

NOTES ON JEREMIAH

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“THE EXALTATION OF THE LORD”

Our Lord Jesus Christ, that Prophet foretold and foreshadowed in the Old Testament, came to speak the words of God; also to do His will and His works. This brought upon Him opposition and persecution, sorrow and suffering. His grace and love were refused. They requited His labours for their blessing with rejection; they rewarded Him with hatred for His love. He nevertheless “*set His face like a flint*” to finish the work He came to do. It was thus with Jeremiah in a measure more limited. “They shall fight against thee”, he was told by the Lord. Therefore he was to be purposeful, and gird up his loins, and arise, and speak unto them; for “I am with thee, saith the Lord” (1:17-19). To be true to his name, in “*the exaltation of the Lord*” amidst deceit and violence, encouragement is divinely given in this first chapter; where the details are recorded of his call and his commission.

Section 1. The Moral Section. (Ch.1-24)

In the first section (chapter 1 to 24), the Lord pleads with the people, whilst warning and admonishing them also. The first twelve chapters, and the next twelve, equally subdivide this section; significant signs being given in the second twelve to illustrate truths stated in the first twelve.

Ch.1. The Call, Commission, and Encouragement of a Servant of the Lord.

Of the early verses of chapter 1 we have spoken. Although at first Jeremiah felt he was but a child, it must have been a great stay for him afterwards to think of *God's foreknowledge of him*, even before his birth, setting him apart, and giving him to be a prophet not only to Israel, but also to the nations (1:4,10). This fact of God's foreknowledge was made known to him at his call to the work, when the Lord touched him and put His words in his mouth. “I am with thee” is twice said to him (verses 8 and 19). Every servant of the Lord should have some sense of this, along with a settled conviction of the foreknowledge of God. This gives stability amidst trials and testings. The Lord said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”. Paul constantly speaks of himself as “a called apostle of Jesus Christ, by

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God's will", and Peter reminds us that we are "elect according to the *foreknowledge of God the Father*". The faithful servant may have to meet great difficulties and fierce foes, but he is encouraged like Jeremiah, who is *again* twice told not to fear (verses 8 and 17). God would fortify him against all opposition (18), and, however strong it might be, none should prevail against him. The greater the foe the greater becomes faith's victory. "I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee".

We often find this honoured servant faltering afterwards, but he pursued the path to the end nevertheless. He might say to the Lord, "Woe is me"; and "Know that for Thy sake I have suffered rebuke"; and again, "Why is my pain perpetual?" "Wilt Thou be unto me as waters that fail?"; but the Lord reminds him once more, "I am with thee to save thee" (15:20). He might curse the day wherein he was born, and tell the Lord he had 'enticed' him (20:7), and that he was a derision daily; but his faith however becomes strong again, and he says, "The Lord is with me" (20:11)! Tossed and tried, opposed and persecuted, he nevertheless laboured on to the end of his long, toilsome journey.

It was to encourage Jeremiah that the two visions in chapter 1:11 and 13 were given to him — the *rod of an almond tree* and the *seething pot*. Both spoke with significant eloquence. The *first*, like Aaron's rod that budded, implied the watchfulness and wakefulness which were always active for the true interests of the Lord: the *second*, like the caldron of Ezekiel, which was made to boil furiously by the fiery judgment from the north (Ezek.11:7; 24:1-4) illustrates Jerusalem and the consuming judgments which should come from God by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

An exceptional word (*shaqed*), a poetical expression, is used for the almond tree here. So in the next verse for 'hasten' it should read 'wakeful' rather. The word (*shaqad*) is from the same root. This divinely inspired use of words is exceedingly expressive. As to the seething pot, the word is the same as in Ezekiel, and referred to what was evidently a common saying at Jerusalem at that time — "This city is the caldron". There is no difficulty about the expression in verse 13 — "*From the face of the north*" (margin). It means the pressure of judgment would come from thence, and the caldron would lean in the opposite direction. All this is solemnly explained in the following verses, and the main reason given by the Lord is touching indeed. It shows how His heart felt the way they treated Him. They have 'FORSAKEN ME' and served other gods, He complains.

They worshipped the works of their own hands (v.16). Sorrowful as it must have been to Jeremiah, yet, when it all came to pass, exactly as he was given to foresee, it must have given great stability to him amidst the trials of his later years, increasing his confidence in the One who had called, commissioned, and encouraged him.

Ch.2-3. The Lord Forsaken and Returned to: The Consequences.

Chapter 2 is the first recorded word to the people. It gives the first thought which filled the heart of the Lord, the main reason, as we have said, for all the sorrow. Those who once loved Him had forsaken Him. He could not forget the kindness of their early years when they first went after Him. He remembered the love of their espousals, but now He complains again and again, They have “*gone far from Me*”; they have “*forsaken Me*”; they have “*turned their back unto Me*”; they have “*forgotten Me*” (see v.2, 5, 13, 17, 19, 27 and 32).

This is written for our learning, and does it not remind us of the first word as to the declension of the assemblies (Rev.2:4)? — “Thou hast left thy first love.” Oh! the sad results of this! ending as it does in what is said to the last of the assemblies, “I will spew thee out of My mouth” (3:16). Such is the beginning and ending of the professing Christian assemblies. May those who understand this and have “ears to hear” — *not what the church says* — but what “the Spirit saith to *the churches*” — have grace given to them to encourage a return to the first love again now at the end before Christ returns for His bride. There is Scriptural reason to expect a revival of this among the real, but our Lord Jesus Christ and His love must be ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit to produce this. “*The exaltation of the Lord*” before our hearts and eyes is necessary, if the heart of the bride, the assembly, is to be reached. The last picture given of her in the last chapter of the Bible, shows her responding to the presentation of the Lord Jesus as God and Man, and as the bright and blessed Hope of her heart. In unison with the Spirit SHE SAYS TO HIM, “COME”. At the same time there is living energy manifested in calling thirsty souls to come and drink and live; yea, in inviting “whosoever will” to take of the water of life freely (Rev.22:1619).

In our chapter we learn that the nation of Israel was seeking the lethal waters of Egypt and Assyria (v.18 and 36). The people turned first to one and then to the other. They should, however, be made ashamed of both.

They would learn that it was an evil and bitter thing to forsake the Lord (v.19). With sorrowful eloquence and pitiful pleading He exclaims, “Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord! For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, *the Fountain of living waters*, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can held no water” (2:12-13)! Yet with what condescension and consideration He inquires of them, “Have I been a wilderness to Israel? a land of darkness?” (v.31). But it is of no avail, they were shameless and idolatrous (v.20-30). Pastors, prophets and people went after Baal; the priests said not, “Where is the Lord?” In vain had He chastised them; they received no correction. Wicked still, Israel said, “I have sinned not”; therefore the Lord righteously rejected their confidences (v.35 and 37), they had become the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto Him.

