and mortified. He will not be content with putting to death one Jew, but asks the king on promise of payment of a large sum of money for permission to put to death the entire Jewish nation, on the condition that he replace his loss out of the money of those he killed. The decree is granted. The lot is cast to decide the day. The edict goes forth that on that day eleven months hence all the Jews are to be put to death.

Chapter 4: The grief of the Jews. Mordecai commands Esther to intercede on their behalf before the king. She asks him to fast three days on her behalf. The answer to Mordecai, "Do not think that thou thyself shall escape their massacre?"

Chapter 5: Esther appears before the king, taking her life in her own hands, for it might mean death to appear before the king unbidden. She is accepted. This incident is to Esther like the experience of Nehemiah in the reign of Artaxerxes, the son of this same king. Everything seemed to depend upon the whim of this childish king. She invites him to a banquet. She knows how to get on the best side of him. She asks Haman to be with them also. Haman hears the news that he is to banquet with the king and his queen, and he is very much elated. He tells his wife about it, then complains about

this man, Mordecai, who will not bow the knee to him. His wife says, "Get ready a gallows fifty cubits high and hang Mordecai on it." He follows his wife's advice and prepares the gallows.

Chapter 6: Incidents leading up to the honoring of Mordecai. The state records are read. The story is told how the king's life had been spared by a man named Mordecai. He asks the question, "Has this man been honored? He saved my life." Answer, "No." While he is thinking about this, Haman comes in. The king asks him, "What shall I do to the one I desire to highly honor?" Haman, thinking it is himself that the king desires to honor, gives this suggestion: "Put the king's robe on him and a chain about his neck, and have the chief man in the kingdom lead his beast through the streets of the city." He said that, thinking that he was to be thus honored himself. "All right," said the king, "You go and do that to Mordecai," and he had to do it. There was no escape from the king's command. Then he went home like a sulky boy because he had been whipped. As soon as he reaches home, word comes that he is to go to the banquet.

Chapter 7: The banquet passed off without incident. Persians were very fond of drinking and banquets. The king wanted to know what Esther demanded. She wanted time to get him in a good humor, so she asked that he come to another banquet. At this the king declared that he was ready to grant her request even to half of the kingdom. Now the time had come. She began to beg for her life and for the life of her people. We may imagine how the king felt when he learned that his favorite queen was to be killed. See how she works him up. Yes, she was to be killed, for the decree did not exclude even her. "Who is going to kill my very idol, my favorite queen?" "Why, this wicked Haman is going to do it." This is another psychological moment. Haman begins to beg and to plead with Esther for his life; he even climbed up on the couch where she is reclining. The king thinks that he is even trying to add insult to injury, and so his rage knows no bounds. The servants say that he has made a gallows fifty cubits high on which to hang Mordecai. The king commands them to take the wretch and hang him on it.

Chapter 8: Mordecai is promoted to Haman's place and becomes chief minister. Esther begs that the decree against the Jews be revoked, but the law of the Medes and Persians changes not. The only thing that can be done is to issue another decree, so the king asks her what she will have. She and Mordecai have talked it over and she is ready for that request. She asks that the Jews have the privilege of slaying their enemies. There was no other way out of it. This shows Mordecai's shrewdness and ability. There was great rejoicing among the Jews at this turn of affairs.

Chapter 9: The day arrives. The Jews are prepared. The nobles help the Jews because a Jew is prime minister. The nobles knew on which side their bread was buttered. So they help the Jews and altogether, seventy-five thousand of the people are slain; five hundred in Shushan the palace alone. Esther and Mordecai make another request. Esther wants the massacre repeated. She wanted another day of butchery. I do not know why. The king grants it. There is great rejoicing among the Jews. This occurred on the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar, or our month of March. Mordecai and Esther fix this day in which all the Jews shall celebrate this great event. She has the edict issued under the seal of Mordecai the prime minister, and so the feast is established. That is how this feast originated. Every year on the fifteenth of March, all the Jews celebrate it. They do not celebrate it in a very religious fashion now. Still they regard it as a great day.

Chapter 10: This chapter speaks of the greatness of Mordecai, as the prime minister of the Persian king.

Now let us look at the chief characters of the book, as follows:

1. Ahasuerus: There is no question but that this Ahasuerus is the Xerxes of history, and is an exemplification of despotism. He was an absolute monarch, a despot. In him we see the outworkings of despotism. Caligula of the Roman Empire was a despot, and his despotism drove him mad. It is despotism that made this king, Xerxes, ridiculous in the eyes of the world. He was the slave of his

ministers and servants. He knew nothing but what they told him. He was absolutely dependent upon them, for all of his information. He was like a child in his silly notions. His servants and nobles deceived and tricked him, and he was so suspicious of them that he was a very slave to his slaves. He was afraid of them, and they knew that if he suspicioned them, he would kill them, and so he was afraid of them, and they were afraid of him. He was the slave also of his passions. He spent his time drinking, eating, banqueting and satisfying his gluttony and lust. He was not much above the beast. Because the Hellespont wrecked his ships, he ordered it to be flogged. He was the slave of his whims and fancies, the slave of his temper and his feelings. He knew no control but his own will, the tool and the plaything of the favorite of his harem, willing to ruthlessly murder thousands of his own subject to satisfy his favorite queen. We must, however, say for him that he recognized the services of Mordecai in saving his life, and honored him. But he did this because it was called to his attention, and not because he sought it out or remembered it.

2. Vashti: She has been honored above many women in history. She is recognized as one who would forfeit her position and crown rather than to sacrifice her honor and her pride. She refused to obey the king at the risk of her own life. But she maintained her dignity and self-respect. She was valorous and womanly. She was having a feast with the women, and it is thought by some that she may have refused to do the king's bidding because she had taken a little too much wine, hence was not much disposed to be ordered, but I rather think this is not true. She was a rare gem in the midst of that corrupt Persian Court.

3. Haman: This man's name is a synonym for vanity and fulsome pride, ruthlessness and savagery, deceit, cruelty, and all that is ignoble. He is the incarnation of insane conceit. Honors made a fool of him. Now pride in itself is not such a bad thing. A man may have pride of the right sort and really be helped by it. But a man with this kind of pride wants everything in the universe to be his slave. Even

preachers may have this disease. They sometimes think that everybody and everything ought to bow down to them. Because Mordecai would not bow his knee to Haman his vanity was hurt. When a man thus allows his vanity to rule him, he sees everything out of proportion. Haman could not be satisfied with the murder of Mordecai, but he must do the big thing and kill the nation. Vanity is insatiable, and often causes wars. It was this man's vanity that led to his downfall.

4. Mordecai: He is one of the great characters of the book. He was a Jew and a poor one, but he was loyal to the king, under whose government he lived. The Jews have become citizens of nearly every nation in the world. Here we have a Jew the prime minister of the empire. One of the greatest prime ministers that Great Britain ever had was a Jew. Mordecai was faithful to his king. He was elevated to be prime minister, but it did not give him the "big head." When he was led through the streets he did not feel puffed up. He had sense enough to know that that sort of thing would not last long. Here is a man who waited and worked. We do well to learn that lesson – working and waiting and doing your best will bring its reward, in due time. God always has a place ready for the man who works and waits and does his best.

5. Esther: She was brought up in the family of Mordecai and trained by him. She was trained well beyond any doubt. She was beautiful but not spoiled by her beauty. She was able to use her beauty in the right way. Though she was the favorite of the king and was successful with him, it did not spoil her. She remained loyal to her uncle and did not forget him. Neither did she lose her religion when she became a queen in the most wicked court of her times. There is no mention that there was prayer connected with the three days fast, but doubtless there was. She takes her life in her own hands for her people. She knew how to manage the king. She outwitted the cunning Haman. She was severe. She was one of the greatest heroines of history, and she has been called by many the saviour of

her people. She was beautiful, talented, brave, shrewd, and a womanly woman, yea, one of the greatest of women.

QUESTIONS

1. At what point in the history of Israel does the book of Esther come in?
2. Who wrote the book and when?
3. What of the canonicity of the book?
4. What was the purpose of the book?
5. What peculiarities of the book?
6. What two allusions in the book to facts in previous Jewish history?
7. Is the book real history and what arguments prove and confirm?
8. What was the classic name of the Persian king who married Esther and what were the boundaries of his empire.
9. What was the place of the scenes of the book?
10. Give the story of the book, chapter by chapter.
11. Give a character sketch of Ahasuerus, Vashti, Haman, Mordecai, and Esther, respectively.
12. What great lessons of the book and at what points in the story is God's hand most plainly seen?

XXVI. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE POSTEXILIAN PROPHETS AND AN INTERPRETATION OF HAGGAI

Haggai

We now take up the prophets of the last period of Israel's history as found in the Old Testament, the period after the return from exile, the restoration, and of the many books on this period, we name the "Bible Atlas," by J. H. Huribut, the "Pulpit Commentary," and *The Minor Prophets* by Pusey.

There were three prophets after the Restoration: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The last pre-exilian prophet was Habakkuk, about ninety years before the postexilian prophets come on the scene, but in the meantime there were three exilian prophets, viz: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

To understand these prophets we must first of all look at the historical situation, as follows: The kingdom of Israel was now under Persian rule. That rule lasted from about 538 to 332 B.C. It began when Cyrus captured the city of Babylon and thus became master of all western Asia. It ended when Alexander the Great crossed the Hellespont, defeated the Persian king, and thus put an end to the great Persian Empire, and spread Greek civilization throughout all western Asia. During that period of a little over two hundred years, the Israelites were in subjection to the kingdom of Persia and were a vassal state. Doubtless all that time they paid an annual tribute to their overlord. They never enjoyed national freedom until the time of the Maccabees. It was 537 or 536 B.C. when Cyrus, after his great conquest north and west of Babylonia, marched upon that city which had been for half a century the center of the world. All nations had bowed to Babylonia during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, and for a short period following the succession of his son, Merodach, Cyrus, one of the greatest and most remarkable conquerors of all history, advanced upon the city, and according to his own inscription on a cylinder which has been discovered, the city opened its gates and surrendered itself to him while King

Nabonidus fled. We have also an inscription which has been recorded by Nabonidus himself, telling us the same story: that Cyrus captured Babylonia without striking a blow. They opened the gates to him.

In about 536 B.C. Cyrus issued his decree that the Israelites who were in Babylonia might return to their native land and rebuild their Temple. He may have been moved or actuated by humane motives, for he was one of the most humane of all monarchs of Oriental and ancient history. He thus allowed any of those Israelites who longed to return to have their desires fulfilled. Whatever motive actuated him, he gave the decree which is recorded in Ezra 1.

The decree permitted all the Jews who wished to return, compelling none whatever to go contrary to their wishes, granting them the privilege of taking all of their property with them, asking that gifts might be given by their friends, and Cyrus sent back all the vessels of the Temple, which Nebuchadnezzar carried away. The decree granted them the privilege of returning to rebuild their Temple. This was their chief purpose.

That return occurred somewhere about 536 B.C. Their Journey lasted several months. It was a large company, fifty thousand or more, with a great deal of wealth, and doubtless Was in many respects a very joyous return. This is the fulfilment of the great prophecies of Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

We can imagine something of the joy and gladness of the nation. But when they arrived home, they found that all those glowing prophecies were yet to be fulfilled, regarding the land, the city, and the Temple, for Jerusalem was a heap of ruins; the city was as it was when Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers destroyed and burned it. The land was largely depopulated and almost barren and their sacred Temple with all its magnificence, which had stood for about four centuries, was left with scarcely one stone upon another. They were to begin anew the civilization of the land, to begin at the very bottom, the very foundation of a new national life and existence. But they had

one great advantage, they had all the traditions and laws and prophecies of the past. They had a marvelous inspiration in those prophetic writings.

Their first aim was to build an altar on the site of the old altar built by Solomon, and there offer up their sacrifices and observe the Feast of Tabernacles. They began to lay the foundation of the Temple very soon afterward, and we saw something of the strange scene that occurred as they laid that foundation, how the old men wept aloud and the young men shouted for joy, the voice of shouting and the voice of weeping were heard afar off.

But trouble very soon arises. The Samaritans from the north, the mixed race of people that had been deported by Sargon and Shalmaneser, wanted to become Jews to help in building the Temple, wanted to mix with this colony and be one with them. They met with a curt refusal; a refusal, justified by Jeremiah and Ezekiel; it would have meant the ruin and the collapse of the national life if they allowed this strange blood and this strangely mixed religion to be mingled with their own. Their very existence depended upon their separateness. As the result of their refusal, they incurred the lasting enmity of the Samaritan peoples. We call them Samaritans, but strictly speaking they were not really Samaritans at this time, because they had not received that name with all its implications. That enmity lasted all through the period of reconstruction, and it is not dead yet. It will not die until the last Samaritan is dead.

They succeeded in stopping the work of rebuilding the walls of the Temple, and from what Haggai says, it seems that they succeeded in stopping that building by preventing them from bringing up the timbers from Joppa. Cyrus' decree permitted them to get the timbers necessary to the rebuilding of the Temple from the mountains of Lebanon, and they had to be brought by raft to Joppa and thence to Jerusalem, and it seems quite probable that the Samaritans succeeded in stopping them from bringing up that timber and hence they could not go on with the building of the Temple.

Sixteen years passed, and nothing more was done toward the rebuilding of that sacred structure, but during that time they were not idle; being defeated in their purpose of building the Temple they set to work to organize the community. They probably restored a great many of the houses in Jerusalem, and many of the houses and villages in Judah; they erected houses of their own, they laid the foundations for a new community. Some of them were not only building themselves houses, but ceiling them with beautiful cedar with carvings. They were beginning to gather some luxuries around them, and they seemed to be largely satisfied with the altar upon which they could sacrifice, and with their progress in reshaping and establishing the new community, and they settled down apparently to take it easy. The difficulties had evidently frightened them out of all thought of going on with the work; they were occupied with their own affairs, rather than with the affairs of the Temple.

In about 529 B.C. Cyrus, being killed in battle, was succeeded by his son, Cambyses, who invaded Western Asia as far as Egypt and doubtless Israel felt some effect of that invasion. Cambyses committed suicide and was succeeded by a usurper who in turn was killed by the nobles who conspired against him, the chief of whom was Darius, who succeeded this usurper on the throne of the Persian Empire about 521 B.C. He was a man of noble character, though not as humane and successful as Cyrus the Great, yet he was one of the greatest men of his age. As soon as he came to the throne, the world which then constituted the Persian Empire, was convulsed with revolts and insurrections and rebellions, in attempts to throw off the yoke of Persia. Darius was engaged for four years in quelling these revolts, and finally succeeded in subjugating them and reducing his empire to order. It was during that time, when Darius was busy quelling these revolts which threatened to dissolve and destroy the Persian Empire, that this prophecy was spoken.

We take up these prophets in order. Haggai was the first. The name is derived from the Hebrew word which means "a feast," or belonging to a feast. It is a peculiar name, occurring nowhere else. It

is altogether likely that he was an exile who returned with the company. Whether he was an old man or not we cannot say. Some say that he was one of those who had been deported, had lived fifty years in exile in Babylon and returned with the first company. The problem before Haggai was to arouse the people to build the Temple. They need a temple as the center of their national and religious life. Because of the difficulties that had come through the Samaritans, and because of the intrigues against them at the royal court of Persia, the people had ceased to work at the building. They reached the conclusion that the time had not yet come, saying, "We can get along without it. We have lived during the exile without it, and fifteen years after we reached our land we did without it, and we can manage to get along. As long as these difficulties are in the way we will not trouble ourselves about building the temple." At this juncture two prophets appear on the horizon, Haggai, who comes first, then Zechariah. About the year 520 B.C. Haggai preaches his first sermon. It is a plain, simple, direct address to the hearts of his hearers.

A fine outline of Haggai is the following:

HAGGAI – THE DUTY OF COURAGE

- I. First Address, 1:1-15, year of Darius, 2-6-1.
- II. Second Address, 2:1-9, year of Darius, 2-7-21.
- III. Third Address, 2:10-19, year of Darius, 2-9-24.
- IV. Fourth Address 2-20-23 year of Darius. 2-9-24.

His first prophecy was a call to build the Temple, chapter 1. The first verses give us the exact date: In the second year of Darius the king, 520 B.C., in the sixth month, corresponding to our September, the first day of the month, came the word of Jehovah by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the son of Jehozadak the high priest. He speaks to the leaders. There is no

mention of his preaching to the people, yet no doubt there were many exiles present, but he is speaking specifically to the leaders. Notice, it is the first day of the month when they were celebrating the Feast of the New Moon, which feast was observed at the beginning of each month in the year. There was, probably, an assembly in Jerusalem, and on that occasion Haggai received his first message and appeared before them.

His first remarks are a reply to the people's excuse. The second verse tells us: "Thus speaketh Jehovah of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house shall be built." The margin puts it better, "The time is not come for Jehovah's house to be built." In answer to that excuse the word of Jehovah comes to Haggai the prophet and he put the question: "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste? Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Consider your ways." Then he portrays their condition and gives the cause of it: They had sown much and brought in little; had eaten but they had not enough; they drank, but were not filled; they were clothed, but were not warm; they earned wages, but put it into a bag with holes. Why all this dissatisfaction? Why were things not going right? They were attending to their own houses and their own affairs, and not Jehovah's. Instead of these things creating this excuse for them, they gave the very reason why they should exert themselves for God's cause. "Thus saith Jehovah, Consider your ways."