Chapter 3 continues to lay bare their unfaithfulness and the *present consequences* of the same; pleading with them also to cry to the Guide of their youth (v.1-5). Then the prophet foresees a turning to the Lord, with *future consequences* of astonishing splendour; when, in the exalted Lord, Israel shall be saved and the nations be abundantly blessed (3:6 — 4:2). This flows out of a special word of the Lord to Jeremiah in his early days, when Josiah was king (6:11). The outward revival of those days was “with falsehood” (ch.10, NT). The call which follows to return and confess to the One who is married to them looks on to a future day, when the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord shall be outshone by a greater glory, when the true King shall reign, and “they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord”, when He shall be truly exalted, and when in a national sense Israel shall call Him “My Father”, and “not turn away from following Him” (v.14-19). This has never yet taken place, as we know. It supposes the return of our Lord Jesus Christ to Israel as David’s greater Son. Their conscience will be truly reached then, and they will return to the One they had forsaken and forgotten. “Behold we come to Thee”, they say, “for Thou art the Lord our God” (v.22). They confess their sin, owning that the salvation of Israel is in Him alone (v.23).

The reply of the ever blessed Lord is given in the first two verses of chapter 4. Let them return to Himself, putting away the abominations which have been a snare to them: let them thus return, and they should be nationally established, and widespread blessing should also be secured for

the nations around: let them return to the Lord, not to national greatness, but to the Lord their God, and the other would follow: let them “*Return unto Me*”, not to national salvation, but to their Saviour God, all else would then come right: let them “RETURN UNTO ME”, not to fullness of blessing, but to the Blesser Himself, overflowing blessing would consequently result: let them “RETURN UNTO ME, saith the Lord”, not to be the head of all the nations, but to be the King of nations (10:7), the King of Eternity (10:10), the living God; national headship should follow: “And thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in Him, and in Him shall they glory” (4:2).

This is a beautiful picture, painted by the Spirit of God Himself. It is a true picture, animated, moving, and in few words, showing us the happy administration of *earthly* blessedness in the coming age after the assembly is taken to her *heavenly* home, and after the great tribulation which follows. Israel is seen saved and exalted in the Lord, in Whom also the nations ranged around Israel shall bless themselves, and glory! The vivid scene of the last two chapters of the Bible is necessary to explain and complete this picture. The Old Testament never gives this. It is the assembly, the bride of Christ coming out from her heavenly home (to which she had been previously taken) as the City of *heavenly* administration, having the throne and the glory of God. She is given her place above the earth in relation to Israel and the nations. This brings the heavens and the earth together for administrative purposes. God and the Lamb are in the heavenly city and the light of the glory shines with royal radiance to Israel and the nations below. Gloriously great, bountifully blessed, and divinely delightful, is this completion and explanation of the Old Testament promises. They find their “Yea” and “Amen” in Christ, for the glory of God by us, who are now brought into the assembly before that joyful day dawns with all its beauty, brightness and blessing.

“Then the wide earth, in glad response
To the bright world above,
Shall sing in rapturous strains of joy,
In memory of Thy love.”

Ch.4-6. A Man Wanted.

From **chapter 4:3 to end of chapter 6** the prophet Jeremiah deals with the state of Israel. Like the chaos which overtook the distant creation of Genesis 1:1, ignorance of God and injustice were bringing the same upon the nation. There was no man to save the sorrowful situation (4:22-26 and 5:1)! Therefore the instrument of God's anger is raised up! The event to which the book points is to take place! Nebuchadnezzar — the lion of Babylon — the destroyer from the north is coming! The battle standard is unfurled! The trumpet sound is heard! Evil cometh and a great destruction! Set up a sign of fire!

With such language Jeremiah seeks to arouse the people (4:6, 7, 21, and 6:1). Dismay and distress take hold of his own being as scenes of suffering and desolation are divinely depicted before him, — “My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart!” He cries — “O my soul, the sound of the trumpet! the alarm of war! destruction upon destruction is cried” (4:19-20).

Whilst thus foretelling the doom which was coming upon Jerusalem by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, Jeremiah labours to reach the heart of the people. And it is important to notice it is in this connection we have the first mention of circumcision after the book of Joshua (4:4). Chapter 9:25-26 gives the last mention of it in the Old Testament. The prophet seeks true circumcision “*to the Lord*”, the circumcision which touches the heart, preparing it for Him. With pleadings and warnings he labours thus to reach them. It is the same today. Unless we have been reached in the heart, and in the spirit, in the very centre of our being, we are alienated from the living God, though like these Jews we call ourselves “*the people of God*” and have priests and a form of religion. What though they claim to be a religious nation if the Lord be not exalted! What though religionists claim to be the church if the true Head be displaced. Israel made high claims, but they knew not the Lord! They were “sottish children”, they had “no understanding”, they were “wise to do evil”, but to do good they had no knowledge (4:22). Woe and anguish must therefore come upon them (v.31). But, as at all times, God reserves a remnant. Such turn in reality to the Lord Himself, and they are true in heart to Him (4:27 and 5:18); therefore, He will not make a full end of the nation.

From the king down to the man in the street not one could be found to meet the situation. We are told, “There was no man”! There were plenty of strong men and hard men, but they knew not the way of the Lord (5:3-4) “I will get me to the great men”, said the prophet, but they were alike evil. The eyes of the Lord are upon the truth, yet not one man could be found in accord therewith. The nation was in a pitiable plight. It was the same cry then which we sometimes hear now — “*Wanted a man*”! Only it was God Himself who said at that time to his servant, “If ye can *find a man*, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; I will pardon” (5.1). God claimed recognition and honour in every circle, but *politically* they were corrupt, *socially* they were debased (5:7-9), and *religiously* they were abandoned to idolatry (v.19); whilst prophets, priests and people were allied in falsification (v.30-31). Some specially wicked men are singled out in verses 25 to 29. They have no thought for the needy, yet they prosper themselves. They are cunning, they craftily lie in wait to catch men. From these verses the Holy Spirit seems to take for the letter to the Ephesians to illustrate the sort of men who ensnare feeble Christians today — especially “the babes” in Christ; as we read, “By the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Ephesians 4:14). As in Israel’s day, these deceivers were prominent and great among God’s people, even so now in this day of Christian profession and the assembly, or the church as it is commonly, though erroneously, called.

The Man Found

Thanks be to God we have no need now to cry out “*A man wanted*”! The king of Israel might fail as the head of the nation, or, even if faithful, he nevertheless died. The man Christ Jesus, however, who is the Head of the assembly today, never fails and never dies. The high priests of Israel were sometimes good and sometimes corrupt; but Jesus, the only High Priest provided for us now, is altogether perfect, and He “continueth ever”. No man, no mediator ever lived, who could bring God and man together for abiding blessing; but now there is “One Mediator between God and man, *The Man Christ Jesus*”. With Him there is no failure. This is important for us to lay hold of. It gives stability to the believer. A perfect Man, in whose hands all is maintained for God’s glory and for our blessing, has been raised up. He first died, making purification of sins; He then ascended to the place of power in the heavens, and took the highest seat. Faith answers the question “What is man”? by saying, “We see Jesus, who was made a

little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour” (Heb.2:9); He is exalted, and all authority is in His hands. God has provided a perfect Man, a Man who has settled the sin question, who has overthrown Satan, and redeemed us to God by His blood; a Man who has taken the sting out of death, who has robbed the grave of its victory, who has risen from the dead, and taken the highest place in the universe at God’s right hand. This is the Man; the Man of resurrection; the Man of ascension and of glory, who is provided by God for us. When the heart truly grasps this in faith, and in the Spirit’s power, the unbelief which marks many, as they look hither and thither for “*A man*”, will be altogether foreign to our hearts. We shall rejoice in the Lord always, looking to Him who never fails, to Him whose fullness is always the same. “The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.” He alone is sufficient for these things; and grace, divine grace, has given our glad hearts to know this ever blessed Man, whose name is not only called “*Wonderful*”, but — let our adoring souls be reminded — also “*The Mighty God*”! Here we find the secret solved. This marvellous Man is “the Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen” (Rom.9:5). All is in safe keeping in His hands. May we be kept in the power of the Holy Spirit ungrieved so that He may make His glories known to us; thus the exaltation of the Lord shall be before us, and not the exaltation of self, individually or collectively.

Covetousness — loving self, money and pleasure — and violence and hatred mark the close of this period. The Lord will bring judgment upon it all. The way of deliverance, however, is always the same; it is found alone in Christ. In Jeremiah 6 we find the same state then: “Every one of them is given to covetousness” (v.13). As in 1 Thess.5:3, just before Christ comes, so here, they say, “Peace, peace” (6.14). Earnestly the prophet seeks to awaken them as to the old paths, the good way, where they should “find rest for their souls; but they said, We will not walk therein” (v.16). When the blessed Lord was here upon earth, He graciously invited them to come to Him, and they should find rest for their souls; but man will not take that way. He chooses other ways; so he finds no real rest. Like the troubled sea in its agitation and tossing, he knows no abiding quietude of heart, no peace of mind, no divine tranquillity.

In these chapters (4 to 6), the Lord again declares the cause of all their distress. He says, They have forsaken Me, they have not known Me, they do not fear Me (4:22; 5:7 and 19 and 22). This is so at times. Therefore

“Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them” (6:30). There was no man to stand in the breach, there was none that executed judgment, there was none who even sought the truth. What else could come! The desolation of such a nation, which had turned its back to the Lord, was inevitable. Corrupt princes and a corrupt people called for this. The wise man had said before, “By the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof, but by a man of understanding and of knowledge, its stability is prolonged” (Prov.28:2). The man was not there. Both the land and the nation must await the coming again of “The Man Christ Jesus”, raised from among the dead, of the seed of David, now hidden in the heavens. They shall not wait in vain!

“He’ll come to break oppression,
To set the captive free,
To take away transgression,
And rule in equity.”

Ch.7-9. The Place of the Lord's Name.

Chapters 7, 8, and 9 have an interesting and peculiar character of their own, inasmuch as the important truths of the house of God and the people's relation to it are prominent.

If the prophet begins by exposing the unreality of those that go to the temple and “enter in at these gates to worship the Lord” (7:2); if he ends by pronouncing punishment upon them along with the “nations that are uncircumcised” (9:26), showing up in between the vanity of those who boastfully say, “The law of the Lord is with us” (8:8); he nevertheless calls to any that may have ears to hear, to *glory alone in the Lord*, who exercises loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things He delights (9:24). It is His exaltation which is always before the mind of the Spirit.

The house of God is that which bears His holy Name, as He saith, “Which is called by My Name” (7:10,11,12,14,30). In Old Testament times this could be said of either the Tabernacle or the Temple, but of no other such structure then or since. Both are mentioned here (verses 1-11 and 12-14).

The house of God today is a building not made with hands, for in such God has no pleasure now, nor does He dwell in them as He deigned to do provisionally in the two structures named (Acts 17:24 and Heb.9:1; 10:9). Believers on our rejected Lord are the ‘living’ material of which the present house of God is constructed, as 1 Peter 2:4-5 explains. Christ is the Living Stone, and we are builded in relation to Him — “a spiritual house” in contrast to what went before. It is wrong to own any other structure as “The house of God”. It is a denial of the true nature and character of this house (which is the assembly of the living God) to apply the name to any building of brick or stone.

And what a solemn fact it is — judgment fell upon the house “which was in Shiloh”, where the Lord set His “Name at the first” (7:12); again it came upon the house at Jerusalem, as He said, “Therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by My Name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh” (14). And thus it happened. Likewise the apostle Peter again tells us in the epistle from which we have already quoted, “Judgment must begin at the house of God” (4:17). We see it in the symbolic history of the churches in Revelation 2 and 3. Corrupt Christendom will be judged no less than

corrupt Judaism was. According to the thought of God as to it, His house, “which is the assembly of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth” (1 Tim.3:15), is marked by the mystery of piety, as it is seen perfectly expressed in our Lord Jesus Christ personally — God manifested in the flesh. When the truth is falsified and true piety is gone, what can come but judgment from God? and more especially so, if this false thing bears His holy Name.

Jeremiah warns them against “lying words”, in verses 4 and 8. “Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these.” This might sound very pious and religious, but they themselves were given to oppression and idolatry (7:6,9,18), and wicked trafficking was practised in His house (10-11 and 30). Therefore His anger and His fury should be poured out upon this place (20). They went backward and not forward; truth had perished from their mouth; they had become the generation of His wrath; their evil practices caused the voice of gladness to cease; judgment from the Lord, who had called so often to them, must fall upon them (21-34). “This evil family” should spread out the bones of the departed before the host of heaven, and even desire death themselves; yet they knew no shame, “neither could blush”; and no man repented him of his wickedness. The prophet feeling all this cries, “Astonishment hath taken hold upon me! Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician there”? (8:21-22). None could be found. There was no man. The coming of Christ is the only hope.

“Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears”, mourns the prophet. Adultery, treachery, lying, slander, deception, iniquity, duplicity and ignorance of God marked the people (9:1-8). “Shall I not visit for these things?” saith the Lord; “yea, I will make Jerusalem heaps”. Who is the wise man, that may understand this? He asks. Wormwood and water of gall should be theirs. Let the mourning women be called; let them teach their daughters wailing; desolation and death cometh (9-22). And in the last two verses, 25 and 26, he shows that the punishment is not to be confined to Israel; but that it is to fall upon “all nations”. In the two verses between (23-24), Jeremiah, true to his Name, exalts the blessed Lord before the eyes of faith, saying, “Let not the *wise man* glory in his wisdom, neither let the *mighty man* glory in his might, let not the *rich man* glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth ME, that I am the Lord which exercises loving kindness,

judgment, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord”.

“Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.”