Then he gives a call to the people to build the Temple (vv. 7-11). Haggai here tells them exactly what they ought to do: "Go up to the mountain [hill-country] and bring wood, and build the house." What hill country does he refer to? Some think he refers simply to the hill country of Judah, but it evidently means the hill country of Lebanon, where the great timbers were secured that were used to build Solomon's Temple, and where they went to secure the timber to build the Temple. They have all the stone necessary; there were plenty of stones round about Jerusalem to build the Temple. "I will take pleasure in it, saith Jehovah." He took pleasure in the house of

Solomon, came and filled it with his presence when Solomon dedicated it, and promises now if they will build the house, he will take pleasure in it, and he will be glorified just as he was glorified when Solomon's Temple was built.

He continues his admonition in v. 9: "Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little [referring to the crops and products of their vineyards]; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it." The margin says, "I did blow it away." In some way it was wasted and they did not derive the benefit. Why this drought? "Because of my house that lieth waste, while ye run every man unto his own house. . . . For your sake the heavens withhold the dew, and the earth withholdeth fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the grain, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon the men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labor of the hands." That was the cause of the drought. People now explain it by various natural causes; the weather bureau and the weather prophets have a theory. But Haggai says, "It is because of your neglect of God's house; ye have been attending to your own affairs." I would rather trust the insight of God's prophet than the weather prophet.

The effect of this appeal was good. They hearkened to Haggai the prophet, both Zerubbabel and Joshua and all the remnant of the people with them, and they obeyed the voice of Jehovah their God and all the words of Haggai the prophet, and the people did fear before Jehovah. Haggai calls himself the Lord's messenger and when he came unto the people he brought this great encouraging word (v. 13): "I am with you, saith Jehovah." As one great man has said, "The best of all is, God is with us." And this is the gracious promise of Haggai to the people. As a result Jehovah stirred up the spirit of the leaders and the remnant of the people, and they came, and did work on the house of Jehovah, and they began to work exactly twenty-three days after Haggai preached to them his first sermon. The date of this sermon is "the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king."

We have the second prophecy of Haggai in 2:1-9, the subject of which is "The Glory of the New Temple." The exact date of this is given also, the twenty-first day of the seventh month. This was preached to the leaders and the people, and to meet an occasion which frequently comes in connection with building a new house, especially when the old one has been a magnificent structure, and when the people are not able to build one fully as large and magnificent. The people had begun to lay the foundation, and this afforded opportunity for comparisons to be made. There were some people there who remembered the old Temple, and they thought about the good old times and the good old building that they had before, and they began to make comparisons, and any man who has helped to erect a church knows the danger of discussion when a church building goes up.

Haggai directs himself to the occasion: "Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes as nothing?" Here is the criticism. But the prophet says, "Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith Jehovah; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith Jehovah, and work; for I am with you, saith Jehovah of hosts." Now the prophet gives a great promise. He said that the time would come when this Temple would be glorified beyond that of Solomon's Temple for, "Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land: and I will shake all nations; and the desirable things of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith Jehovah of hosts." The explanation is found in verse 8: "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith the Lord of hosts; and in this place will I give peace." A great promise, a great inspiration! No wonder that Zerubbabel and Joshua went to work with, greater zeal, largely as a result of Haggai's prophesying.

The third prophecy of Haggai is in 2:10-19, the burden of which is the cause of their calamities and the promise of blessing. This occurred in the ninth month, just two months after the previous one and on the fourth and twentieth day of the month. Haggai comes forward with a new and fresh argument to incite them to activity. He raises a question here and it is a question as to the relative infectiousness of evil or of good: "Ask now the priests concerning the law saying, If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any food, shall it become holy? And the priests answered and said, No. Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by reason of a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean." The question is based on the ceremonial law and customs. It is like this: A holy garment touching a piece of furniture will not make that holy, but an unclean garment touching anything will make it unclean. In other words, evil is more infectious than good.

Now what does Haggai mean? Is he simply playing with words? No, he is illustrating a great principle here. People are affected by evil much more readily than by good. This principle Haggai applies to these people. They had been in touch with things unclean; had been without their Temple; had been in the condition of pollution without their sacrifices. It is summed up in verse 14: "So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the Lord; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean." In other words, their acceptance before God did not depend upon their place in the Holy Land, but upon their actual state of holiness before him. Then he goes on to discuss his dealings with them and the result upon their economic and religious life which had been very unsatisfactory. They had been under a curse, but they are on the threshold of a great blessing (2:15-19).

The fourth prophecy is found in 2:20-23, the burden of which is the restoration and the establishment of the throne of David through Zerubbabel. This is the same day on which the third one was given.

This is addressed directly to Zerubbabel, the governor, the descendant of the line of David, the true, lawful heir to the throne. It is a gracious promise bringing before Zerubbabel something of the glories predicted by Jeremiah and Ezekiel, when they spoke about the prince of the house of David that should sit upon the throne forever. He encourages Zerubbabel and says, "I will shake the heavens and the earth: and I will overthrow the throne of the kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen: and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one, by the sword of his brother."

The background of this prophecy is those insurrections which convulsed all the world at the succession of Darius, and which it took him four years to quell. Verse 28 says, "In that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith Jehovah, and I will make thee as a signet," which means that he will be God's lawful representative, and God will delegate to him rulership, kingship and authority. The signet ring represented several things, viz: an irrevocable testimony, a delegate power, as God delegated his power to Zerubbabel. God delegated royal and divine authority to Zerubbabel, the legal heir of the throne of Israel. There was here a great promise of peace.

The fulfilment of this prophecy of Haggai did not take place fully in his day. The Persian Empire was re-established and the Jews, for over four hundred years, remained a little, obscure nation; a great conflict took place between Persia and Greece, when the battle of Marathon, Thermopylae, Salamis, and others were fought. But Haggai's prophecy revived the old hope of the messianic age in Israel, and started Judaism with that hope burning strong in their breasts. These prophecies were fulfilled at the coming of the Messiah, and the establishment of his reign.

There are two distinctive messianic prophecies in this book, viz: (1) The greater glory to the temple, 2:6-9; (2) David's throne through

Zerubbabel, as a representative of David, 2:2123. There is also one quotation from the book in the New Testament, viz: Hebrews 12:26 is a quotation of Haggai 2:6, and is there applied to the final shaking of all material things. Starting with Sinai, we have a perspective of prophecy, the shaking of Sinai forecasting God's shaking in Zerubbabel's day, the shaking in Zerubbabel's day forecasting Christ's day and that in turn forecasting the shaking at Christ's second advent.

There are three great lessons of the book: (1) The influence of God's preachers in forward kingdom movements, as great things in God's kingdom have always been accomplished by the instrumentality of great leaders; (2) The importance of God's work is paramount to everything else, which is illustrated in the saying of our Lord, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things (food, clothes, houses, etc.) shall be added unto you." (3) the necessity of a vision. They saw through the prophet's pictures, the future glory of Israel and were stimulated to activity commensurate with the task in hand.

QUESTIONS

1. Who were the postexile prophets?
2. Who was the last pre-exile prophet, how long after he prophesied. before these prophets came on the scene, and what prophets came in during the exilian period?
3. What was the historical situation in the time of these postexile prophets?
4. Who was Haggai, what was his problems and what, in general, the date of his prophecies?
5. What was the general character of his prophecies?

6. Give an outline of Haggai showing the addresses and the date of each.
7. To whom was his first address directed primarily?
8. What excuse had the people offered for their failure, what was the meaning of it, and what was this prophet's reply?
9. What condition does he describe to them and what reason does he assign for such condition?
10. What call does he then give to the people and what incentive does he hold out to them to go forward?
11. What was the response to this appeal and what the result?
12. What was the subject of his second address and to whom was it addressed?
13. What contrast does the prophet here make, what the occasion for it, what promise did he then give respecting the Temple and what the fulfilment of it?
14. What was the burden of the third address, what analogy does he draw from the Law and what was his great lesson for the people?
15. What punishment cited and what blessing now promised?
16. What was the burden of the fourth address, what was the glorious promise here and what was its fulfilment?
17. What two distinctively messianic prophecies in this book?
18. What quotations from this book in the New Testament and what is its application there?
19. What great lessons of this book?

XXVII. THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH PART I

Zechariah 1-3

We take up now the book of Zechariah. The date is 520 B.C., the same year in which Haggai uttered his prophecies to the leaders and people of Judah and Jerusalem urging them to go on with the work of rebuilding the Temple. Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai, the two preaching at the same time, with a similar message, and with the same purpose. They make no reference to each other, but it is the usual thing for prophets to apparently ignore the existence of any other prophet. That is only apparent, however, for the prophecies that we have recorded are supposed to record the messages of God, and not to be taken up with references to any personal matters.

It was in the reign of Darius which began 521 B.C. Zechariah tells us in the first verse of his prophecy that it was in the eighth month of the second year of Darius. He says that he was the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, the prophet, and styles himself "the prophet" as if he were well known as such. He was the grandson of Iddo. In Nehemiah 12:16, Zechariah is referred to as the son of Iddo, who was one of the heads of the priestly families that returned from Babylon with the first great company. So Zechariah was the grandson of a priest and was, no doubt, a priest himself. In the records of Ezra and Nehemiah, no mention is made of Berechiah. Probably he was an insignificant man, or perhaps died early, and thus no mention is made of him in those larger genealogies. Zechariah himself remembered his father, and also his grandfather and thus connected himself with one of the priestly families of Israel.

Now, let us consider the problem of the authorship of Zechariah. The first eight chapters of Zechariah are a unit. No one has ever denied that unity. The last six chapters of the book of Zechariah are very different. In these there is no allusion to the Temple, no reference to their feasts, to their ritual, to their sacrifices, or ceremonials; no references to the governor, or to the Persian Empire.

The political situation seems to be entirely changed. Other nations are mentioned which had not been mentioned by Zechariah, which had not been mentioned in fact, since the eighth century prophets prophesied against them. These nations are Damascus, Hadrach, a large city tributary to Damascus; Hamath, another important city in that region; Assyria, which had long since been dead as a nation; Egypt, still in existence and somewhat prominent; Greece, which had been mentioned only once and that in Joel, and which now comes to the front as the great conquering nation of the world. There is no peace in these chapters as in the first eight, but war, turmoil, strife, revolution, bloodshed, invasion, conquest, and struggle. Interspersed with that, there are beautiful portions on the messianic peace, the messianic glory that is to come, and there is also the picture of a fearful judgment upon Jerusalem, when that city shall be assaulted by the nations and shall be saved by Jehovah. All this is entirely different from the first part of Zechariah, and so different that there has been a great deal of controversy as to the authorship.

I give now a brief history of the various theories in regard to the authorship of these last six chapters.

In 1632, nearly three hundred years ago, an English Bishop noticed in Zechariah 11:13, this statement: "And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter, the goodly price that I was prized at by them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them unto the potter in the house of the Lord." Then he noticed in Matthew 27:9 these words ascribed to Jeremiah: "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken of by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was priced, whom certain of the children of Israel did price; and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me." On the supposition that this was a quotation from the book of Jeremiah several English scholars at the date ascribed these last six chapters to Jeremiah, the prophet. That theory held sway for some time, and we readily see that it would revolutionize many of our ideas and conceptions regarding the book

of Zechariah if it were put back into the time of Jeremiah, and it would create a thousand problems that would be difficult to solve.

Then again, some put it earlier than Jeremiah, before 720 B.C., while northern Israel was still in existence and Assyria was on the horizon and Egypt yet powerful and Damascus a strong state. Up to the year 1784 Jeremiah was regarded as the probable author by a great many. Then it was noted there was a man named Zechariah who lived in the time of Isaiah, and many scholars following that date, ascribed it to this Zechariah, a contemporary of Isaiah. Up to about twenty-five years ago almost all scholars ascribed it to a pre-exilic date, appearing at any period from the time of Isaiah to the time of Jeremiah.

Since about 1880 radical critics have been at work, and it has been ascribed almost unanimously by them to a postexilic date. Scholars have seen that the reference to Damascus and Hadrach and Hamath and their destruction might be ascribed to the conquest of Alexander the Great. For those nations, once powerful, had become weak, but revived again, and it is a historical fact that Alexander the Great really did sweep through that part of western Asia and destroy those cities and people. It was seen that Assyria and Egypt as referred to here, were general terms for the enemies of Israel north and south of Palestine. Assyria being her northern enemy, and Egypt her southern enemy. Judah and Ephraim which are referred to in this prophecy were used to represent all Israel, the two tribes and the ten tribes as grouped. They contend that the language is very late, but an argument from language is rather precarious, as we cannot be sure that words used in the sixth century B.C. were not used in the seventh and eighth centuries B.C.

Many scholars put it about 516 B.C., at the time of the dedication of the second temple. Pusey, one of the greatest English scholars and writers on the minor prophets, says that it was written about 516 B.C. or shortly afterward and that it gives us a vision of the conquests of Alexander the Great, the wars and turmoils under his

generals and the Ptolemies of Egypt, the Maccabees, the Roman Empire, down to the time of the crucifixion of Christ, and reaching on into the future to the conversion of the Jews. Radical critics, however, make it much later. They say it was written sometime during the period of Alexander the Great; that some of it was written probably in the Maccabean age, and many of them say that these six chapters have two different authors, living at different times. Cheyne, one of the great English critics, refers it to the Maccabean period. George Adam Smith puts it later than the time of Zechariah and the other prophets, but does not ascribe any date.

A great many conservative and very able scholars have held and do still hold that it was written by Zechariah himself after 516 B.C., when the Temple was dedicated. It is a picture of the Greeks upon the horizon of history, and that history arises because of their advance upon and their relation to Judah and Israel. There are foresight and prediction, and the reason why the radical critics put it in the Maccabean or Alexandrian period is because of their theory which practically denies prediction. Granting inspiration which gives predictive power, there is no reason in the world why Zechariah should not have written it subsequent to the dedication of the Temple.

This book is one of the longest of the minor prophets and may be divided into two parts, chapters 1-8 having a distinct reference to the work of the rebuilding of the Temple and the establishment of the ritual and the ceremonial. The message is one of encouragement to the people to proceed with the building of their Temple. Chapters 9-14 are very different. The political situation seems to be different, the historical circumstances seem to be changed, the horizon seems to have been largely modified, the occasion seems to be entirely dissimilar, the style and language are different, and so marked is the variation that this part of the book needs careful consideration. This latter part, chapters 9-14, may be subdivided into chapters 9-11 and chapters 12-14.

The following is a carefully wrought and exegetical analysis of the book:

PART I – CHAPTERS 1-8 Introduction 1:1-6

I. The Visions (1:7to 6:8)

1. The horses under the myrtle trees (1:7-17)
2. The four horns and four artificers (1:18-21)
3. The man with the measuring line (2:1-13)
4. Joshua and Satan (3:1-10)
5. The candlestick and the olive trees (4:1-14)
6. The flying book (5:1-4)
7. The woman and the epha (5:5-11)
8. The four chariots (6:1-8)

II. The Memorial Crowns (6:9-15)

III. The True Fast (7-8)

PART II – CHAPTERS 9-14

I. The First Burden of Prophecy (9-11)

1. The coming king (9)
2. The great regathering (10:1 to 11:3)
3. The good shepherd rejected (11:4-14)
4. The foolish shepherd (11:15-17)

II. The Second Burden of Prophecy (12-14)

1. Jehovah's protection of his people (12:1-9)
2. Repentance and conversion of many Jews (12:10 to 13:6)
3. Scattering the sheep by smiting the shepherd (13:7-8)
4. Purification of the remnant (13:9)
5. Gathering of nations against Jerusalem (14:1-2)
6. Conversion of the Jews as a nation (14:3-15)
7. The Millennium (14:16-21)

The occasion for the utterance of chapters 1-8, as we have already seen, was the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem, and the apparent occasion for the utterance of chapters 9-14 was the future history and vicissitudes of the nation.

Taking up the prophecy more in detail, we have, first, the introductory oracle, 1:1-6, which contains the title of the book, the name of the author and his admonition against the evil example of their fathers. It contains also the date of the prophecy which occurs between the last two prophecies of Haggai. Zechariah's first prophecy was in the eighth month of the second year of Darius.

Zechariah reviews their past history and uses that as a warning and as a means of admonition. He says, in v. 2: "Jehovah was sore displeased with your fathers." Those who had just returned from the exile knew well the meaning of this statement, for many of them had suffered the terrors of that yoke of bondage, a greater part of their own lives. Zechariah's message was, "Therefore say unto them, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Return unto me, saith Jehovah of hosts, and I will return unto you." A further admonition in the fourth verse, "Be ye not as your fathers." Take warning by their history. "Unto whom

the former prophets," the earlier prophets whose names were familiar to them and whose writings probably were in their hands, "cried, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Return ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings." "But," says Zechariah, "they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith Jehovah." He now raises a very serious question: "Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?" Zechariah reminds them that their fathers are gone, and the prophets are gone.

There are two ways of looking back into the past. There is that which looks back and longs for the same conditions, and thinks if only they could live in "the good old times," all would be well. There is such a thing as an excessive reverence for the past. Now Zechariah says, "Your fathers, where are they?" He says, "But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers?" Yes, and in spite of all the prophets said, and all they did, and all that God warned, "they turned and said, Like as Jehovah of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us." Now, do better than your fathers.