That which Jeremiah speaks of in these two verses can only be understood rightly by those who have a saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One who is appointed to administer righteousness in the habitable earth, having been raised from among the dead (Acts 17:31); and it is by Him God is made known to us now. The Father’s Name is declared to us by Himself, so that whatever failure may be connected with that which outwardly bears His Name, we can still rejoice in the perfectness of the Son, and our joy be full in communion with the Father and with the Son.

The Name is now connected with *a Person*, rather than with *a place*. Though there might be little to glory in outwardly, yet we can always glory in Him. This is pleasing to the Father, and for this reason the Holy Spirit of God is in and with us during the time of His rejection by Israel. Those who own *the Lord* now are growing to a holy temple *in Him*, and will be displayed as such in glory when complete; but even at the present time, whilst they wait that day, they are builded together “*in the Lord*” for a habitation of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:21-22).

Ch.10-12. The Living Lord, Dead Idols, Oppressive Pastors.

Chapters 10, 11 and 12 show us that the Living Lord, the King of nations, the King of eternity, the Creator, is the God of truth; also that He shall triumph in spite of the people's idolatry and the brutishness of their pastors. When the people failed in the wilderness after He had redeemed them out of Egypt, unfaithful and untrue to Himself though they were, He said to Moses, "As I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Num.14:21). Blessing and order shall consequently follow, notwithstanding the repeated failure of those He took up in view of this. The goodness of Jehovah will only be made more distinct and distinguished before men's eyes; for, coming down in the person of Jesus ("Jehovah Saviour"), by death and resurrection He laid the stable foundation to bring it all about in righteousness. Christ is now alive for evermore, and the pleasure of the Lord, and the exaltation of the Lord, as well as the blessing of men, are safe in His hands. In due time it shall be accomplished in Divine perfection.

The wise men with their doctrine of vanities, and the workmen with their cunning arts in silver and gold and wood, may labour together with *Chaldean scholarship* to hold the nations by idolatry; but they are all the works of error; therefore, "they shall perish" (10:15). The God of truth shall triumph over this falsehood! It is in this chapter 10 where the greatness of His glorious Name is declared, the fact that these false gods shall perish utterly is recorded by the Spirit in verse 11 in the *Chaldean language*! This is exceedingly striking and significant. It is the only verse so written in the whole book. The idolatrous Chaldeans were to take Israel captive, but in their very language God records the utter overthrow of their false gods, and proclaims that Israel, whom he allows to be carried into captivity by them, is His rod (10:16), and by them He will yet bring about order when they turn to our Lord Jesus Christ.

The signs of heavens dismay the nations! With axe and hammer they make their gods! They cannot speak! They have to be carried! for they can not go themselves! Silver and gold and blue and purple may cover them, but they are just stocks! There is no breath in them! The "wise men" who teach their doctrines are foolish (1:15)! Thus the prophet exposes the utter vanity and emptiness of idolatry. The nations vie in curious and cunning arts to *form* these vanities, but "The Portion of Jacob is not like them; for He is the *Former* of all things," rejoicingly exclaims the prophet (16). "Israel is

the rod of His inheritance, the Lord of hosts is His Name.” Bye and bye Israel shall own Him truly to be the Living Lord; they shall swear “The Lord liveth”; and great shall be the blessing that shall follow. Great, because of the greatness of this Living God, whom Israel shall then own; and before whom Jeremiah here shows these dead idols and their votaries to be vanity and falsehood also.

Exalting the Lord in His Divine eminence, and contrasting His marvellous might and majesty with the mean impotence of these dead and dumb idols, the prophet says, “There is none like unto Thee, O Lord; Thou art great, and Thy Name is great in might. Who would not fear Thee, O King of nations?” (6). Again, “The Lord is the God of Truth, He is the Living God, and, the King of Eternity” (10). He is the Creator, and His power, wisdom and understanding wrought in creating and establishing the earth and the heavens (12). The wind he bringeth out of His treasures; and just here the Spirit records a scientific fact, made known over 2500 years ago: “*He maketh lightnings for the rain*” (13). Scientists have only recently discovered this relation of lightning and rain. Like many other discoveries, in a few words it was stated in the Scriptures of Truth ages ago. God is the Creator and Former of all things; He has hidden vast riches as yet undiscovered in the created universe; and far greater riches still in the new creation, of which true believers through grace form part in Christ; yea, in the mystery now made known to us “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col.2:3). This latter is beyond anything to be found in the Old Testament, although it is the same blessed God Who has graciously wrought it out; the same God whom Jeremiah rejoices to exalt; known then as “*Jehovah*”; known to us now as “*Father*,” in a relationship of love and life eternal, which cannot be broken. THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IS OUR FATHER NOW THROUGH DIVINE GRACE AND LOVE: WORSHIP BECOMES THE RECIPIENTS OF SUCH HIGH FAVOUR.

It was because Jeremiah knew the love of the Lord for Israel, and the importance of their national position before Him that he cries out in pain when he pronounces again their overthrow (10:17-25). In chapter 11, verses 1 to 17, he once more warns the people, and charges them with unfaithfulness and sin. Therefore, evil should come, and Jeremiah is told not to pray for them. How deeply all this touched the heart of the Lord is discernable in His expressions concerning the sinful nation. “My Beloved,”

He calls her; “A green olive tree”; but she rejoiced in evil, and evil should come upon her. In the presence of all their sinful doings, and with full knowledge of it, the prophet suffers like His Lord, of whom he is a type. He is brought “*like a lamb*” to the slaughter. They had devised wicked devices against him, to “*cut him off from the land of the living*” (18-19). How like this is to what is said of our blessed Lord in Isaiah 53; but how unlike His prayer is that of the prophet in the next verse as he asks for vengeance upon his persecutors. Truly it was a perfectly righteous prayer for a Jew to make, with earthly promises and hopes, and it should be answered (21-23), but the Lord Jesus asked His Father to forgive His enemies.

“**RIGHTEOUS ART THOU, O LORD,**” exclaims Jeremiah (12:1); yet he pleads with Him about the prosperity of the wicked—“*Thou art near in their mouth and far from their reins,*” he says. This describes a state which is sadly in evidence in Christendom today. The Lord shows His servant that contending with these things is not wise, for even his own nearest relatives had dealt treacherously with himself, he must therefore trust in the Lord. Though the people connected with the place of His name were His heritage, yet He had left them; yea, He had given the beloved of His soul into the hand of her enemies, The true servant must cleave to the righteous Lord (5-9) that is his wisdom.

There were plenty of servants enriching themselves at the expense of God’s glory and of His poor people. The true servant stands out in contrast to this. The pastors many, destroyed the Lord’s vineyard (10), instead of tending it with knowledge and care, so that it might bring forth fruit well-pleasing to the Lord. These pastors had become brutish also and had not sought the Lord (10:21). The Lord’s honour was not in their thoughts, the true servant was to seek the exaltation of the Lord. These pompous pastors with their oppressive officialism and with their weighty self-importance had trodden the Lord’s precious plants under their feet. Creating, it may be, for their own ends, an unreal conscience, instead of building them up in the truth. “They have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness” saith the Lord (12:10). It mourned unto Him, and the spoiler should come up upon it. All this is repeated in the history of Christendom, and judgment must necessarily follow, as is so often affirmed in the New Testament. We must be like Jeremiah, keep near to the Lord, and labour for His honour and exaltation, and so for the real help of all His own loved ones.

“Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture, saith the Lord.” The scatterers have His frown and not His favour. “Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed My people; ye have scattered My flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them; behold I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord” (23:1-2). The gatherers of the true sheep are with Him in their labours, for He adds, “I will gather the remnant of My flock.” There is One Shepherd and one flock now, as we read in John 10. His sheep follow Him. They know Him; and they know His voice. He gives them eternal life and they can never perish.

They are safe in His hand and in the hand of the Father. True servants encourage the sheep to follow our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and not to follow themselves. He is the “*Good Shepherd*” who died for them; and He is the “*Great Shepherd*” raised from among the dead, who lives for them. He is also the “*Chief Shepherd*” who is coming again; yea, Jehovah saith, He is “*My Shepherd*.” The sheep belong to Him, and the confident soul can also truly say, He is “*my Shepherd*.”

“Their times are in His hand,

Jesus, once crucified,
Now leads them on with tender care,
Their Shepherd, Guard, and Guide.”

He is alive for evermore! Our well-loved Lord and Saviour is the living One! It is very precious to be reminded in the last few verses of chapter 12 that He will gather Israel again, and they shall own “*The Lord liveth*.” For the fulfilment of this they must come under the new covenant of which we will speak later. The pastors then will not oppress His people. He says, “I will give you pastors according to Mine heart, which shall FEED YOU WITH KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING” (3:15).

Ch.13-16. Prophetic Signs and Their Significance.

We have now come to the second twelve chapters of “*The Moral Section*” of Jeremiah. The significant signs which are here recorded illustrate important truths in an interesting manner. These latter twelve chapters naturally subdivide into three parts of four chapters each; the previous twelve, as we have seen, subdivide rather into four parts of three chapters each. The peculiar order which is maintained all through the book becomes more manifest as we proceed. This order is not historical or chronological as we have said, but it is set out according to the bearing of the word or sign upon the central event of the book. The signs are mostly confined to this second division of twelve chapters which we are now to consider.

Chapters 13, 14, 15 and 16, show us the signs of the *girdle*, the filled *bottles*, and the *drought*; also those of the prophet’s *abstinence* from marriage, and *from mourning*, and likewise *from feasting*. The teaching of these signs is made plain for us by the Holy Spirit, who at the same time unfolds precious truths concerning the Lord; showing us His attitude in regard to the state signified, and also that of the true servant of the Lord and of the believing remnant.

THE GIRDLE, or loin cloth of linen (13:1-11), first of all shows that the Lord had given the nation of Israel a near and intimate place in connection with Himself. Great indeed was their place of honour! They were unto the Lord for “a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory” (11)! This was the glorious girdle—Israel placed thus near to the Lord. He was enough for them. Therefore it is said to the prophet first, “Put it not in *water*.” Next he is told to hide it in the hole of the rock far away by *the waters of the Euphrates*. When he returns for it after many days, he finds it spoiled and good for nothing.

Heedless of their high honour, Israel constantly turned to other “*waters*” (see 2:18) and, consequently, became idolatrous. They forsook the Lord who was in their midst as a man is in the midst of his girdle. He therefore would cause *the waters of Babylon* to be their destruction, and so mar their “great pride.” If we see in this first of all the Lord’s thought concerning Israel’s national distinction for His own glory, and then their awful folly and pride, how it ought to give us diligence of soul now to be found cleaving to the Lord in humility of mind, seeking to answer to His far higher thoughts concerning the assembly, in spite of the far more awful

folly seen in Christendom today. The truth espouses the assembly to Christ as a chaste Virgin. May we have grace to be faithful; for it is revealed in Revelation 18. that the dark waters of judgment shall presently engulf Christendom, there called "Babylon."

THE BOTTLES, or jars, filled with wine (12-14), signify the stupid senselessness with which drunkenness should drown all clear and right thought among the people and their princes. This, doubtless, refers again to their Babylonish inclinations. This wine is referred to as the wine of fornication again in Revelation. But here, as well as there, it brings down the judgment of God. Rationalists may complain that this is a very simple sort of sign, and question it because it appears to refer the blame of their drunkenness to the Lord; but such criticism only exposes their own ignorance of God's ways and judgments. When men depart from Him in any way He gives them up to something else, and unless they repent, their lusts get a stronger hold of them (see Rom.1:18-32). In Israel's case the Lord says, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backsliding shall reprove thee, know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God" (2:19). The Scripture in Romans refers to man in *creature* responsibility; this in Jeremiah to Israel in *national* responsibility; 2 Thessalonians 2:11, refers to *Christendom's* responsibility. There we are told that God Himself sends them a working of error that they should be carried away by what is false. Why? To turn aside those who believe on His beloved Son? Perish the thought! It is to manifest clearly in judgment those who did the very opposite, those "who believed not the truth, but found pleasure in unrighteousness."

The petty and puerile criticisms of some, also question the former sign of *the girdle* and the fact of Jeremiah going twice to the Euphrates. It is not surprising that they fail to understand the sign, but if there is one place more than another which Jeremiah may have had many reasons for visiting, that place is the very one in question. The judgments he constantly foretold were to come from thence, and the people he loved and laboured for were to be captives there.

Affectionate and eloquent is the pleading in verses 15 to 27. "Wilt thou not be made clean?" he enquires of them. Pride and falsehood held them as in a vice (v.15,17,25). If they will not hear his eye should weep sore and run down with tears because of the captivity of the Lord's flock, that beautiful flock (v.17,21). Tell the King and the Queen mother to humble themselves;

sorrow and travail are coming; they had not only forsaken and forgotten the Lord, but they had sunken into adultery, lewdness and whoredom. No wonder, therefore, that the call to “*Give glory to the Lord your God*” was unheard and unheeded by them.

THE DEARTH or drought of chapter 14 only shows up their proud obstinacy the more. They will not bend; Jeremiah, however, pleads with the Lord, the Hope of Israel and the Saviour thereof. He reminds Him that they are still called by His Name; and says, “*Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us*” (9)! In that sense they were still His *girdle*. Why? asks the prophet. Should the Lord be as a mighty man that cannot save? He is told not to pray for them; consuming judgment must be theirs (10-12). Jeremiah tells Him the people’s prophets speak otherwise. Therefore they shall be punished as well as the people (13-16).