Now, we come to the visions which Zechariah saw for the encouragement of the people. The first vision of encouragement is the angel horsemen (7-17). Angels play a very important part in Zechariah's visions. In almost every one of his visions angels are the speakers, the actors and the interpreters. They are the messengers from Jehovah. In the book of Daniel angels play a very important part also. That occurred some time previous to these prophecies of Zechariah. All down through the centuries they had been familiar with the idea of angels. Every kingdom had its angel and every individual had his guardian angel. The Apocalyptic literature that followed the close of the canon is filled with a great many teachings and speculations, wise and otherwise, regarding angels. Zechariah's messages in visions all came by means of angels. The New Testament is full of the teaching of angels and their mission as ministers of the heirs of salvation.

The date of the prophecy is the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, Shebat, corresponding very nearly to our February, in the same year, 520 B.C., the second year of the reign of Darius. It came in a vision: "I saw in the night, and, behold, a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle-trees." There are many myrtle trees in Palestine, and many groves around Jerusalem. These myrtle trees are in "the bottom," that is, a shady place in some quiet valley. The angel riders symbolized God's messengers looking after conditions in the whole earth; the myrtle grove symbolized the shadowy condition of Israel, but there was encouragement in view of national life promised here; the nations were all quiet. This is a vision in the night, and behind the man on the red horse, were other horses, red, sorrel, and white. This is the analogue of those visions which John saw (see Revelation of the "Interpretation") . John saw a white horse, and a black horse, and a red horse and a pale horse, though the black horse is not mentioned here. The other three mentioned by John are very much like the three here described.

Naturally the prophet raises the question, "O, my Lord, what are these?" The first angel says, "I will show thee what these are." And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, "These are they whom Jehovah hath sent to walk to and fro throughout the earth." In other words, these are Jehovah's scouts who go to and fro throughout the world, to ascertain the condition of things and report. Now, what is the report of these scouts of the Almighty? "They answered the angel of Jehovah that stood among the myrtle-trees, and said, We have walked to and fro throughout the earth, and behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest." Now, what does this mean but that they have searched throughout the world to discover the political conditions, in order that they may ascertain whether the situation is conducive to Israel's going on with the work of building the Temple. Is there danger of immediate invasions, or of political upheavals? But they have found all is at rest and quiet.

How could this possibly be, because the first few years of the reign of Darius were occupied in quelling insurrections in almost every

part of his empire, and how could the affairs become settled and at peace during that period? There are two possible explanations. One is, though there may have been insurrections and revolts throughout the empire, there was no danger of their affecting Judah and Jerusalem. Or it may be that Darius had just succeeded in bringing some of the insurrections and revolts to an end, therefore there was rest and peace on the political horizon.

In verses 12-17 we have a dialogue between the prophet and the angel, and this angel of Jehovah gives Zechariah a very encouraging and comforting message to the people. The political situation was all quiet. Now there comes the question: "How long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these three score and ten years? And Jehovah answered the angel that talked with me with good words, even comfortable words." Then the angel that was answering, said to Zechariah, "Cry thou, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with great jealousy. And I am very sore displeased with the nations that are at ease; for I was but a little displeased and they helped forward the affliction. . . . I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies; my house shall be built in it." That is the message they wanted to hear. "Cry ye again, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, My cities shall yet be spread abroad." Jerusalem is going to grow, the land is going to be rich and prosperous, the Lord shall comfort Zion, and shall yet save Jerusalem. This is the first message, and it is a message of great encouragement, dealing with the political condition which, of course, must be quiet and favorable or no work could be done on the Temple.

The second vision is a vision of the destruction of Israel's adversaries (18-21). On the same night, apparently, he sees in a vision, four horns. Here they evidently represented powers; four, representing powers on all sides, power complete, one at each point of the compass. "And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these? And he answered me, These are the horns which

have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem." These are the nations, not four necessarily, as some think, but the nations that have been sufficient to scatter Jerusalem from all sides. "And the Lord showed me four smiths, then said, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns that scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head; but these are come to cast them down." That vision gave hope, the four horns representing all the power of these oppressive nations, sawed off by these smiths, thus destroyed and crushed.

The third is a vision of the measuring line (2:1-5). This refers to the geographical limits of Jerusalem, as the other two referred to the political conditions: "I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand." The angel now does not anticipate the question of the prophet, but he speaks himself, "Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof. And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, and said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as villages without walls." Put down your measuring line: Jerusalem is going to spread out, and multitudes of men will be gathered into it. "I will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and I will be the glory in the midst of her." The prophets before the exile had prophesied that Jerusalem should be built again, should occupy the same place, but the prophecy of Zechariah is a broader vision, the greater Jerusalem that was to be, could not be walled in. This, of course, does not have a literal fulfilment. It finds fulfilment in all the history of Christianity and means that Christianity will not be limited by measurement.

In verses 6-12 inclusive, we have a lyric poem appealing to the people to return from their exile in Babylon and come back to Judah, and Jerusalem. "Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughters of Babylon. For thus saith the Lord of hosts: After glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you; for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye," showing his regard for

his people. He was going to bring a calamity upon these nations that had been spoiling them: "For, behold, I will shake my hand over them, and they shall be a spoil to those that served them; and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me." Then he calls on them to sing and rejoice: "O daughter of Zion; for, lo, I come, and will dwell in the midst of thee."

We have here something like the second part of Isaiah, and the phraseology is very much like that great prophecy: "Many nations shall join themselves to Jehovah in that day, and shall be my people," which has fulfilment in the final conquests of Christianity through the Jews. Just as the great prophets have prophesied, so does Zechariah. "I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me unto thee. And Jehovah shall inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and shall yet choose Jerusalem. Be silent, all flesh, before Jehovah; for he is waked up out of his holy habitation." He woke up when Babylon was destroyed, when he sent back some fifty thousand of his people; he is awake now, and he calls on Zechariah to give the message to the people to arouse them to rebuilding the Temple. This call of Jehovah reminds us of God's call to his people to come out of the apostate church in Revelation.

The fourth is a vision of the high priest and Satan, chapter 3. Visions one and two dealt with the political situation, vision three dealt with the geographical situation, and the fourth vision deals with the moral and religious situation. The Lord showed Zechariah, Joshua, the high priest, who returned with Zerubbabel as one of the leaders, standing before the angel of Jehovah. The angel of Jehovah is God's representative of himself in the person and presence of his angelic being. Satan is standing at Joshua's right hand to be his adversary, a supernatural being whose business it was to accuse the people of God. Thus we have Jehovah, Joshua, and Satan, a trio: Jehovah on behalf of his people, Joshua the representative of his people from a religious standpoint, representing them in their moral and religious relationship, and Satan, the accuser, the adversary, the angelic being

whose business it was to accuse God's people whenever he had an opportunity.

The accuser had sought to prove that Israel was forsaken, and had incurred the displeasure of Almighty God. Now the Lord speaks: "Jehovah rebuke thee) O Satan, yea, Jehovah that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" My people were in Babylon under oppression, but by my providences I brought them forth out of that oppression, and is not that sufficient proof that I am with them and that they are my people? I plucked them as a brand from the burning. Satan disappears and we hear nothing more about him in the vision. But how about Joshua, the priest? He is clothed in filthy garments, representing the religious condition of those people with their Temple unbuilt and ceremonial unkept. The angel of the vision answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, "Take the filthy garments from off him," and when they had done that he said, "I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with rich apparel. And I said, Let them set a clean mitre upon his head." What did it mean? It meant that Jehovah was going to be so gracious to Israel that she was going to have her Temple again and enjoy the blessings of Jehovah.

We conclude the study of the fourth vision, describing the purified religious conditions (3:6-10). We have seen the importance and place of Joshua in the new era that was about to dawn; how that Joshua, as the representative of the people was cleansed and made ready for the divine service and worship. In keeping with that new era upon which Joshua and the people entered, we have the word of Jehovah unto Joshua giving him an earnest warning: "Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou also shalt judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee a place of access among these that stand by." This is what had been enjoined upon the priestly families long before this, even from the days of Moses. They were to be the teachers and judges and administrators of the law, and if they kept

that law and walked in his ways, they maintained their high and honorable position in the nation. They had forfeited that to a large extent, for, as we see, in the prophets previous to the exile, they had almost failed.

It says further, "I will give thee a place of access among these that stand by." This passage presents some difficulties. Who are "these"? Does it refer to the people, his brother priests, the leaders and representatives of the nation? That is one interpretation, but another one is, he shall have a place of access, or a place in which to walk among God's representatives, such as have been appearing in the prophet hitherto. This seems to be more in keeping with the dignity of the office here ascribed to Joshua.

Zechariah goes on with his admonition: "Hear now, O Joshua, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee," i. e. his brother priests, subordinate, but officiating with him in the services and the sacrifices being offered. What about these men with thee? These men that sit before thee, they are men "which are a sign," a wonder. This refers to the typical significance of their office. "For, behold," he goes on, "I will bring forth my servant the Branch." This refers to the descendant of David, the royal family, and the dynasty that was to sit upon the throne of Israel forever, now represented by Zerubbabel, forecasting the Messiah, or Jesus 'Christ. "For, behold, the stone that I have set before Joshua; upon one stone are seven eyes; behold, I will engrave the graving thereof." What is the stone?

There have been a great many beautiful interpretations. Some say that it was the headstone which completed the Temple building, and upon that stone were engraved seven eyes, as well as other engraving, beautifying and adorning it. Others say it was the stone upon the breastplate of the high priest and upon that stone were engraved the seven eyes. Others have said that the stone which is set before Joshua represents the Temple completed, and upon that Temple Jehovah was to set his seven eyes, not to engrave the picture of the eyes on the stone of the Temple, but Jehovah, with his perfect

vision, seven eyes, representing the perfection of sight and knowledge, should set that perfect sight upon the Temple to watch over it, that is, God should set upon it the perfection of his knowledge and his care, and thus it would be protected.

But the stone here referred to is the hierarchy, or theocracy, and is parallel to Daniel's "little stone," and the seven eyes represent God's perfect, watchful care for spiritual Israel. As a result of it, he says, "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." This is a very gracious promise, referring to the Atonement Day as typical of the sacrifice of Christ by which sins were expiated.

Verse 10 gives a picture of the blessings and prosperity the people shall enjoy in the period which is to follow, including the messianic age. "In that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, shall ye invite every man his neighbor under the vine and under the fig tree." There is promised peace and prosperity in the world, especially when the messianic age terminates in the millennium as here foreshadowed.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the date and occasion of the prophecy of Zechariah?
2. Who was contemporary, how do you account for the fact that they make no reference to each other & who was Zechariah?
3. What objections have been urged against the unity of the book and what was the reply?
4. What was the general character of the book?
5. What was the occasion of each of the two great sections of the book, respectively, what was Zechariah's first prophecy, and what was its relation to the whole book?
6. Give an exegetical analysis of Zechariah.

7. What was the date of this prophecy and how does it correlate with Haggai's prophecy?
8. What history does he recite in the prophecy and what are the lessons which he draws from it?
9. What was the date of the first vision, what was the vision itself, what means of communication here and what can you say of the teaching in both the Old Testament and the New Testament respecting angels?
10. What was the purpose of this vision, what was the meaning of its symbolism and what was the bearing on the work of building the Temple?
11. This is the analogue of what New Testament vision and what parallels in the two visions?
12. What was the dialogue between the angel and the prophet and what revelations here made to the prophet?
13. What was the second vision, what was the meaning of the symbolism and what encouragement to Jerusalem?
14. What was the third vision, 'what was its purpose, who was the young man and what prophecy contained in this vision?
15. What was the character of the passage, 2:6-13, what appeal here and what similar one in Revelation?
16. What expression here indicates Jehovah's regard for his people, what prophecy of this section, and what was its encouragement to the people of Jerusalem at this time?
17. What was the fourth vision, who were the representative characters, what does each represent, what symbolic action here described and what interpretation of it?

18. What charge did the angel here give Joshua, what promise did he give him, and who were the "fellows that sit before thee," how are they "a sign"?

19. What messianic prophecy here, what the stone mentioned, what was the meaning of seven eyes, what was the meaning of removing "the iniquity of the land in one day" and to what period of 'time does v. 10 refer?

XXVIII. THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH (CONTINUED) PART II

Zechariah 4:1 to 8:23

The fifth vision of Zechariah gave the people encouragement regarding their spiritual condition. The others gave them encouragement from the political and geographical standpoint, but this has reference to the inner, spiritual condition. This vision is for Zerubbabel, the messianic representative, the heir to the throne of David. The prophet says that he was wakened as a man that is wakened out of his sleep. This vision comes on the same night as the others, and apparently the prophet had fallen asleep between the former visions and this one. The same angel that had spoken to him before is still with him, and he says, "What seest thou? And I said, I have seen, and, behold, a candlestick all of gold, with its bowl upon the top of it, and its seven lamps thereon; there are seven pipes to each of the lamps, which are upon the top thereof."

This is his description of the seven-branched candlestick. There was a bowl above the candlestick probably in the center holding a large amount of oil. The seven branches of the candlestick spread on either side, and he says, "There are seven pipes to each of the lamps." Seven signifies perfection, and therefore the supply will be never-failing, and all-sufficient to keep those lights burning. Again, there are other means by which this bowl is itself to be supplied with oil. Two olive trees stand by it, one upon the right side of the bowl and the other upon the left side. The olive trees furnished the oil which was used for their lamps. Now the prophet does not understand the vision and he asks the question, saying, "What are these, my Lord? Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these are? And I said, No, my Lord. Then he answered and spake unto me," giving a fuller description of the vision that had been presented to him, and the latter part of verse 10 is a continuation of the description of the vision.

I read from verse 6, first part, and verse 10, latter part: "Then he answered and spake unto me saying, . . . These are the eyes of Jehovah," the perfection of knowledge and oversight of God, "which run to and fro through the whole earth." Those seven lights thus represent the omnipresence and omniscient activity of God. Verse 11 continues the description: "Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof?" He does not answer at once, but the prophet asks again the question, "and I answered the second time, and said unto him, What are these two olive branches, which are beside the two golden spouts that empty the golden oil out of themselves?" The olive branches acted as spouts for the olive trees carrying the olive oil from the trees to the golden bowl at the top, then through the seven pipes to each one of the lamps on the candlestick. "And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these things are? I said, No, my Lord. Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth." This refers to the two representatives of Jehovah among the people of Israel, Joshua, the religious leader, and Zerubbabel, the civil leader, one representing the regal and the other the priestly function of the theocracy as found in the hierarchy. These are the two olive trees which furnish the oil to the burning lamps.

Now let us see the application as we find it in the latter part of verse 6, to the first part of verse 10, bearing in mind this picture before the prophet of the two olive trees. What does it mean? "This is the word of Jehovah unto Zerubbabel." This was on behalf of the civil government, and it was through Zerubbabel that this message should be fulfilled among the people of Israel in the rebuilding of the Temple and the establishment of the nation. It was to be by the power of the Spirit of Jehovah, not by an army nor by fighting, not by mere strength nor power of any kind, "but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah." That is a great text, which has had its application all through the ages. Not by an army is this work to be done, Zerubbabel, not by your strength and prowess, not by anything but the Spirit of God, and this represents that operation: the two olive

trees supply the oil which runs to the lamps and which keeps them burning. The process is unseen but its effects can be seen. That is the message to Zerubbabel.

Now the encouragement is in these words (v. 7). "Who art thou, O great mountain?" A great difficulty seemingly insurmountable was before Zerubbabel. "Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the top stone with shoutings of Grace, grace, unto it." The mountain shall disappear, the difficulty shall vanish, because the mighty power of the Spirit of God is going to be felt in the hearts and spirits of men, and they are to come to thy help. The Temple shall be completed and he shall bring forth the top stone "with shoutings of Grace, grace unto it." That was wonderfully encouraging to Zerubbabel, who must have been discouraged. Now the promise comes with great force: "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house" (which was done under the preaching of Haggai); "his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me (the prophet Zechariah) unto you." But there were some that despised this small beginning, this almost contemptible start of the building: "Who hath despised the day of small things?" Many people have done it, but they are going to change their minds; they are going to rejoice and be glad when they shall see the plummet in the hands of Zerubbabel; when the prince shall begin the work of erection of the Temple.

The sixth is the vision of the flying roll, or the curse re-moved (5:1-4). People, priests and leaders have been encouraged. Now there comes a message saying that a certain class of people who are a nuisance and a trouble shall be removed out of their midst and they shall get rid of them once for all. This refers to the cleaning out of certain types of criminals among them. The prophet see" a roll, or scroll, flying in the air, and the angel speaks to him, "What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits and the breadth thereof ten cubits." That was a large roll, or sheet of paper, twenty cubits by ten cubits, or fifteen by thirty feet, to see flying. "Then he said unto me, This is the curse

that goeth forth over the face of the whole land." What was the curse to do? Every one that stealeth shall be cut off and every one that sweareth shall be cut off. The roll represents the principle of law to be administered by Israel; the flying roll means the active principle of law; the written roll, a published principle of law; in heaven means that the law and its penalty were from God.

The vision teaches that as Judah and Jerusalem were troubled by these criminals, Jehovah would send a curse among them and consume their families, their homes, and their houses, extirpate them, and thus cleanse Jerusalem from such a troublesome element. This was to be a great blessing to the people, as it would be almost impossible for them to go forward with such criminals in their midst.

The seventh is a vision of the woman in the barrel, or wickedness removed from the land (vv. 5-11). It is a vision wherein God shows to Zechariah that the spirit and principle of sin which seems to be engraved in the people's natures would be removed by the divine power from their midst. It is the picture of an ephah, a large measure about equal to our bushel measure, really a barrel with a round top and cover to it. In the barrel there is a woman sitting. This woman represents wickedness: the principle of sin that is so prominent among the people. The lid is upon it, and on the lid is a talent of lead, a great weight. The woman is forced down into the barrel, the lid is closed over it.

Two other women appear with wind in their wings, wings like those of a stork, and they lift up the ephah between earth and heaven. Then the prophet asks the question, "Whither do these bear the ephah? And he said unto me, To build her an house in the land of Shinar: and when it is prepared, she shall be set there in her own place." Shinar, or the Plain of Babylon was the place where wickedness began, the plain where they attempted to build a tower into heaven and were scattered abroad; the plain which had been the means of Israel's oppression. The idea is this: That sin must be

removed, and it cannot be removed by a ritual or by a legal punishment. It must be removed by the action of the Almighty God himself. Human hands cannot carry away the sins of the people. That is a divine operation only and sin is represented here by a woman, not because a woman is more sinful or worse than a man, but because sin is so attractive. It must therefore be dealt with by God himself and banished from the land. According to this vision it is going to be done; evil is surely to be extirpated.

The eighth vision, or the chariots of the four winds, or spirits (6:1-8), is a vision of the universal providence of God; as the first vision was a vision of God's providential scouts watching all that was upon the horizon of the world's history, this is a vision of the universal providence of God visiting punishment upon the nations that have oppressed Israel. And in the first vision there were angels upon horses; here we have horses and chariots. He sees four chariots corresponding to the four points of the compass and representing the completeness of the operation of God's providence. They came forth from between the mountains) and the mountains were mountains of brass. The mountains refer to Mount of Olives and Mount Moriah upon which Jerusalem was built. Brass represents the everlasting quality and strength of the mountains.

The first chariot had red horses attached to it, the second, black horses, the third, white horses, and the fourth grizzled or dappled horses. The brass mountains represent the invincible nature of the theocracy; the different kinds of horses correspond almost exactly to the four horses which John saw on Patmos as recorded in Revelation 6. The white horse there represents the gospel going forth in its conquests; the black horse represents the scarcity of the gospel when it was in the hands of certain ones who doled it out and starved the people; the red horse represents the conflict that arose wherever the gospel went; the grizzled or pale horse represents the persecutions that follow in the wake of the gospel.

These four chariots here represent the four winds, and the four winds represent the four great punishments or judgments of God that are to break forth upon all parts of the world, the analogue of what John sees in chapter 7, where he represents the four angels as holding the four winds of the earth. Here are four chariots representing the four winds or universal providence of God upon the nations (see Revelation of "The Interpretation") .

Now he sends them forth, the black horses and the white horses go forth to Babylonia and the natives adjoining to inflict the punishments of Jehovah upon those people. The grizzled horses go south to Egypt to inflict punishment upon her, because Israel had suffered at the hands of that nation also. The red horses want to know where they are to go, and they are told that they are to walk up and down, to and fro, through the earth, that is, they are to pass up and down through the land of Palestine and be the administrators of the divine providence in that region.

Then a question arises here concerning the mission of the chariots with the black horses and the white horses, which go toward the north. "Behold they that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country." What does that mean? It means that they have caused his anger and wrath to rest upon those nations in the north which have oppressed Israel; that they are to inflict God's severe punishment upon those people in the north country, until they are exterminated, and God's spirit will rest because those enemies are gone. In other words, it means that they have caused this providential visitation of God to come upon and abide upon that north country. History bears us out in this, and from this time on, Babylonia, Assyria, and Syria began to decay, and God's providential judgments have ever since then been upon these peoples.

The result of the visions was the crowning of Joshua, the priest (9-15). Following these visions which have given encouragement to the people and the leaders, which have promised freedom from sin and

iniquities, and which have given them a vision of God's universal providence on their behalf, they are ready for the crowning of Joshua as joint-sovereign and ruler with Zerubbabel, the son of David.

This is not a vision by the prophet, but a symbolic action which the prophet himself performs. There appear before him in the daylight, men who have come recently from Babylon and the captivity, such as Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah, who have come into the house of Josiah, the son of Zephaniah, who dwells in the city. They are to bring silver and gold, such as they brought from Babylonia, and he is to make a crown, or crowns. The crown was a wreath, or diadem, which would encircle the brow of the priest, and it may have been made of two or three small wreaths, or rings, and put together would form one crown. That is probably the explanation of the word "crowns" mentioned here because there is only one man crowned, Joshua, which would necessitate only one crown, made of several small wreaths. Zerubbabel is ex officio entitled to a crown, being the direct heir of the line of David. Now Joshua is crowned.

Then comes the word regarding Zerubbabel: "Thus spake the Lord of hosts, Behold, the man whose name is the Branch." Zerubbabel is the man mentioned in the fourth vision: "He shall grow up out of his place"; he shall come out of his obscurity and assert his royal dignity and power. The vision predicts that he is going to rise up and build the Temple of Jehovah, and, as it says in verse 13, "He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." They now have two crowned rulers, prince and priest. Zerubbabel is going to assert his place of power. Now, with the religious leader crowned, and the civil leader roused, the Temple is going to be built. Then these crowns that are here made are going to be preserved in the Temple as a memorial of those men who brought the silver and gold from Babylon, "And this shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of Jehovah your God."

The larger fulfilment of this prophecy, the crowning of the prince and the crowning of the priest comes into vision as we look upon the one who represents both the priest and the prince. He represented in himself the priestly and the kingly authority, and he built the spiritual temple which shall abide to all eternity. Zechariah, however, is talking about building that Temple in Jerusalem, and his word has its application primarily to Joshua and Zerubbabel, but its larger application is to the priest-hood and kingship of Jesus Christ, the true Branch of the line of David. (For the typical significance of this crowning of Joshua see Revelation, chapter 6, of "The Interpretation.")

Now we take up chapters 7-8, the theme of which is the true fasts, and we find that these are dated some two years later, in the fourth year of the reign of King Darius. There is an interval of almost two years between those two prophecies. The question arises, What was done in the meantime? Those two years were occupied with the work of rebuilding the Temple under the inspiration of the preaching of Haggai and those visions which Zechariah saw. Two years passed, probably of strenuous labor, and by that time the Temple was half erected, or more. It required about four years to complete it, and it was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius, or 516 B.C., that it was dedicated.

With the erection of the Temple there arose in the minds of the people the question of the keeping of their ceremonial laws. That gave rise to certain questions in the minds of some people, and they came to Joshua and to the leaders in Jerusalem with the question as to whether they should observe certain facts that had been observed since the beginning of the exile, about seventy years previous. This question on the part of those inquirers, gave the prophet his opportunity, and he deals with their problems, and by means of that inculcates the performance of civic virtues and duties which they must soon resume.

We observe in the second verse that a delegation came from Bethel composed of Sharezer and Regemmelech and others, to entreat the favor of Jehovah, and to speak unto the priests of the house of Jehovah of hosts and to the prophets, probably Zechariah, and Haggai, and possibly others of whom we know nothing, and they came with a question regarding certain facts which they had been observing. He does not say whether they should observe the fast or not, but he proceeds upon broader lines and principles. As much as to say, "God did not institute that fast which you have been observing these seventy years in the fifth month. It was not his requirement. You men of Israel instituted the fast yourselves. It was in commemoration of an event which Almighty God would have prevented if he could have done so righteously. It is in commemoration of an event which was because of your sins. He then throws back the question to them: "When ye fasted in the fifth and seventh month, did ye fast unto me?"

The fast in the seventh month was in commemoration of the murder of Gedaliah, the Jewish governor who had been appointed by Nebuchadnezzar, governor over the last, small, miserable semblance of national life, left after the fall of the city. "Even these seventy years, when fasting on the fifth and seventh month, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?" Was that God's requirement: The answer is evident. No, your fasting was not unto God. Ye did it not at his commandment. Therefore, ye need not raise the question whether you should continue it or not. But he goes on, "And when ye eat and when ye drink, do not you eat for yourselves and drink for yourselves?"

The point here is: Do you eat and drink to the glory of God? Then he makes an application of the historical episodes through which they had passed and which had burned themselves into the people's memory. Rather than concern yourselves with this fasting in these months, or with eating and drinking, or not eating and drinking, he says in verse 7, "Should ye not hear the words which Jehovah hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in

prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, and the South and the low lands were inhabited?" In other words, God sent his prophets; ye did not hearken to them, and therefore ye lost all; now learn by your history and give heed to the word of the former prophets. Then he branches out to discuss and inculcate civic righteousness instead of mere ceremonial fasting: "The word of Jehovah came unto Zechariah saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Speak, saying, Execute true judgment and show mercy and compassion to every man his brother." Zechariah here says, "Take warning by the past, op-press not the widow nor the fatherless, the stranger nor the poor," and penetrating right to the very heart of the people and to their very motives, he says, "Let none of you imagine evil against his brother in his heart." In verse 11 he again refers to their past history and to the stubbornness of their forefathers; how they refused to hear; how they made their hearts as hard as adamant lest they should hear the law and the words of the former prophets. Because of that, great wrath came from Jehovah of hosts, so great that when they cried, God did not hear. He scattered them as a whirlwind among all nations whom they had not known. Because of that even the land was desolate and the pleasant land was laid waste. Here Zechariah was in line with Moses. Isaiah. Jeremiah. Jesus Christ, and Paul.

The Seed of Peace, or the Future Prophecy of Jerusalem, is the theme of chapter 8. Here in this chapter we have ten brief oracles, each one beginning with the same statement, "Thus saith Jehovah of hosts," and in these ten oracles he gives a picture of the future peace and prosperity of the Temple and the establishment of the nation upon its religious foundation again. He commends their heavy labor in this work, and on the supposition that they are going to heed his word, and take warning by their past history, he proceeds to give them this series of views of the glory that shall come to their city and nation, as follows:

Oracle 1. A renewed assertion of God's jealousy for them (vv. 1-2). Like the true prophet, he begins with fundamentals. He brings

before their minds again the thought of God's eternal love and God's eternal interest in those people. "I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy."

Oracle 2. Jehovah's dwelling in Jerusalem, the city of truth and righteousness (v. 3). "I am returned unto Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem." It means his continued presence and therefore their assured blessing.

Oracle 3. There shall be the aged and the young in the city (vv. 4-5). We can understand something of the meaning of this prophecy when we look at the character of the population of Jerusalem. Many of the people returned from the exile, but there were comparatively few aged men and women. They had not been settled long in the land and there were comparatively few children, and Jerusalem had comparatively few inhabitants anyway, and what is a city or community unless there be the aged with their wisdom, their mellow and ripened years, and what is a city or community without the playing, prattling children in the streets? A community of middle-aged men or women is not complete. All sides of human life are not there represented. Now he says the time is coming when there will be the aged, and there will be the boys and girls: there shall be old men and old women in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age, and the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing therein.

Oracle 4. The marvel of their prosperity will be no marvel to God (v. 6). "If it be marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of these people in those days, should it also be marvelous in mine eyes? saith the Lord of hosts." There is nothing marvelous with God.

Oracle 5. Jehovah brings back his people (vv. 7-8). "Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Behold, I will save my people from the east country and from the west country; and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness." This was partly fulfilled then, but finds its larger fulfilment in Christianity.

Oracle 6. An exhortation to strengthen their hands (vv. 913). Verse 9 is an admonition, "Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words," etc., which came by the mouth of Haggai as well as Zechariah himself. The Temple, he says, will be built, for that was the purpose of these prophecies. Before these words of the prophets came there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast, neither was there any peace to any that went in or out, because of the adversary. In verse 11 he gives the contrast: "Now I will not be unto the remnant of this people as in the former days . . . There shall be the seed of peace; the vine shall give its fruit, and the ground shall give its increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to inherit all these things. It shall come to pass that, as ye were a curse among the nations . . . so ye shall be a blessing."

Oracle 7. Justice shall be their standard (vv. 14-17). He gives the reasons why he had planned evil before. He plans good now on this condition as given in verse 16: "Speak ye every man the truth with his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates; and let none of you devise evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate. saith Jehovah."

Oracle 8. Fasts turned into feasts (18-19). The fast of the fourth month was because Jerusalem was then taken by Nebuchadnezzar, of the fifth month because it was then burned; the fast of the seventh month was because Gedaliah was then slain, and the fast of the tenth month commemorated the blockade of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar a year and a half previous to its being taken. These four dire events in their history had been celebrated by fasts during the exile and up to this period of the return. "Now," says the prophet, "this has been changed; these fasts shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts," since the things that caused these fasts had passed away. "Therefore," he says, "love truth and peace."

Oracle 9. Peoples and nations shall come to Jehovah (20-22). "There shall come peoples, and the inhabitants of many cities; and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to entreat the favor of Jehovah, and to seek Jehovah of hosts." This was partly fulfilled then, but the larger fulfilment is found in messianic times when all people shall come to the true Israel of God.

A tender and delicate touch is given here. They will say, "I will go also." A very suggestive text. A mother and wife and the family prepare to go to church, the father stays at home and perhaps asks them to pray for him, but he doesn't go. In a revival where many are coming to the Lord the application of this text can be made to the others. "I will go also." That is what they are going to say, Zechariah says.

Oracle 10. Ten men shall follow one Jew (v. 23). "Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: In those days, it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold, out of all the languages of the nations, they shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." It was fulfilled partially then; it was fulfilled more in the time when Christ was upon earth; it was fulfilled when Paul the great Jew brought the gospel to the heathen world, and if we substitute a Christian here for a Jew, for a Christian is the real descendant of the Jew, it is being fulfilled now. This figure signified dependence and love, as a child clings to the parent; so, it applies to the great fact that the religion of the world comes through the Jews. This will have its larger fulfilment in the millennium.

QUESTIONS

1. What was Zechariah's fifth vision, what was the meaning of the symbolism, what the message of this vision, and to whom?
2. What was the promise of this message, and what was the meaning and application of verse 10?

3. Is there a type of Christ in this vision? If so, what?
4. What was Zechariah's sixth vision, what was the interpretation of its symbolism, and what was the purpose of the vision?
5. What was the seventh vision of Zechariah, what was the interpretation of its symbolism, and what the encouragement here to God's people?
6. What was Zechariah's eighth vision, what was the meaning of its symbolism, and where do we find in the New Testament the vision of which this is an analogue?
7. What great symbolic act follows these visions and what is the interpretation of it?
8. What was the subject discussed in chapters 7 and 8, what was the date of this revelation, how long after the visions and what had occurred in the meantime?
9. How did this question arise, what was the meaning of the question, what was Jehovah's reply, and what was the meaning of it?
10. What history does the prophet then recite to them and what was its lesson?
11. What was the special theme of 8:12 and what ten oracles of this chapter introduced by "Thus saith Jehovah"?
12. What was the meaning and application of Jehovah's jealousy of v. 2?
13. What was the meaning and application of Jehovah's dwelling in Jerusalem?
14. What was the meaning and application of the young and aged in the city of Jerusalem (vv. 4-5)?

15. What is the meaning of verse 6?
16. What is the meaning of 7-8?
17. What was the prophet's exhortation and encouragement in verses 9-13?
18. What promise does he make to them and what requirements does he make of them in verses 14-17?
19. Why were the fasts mentioned in verses 18-19 kept by the Jews in the captivity and what was the announcement here concerning them and why?
20. What was the promise of verses 20-22 and what the fulfilment of it?
21. What was the meaning and application of verse 23?

XXI.XTHE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH (CONTINUED) PART III

Zechariah 9:1 to 11:17

We take up now the second part of the book of Zechanah, the more difficult part of the prophecy. It has many parallels with the Revelation of John, and has a great many difficulties, though perhaps, not as many as that book.

The date of these oracles is subsequent to 516 B.C., that is, sometime subsequent to the dedication of the Temple. It represents Zechariah's inspired look into the far future. It contains the pictures which Zechariah drew of the great principles – political, spiritual, and religious – that were to operate in the future history of his people, Israel. He looks at them through the eye of the Jew, and from the Jewish standpoint, as all prophets did, and pictured those events from materials drawn from Jewish conceptions and Jewish life and ideals. He looked into the centuries and saw the spiritual conflicts which took place, and saw the final outcome, which was very similar to the final outcome portrayed by the other great prophets. As Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah had before them the Assyrian invasion, and as Zephaniah, Jeremiah, and Habakkuk, as well as Ezekiel, had upon the horizon of the world the Babylon invasion, so Zechariah has before him the Greek invasion and the great events which transpired in the history of Israel as a result thereof. It was the rise of these great powers which gave rise to the greatest of the prophecies that we have reserved to us. It requires great occasions to bring forth and develop great men, and when God brings great occasions or great emergencies upon the world, he prepares great men to meet them.

The principal ideas in these last six chapters of Zechanah, are the invasion of the Greeks and the spread of Greek philosophy, religion, literature, and civilization in western Asia. There is a picture of the messianic King, presented as coming like a king of peace, and as a shepherd to tend his sheep; a picture of the preservation of the

people of Israel, particularly the preservation of the capital, Jerusalem) and the downfall of their enemies; a picture also of the restoration of the exiled, outcast and scattered people of Israel; a picture also of Israel's greatest crime, the tragedy of her history, also of the final conversion of the Jews, of the consummation of all things and the glorious and blessed millennial age. Zechariah has in view the great principles that were fighting for supremacy in the history of the centuries and shows their outcome

Now we take up chapter 9, the theme of which is The Coming of a King. The destruction of the nations through the advent of the Greeks is set forth in 9:1-7. These nations were those immediately north of Israel, in what is known as Syria. They were Damascus, Hadrach, Hamath) Tyre, Sidon, and then all the victorious Greeks swept down the coast of Philistia and its great cities. "The burden of the word of Jehovah," which means an oracle concerning their destruction, an oracle which predicts a burden upon those nations, and means that these nations were to suffer beneath that burden. "Upon the land of Hadrach," he says, "and Damascus, is this burden placed, for there shall it abide and it has abode upon the land of Hadrach ever since. "For the eye of man and of all the tribes of Israel is toward Jehovah," or "For to Jehovah is the eye of man and all the tribes of Israel."