The faithful prophet mourns over them and again pleads with the Lord, confessing their sins, and touchingly concludes “Do not abhor us, for Thy Name’s sake, do not disgrace the throne of Thy glory; remember, break not Thy covenant with us. Are there any among the vanities of the nations that can cause rain? Or can the heavens give showers? art not Thou He, O Lord our God? therefore we will wait upon Thee, for Thou hast made all these things” (21-22). This shows how the faith of a true servant of the Lord holds Him in connection with that which professes His Name at any time. I have no doubt that answer then came to such a prayer and confession; though in its completeness the foretold judgment followed later on.

Chapter 15:1-9 continues to show that no prayer for this people could *finally* prevail, not even if Moses and Samuel stood before the Lord. They were servants of God who were faithful to Himself, and they loved the people, but nothing could avail, He would cast them out of His sight. Back to Manasseh the evil is traced, the revival since had no real depth. “Thou hast forsaken Me saith the Lord, thou art gone backward, therefore will I stretch out Mine hand against thee, to destroy thee. I am weary with repenting” (6).

Separation to the Lord

There are most important principles concerning the remnant and the servants of the Lord in verses 10-21. Others may be indifferent to the sad state of things, but *they* feel it all before God. They are to keep themselves separate just as *we* are also instructed to do now (2 Timothy 2, etc.). In this

position of separation, however, they are still a part of the whole. “*Thy Words,*” found and fed upon, become the secret spring and joy of the heart. These servants are connected with the Lord’s Name, and they own this. He Himself in what He is, fills their thoughts. The finding of His words (verse 16) may refer to the finding of the book of the law, but in any case the true heart makes the Lord’s words its own. And though happy himself before God, it puts him outside of the assembly of mockers (17). This causes him pain.

The last three verses are a sort of *confirmation* to the encouragement given to the Prophet in his *call and commission* recorded in chapter 1.

In the position of separation to the Lord, standing before Him and taking the precious from the vile, he should be as the Lord’s mouth, He was not to return to them, but to let them return to Him. As thus separated to the Lord he should be strengthened; and the Lord should be with him; none should prevail against him. These principles are of immense and immediate importance for us today as we seek to follow faithfully the Lord in the midst of the religious corruptions of the present time. We shall always find a remnant, thank God, who rejoice in the Lord and call alone upon Him out of a pure heart whilst pursuing righteousness, faith, love and peace together. This *positive* position and practice keeps them bright and happy: the purely *negative* attitude of those who boast in being separate from unrighteousness produces the opposite, and also paralyzes all true prosperity, giving pre-eminence to the most unchristlike who find pleasure and prominence in their Diotrephesian words and works (2 John 9-11). The good is before the true believer; he follows that in separation to the Lord.

“Christ Jesus our Hope”

The prophet himself becomes a sign amongst the people (Chapter 16:1-13). So sure is the punishment that is coming upon them, he is to *abstain from marriage*, from entering into social relationship with them. He is also to *abstain from the house of mourning*, signifying that the Lord’s peace was taken from this people, that consolation was withdrawn, and also the voice of mirth and gladness, therefore Jeremiah is likewise to *abstain from the feast*.

Again the secret of all this sorrow is reiterated; “They have forsaken ME saith the Lord”; they have followed other gods and walked after the imagination of their own hearts, “that they may not hearken unto ME” (11-

13). It is this wretched subjective tendency which always follows the turning away from the Lord Himself that caused the mighty mischief then just as it is doing now. Doubtless the feelings and frames are considered good and pious and wise, but it is self-occupation nevertheless, and contrary to the true knowledge of the blessed God. To Ephesus, where so much apostolic labour was bestowed, it was written before the apostles had all passed away, “Thou hast left thy first love” (Rev.2:4); and here in our chapters (13 to 16) it is constantly and touchingly repeated, “*Thou hast forgotten ME*” (13:25); “THOU HAST FORSAKEN ME” (15:6); “THEY HAVE FORSAKEN ME” (16:11); “THAT THEY MAY NOT HEARKEN UNTO ME” (16:12).

Is there no hope? Certainly not in Israel, nor today in the churches; but we are reminded that Christ Jesus is “our Hope” (1 Tim.1:1). He is also “the Hope of Israel and the Saviour thereof” (14:8). Failure on the part of Israel and of the assemblies has become the means, however sad, *for the exaltation of the Lord alone*. He remains faithful. Our hope is in Him, and we are to make Him our boast and our glory. This should be understood and held firmly. Israel like a girdle was to encompass the Lord “for a people and for a Name, and for a praise and for a glory; but they would not hear” (13:11). This was God’s original intention (see Deut.26:19), therefore it must be brought to pass. Israel failed on the ground of responsibility, but the Lord will not fail. Verses 14 to 21 show this. Greater than the deliverance of Israel from the cruel bondage of Egypt shall the future recovery and restoration be. It shall be said then, “The Lord liveth” who has done this great thing. Truly they shall be brought through sorrowful recompense for their iniquity and their sin—“double” indeed in a governmental way, but our Lord Jesus Christ has made atonement for it all; He alone could do so; none other of that nation (or any other) was sinless and spotless and holy. On the ground of His sacrifice they shall be restored and blessed abidingly, and the nations through them. Yea God hath said, “Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know, Mine hand, and My might; and they shall know that My Name is the Lord” (21). Then, indeed, His girdle which compasseth Him about shall be glorious. He shall be exalted in the abundance of Israel’s blessing, as we read: “It shall be to Me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them” (33:9).

Jeremiah's heart exults in the Lord, and exalts Him anticipatively, in the presence of such precious and priceless promises. He is lifted in spirit above and beyond the sorrowful surroundings of the moment. He pronounces the falsehood and vanity and profitlessness of that which had led people away from the true God, as they themselves shall do in the bright and blessed day that is coming. "O Lord!" he exclaims, "My Strength and my Fortress! and my Refuge in the day of affliction! the nations shall come unto Thee from the ends of the earth" (19)! Blessed it is to the heart, to know Him now before that day arrives; then the assembly, glorified in *heavenly* splendour with Christ, shall be in administrative relation with restored Israel in her *earthly* glory, and the nations shall be blessed abundantly, Christ being owned by all as KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. The kingdom and dominion also shall be His throughout all the rejoicing earth! For all this Christ Jesus is our Hope, and He is also the Hope of Israel.

"Hope of our hearts, O Lord, art Thou;
The glorious Star of day;
Thou wilt shine forth, and chase the night
With every fear away."

Ch.17-20. The Cursed Man and the Blessed Man.

Chapters 17, 18, 19 and 20, contain most interesting instruction: they give us the signs of *the Potter and the clay* (18:4), also *the broken bottle* (19:10), and *Pashur's new name* (20:3). These will become plain to us as we proceed.