The idea is that these events which he is going to mention, are events ordered of God because he looks upon all those nations, and upon the tribes of Israel also, who shall have an important part in these events. "Hamath also which bordereth thereon; Tyre and Sidon, because they are very wise." Ezekiel says that Tyre was very wise, worldly wise, very shrewd, the most astute commercial people in the world at that time. And he says, "Tyre did build herself a stronghold, and heaped up silver as dust, and fine gold as mire of the streets," just as Solomon did in Jerusalem, as he gathered all the wealth of the nations into Jerusalem to himself, so Tyre gathered all the wealth she could gather from the nations unto herself and it was concentrated there.

He says in regard to Tyre, "Jehovah will dispossess her and will smite her power in the sea and she shall be devoured with fire." That was done in 331 B.C. when Alexander the Great built a mole from the mainland across the strait to the island on which Tyre was situated. Upon Tyre he vented all his wrath: Two thousand of its best citizens were crucified, and six to eight thousand more were butchered, multitudes were sold into slavery, the city was burned with fire and ever since it has been a desolation,

Alexander the Great swept down the coast to Philistia. "Ashkelon," one of the Philistine cities, "shall see it and fear," and well they might fear. "Gaza also shall see it, and be sore pained, and Ekron, for her expectation shall be put to shame; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited." Probably her expectation was Tyre and Sidon, that they would form a bulwark or barrier against the conquering Greeks. "And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines." That was done, for Alexander swept them almost into oblivion. "And I will take away his blood out of his mouth," that is, "I will stop his eating of blood in his sacrifices and religious ceremonials, and his abominations from between his teeth." I will put a stop to all that eating of abominable flesh in his religious ceremonials. "And he alas shall be a servant for our God." There is hope for a few.

What about Jerusalem? Shall Jerusalem fall under Alexander the Great? No, as verse 8 says, "I will encamp about my house against the army, that none pass through or return; and no oppressor shall pass through them any more; for now have I seen with mine eyes." And that is what happened. Alexander the Great passed down the coast of the Mediterranean, and according to Josephus was marching up to Jerusalem, when he met the high priest, Jadda, at the head of a procession of priests; they met him in their white robes, showed him the oracle, perhaps this very prophecy) which said he should not take Jerusalem. Alexander bowed before him, went into Jerusalem, offered sacrifice, and Jerusalem was saved exactly as it says here.

Whether Josephus' story is true or not, one thing is certain, he spared Jerusalem.

In verses 9-10 we have a prophecy of peace among the nations by the advent of Israel's king. Having thus predicted the destruction of those nations and the safety of Jerusalem, and having prepared the way for the king, he now paints his immortal picture of the coming king: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy king cometh unto thee; he is just and having salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass, even a colt the foal of an ass." This is a picture of a king coming in peace, a contrast to what he had just been picturing. Now this is one of the passages that have been literally fulfilled, and we know the story of how Jesus sent his disciples to prepare the colt upon which he sat and rode into Jerusalem amidst the acclamation of the multitudes.

What is the result of his entrance upon the city? Verse 10 says that he will put an end to all strife and war and bloodshed: "I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim," the chariots which they employed for war, "and the horse from Jerusalem," which Micah says was the cause of her sin and downfall, "and the battle now shall be cut off; and he shall speak peace unto the nations; and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth." That was not all literally fulfilled when Jesus entered Jerusalem, but has its fulfilment in all the history of Christianity. It is a picture of the onward march of Jesus Christ, looked at from a standpoint of a king of peace.

Next he sees the inevitable conflict between the religion of the Jews and the religion of the Greeks (9:11-17). The history of the contact between the Greek and Hebrew cults is very voluminous and in every way full of interest. It may be noted without present comment that certain Jewish books attribute to a king of Sparta the curious statement based on alleged records, that the Spartans, with the Jews, "are of the stock of Abraham" (I Mac. 12:21). These Apocryphal books, I and 2 Maccabees, recount with thrilling interest the heroic

struggles of the Jews against the Syrian subdivision of the Greek Empire.

As above mentioned, Josephus has a marvelous account of the march of Alexander, himself, against Jerusalem, and of the supernatural reasons which constrained that world conqueror not to forge his threatened vengeance against the Holy City, but to confer great privileges upon the Jewish people. He also tells us a stirring story of the continuation of Grecian favor accorded by the Ptolemies who subsequently ruled over the Egyptian part of Alexander's divided empire, and particularly of the translation of the Hebrew Bible into the Greek language, thus giving to the world a royal patronage more helpful than that which later immortalized King James, the famous version of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint, from which Jesus himself sometimes, and the New Testament writers more frequently quote. Indeed, Alexandria, established by Alexander himself at the mouth of the Nile, by the liberal policy toward this hated people, became a second Jerusalem, which evidenced for centuries in the religious and philosophical literature of its Jewish residents the modifying influence of Greek culture.

The book of Daniel forecasts much concerning the rise, extent, subdivisions, and influences of the coming Greek Empire, and its relation to the kingdom of the Messiah. The records of the New Testament are all preserved for us in the Greek language. Jesus himself, somewhat, and his apostles much more at a later date, came in personal contact with Greek people. And the simplicity of the gospel which they preached throughout the world, met, at every turn, the opposing forces of Greek culture, Greek philosophy and Greek idolatry.

Some of the most noted of Paul's apostolic labors, sufferings, conflicts and triumphs were in Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, and other famous Greek cities, and very much of the argument and exhortation

of his letters was called forth for the solution of practical problems of Christian life arising from Greek environment.

The second largest ecclesiastical organization of the professing Christian world today is called the Greek Church – whose religious primate is the patriarch of Constantinople and whose secular head and champion is the Czar of all the Russias. There exists also today a galvanized Greek government, kept upon its feet by the buttressing of foreign powers, but in no way fulfilling the ideal for which Marcos Bozzaris fought and Byron sang.

Far more significant than this weakling of a government – rendered doubly ridiculous by its recent fiasco with Turkey, is a widespread and menacing revival of ancient Greek philosophy – wrongfully supposed to lie hopelessly dead in the graves of Epicurus, Lucretius, and Demacritus. The tombs of the heathen Greeks have been robbed – their philosophy exhumed and rehabilitated – and now, like the soulless giant, Prometheus, that sprang from the brain of Godwin's daughter, it stalks in colossal strides across affrighted continents or like Nebuchadnezzar's huge and incongruous dream image, stands an imposing titan in the path of the rolling stone of the Messiah's kingdom.

Following this comes an inquiry into the import of this passage – for somewhere on historic ground must we find the time, place, and need for divine intervention in stirring up the sons of Zion against the sons of Greece in verse 13. From some points in historical background must flash the light that illumines this passage and reveals the fulfilment of this prophecy.

The difficulty here is not one of the exegesis but of interpretation, the grammatical construction is simple, and every term of the prophecy easily defined. The question is, What does it mean? Are we to understand by "sons of Zion" Israel according to the flesh, or spiritual Israel? Are "Sons of Greece" limited to men of Greek nationality? Is the conflict to which God purposes and promises to incite the one against the other an ordinary war between nations, a

strife for tribute, territory, or conquest? Unquestionably, the grammatical construction admits the natural and literal interpretation.

In such case, however, we must look far back into the past to find fulfilment of the prophecy, far beyond the birth of Christ – for when Jesus came, the scepter had departed from Greece, and Rome ruled the world. The literal interpretation forces us back to a time when both Jews and Greeks had national existence and grounds of quarrel.

Therefore, to the question, When and by what events is the prophecy fulfilled, most commentators promptly answer: When the Maccabees waged heroic and triumphant war against Antiochus Epiphanes and his successors, a thrilling account of which struggle is recounted in Josephus and the Apocryphal books of the Maccabees. But to my mind, the objections to this limited and local interpretation are insurperable. Not merely because the course of Antiochus Epiphanes was the one exception to the otherwise uniform kind treatment of the Jews by Greek nations and is more than counterbalanced by the course of Alexander himself and of the Ptolemies – simply because the Maccabean war is an insignificant and inconsequential climax to so great a prophecy – nor even mainly because this war is manifestly irrelevant to the messianic features of the prophecy – chiefly because the context, separately in all its parts, and altogether as a whole, absolutely forbids it, both as to time and events.

Let us look somewhat at this context. Immediately preceding the text, intimately and necessarily associated with it indeed its only proper introduction, is this unquestioned messianic prophecy: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy king cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt and foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off; and he shall speak peace unto the nations; and his dominion shall be from sea to

sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. As for thee, also, because of the blood of thy covenant, I have set free thy prisoners from the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope; even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee. For I have bent Judah for me, I have filled the bow with Ephraim, and I will stir up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and will make thee as the sword of a mighty man" (9:9-13).

This preceding context – on the face of it, and in every particular excludes the literal interpretation under consideration. It expressly cuts off the use of the carnal weapons employed in the Maccabean war – it proclaims peace and not war to the opposing heathen – its captives are prisoners of hope to be saved by the blood of the covenant – the dominion attained is too wide to fit the territory redeemed by the Maccabean victories. The inspiration of the New Testament expressly interprets the coming of the king described in it to mean Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem (See Matt. 21:1-11). The bending of Judah as a bow and the fitting of Ephraim to it as a narrow, prior to the stirring up of the sons of Zion, has no fulfilment in Maccabean times, but finds plausible interpretation in the apostles who, except Judas that perished, belonged to the tribe of Ephraim rather than of Judah – but who proclaimed the word of the law from Jerusalem, when the ascended Jesus, the great archer, shot them forth as arrows to the ends of the earth. They were his spiritual children, "an heritage of the Lord," who became "as arrows in the hand of a mighty man."

As the preceding, so the succeeding but more remote context. It is all messianic. There we behold "the wounds in his hands received in the house of his friends." There we see the "weighing out of the thirty pieces of silver as his price." There we hear the divine apostrophe: "Awake, O Sword, against the Shepherd," and there we foresee "the pouring out on the house of David and the city of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplications and of mourning when they look on him whom they had pierced," and there the

consequent "opening of a fountain for sin and uncleanness in the city of David."

Indeed, not one circumstance – not one detail of time nor event in all the context can be applied without gross violence to the times of Antiochus and the Maccabees. Moreover, Zechariah must line up with Daniel when he also forecasts the same messianic kingdom and its foes. In the great and luminous image of Nebuchadnezzar and in the four beasts of his vision Daniel is made to see four successive world empires – three of them naturally defunct in the beginning of fulfilment – but all of them alive in their characteristic spirit and genius, and all of them in this genius and spirit to be opposed and overturned by the universal kingdom set up by the God of heaven. The Assyria – the Persia – the Greece – as well as the Rome which Daniel saw, were to be equally alive at one and the same time and constituted one colossal image of opposition to the messianic kingdom.

When God stirs up the sons of Zion against the sons of Greece, he does not array an ancient Jewish army against the Macedonian phalanx, nor a modern Jewish army against the lean, springing battalions of the poor little make-believe government now at Athens cowering under Turkish sovereignty. The question then recurs: What events fulfil this prophecy?

Is it merely a coincidence that just after John's vivid description of the fulfilment of the first part of this prophecy, he strangely interjects the story of the coming of certain Greeks to see Jesus and how Jesus more strangely replies: "The hour has come, that the Son of man should be glorified . . . now is the (crisis) of this world" (John 12:12-22)?

At any rate, Paul's dispute at Athens with Epicurean and Stoic philosophers was no mere coincidence. And, singularly enough, the New Testament record of that conflict verbally fulfilled the prophecy: "I will stir up thy sons, O Zion," says this passage, and "while Paul waited for them at Athens his spirit was stirred in him,"

says the New Testament record. Under that stirring up of his spirit he smote the Grecian philosophy which affirms the eternity of matter – which denied immortality to man – which enthroned chance or fate – which declares all existing forms to be the result of a fortuitous concourse of atoms – which claims that the highest and most complex of living organisms, including man, were evolved in long processes of time from the lowest forms.

Let us re-examine the teaching of Epicurus as embodied in Lucretius' song, "De Rerum Nature," or read that Epicurean and Stoic composite by Democritus and ask ourselves, "What essentially new and fundamental thought has been added in our day to the ancient Grecian theory of evolution, by Darwin, Haeckel, Huxley, Tyndall, or Spencer? And then let us note how Paul, the son of Zion, when divinely stirred in spirit, smote the whole business, hip and thigh, by that grandest of all compound propositions, commencing, "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is the Lord of heaven and earth."

Here, indeed, was a coming controversy between the sons of Zion and the sons of Greece, huge enough to cast its shadow before upon the prophetic eye. Beside this heaven-covering and earth-darkening cloud – the Maccabean war was merely a minute speck in the sky of the future. That controversy with Antiochua Epiphanes ended long ago and was soon swallowed up from human sight by far grander and more momentous events. But this Grecian war is still on, and this mightier Antiochus, does now in moments of temporary victory set up a "real abomination of desolation in the holy place."

Paul again states the case as he found it in Corinth, another Greek city: "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent will I reject. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of preaching to save them that

believe. Seeing that Jews ask for signs, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumbling block and unto Gentiles foolishness, but unto them that are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor. 1:10-25).

Yes, even now, as of old, the Greeks seek after wisdom. By their own wisdom they propose to solve all of life's problems. And now, as then, their wisdom leads to the same God-denying and man-dishonoring conclusion: Man is only a developed beast. He is soulless. Death ends him. There is no God, no judgment – no heaven – no hell. Pleasure is man's chief good.

The Grecian philosophers at Athens mocked when Paul spake of the resurrection. And they are right as to the chief good if Paul is wrong. So he himself argued: "If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die" (1 Cor. 15:32).

In the Christians of today we find the "Sons of Zion," and in modern evolutionists and materialists we find the "Sons of Greece." And now, as much as in Paul's time, the sons of Zion need to be stirred up against the sons of Greece.

In chapter 10 we have the true shepherd punishing all evil shepherds and gathering together his flock. The true shepherd, Jehovah, is spoken of first, and then the foreign rulers. The word "shepherd" as used by Jeremiah and Ezekiel means the political and religious leaders. Jehovah here calls attention to himself as the true shepherd: "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain, even of Jehovah that maketh lightnings ; and he will give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field." But they will not ask Jehovah nor look to Jehovah, because Greek philosophy, Greek religion, and Greek civilization premeated the nation's life and almost swept it away into Greek thought and life and religion.

He had in mind, perhaps, the Greek religion that threatened to sweep away Judaism. "For the teraphim [the household gods] have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie; and they have told false dreams, they comfort in vain: therefore they go their way like sheep." Under these leaders, the Hellenists, Egyptians, and others, they have been led astray, as multitudes of the Jews did become corrupted. They were afflicted because there was no shepherd, and they had no true religious leader, and had not had for a long period. Now Jehovah speaks against those shepherds: "Mine anger is kindled against the shepherds, and I will punish the he-goats." These were undershepherds having a charge of a certain number of goats or sheep, under a shepherd. So he speaks about the political leaders and the religious leaders under them, "For Jehovah of hosts hath visited his flock, the house of Judah, and will make them as his goodly horse in the battle." Judah shall be safe, for "From him shall come the corner-stone, from him the nail," the sure peg in the wall that will hold the burden upon it, "from him the battle bow; from him every ruler together." The leaders of Israel did come from Judah; for, during one hundred years or more, God raised them up to be the leaders of the shepherds of Israel and they saved the nation.

From verse 8 on he says, he is going to call all the scattered, wandering people of the Jews home, and they are going to find their land again: "I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them; and they shall increase as they have increased. And I will sow them among the peoples; and they shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and shall return." One would think he was reading the prophecies of the three exile prophets, predicting the return of the exiles from Babylonia. At this time there were thousands upon thousands of Jews in Egypt, Babylonia, Syria, Assyria, Asia Minor, and almost all the world. He says, "I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon; and place shall not be found for them." In verse 11 we have a remarkable expression: "And he will pass through the sea of affliction, and will smite the waves in the sea, and all the

depths of the Nile shall dry up; and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart." The figure of passing through the sea is taken from passing through the Red Sea when Israel escaped from Egypt, but God is going to make them pass through the sea of affliction, and save them out of that as he saved them in the sea of Egypt. The sea of affliction! What a suggestive expression! "The depths of the Nile shall dry up, the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart. And I will strengthen them in Jehovah; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith Jehovah." All this finds fulfilment in the return of the Jews just before the millennium.

In chapter 11 Zechariah goes back and takes a look at those foreigners, especially those north of Judah, the tyrants that were at Antioch: the Seleucidae, among whom were Demetrius, Antigonus, Antiochus Epiphanes, and others. In poetic imagery he speaks about the destruction that was to come upon them: "Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars. Wail, O fir-tree, for the cedar is fallen." The cedar was the greatest of all the forest trees, and if the cedar goes down, the cypress may well be afraid. "Wail, O ye oaks of Basilin, for the strong forest is come down." This is a terrible picture of the affliction that shall come upon the nation by the Parthians and Romans who crushed them to the earth. The effect is given in verse 3: "A voice of the wailing of the shepherds! for their glory is destroyed: a voice of the roaring of young lions! for the pride of the Jordan is laid waste." The fulfilment of that took place in those terrible invasions of the Parthians and Romans who swept over that part of the world and destroyed it.

Then comes the allegory of the shepherd and his flock, one of the most important messianic prophecies of Zechariah. It is the story of the shepherd sent to tend Israel, and the fate he met with in his work. The shepherd is Jehovah, but the view changes and at last it becomes Jesus himself. It is given to us in the form of a monologue. It pictures to us the greatest spiritual tragedy of Israel's history. The tragedy of the ages (11:4-14).

We have here a picture of the false shepherds devouring the flock, the work and rejection of the good shepherd, the breaking of the two staves "Beauty" and "Bands" and the selling of the good shepherd. Here is a remarkable expression, "The flock of slaughter," and yet it is true to their history. If we read the history of Israel in the second and third centuries before Christ and afterward, we see how that was literally fulfilled, for they were as a flock of slaughter. Syria from the north, Egypt from the south, internal strife among the people themselves; there were war, turmoil, and bloodshed, and death for two centuries.

It was the flock of slaughter indeed. "Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty; and they that sell them say, Blessed be the Lord, for I am rich; and their own shepherds pity them not." The expression "they that sell," refers to selling them into slavery, which was carried on in wholesale fashion during this period. The slave dealer says, "Blessed be Jehovah, for I am rich." That is how they treated Israel, they thanked God that he had given them an opportunity to rob them. "Their own shepherds pity them not" – ie. their own shepherds were not shepherds of tenderness, and the people of Israel were not faithful to their Great Shepherd, for here he portrays one of the most pitiable situations in the life of Israel: she failed in fidelity to her religion. He says in verse 6, "I will deliver the men every one into his neighbor's hand, and into the hand of his king; and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them." For a century or two he seemed to have left them almost to their enemies.

Then follows Jehovah performing his duty as a shepherd through persons we know not, possibly the Maccabean family or the Asmonean dynasty, who under God acted as the shepherd for the people of Israel for a hundred years. Jehovah is above it all and he is the real shepherd. He thus pictures it: "So I fed the flock of slaughter, verily the poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves," as every shepherd in Palestine had, one with a hook to

control, and the other a club to fight the enemies. "Thy rod and thy staff," as the psalmist says.

"I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock. . . . And I took my staff, Beauty, a symbol of Jehovah's grace toward Ephraim and Judah, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. And it was broken in that day; and thus the poor of the flock that gave heed unto me knew that it was the word of Jehovah. And I said unto them, If ye think good) give me my hire. . . . so they weighed for my hire thirty pieces of silver," the price of a common slave. That was a fine salary to pay a first class shepherd of a nation for years! They gave Jehovah, the shepherd of Israel, as his hire, only thirty pieces of silver. "And Jehovah said unto me, Cast unto the potter the goodly price that I was prized at by them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them unto the potter, in the house of Jehovah." According to the Lord's commandment, they were thrown unto the potter. "Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands," a symbol of the love of Ephraim and Judah, "that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel."

We note the order here: Bands, the brotherhood, cannot be broken till Beauty, the grace of God, has first been broken. Brotherhood is truly based open grace. The fulfilment of this passage was literal. Judas sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, and when he flung it down at their feet after seeing what he had done, they would not receive it, but used it to buy a potter's field. The symbolic action here is impressive. The breaking of these staves symbolized the withdrawal of God's grace from and the disunion of Judah and Israel because of their rejection of the shepherd. They are left to confusion and capture by the Romans, which took place in A.D. 70.

Here arises a question of textual criticism. How harmonize Matthew 27:9 with Zechariah 11:12-13? To this question there are four possible answers, either of which satisfies the conditions. These are as follows: (1) The copyist by error changed Zechariah to Jeremiah;

(2) Matthew did not give the name of the prophet but the copyist wrote it in the margin of the manuscript and from that it thus crept into the text of Matthew's Gospel; (3) Jeremiah was at the head of the prophetic list with the Jews, and the word "Jeremiah" refers to a collection of Old Testament prophecies including Zechariah; (4) Jeremiah discusses the potter's field (19:1-9); Zechariah discusses the price of the field, and Matthew runs the two together, mentioning the first author only, but not discussing anything said by the second. This is my own personal view.

In 11:15-17 we have symbolic action of the foolish shepherd prescribed for the prophet. Because of this rejection of the good shepherd Jehovah says, "Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd. For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, who will not visit those that are cut off, neither will seek those that are scattered, nor heal that which is broken, nor feed that which is sound; but he will eat the flesh of the fat sheer, and will tear their hoofs in pieces," as a beast devours even to the hoof. Such was the fate of Israel under such a shepherd when they cast off the true shepherd, and it came true, for Rome did that very thing to her. But the curse that goes against this false shepherd is added, verse 17: "Woe unto the worthless shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened." The Lord may give an evil shepherd, but woe to the shepherd that is thus evil. So Rome in turn received her just recompense of reward.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the problem with reference to Zechariah, chapters 9-14, who was the author and what was the date of this prophecy?
2. In general, what was the principal predictions in these last six chapters of Zechariah?
3. What were the predictions of 9:1-7 and what of their fulfilment?

4. What special prophecy of 9:8 and what of its fulfilment?
5. What was the vision of 9:10 and what of its fulfilment?
6. What prophecies of 9:11-17, what covenant referred to, what is the meaning of "render double unto thee," and what is the meaning of bending Judah as a bow and filling the bow with Ephraim?
7. What of the stirring up of the Sons of Zion against the sons of Greece and what were the far-reaching results which followed?
8. How is chapter 10 introduced and what was the contrast of verses 1 and 2?
9. Who were the shepherds referred to in verse 3, what the prediction concerning Judah and Ephraim, and where do we find the fulfilment?
10. What was the prophecy of verses 8-12 and what the fulfilment?
11. What the apostrophes of 9:1-3 and what is the application of this paragraph ?
12. Describe the scenes of verses 4-14, who was the shepherd here, what was the shepherd's two staves and what was their meaning?
13. What was the symbolic act of the shepherd and what was the far-reaching meaning and fulfilment?
14. How do you harmonize Matthew 27:9 with Zechariah 11:12-13?
15. What was the symbolic action prescribed for the prophet in 11:15-17 and what was the application?

XXX. THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH (CONCLUDED)

Zechariah 12-14

This chapter concludes our study of the prophet, Zechariah. This includes the later part of the second division of the prophecy. The last six chapters of Zechariah seem to give a forecast of the history of Israel from the time of the prophet's writing down to the end of the nation's history, just as in the book of Revelation we interpret the seven seals, the seven trumpets, etc., as a forecast of the history of the church to the second advent.

We have had the vision of the shepherd who was to feed the flock of slaughter, who found the flock disloyal, unfaithful, and unappreciative, and who broke the staff, dissolving the union between the two, signifying that this office as shepherd was ended; how that a worldly shepherd was appointed over them, and then followed a brief history of the tragedy of Israel's history, when they smote their shepherd and put him to death. In this chapter we take up the consummation of it all, the last, final struggle, and the ushering in of the messianic age as found in chapter 14.

In 12:1-9 we have the salvation of Jerusalem, the spiritual history of the people, their inner life, national and religious, pictured as the life of their capital, Jerusalem. The clue to it we find in the later part of verse 1, where he speaks of Jehovah as the One that forms the spirit of man within him, and this section gives the details as to how Jehovah formed the spirit of Israel, the true kernel of the nation, the center of the national life. We have here Jerusalem represented as the center of Israelitish life, the capital of the nation, besieged by all nations, God protecting her against them and making her the "cup of reeling" and the "burdensome stone" and the "pan of fire" unto all the peoples round about. He says, "I will make Jerusalem a cup of reeling, or a bowl filled with wine of which the nations shall drink, and it shall make them drunk and they shall reel and stagger."

That perhaps refers to the commotion that was created among the nations previous to the Maccabean age, and afterward, when all the nations that apparently could come in contact with Judah and Jerusalem seemed to be possessed with a passion to destroy her. The anti-Judaistic feeling, or anti-Semitic feeling, was very prominent through those centuries, and the larger fulfilment of this prophecy is the hate of Judaism which has run through all the centuries since. The Jews have been a cup of reeling to all the peoples that have come in contact with them. He says here, "Upon Judah also shall it be in the siege against Jerusalem." All is now concerned about Jerusalem and Judah, the tribe in whose territory Jerusalem is situated.

Again he says, "I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all the peoples, and all that burden themselves with it shall be sore wounded." This may refer to the fact that near many cities in the east, it was the custom to have a stone where all the young men could try their strength in lifting it. Or it may refer to a great boulder in the ground to be raised up out of its position and cast away, and as they dig about the stone and lift it up, the only thing they accomplish is to bruise and tear their own hands. The stone is fixed and immovable. The latter is the more probable interpretation. Anyhow, it means that all through the centuries Jerusalem has been a fixed, established fact. God put Jerusalem there and intended that no nation would move the center of his people; that they could not move Jerusalem. They fought round about it and for it and against it for a century or two, but it remained. And he says, "All the nations of the earth shall be gathered together against it."

Verse 4 shows what Jehovah is going to do upon all the enemies that come against Jerusalem: "I will smite every horse with terror, and his rider with madness; and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah." His eye is upon Judah for a special purpose. Verse 5 gives the result: "The chieftains of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem are my strength in Jehovah of hosts their God." Jerusalem was in Judah, the capital of Judah, and the

chieftains of Judah now wake up to the fact that their strength and stability and hope are centered in Jerusalem, their capital, and when they realize that, they fight bravely for their city, and the result is that all the nations are defeated.

Verse 6 says, "I will make the chieftains of Judah like a pan of fire among wood, like a flaming torch among sheaves." The fulfilment of that may be found in the fact that when the Maccabean heroes rose to fight down Hellenism, thousands of the Jews saw that their national life was at stake if they did not fight for their religion and their country, and rallied around the banner of the Maccabeans, and thus their enemies time and again were overthrown, though there may be a larger fulfilment later on.

In verse 7 he says, "Jehovah also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory . . . of the inhabitants of Jerusalem be not magnified above Judah." In other words, God was going to so deal with them that the people of Jerusalem would have no occasion to feel that they were above the people of the country. Then those inhabitants of Jerusalem and of Judah shall be revived in their national life and spirit. God will put the spirit of the hero in them. "In that day shall Jehovah defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David," the hero warrior, who, when a boy faced the lion and the bear, and when but a youth, a giant; "and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of God," or as a supernatural being, having superhuman powers. That hath a fulfilment in the house of David represented by Jesus Christ, as God or as the angel of God, and his disciples who were as heroic as David. Verse 9 refers to the fact that Jehovah has made it hard for all nations that have oppressed the Jews, and in a large measure this has been fulfilled, because those nations have suffered. "In that day" here refers to whatever day was referred to in the several prophecies of the passage, reaching down to the time of Christ and his apostles.

In 12:10-14 we have the conversion of the Jews. This is a remarkable passage, one of the author's favorite passages, a vision of

the conversion of the people of Judah and Jerusalem after this great conflict is over. It is a picture of their spiritual life, the life of the spirit of the nation from its religious standpoint. Now look at the promise: "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication." "Grace" refers to those qualities of the spirit that adorn the person when God's spirit is given. Coupled with that is the spirit of supplication, "And they shall look unto me whom they have pierced." We have no reference to one pierced by them excepting as suggested in 13:7-9 and that is presupposed in this statement. They had pierced their own shepherd, the representative of God, and now he pictures the time coming when they shall look unto him. God is speaking: "Whom they have pierced," the one whom they have wounded, the one against whom they had poured out their bitterest hatred. This is going to be a great conversion of the Jewish nation.

This prophecy has a fulfilment in the events of Pentecost and following, but the greatest fulfilment is to follow in the conversion of the Jews as a nation. At that time there will be a bitter mourning, a great mourning; they shall mourn as one mourns for his only son; the Jews could appreciate what that meant better than we can – the only one left to bear his name, the only one to keep that name alive in Israel. It shall be as when they mourned for Josiah, who was slain by Pharaohnecoh in the valley of Megiddon when they mourned at Hadadrimmon, a little village just a few miles from the scene of battle. There will be national mourning and a family mourning, for the land shall mourn every family apart. Then he mentions certain families to indicate how completely that is going to be carried out. The family of David, the royal family, then the family of Nathan, one of the sons of David, brother of Solomon, an obscure member of the royal family, which indicates all members of the royal family, the men in one part, the wives in another, men and women separately. The family of the house of Shimei, one of the little or obscure families of the tribe of Levi, to indicate how that every family shall mourn: families mourning, men mourning alone, women mourning alone. This was fulfilled when they looked upon

the cross; there many of the people looked upon him whom they pierced, as John says quoting this passage of Zechariah as being literally fulfilled.

It was fulfilled in the larger sense when at Pentecost three thousand men and more, pricked in their hearts, said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do? We have killed our Messiah!" And in a few weeks thousands, more looked unto him whom they had pierced. For decades afterward many more and through the centuries there have been a few. More and more the Jews are coming to this point when they will look unto him whom they pierced, and there is no grief more poignant, more penetrating to the human heart than the grief of a loyal Jew who realizes that his nation killed their Messiah. God will pour out his spirit upon the nation and all the nation shall look unto him whom they have pierced, mourning as for an only son.

In 13:1-6 we have the cleansing of the people as the result of the mourning and supplication above described. The fountain opened for sin and uncleanness was opened for the house of David, the royal family who needed cleansing, needed it as well as the people, showing that he has not in mind the Messiah, for the Messiah did not need cleansing. It is also to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and it is for sin and uncleanness. It is a picture of a fountain flowing to cleanse, something like Ezekiel's picture where he says, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and cleanse you from your sins," and David's "Purge me with hissope and I shall be clean." Upon this passage is based our song: There is a fountain filled with blood, Drawn from Immanuel's veins, And sinners plunged beneath that flood, Lose all their guilty stains.

That is the fulfilment of it for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Of course it applied to them first, but it is not confined to them in its application. Then he shows how idols, prophets, and unclean spirits shall be cut off: "I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land and they shall no more be remembered." That was partly true in the refining of Judaism that followed the Maccabean

age, but it receives its fulfilment only in Christianity, the daughter of Judaism, for it is only where Christianity goes that the idols are cut off and are not remembered. Not only the idols are cut off, but the unclean spirits pass out of the land. This again has its fulfilment where the gospel goes, for it is only where Christianity flourishes that these unclean spirits are put out.

Then the prophets are to be cut off also. Prophecy is going to be so discredited that there will be no more of it permitted. He says here that when anyone shall prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, "Thou shalt not live"; we are not going to have any preacher in our family, and in order to get him out of the way they thrust him through, saying, "Thou speakest lies in the name of Jehovah." Now this cannot refer to the true prophet and preacher, but to every kind and species of false prophets.

It refers to all kinds of sorcerers, diviners, especially fakirs. And if there shall be one of those that escape, he shall be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies. They are not going to wear a hairy garment to deceive, trying to make themselves look like Elijah, and make people believe they are real prophets as Elijah was. It will be a good thing when preachers cast off all their ecclesiastical "toggery." He shall say, "I am no prophet, I am a tiller of the ground; for I have been made a bondman from my youth. And one will say, How do you account for those wounds?" Then he shall answer, "These are the wounds I received in the house of my friends."

It is difficult to understand exactly the meaning of this passage. Apparently, this is an excuse on the part of the prophet, who has been caught and he seeks to evade the consequences. He was wounded in the house of his friends. They put those marks upon him. So then these constitute no reason for condemning him. That is one idea. A great many apply this to Christ himself. When he shall appear and the Jews, his own people, shall ask him, "Whence those wounds between your hands?" Then he shall say, "These are the wounds I received in the house of my friends," i.e., among you Jews.

That is the larger fulfilment, but the immediate application of it seems to be to the wretched fakers that had no business to preach. There are many of them yet in the East with marks upon their hands to signify their profession.

In 13:7-9 we have the smiting of the Shepherd. This is the climax of the nation's tragedy. The putting of its shepherd to death. The fulfilment of this is in Jesus Christ who was smitten and his little flock scattered. The larger fulfilment is in the fact that the sheep put to death their Christ, and have been scattered ever since. "Awake, O sword," says Jehovah, "against my shepherd and against the man that is my fellow." In Gethsemane we see the application of this. Although his only beloved and only begotten Son prayed until the sweat broke forth from his brow, that the sword might pass, God says, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow." The sword must descend, the shepherd must be smitten. It was then that he turned his hand upon "his little ones" the humble and meek, and as a result two parts of the people were to be cut off, two-thirds of the nation destroyed, and it was so in the intervals following Jesus' death and the destruction of Jerusalem. "And I will bring the third part (and he did bring a great multitude of the Jews) into the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried. They shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, Jehovah is my God." The fulfilment of that occurred in the history of the Jews after the crucifixion.

We have the final assault upon and deliverance of Jerusalem in 14:1-8. This brings us to the last chapter and the consummation, the final act in the great drama as pictured by this prophet, Zechariah: "Behold, a day of Jehovah cometh." There have been many days of Jehovah, when he smote nations and peoples, when he overturned things upon earth, but there is to come a greater day, a day when Jehovah shall manifest his judgments in power. The first result of this day will be the strange fact that Jerusalem shall be captured. Jerusalem the center, the nation's very life core shall be captured.

"Thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee, and I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished," as was customary in the capture and sack of a city. "And half of the city shall go into captivity and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city."