The sin of Judah, deeply engraved in their hearts, and publicly proclaimed on their hills of idolatry, had kindled a fire which should consume them utterly, for the anger of God was roused against them (17:1-4). What then was any believing individual to do when God had pronounced this dire destruction of the nation? What is the individual to do now who foresees the doom of the churches as foretold in the Scripture of Truth? Let him not confide in man; let him not make flesh his arm, whether claiming scholarship or otherwise; for to so do is to depart *in heart* from the Lord. Cursed is the man that does this (5). Faith worketh by love; and where the heart, which is the seat of affection and faith, confides in the Lord, that soul will be preserved from transferring his confidence to man and the arm of flesh, and therefore from the consequences which must inevitably follow such a course. May God speak to us as to this, that none may take the path of *the cursed man*. It leads to places that are parched and sapless. The soul that is there shall see no good coming, even though it be coming for others, for he is moved away from the hope of the Gospel, and dwells experimentally amid destitution and desolation as in a desert (6).

Let us ask again, What is the believing individual to do at such a time? There is no uncertainty in the answer here given: "*Blessed is the man that confideth in the Lord, and whose confidence the Lord is*" (7). God never leaves us in a negative attitude, simply saying what we are *not* to do. Too many dwell continually upon that side only. The blessed man is the one who is marked by positive confidence in the Lord Himself. Here is the secret, then, of soul prosperity at all times. If Israel fails, if the assemblies fail, then the more distinctly is the blessed Lord to be exalted before the faith of the true believer. He becomes His confidence entirely. To whom did we turn for relief as poor repentant sinners? To whom did we go for deliverance when we learned there was no good in us—that is in the flesh? To whom is our heart to turn amid the failure of the assemblies now? The answer to all these questions is the same, Not to man, but to the Lord Himself. Here again is seen the true work of Jeremiah, according to the meaning of His name, "THE EXALTATION OF THE LORD."

But what will be the result for the individual who thus has the Lord as His confidence? Instead of being in parched places, he shall find himself where the living waters never cease to flow. Like a tree planted by never-failing moisture, he shall be always fresh and fragrant. He retains his greenness and fruitfulness at all times, for his wide-spreading roots appropriate the plentiful supplies of God. Strengthened today by the Holy Spirit in “*the inner man*,” he has Christ dwelling in his heart through faith, and being rooted in God’s unchanging and unfailing love he finds Divine abundance there notwithstanding all the *outward* failure. How like this is to the blessed or happy man described in the first Psalm! There again we are not simply told what such an one does not do, but the perennial prosperity and seasonable fruitfulness so vividly described are the rich results of positive delight in the law of the Lord and constant meditation therein. There was One of whom all this was true in perfection, and it is that One we are to consider well, our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. He could say, “Thy law have I hid within My heart,” He lived by the Father, His love was the joy and rejoicing of His heart, as He daily confided in Him alone. And, oh! what rich fruit in immeasurable bountifulness results from this for eternal ages.

Just another word before we leave these two men. Of each of them it is said, He “shall not *see*.” Both are blind to something! How great is the contrast though! The cursed man is blind to the coming good; the blessed man is blind to the coming evil. The cursed man whose heart is away from the Lord, trusting in man and in the arm of flesh, has no power to lift up his eyes to see the bounteous blessedness that is to be brought by Christ’s coming; the blessed man, on the other hand, whose confidence the Lord Himself is, dwells in faith and in the Spirit’s power amidst scenes of plenty, and sees not the parching heat which comes with withering force, for his living fountains fail not. This precious portion of the blessed man is open to each one of us today in Christ Jesus.

The Heart and the Fountain of Living Waters

The heart of man is incurable, however, and so deceitful is it that no one of Adam’s sinful stock can fathom its depravity (9). It is set to do evil and to depart from God, however greatly privileged it may be. The Lord was testing man in the Old Testament, testing favoured Israel under law, but only to prove his utter ruin (10). Judgment must therefore fall. For believers now it has already taken place at the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; governmentally it fell upon the nation as the prophet foretold, and

even the covetous King Jehoiakim becomes an individual example. From his ill-gotten goods he was cut off in the midst of his years (at 36), like a partridge might be taken from her many eggs. As Nabal, at his end, he was a fool (11); so is every man who follows the subjective promptings of his own heart and forsakes the Lord.

It is true that the believer on our Lord Jesus Christ today has a *purified* heart, but that does not alter what is said here. Indeed Scripture is careful to tell us that those who have heard and believed the Gospel now have their hearts purified by faith, and also that they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit from “*the heart-knowing God*” (Acts 15:8-9). It is no matter of works or process on our side, although it results in our loving one another “out of a pure heart fervently (1 Pet.1:22). It is good to find such choice company in these days of strife and contention—contention, sad to say, not for “the faith once delivered to the saints,” so as to walk together in it in peace, but contention for self and man’s opinions. Where the former are found, they will be marked by following righteousness, faith, love and peace whilst they CALL ON THE LORD HIMSELF OUT OF A PURE HEART (2 Tim.2:22). It should be noticed, it is not “*the Name*” of the Lord in this verse which is called upon as it is usually quoted. This is important, for there are many subtle reasonings based upon this misquotation. The deceitful heart of man has “found out many abstruse reasonings” (not “inventions”); and He would even say like some of old, “The Lord hath left the earth”; and add, “We only have His Name now.” Sad and solemn statement; we hope it may have been said in ignorance, and not as an excuse for light behaviour; or, as in Jeremiah’s day, because the Lord is “near in their mouth and far from their reins” (12:2).

To abide with the Lord, and call upon Himself, is our present privilege. Surely we may know Him also today as “*The Fountain of Living Waters.*” This preserves the believing heart from turning to other streams. It was Israel’s great sin that they thus turned away from the Lord, but Jeremiah cleaves to Him. “A glorious high throne from the beginning,” he says, “is the place of our Sanctuary.” He rises in faith above the failure, and glories in what was “from the beginning.” This is the way of the blessed man whose confidence the Lord is. He gets to the place where living waters never fail, where the streams thereof gladden his rejoicing heart. For him this “Sanctuary is the Lord Himself” (Ezek.11:16), as is also the “Glorious High Throne” (Isa.22:23). It is from the Sanctuary the healing and life-

giving waters flow, whilst the Lord is Himself the Fountain of those living waters. What folly then it was for Israel to turn away from Him, and to endeavour to maintain the national position by their own boasted efforts! What folly it is to turn away from Him today! Yea, what unutterable vanity, with the advantage of these writings given for our warning and learning, to turn from Him who is the living Lord and the living Head of the assembly now, and become engrossed in proud efforts of no avail, seeking to rebuild that which is to be judged, as we see in Rev.2 and 3! True wisdom confides in the Lord; He is our Hope in every way. May all our expectation be from Him.

The prophet continues, “O Lord, Thou Hope of Israel, all that forsake Thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from Me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken THE LORD THE FOUNTAIN OF LIVING WATERS” (13).