Now, what is going to happen when this terrible fate overtakes the city? "Then shall Jehovah go forth and fight against those nations as when he fought in the day of battle." Although Jerusalem shall be captured and half her people sold into slavery, yet Jehovah will then appear at the crisis to save the city. "His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives," which is before Jerusalem on the east and towers between two and three hundred feet higher than Mount Moriah, or Zion, upon which Jerusalem was situated. "And the Mount of Olives shall be cleft in the midst toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley and half of the mountain shall be removed toward the north and half of it toward the south," that is, there shall be a great supernatural manifestation of God's power to make a way of escape for the people from their city. This has never been literally fulfilled, and never will be. The idea is that when the crisis comes upon God's people, he will make a way of escape, and thus he pictures the way of escape as a cleaving of the mount, separating it and opening a valley for the people to flee. "Ye shall flee by the valley of the mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azel." We don't know just where Azel was, some little place east of Jerusalem. "And ye shall flee like as ye fled from before the earthquakes in the days of Uzziah king of Judah," which event Amos refers to and which followed just two years after he began his preaching. "And Jehovah my God will come and all the holy ones with thee," and that period for a short time shall be a day of gloom. "It shall come to pass in that day that the earth shall not be light; the bright ones, the sun, the moon, and the stars shall withdraw themselves." "It shall be one day which is known unto Jehovah, not day, not night," twilight gloom, murk, half-night, and half-day, but it shall come to pass that at eventide as

the day draws to an end, a new day will dawn and there will be light at eventide. This prophecy is yet unfulfilled. The time forecast here is the final gathering of the nations against the Jews, gathered back into their land, just before the millennium. This is the great battle of Jehoshaphat in the plain of Esdraelon, where Jehovah intervenes and saves the Jews from a shameful defeat. It is a great spiritual conflict under the symbol of war. Here the veil falls from their eyes and they behold the Christ as their Saviour. The nation is converted, as it were, in a day and the millennium is here ushered in. (See *Revelation* of "The Interpretation.")

In 14:9-11 we have the prophetic picture of the kingdom of Jehovah, king over all the earth, which is in exact accordance with the visions drawn by Isaiah, Micah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah. "Jehovah shall be one and his name one," that is, there is to be the one God, with one name. "And the land shall be made like the Arabah," the valley of the Jordan, which was so attractive to Lot that he chose it for his cattle and flocks. The land is going to be made like that valley from Geba, a little place north of Jerusalem, to Rimmon on the south, away down in the land of Simeon, we do not know exactly where. Then he goes on with his description of this city, how it is to be built, its dimensions and its various gates, "And there shall be no more curses but Jerusalem shall dwell safely." All this will be fulfilled in the millennium.

Next comes the plagues upon her enemies (12-15). The nations that war against Jerusalem shall be utterly destroyed; he gives a picture of the plagues that shall fall upon these nations. "Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, their eyes shall consume away in their sockets, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth. . . . They shall turn one against another. There shall be a great tumult from Jehovah among them, and they shall lay hold everyone on the hand of his neighbor, and they shall rise up against his neighbor, and Judah shall fight at Jerusalem." In spite of that, all the wealth of the nations round about shall be gathered together, gold, silver, and apparel in great abundance. Afterward in spite of all

the enemies the Jews shall have the wealth, privileges, power, influence of the world. This will be fulfilled in the destruction of the enemies of the Jews before the millennium at which time the Jews will be converted.

The remaining nations shall keep the Feast of Tabernacles at Jerusalem. The remaining nations means those who have not warred against Jerusalem, but have assumed either a friendly or a neutral attitude. This is the millennial age, this is the time pictured by Isaiah and Micah and the others, when all the nations shall be Jews, and they are to come up and worship the King, Jehovah of hosts, and keep the Feast of Tabernacles. Now if this is to be literally fulfilled, then all the nations of the world shall have to become Jews and go up to Jerusalem and keep the Feast of Tabernacles in October. Can we imagine that our Christianity shall have such a setback as that; that we shall all have to revert back to Judaism? This is a picture of the nations converted to the God of Israel expressed in the terms of Judaism. But if any of these nations will not keep the Feast of Tabernacles, they are to have no rain upon them, and Egypt, which is independent of rain because of the overflow of the Nile, is not forgotten by the prophet, but is mentioned as liable to punishment, though he doesn't say what punishment that is. This is the prophet's picture of the conversion of the Gentile nations to Judaism, and when we enlarge Judaism into Christianity and picture the conversion of the nations to Christianity, which is the real fulfilment of this, we have the larger fulfilment.

And lastly, Jerusalem shall be holy. "The bells upon the horses shall be holy to Jehovah. And the pots before Jehovah's house shall be like the bowls before the altar." All this means there are to be so many people, and they are all to observe the sacrifices and feasts, and they must make every pot in Jerusalem as large as one of those great basins in the Temple. And more than that every one of those pots in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holy unto Jehovah. This is the Judaistic and ceremonial idea of holiness. And they that sacrifice shall come and take of them and boil therein. Ezekiel had kitchens in

his picture of the Temple for boiling the sacrifices. Zechariah says that there are going to be great holy pots, and they are, to boil in them. "In that day there shall be no more a Canaanite," that is, there shall be no more heathen, the foreigner, and unclean person, and unworthy person in Jerusalem and in Judah. "All shall be clean," which is in exact accordance with Revelation 21:27. where John says. "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, or maketh an abomination or a lie." "Blessed are they that have washed their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of life and enter into the gates of the city." John's picture is richer and larger and fuller than Zechariah's but in substance they are the same.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the prophetic picture of 12:1-9 and what is the fulfilment of it?
2. What is meant by the "cup of reeling," "the burdensome stone," "the pan of fire," and what is the day referred to in the expression, "in that day"?
3. What is the prophetic picture of 12:10-14 and what is its fulfilment?
4. What illustration in verse II, and what is the significance of the families mourning apart?
5. What prophetic picture of 13:1-6 and in what does it have fulfilment?
6. What allusion in verse 6?
7. What prophecy of 13:7-9 and where do we find its fulfilment?
8. What is the meaning of "little ones" (v. 7), "two parts cut off" in verse 8, and "the third part refined" in verse 9?

9. What prophetic picture of 14:1-8 and what is the fulfilment of it?
10. What prophetic picture of 14:9-11 and what is the fulfilment of it?
11. What is pictured in 14:12 and what is the fulfilment of it?
12. What final picture of Zechariah and when will it be realized?

XXXI. THE BOOK OF MALACHI PART I

Malachi 1 :1 to 3:9

We now take up the prophecy of Malachi. We have seen that there were three prophets in the period after the exile, whom we called the prophets of the restoration. These were Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. We now take up the last of those three, the prophet whose writings closed the canon of the Old Testament. Between the books of Zechariah and Malachi there is an interval of about sixty years, and of what was done during these sixty years we have some light. We can draw inferences from the condition of things previous to, and the conditions we find portrayed in Malachi's book.

We are pretty sure of some things. We know that the Temple was finished and dedicated four years after the preaching of Haggai, under the inspiration of his preaching and that of Zechariah, his greater successor. We know that the Temple worship was instituted, and the ritual and the ceremonial had been performed and they had built the walls of the city. Herein fall the events of the book of Esther, Ezra's reformation and Nehemiah's organization. These facts are about all that we have regarding that period.

There are some things also we can determine by way of inference. It is important to know the condition of Israel at the time of the prophecy of Malachi. We must always know the historical situation, the economic, civic, social and religious conditions of the people in order to fully understand the message which God brings to them through his prophet.

We take up now the political condition. Israel was only a very small vassal, dependent upon the great Persian Empire. Zerubbabel evidently had been appointed governor soon after they arrived in the land, but apparently he had no successor in the royal line, for in the period of Malachi the Persians had appointed their own governors. They are under a Persian governor and are one of the least known and least interfered with of all the little nations of the world. The

great tide of the world's history has flowed north; Xerxes had made his great campaign against Greece; was three or four times defeated, and the great tide of barbarism from the Persian Empire was rolled back by that wonderful little nation, Greece, and thus Europe was saved from an eastern Asiatic and barbarous civilization.

The consequences, or the effect, of that upon all ancient history we can hardly calculate. Had Xerxes succeeded in conquering Greece, southern Europe and perhaps northern Europe would have been overrun with Persian religion and civilization. As it was, that invasion was driven back, and a century or so later Alexander the Great spread the civilization of Greece over the Persian Empire; the tide was turned eastward instead of westward, and the world has been the better ever since.

All this passed and did not touch Israel. They had no place whatever in one of the greatest movements of the ages. They had enemies round about them, who never forgot them, and who never failed in a chance to thwart their purposes, or to harass them in their efforts to build up their nation again. They apparently had no hope, and there seemed to be no reason for the hope of the fulfilment of the prophetic visions of Amos, Hosea, Micah, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel. These all seemed to be failures, and there was no indication on the horizon of history that they would be fulfilled. Thus their political situation tended toward a despondent condition of mind among the rulers and probably among all the people.

The following were the economic conditions: They had had a succession of bad harvests and of hard times. This we find in the book of Malachi itself. A great many of them had suffered from poverty. They had been compelled to pay their taxes to the Persian Empire regularly, and in order to do that, many of them, as we find in Nehemiah, were forced to mortgage their property, and some of them had to sell their children into slavery. Part of the population, the dregs, had been left by Nebuchadnezzar when he destroyed the city and carried away the best of the people, and when the other

people were removed they took possession and cultivated all the best of the land for themselves. The Samaritan people, that mixed race of the north, had also come in and cultivated their land, and a great many of them had become wealthy and were in a prosperous condition. Doubtless, many of them came down into Judah and there held important positions. Thus there grew up a large number of families of considerable wealth and social influence. But the best of the people who had returned from the captivity were poor.

Now let us look at the social condition. The city itself had never been rebuilt. The ruins were there to be seen every day in the year. These people were mainly poor, and in order that they might become rich and influential they married into the rich families and got rich wives. In order to marry these heathen or semi-heathen women who belonged to the rich influential families, they divorced their own wives. This was done altogether too promiscuously in Judah. There grew up a select class and as a result there was enmity between the poor and the rich.

These political, economic, and social conditions produced a peculiar religious condition. The colony had returned with all the glorious promises of the great prophets filling their horizon, and they looked confidently to the time when they should be a great nation, and all the nations of the world should look to them for the law of Jehovah. Naturally they were filled with a considerable amount of spiritual pride, because of the exalted position in which they believed themselves to be placed. The Persian kings were generous; did not interfere with their religion. These people had nothing of the fires of persecution to purify them, nothing to arouse that which was best within them. They were beginning to settle down upon their lees, and to grow dull and stupid in their religious life.

Because of these conditions, and the seeming failure of the prophecies of the great prophets, their pride was set on edge, and a peculiar condition developed in Israel, such as we have never met before, viz: a contempt for their revealed religion and ceremonials,

contempt for even God and his Temple, the ritual and the sacrifices. They began to think that there was no use to believe in God. They began to doubt the very existence of the love of God, and to have little or no reverence for the honor and holiness of God. The priests treated all their ceremonial and ritual with contempt. The nation seemed to be on the verge of renouncing God and their religion entirely.

As a result they sacrificed only with the poorest gifts they could find; they picked out the lame and the maimed and the blind and the halt for their sacrifices. They offered the poorest of their bread upon the altar and treated God as if he were not worthy of their worship. By marriage they mixed with the heathen or the semi-heathen surrounding them, and thus were in danger of amalgamating their race with the low and degraded race of that country, thus losing their distinct nationality as a people. Some of them went further than that, and actually began to doubt and question the justice of God in his rule over the world. They were coming to the point of saying that God dealt more kindly and justly with the wicked than he did with the righteous, and was treating the wicked better in all their sin, than he was the Israelites in all their righteousness. They refused to bring in the tithe to support the priesthood. Some of them had actually come to the conclusion that there was no profit in serving God, and they might as well renounce it all.

In this brief survey of the condition we observe that Malachi met a great many of the problems which we have to meet today. The book of Malachi is rich in homiletical material. A great many of the problems which we must face are there. In this period the Pharisees and the Sadducees began to spring up. In the authorized, Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions the book is divided into four chapters, as we have it in the American Standard; the Hebrew combines the third and fourth chapters into one, but none of the chapter divisions exactly fit the contents and subject matter of the book as we have it in our Bible.

According to the title of the book, the prophet's name is Malachi, which means "my messenger," exactly what the Hebrew word means, as found in 3:1: "Behold, I send my messenger [Malachi]." A great many maintain that this book is anonymous, and that Malachi is not the name of the man, but that the name is adopted from this expression here, and given to the author because his real name was unknown. The Targum, the translation of the Hebrew text into Aramaic, adds this little note and says, "My messenger is Ezra the scribe," thus ascribing this prophecy to Ezra, but this is not the prophecy of Ezra, although it does breathe a great deal of his spirit. It is not necessary to say that Malachi is strictly the official name and not the real name. There is no reason why Malachi should not be the name given to the man, his personal name, as well as his official name. Malachi was the name of the prophet who actually lived and wrote in the postexilic period.

There is no date given. It can only be inferred. We know that it occurred some time after the rebuilding and dedication of the Temple, but the question arises, Was it before Ezra returned from Babylonia in 458 B.C. or after? Was it before Ezra's visit in 458 and Nehemiah's visit in 444, or was it between Nehemiah's visits in 444 and 432, or was it after Nehemiah's second visit? It is more probable that these things would be said in connection with Nehemiah's second visit, for he compelled the Jews to bring their tithes in, to divorce all their foreign wives, and to adhere to the Temple ceremonials. It fits the conditions of Nehemiah's second visit. Malachi was preaching against the very conditions which Nehemiah dealt with. There is no Question that it occurred during the reign of Artaxerxes, the same ruler who sat upon the throne when Nehemiah came. Edom had been conquered and almost totally destroyed by this time. So this prophecy parallels very closely the latter part of Nehemiah.

The book is a dialogue in form, prosaic in style, with simple, smooth, and concise diction. It is a fine piece of eloquence, the outline of which is very simple, as follows:

Introduction: The name of the author (1:1)

I. Fundamental Affirmation (1:2-5)

II. Formal Accusations (1:6 to 2:17)

III. Final Annunciations (3:1 to 4:6)

Malachi adopts a peculiar method of prophesying, a pedagogical method. We will observe it more closely as we go on with our exposition. His method was to make a great statement of some fundamental, theological truth which was being questioned in that age. Then having made that statement he throws out the question that is raised up by those people who are in that peculiar religious condition described above, in which they question these theological truths. He voices their skepticism and doubts. Then he gives his answer, and drives it home with illustration, with exhortation, and even with threats.

This is a pedagogical method for either teaching or preaching, and an effective method, an excellent way to arouse the careless and indifferent. It compels attention; it compels the people to action. This method of Malachi is the beginning of a certain scholastic method that prevailed in the synagogue for centuries after. As we have in the book of Zephaniah the beginning of the great apocalyptic literature which is amplified in Daniel, Zechariah, and the book of Revelation, and as in Habakkuk we have the beginning of the speculative method in Israel, when they were speculating upon God's providence and God's rulership, so in Malachi we have introduced the scholastic method which has survived more or less ever since in Hebrew and Christian literature.

Now we come to the exposition of the prophecy. We take up in this chapter three of the prophet's messages. There are eight in all. The remaining five will follow in the next chapter. Malachi's fundamental affirmation is that God's love was shown in Israel's election, and Edom's rejection (1:2-5). Here we have exemplified

that pedagogical method. He first makes his great fundamental, theological statement: "I have loved you, saith Jehovah," one of the most fundamental and far-reaching truths that was ever uttered. With that as the fundamental truth in theology we hold to everything else. Malachi then projects their questioning: "Ye say, wherein hast thou loved us?" This question represents their very dangerous, skeptical attitude. This attitude, as expressed by "wherein," is manifested at seven points in this book, viz: 1:2, 6-7; 3:7-8, 13. But Malachi goes on and proves that God loved Israel. His proof is based on the history of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob, in contrast with the history of Jacob, or Israel. His love is proved by the difference in his conduct toward Jacob, and his treatment of Esau. In other words, God's love for Jacob is proved by Jacob's history, in contrast with the history of his brother.

These nations were as near akin as they could possibly be, but the very opposites in disposition and destiny. We have some of the characteristics of Edom in Obadiah. Now the difference between God's treatment of Jacob and Esau is as he says in the latter part of v. 2, "Yet I loved Jacob, but Esau I hated, and made his mountains a desolation, and gave his heritage to the jackals of the wilderness." He does not mean that he actually hated Esau, but that Esau occupied a very small place, or a very subordinate place in his estimation, for God cannot hate any nation, but he puts them in a very low place in his estimation in comparison with others.

God's love for Israel is proved in her preservation, while his lack of love for Edom is proved in the fact that Edom is made a desolation, which occurred at the hands of the Nabataean Arabs during the period of the exile, somewhere about the middle of the century preceding this prophecy. Then he goes on to verify that history of Esau, "Whereas Edom, after he had been so utterly crushed, said, We are beaten down, but we will return and build the waste places." "They shall build, saith Jehovah, but I will throw down, and they shall call them the border of wickedness, and the people against whom Jehovah hath indignation forever. And your eyes shall see

[this judgment upon Esau], and ye shall say, The Lord be magnified beyond the border of Israel." Paul refers to Jacob and Esau in Romans 11:13 to illustrate the doctrine of election. They do not show honor and reverence for God as do the heathen (1:6-14). Again Malachi starts with his fundamental, theological premise. He says, "A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master." He is basing his remark on the Fifth Commandment which says, "Honour thy father and thy mother." God did not say, "Love thy father and thy mother," but "Honour thy father and thy mother." What Malachi has in mind here is the holiness, the majesty, the authority of God, which demands honor and reverence on the part of his people.

Then God speaks, "If then I am a father, where is mine honour?" I have commanded you to honor father and mother, which implies that in the very highest and noblest sense you honor God also. But they had begun to despise and heap contempt upon the holiness, the majesty, and the authority of God Almighty. "If I am a master, where is my fear?" The first thing demanded of a servant is that he fear his master, and of the child, that he honor and reverence the parent, and the first and fundamental thing demanded of subjects is that they reverence and fear Almighty God. But these people were despising the holiness of God; the priests looked upon the services with contempt.

Now having projected this great fundamental truth, he states the objections of the people. He charges the priests with despising his name and saying, "Wherein have we despised thy name?" Such is their position, and that position, on the part of those priests, indicates a woeful, wilful ignorance or a scornful skepticism. To be unconscious of the fact that they were despising God's name shows that their moral consciousness, as well as their religious perceptions, must have been dormant, or utterly perverted.

Now having stated their position, he attacks it. This is what they do: "Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar," and that proved that they despised the name, majesty, and holiness of God. "And ye say,

Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of Jehovah is contemptible." Then he goes on to specify in what ways they made the table of Jehovah contemptible; that when they offered the blind, and the lame, and the sick, they thought it was all right. They would not dare offer such a gift to the governor, but they did to Almighty God. They knew the governor would not accept it of them, but they dared to offer it to God.

Malachi goes on with his admonition: "And now, I pray you, entreat the favor of God, that he may be gracious unto us: this hath been your means: will he accept any of your persons?" He will not..

Then the prophet breaks forth and says, "Oh, that the doors of the temple could be shut! I have no pleasure in you, saith Jehovah of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand," expressing the same attitude toward their sacrifices as did Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah, not that he objected to the ceremonial or to the ritual, but he objected to the spirit in which they offered them, as also those prophets did.

Now we have a remarkable prophecy in which he shows the Gentiles will offer up incense and sacrifices all over the world: "For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the Gentiles, saith Jehovah of hosts." This passage finds its fulfilment in the transfer of the covenant privileges from the Jews to the Gentiles which came to pass when the Jews rejected the Messiah. The argument is that the Jews with their great mission to all the world were failing and therefore, they must be punished for their failure with such opportunities.

He goes on stigmatizing those priests. They profane the Temple of Jehovah, they pollute it and they say, "Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it . . . and ye have brought that which was taken by violence, and the lame, etc." Then he pronounced a curse upon the deceiver who had in his flock a male, and voweth, and

sacrificeth unto the Lord a blemished thing; for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is terrible among the Gentiles."

Next he charges the priests with unfaithfulness and wickedness. Here we have some splendid homiletical material for the preacher. In chapter 2 he continues thus: "And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, then will I send the curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings; yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart." The third verse gives a description of the awful curse that shall come upon them.

Then he goes back to the history of Levi to get his ideal for the priest, when the tribes were set apart in the great covenant on Mount Sinai: "My covenant was with him of life and peace; I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and unrighteousness was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many away from iniquity."

Then he gives his reasons for the statement: "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge." The role of the priest was to teach and from the very beginning of God's institution of his religion, he required a whole tribe to be set apart as teachers and administrators of the law. God recognized the fact that human nature must have teachers provided for their instruction. "They should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." But by way of contrast to what Levi did at one time and what he does now, look at 8-9, "But ye are departed out of the way; you have caused many to stumble in the law." They had wilfully perverted it or misinterpreted or misapplied it. "Ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith Jehovah of hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have had respect of persons in the law." And God Almighty will make every priest and every preacher of his people contemptible and

base in the eyes of the people, if they do with his gospel as the priests did with his Law.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the historical setting of this book?
2. What is the political condition of the people at this time?
3. What is the economic condition?
4. What is the social condition?
5. What is the religious condition?
6. What two Jewish parties began to spring up about this time?
7. What are the chapter divisions in the different versions, what in the Hebrew and how do these arrangements fit the subject matter?
8. What of the author and his name?
9. What is the date of the book and what were the difficulties in connection with it?
10. What is the general character of the book?
11. Give the outline of the book.
12. What is Malachi's method?
13. What was Malachi's fundamental affirmation and what was their reply?
14. What was the attitude of the people as indicated by the sevenfold "wherein" and where do they occur in the book?

15. What was God's reply to their question, what was the meaning and what is the New Testament use of this statement?

16. What was Malachi's first accusation, against whom was it made, what commandment referred to in this accusation, and what their reply?

17. What were his charges against the priests?

18. What were the threats against the priests for this failure in duty and what was Malachi's ideal for the priests?

XXXII. THE BOOK OF MALACHI (CONTINUED) PART II

Malachi 2:10 to 4:6

We continue in this chapter the exposition of the prophecy of Malachi. In the first chapter we examined three of the prophet's sermons directed against the people; the first one corrected their false and skeptical ideas regarding the love of God toward the nation, the second one attacked their attitude toward his majesty, or holiness, in the matter of their offering blemished sacrifices, and the third one was directed against the priests because of their external delinquencies, their perversion of the truth that they were given to teach, and their general wickedness.

The next evil which the prophet charged against them was the cruel evil of divorce (2:10-16). This evil of divorce arose, as we have already seen, from the growing custom on the part of some of the people who wished to belong to the high and rich families, of marrying into families of mixed and foreign bloods. In order to do this they were compelled to put away the wives that they had already. This charge gives the prophet's view regarding that evil.

The key words in this section are "dealing treacherously." He is addressing the people now, for they, as well as the priests, have indulged in this cruel and wicked custom. In this case he begins with a broad and fundamental principle of a common fatherhood. "Have we not all one father? hath not God created us?" He has in mind Israel as a descendant of Abraham the father of the Jewish nation, and God the common creator of all. "Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother?" In other words, why do the Israelites sustain such a relation to one another? Why do they "deal treacherously one with another"? For in speaking of brothers here he included men and women, for it was the wrong against the women that he spoke of specifically. In doing this he says that they profane the covenant of their fathers, for a covenant was made between God and Israel at Sinai asserting this one thing, that all the people of Israel were God's and there should be no dealing treacherously one

with another. In dealing thus, they were breaking the fundamental law of the covenant between God and Israel.

In verses 11-12 he specifies the charges; he says that Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel, and in Jerusalem. Then he explains what that is: "For Judah hath profaned the holiness of Jehovah which he loveth and hath married the daughter of a foreign god." To marry the daughter of a foreign god meant to an Oriental, to marry a woman who belonged to another race and to another religious cult; in marrying into that other nation or religious cult, he was practically marrying a daughter of the foreign god, for every nation conceived itself as the offspring of its own particular god. They were thus marrying the daughter of the foreign deity.

As the result of this evil (v. 12), "Jehovah will cut off, to a man," that is, every man without an exception, "that doeth this, him that waketh and him that answereth," a proverbial expression, to include everyone. That was partly fulfilled in the time of Nehemiah. The divorce court was then set up, and nearly all the men that had married foreign wives were compelled to put them away, and those who would not, were excommunicated, and thus cut off from the congregation and life of Israel. In verse 13 he says, "And this again," or literally, "this a second time ye do." And, in order to make it very vivid, he draws a picture of the divorced wives, weeping and wailing because of the wrongs that have been done to them. He says (v. 13), "Ye cover the altar of Jehovah with tears, with weeping, and with sighing, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, neither receiveth it with good will at your hand." The weeping wives and punctilious offerings and sacrifices would not to together.

And now to show the carelessness and grossness of the people, he represents them as saying, "Wherefore? Why is it that he hath not received them with good will?" as if they were innocent. Then the prophet answers, "Because Jehovah hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth." In marriage vows Jehovah was witness

between the two. These vows were taken for life, and now they had dealt treacherously. The prophet recognized the wife as still the wife and companion, although thus divorced.

Verse 15 represents some difficulties. There are many translations of it. The translation given here is, "And did he not make one, although he had a residue of the Spirit? And wherefore one? He sought a godly seed." Now the margin of the American Revised gives a different translation: "And no one hath done so who had a residue of the Spirit. Or what? Is there one that seeketh a godly seed?" which is almost unintelligible. The general meaning seems to be this: Did not God, when he first made man, make one man and one woman, although he had the residue of the spirit of life and might have made a thousand women for one man, if he had chosen to do so. He had all the power, yet he made one man and one woman. And why one? Because he sought a godly seed; because he sought a pure offspring. Therefore he made one man for one woman and one woman for one man, in order that the best results might thereby come.

It enunciates a great and fundamental principle, which is the same as that enunciated by our Lord Jesus Christ himself. When the Pharisees came and asked him the question about divorce, he said, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so." God made one man and one woman and put them together in Eden. That is also Paul's teaching, that God intended that one man and one woman enter into a union for life.

Now an admonition arises out of that. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For I hate putting away." The prophet closes with this admonition: "Therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously."

In 2:17 he brings his charge without enunciating his general fundamental principles: "Ye have wearied Jehovah with your words." They returned the question to him. "Wherein have we wearied him?" And the prophet gives his answer, "In that ye say,

Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of Jehovah, and he delighteth in them." Or, "Where is the God of justice?" It is a very dangerous kind of skepticism; they are saying, "Jehovah delights in the wicked more than in the righteous. He is blessing the unrighteous more than the righteous. His pleasure is with the man who is of the world. Where is the God of justice?" The application is that God is not just in the administration of the affairs of this world; it is not according to the principles of righteousness. Many a man, in adversity, has asked the question, "Where is the God of justice?"

In 3:1-6, the prophet gives his answer to that question, and it is complete: "Men may think that the evil doer is God's delight, and that God is not a God of justice, but the time will come, when they will see that he is a God of justice, for, "Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me." Justice is coming, God is going to manifest himself, he is going to discriminate between the righteous and the wicked. He will come in a day of judgment; he will send a messenger before him, who shall prepare the way, that he may carry on his work of judgment and of righteousness in the world, and not only will the messenger come to prepare his way, but when he has prepared the way before him, then "the Lord, whom ye seek, will suddenly come to his temple."

As in the days of Amos, they sought the day of Jehovah, now in the days of Malachi they look for the day of Jehovah. Then he raises the question, "Who can abide the day of his coming? . . . for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's Soap; and he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi," their priests and leaders, and when he has done that, they shall offer unto Jehovah offerings in righteousness. Then when the priests are made pure and are refined, there will be a revival of religion in Israel. Then will the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant to Jehovah.

The fulfilment of this we are told by Jesus, occurred when John the Baptist came preparing the way for him. He himself was the Lord;

he was the messenger of the covenant; he came to refine and purify the people. His first public act was to cleanse the Temple, drive out the sellers of oxen and sheep, and the money changers, and every word he said, every sermon he preached, every truth he taught, every act he did, tended to refine and purify the world, and all his life was as a winnowing fan separating the chaff from the wheat, dividing mankind into two great classes.

"Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye rob me, even this whole nation." Here is a reference to the law of tithes, or the custom of giving one tenth, which appears first in the Bible in the days of Abraham, long before it was given by Moses on Mount Sinai. Really it is coincident with the religious practice and customs of the human race. It appeared in religious observances from the very beginning, long before Moses honored it by embodying it in the law received on Mount Sinai. As the law of the sabbath is a fundamental requirement in the physical and moral constitution of mankind, so the law of tithes is also a fundamental requirement of religion.

Now we come to a great text: "Bring ye the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord." People who are giving their tenth prove God, and those who faithfully give the tenth find that God blesses them for doing so. Spurgeon used that same text and applied it to the sinner: Prove me now, come and test my gospel and salvation. Find out for yourself if what I say is true. Prove me and see if I will not bring abundant blessings to you, if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. "Windows of heaven" is an Oriental expression for great blessings from heaven, which of course refers to the source of all blessings.

Then he goes on to say, "I will rebuke the devourer," the locusts that had been eating up their crops, "for your sakes," that is, "I will bring to pass certain things in the administration of physical elements of this world, and will so take care of the order of nature that the

devourers shall not destroy the fruits of your vineyards; neither shall your vine cast forth its fruit before the time. Then all nations shall call you happy, for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith Jehovah of hosts," and that has been literally fulfilled many a time as God's people have met the conditions herein prescribed.

Chapters 3:13 to 4:3. In 3:13 we have set forth another dangerous phase of their skepticism. The charge is this: "Your words have been stout against me, saith Jehovah." Again the people say, "Wherein have we spoken against thee? What have we said? Ye have said it is vain to serve God. What profit is it that we have kept his charge and walked mournfully before Jehovah of hosts? What good is it to serve God? It doesn't pay; there is no profit in it." That is a different phase of the problem from what we find in the book of Job. Satan said, "Job is a good man because he finds that it pays to be good." Then God brought Job through that suffering and trouble, in order to prove that a man might serve him for his own sake and not for the profit of this life. Now, because these people received no profit, they therefore said, "It is no use; if God is not going to make us rich, we will not serve him; we don't make any money by it." That is the modern commercial idea which underlies this skepticism.

And now they begin to say some rather strange things, depicting the anomalies that are to be found in the religious life: "Now we call the proud happy." When they saw these proud and yet happy people, they said, "The happy ones are they that work wickedness; they that do unrighteousness, they are the ones that escape." Many people now envy the rich and think that the wicked are the ones that are being built up; that the people that tempt God escape, whereas they are loaded down with troubles and difficulties. It is the old problem discussed in the book of Job and in Psalm 73. In answer to this complaint, the prophet says, "There is going to be a separation between you and the others when the time comes for the great judgment." When that day comes, they that fear Jehovah, that speak one with another are heard: "And Jehovah hearkened, and heard, and

a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared Jehovah, and thought upon his name."

The picture is taken perhaps, from a custom observed by the Persian Empire with great scrupulousness. Whenever a man did a deed or conferred a favor upon the empire worthy of remembrance, the Persian emperor always had that fact recorded in a book kept for that purpose. Mordecai, when he saved the life of the king, had his name and deed written in the book, (officially recorded) and afterward he received his reward. Every man who did something worthy of reward had his name recorded in that book. The Persian dominion was over Israel at that time, and this custom was seized upon by the prophet Malachi, and made use of by way of an illustration. Jehovah is going to have a book of remembrance, and in that is recorded the names of all those that remember him and speak to one another. The time is coming when he is going to reward them.

This thought we find wrought out more in detail in the book of Revelation, where the Book of Life is mentioned more than once. (See author's sermon on "The Library of Heaven"). "And they shall be mine in that day," when this judgment comes, when the separation takes place, they shall be "mine own possession," my peculiar possession, my own dear ones not my jewels), "in the day that I do this thing; when I bring this judgment and create this separation. I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." They will be spared as a man spares his own beloved boy. When that time comes they shall also have moral discernment and shall be able to discern distinctly between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

Now we have one of the finest descriptions of the judgment day, of the coming of Jehovah in 4:1-3: "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be a stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith Jehovah of hosts, and shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear his name, ye righteous ones, you

true Israelites, you that speak often one with another, you that are yet faithful, for you shall see the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings." As the great sun suddenly springs up above the Plains of Moab, spread his rays of light over all the country, and flashes them over Judah and Jerusalem, giving life and light, so the Sun of Righteousness, the messenger of the covenant shall come and shall send his rays of divine righteousness which shall burn up the wicked and bring its blessings to his own. "Ye shall go forth, and gambol as calves of the stall," i.e., be happy and prosperous and blessed. "And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I do this thing, saith Jehovah of hosts." This passage is paralleled in Matthew 3:11-12.

In 4:4-6 we have God's last great effort to have the people do right and to save them; he promises to send his greatest and best prophet in order that he might, if possible, bring all back to himself. In the meantime, "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb." Keep my statutes and ordinances, observe those carefully and I will send Elijah the prophet before that great and terrible day of Jehovah, and Elijah shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers. If that is not done, I will come and smite the earth with a curse. How was it fulfilled? We know that Elijah came, not the real Elijah, the former prophet, the most powerful personality of all the prophets, but John the Baptist with the spirit and power of Elijah, the most powerful personality of all those centuries, except Jesus Christ. We know the story of how he came, how he preached and how there was a great turning of hearts and when Jesus came a great separation, refining and purifying process was begun and now goes on through the centuries, and Jesus Christ will finally separate the evil from the good forever.

QUESTIONS

1. What charges against the people in 2:10-16, how introduced, and what the judgments denounced?

2. What was his charge in 2:17, what was their reply, and what was the point of their question?
3. What was the annunciation of 3:1 and what was the fulfilment?
4. What was the process of the Messiah's administration as described in 3:2-6 and what attribute of God is here declared to be the basis of his mercy to Israel?
5. What appeal to the nation in 3:7, what charge following this appeal and what great lessons of God's providence in this passage?
6. What was the charge in 3:13 and how does the prophet here show their skepticism?
7. What optimistic note in 3:16 and what picture here presented?
8. What is the "Book of Remembrance" here spoken of and what other references to such books in the Scriptures?
9. What was the blessed relation between God and his people pictured in 3:17 and what was the result?
10. What day is here spoken of and what great revelation shall be made on that day?
11. What was the picture presented in 4:1-3 and what is the correspondent New Testament teaching?
12. What of the beauty and force of "Sun of Righteousness," etc., what is meant by treading down the wicked?
13. In closing this book what reminder is given and what special fitness of it here?
14. What promise in this connection and what is the New Testament proof of its fulfilment?

15. What was to be the great work of this Elijah and what was the significance of it?