Four times only in the Bible is *the* Fountain of Life spoken of, although a fountain of life is often mentioned. In Ps.36:9 we read, “With Thee is the Fountain of Life.” Twice in Jeremiah we have the above beautiful designation (2:13 and 17:13). The fourth is found in Rev.21:6, “I will give unto him that is athirst of the Fountain of the Water of Life freely.” Jeremiah realizes how entirely he is shut up to the Lord, and with confidence and assurance he prays, “Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved; for Thou art my Praise” (15). In verse 17, after speaking of the reproach which came upon him for following the Lord, he says, “Be not a terror unto me, for Thou art my Refuge in the day of evil.” Unlike the Lord Jesus or the believer now, he prays for the overthrow of his persecutors (18). This was righteous for a Jew, but the blessed Lord asked for forgiveness for His enemies.

It is of the last importance today to see to it that nothing be allowed to rob us of the perfection of the salvation which is in Christ Jesus. It is a serious matter to be negligent of that. Departure from the truth had begun when the Holy Spirit inspired the Lord’s servant to give us this echo of Jeremiah: “See, brethren, lest there be in any one of you *a wicked heart of unbelief*, in turning away from the living God, but encourage yourselves each day, as long as it is called Today, that none of you be hardened by the *deceitfulness* of sin. For we are become companions of the Christ if indeed we hold the beginning of the assurance firm to the end” (Heb.3:12-14). To

put the assembly or anything else in the place of Christ is a sure sign of departure from the living God, and evil consequences will follow.

One might have thought that Israel would have gladly welcomed from the Lord the prophet's words to cease from burden bearing on the Sabbath day, to be at rest, and so secure national prosperity and permanence (17:19-27), but activity is preferred to hallowing a day "*to the Lord.*" When will men see that the way of abiding blessing is to honour Him first, to give Him that which is due to His Name?

Ch.18-20. The Potter and the Vessels.

The striking sign of chapter 18 when rightly understood is sufficient to cause us to cleave to the Lord alone. The circle of civilization is to Him just what the workshop is to the potter. As the latter holds the clay and moulds it into variously formed vessels, so the Lord holds in His hands the nations, fashioning and forming as He thinks good. Who shall question the work of God? Who indeed is capable, even if he dared so to do? The potter rejects faulty material rightly. Cannot the Lord speak concerning a sinful nation, or concerning an unrighteous kingdom. Let it be plucked up, broken, and destroyed? Who shall say Him nay? Where is haughty Assyria, and corrupt Babylonia? How low has He brought Persia and Greece and Rome for their sins! What desolations He hath wrought among the nations which were around His well-loved Israel! How debased and desolate the once oppressive and independent nation of the Nile! Broken and rejected kingdoms, like the potter's useless earthenware, strew the face of the ground. O Lord, what desolation Thou hast made in the earth! Yet Thou art righteous in all Thy ways. And Thou art long-suffering and merciful also. For unlike art Thou to the potter in this that Thou hast said; "If that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, then will I repent of the evil that I had thought to do unto them" (verse 8).

In the case of the privileged nation of Israel, we have a special example of the long-suffering of our God. So solicitous was He for their good, that, "rising up early," as He so often expresses it, He called to them again and again to return to Himself and find the establishment and blessing which His gracious heart desires for them; but they would not, for they said, "There is no hope" (verse 12). They did not, however, forget to seek self-gratification; but they forgot the Lord, only to bring evil upon themselves (verses 11-17). They also devised devices against Jeremiah and sought his life. The prophet prays against them, for they recompensed his good with evil, and though this prayer was not unrighteous in a servant of the Lord connected with earthly promises and hopes, yet it would not be suitable for those who know the surpassing grace of God now, for such are connected with the *heavenly* purpose and hope, and this rises far above what was then made known. They were then against Jeremiah unrighteously, and he prayed to the Lord to righteously reward them. Those who know the true grace of God today have received favour for which they had no merit or claim; they are saved, justified and blessed eternally in Christ Jesus; and

for such to pray against others when they themselves have been thus treated by our blessed God and Father would be inconsistent indeed. For us now, no lower standard than our Lord Jesus Christ is placed before us, and we become like Him in this as in other things if His glory is the delight and study of our hearts. The Holy Spirit is here to enable us to do this without legal effort, and it becomes the joy of the one who knows the love of Christ to behold the glory of the Lord; and as he does so, without thinking of himself, he becomes “transformed according to the same image from glory to glory” (2 Cor.3:18).

“Like Him in faith, in meekness, love,
In every beautiful grace;
From glory into glory changed,
Till we behold His face.”

The *earthen* bottle of chapter 19, is figurative of Jerusalem and the people.

In the previous sign the significance was the right of God to handle any nation or kingdom as He saw fit, and also His ability to do so: here it is the solemn sign that the city and its surroundings and people shall be publicly punished for their sin and idolatry in a way that when others hear of it their ears should tingle. It thus becomes an eloquent witness of the awfulness of sin, so that the vile names of *Tophet* and *Hinnom* could not be expressive enough to describe the place of their punishment; it should be called *The valley of slaughter* (verse 6). To the prophet the Lord said, “Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee, and shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts: even so will I break this people and this city” (verses 10-11).

Pashur, the son of Immer the priest, hearing that Jeremiah prophesied these things smote him and put him in the stocks (20:2); but he himself is made a sign; for, though his name Pashur meant “Prosperity round about,” it is changed to Magor-Missabib, meaning, “Fear round about.” There is something startling and pointedly expressive about this sort of naming in the Scriptures of Truth — the naming of the omniscient God we might say. He becomes a terror to himself and to his friends; and because he had prophesied lies he and his should be taken captive to Babylon and die and be buried there (verse 6). Moreover, all the wealth of the guilty city should be given to their enemies. The strength thereof, its riches, its gains, its

precious things and all the treasures of the kings of Judah should be carried away by them to Babylon.

The Prophet's Experience and ours

To pronounce this was no perfunctory duty to the prophet. Deeply he felt it all; and the more so because he knew the importance of this people and city to the Lord and to the whole world also. He loved them, and he knew how the Lord loved them; he knew however also that the judgment must come. It is a wrong translation in verse 7 which makes Jeremiah accuse the Lord of deceiving him. It should read, "Lord, Thou hast *enticed* me," being the same word as in verse 10. The word of the Lord became a reproach unto him and a derision daily. He said he would speak no more in His name; but he could not keep quiet, for it was like a burning fire within him. His persecutors defamed and watched for him to stumble: the Lord was with him, however, as a mighty and terrible One: they should stumble and be ashamed; confusion everlasting and never to be forgotten should be theirs (verses 8-11).

The Son of David

In the consciousness of being personally right before God, who tries the righteous and sees the very reins and the heart, Jeremiah casts his cause into the Lord's hands. He asks to see His vengeance on his enemies (12), and then, as if prayer had freed his soul from an oppressive burden, he breaks out:—

Sing unto the Lord!

This is always the way with the one who has experimental and conscious dealings with the blessed God. Mere theology never produces this. The prophet continues his gladsome strain: HALLELUJAH! he cries; and he gives a very good reason for such gladsome praise. "He hath delivered the soul of the needy from the hand of evildoers" !

Today it should not be an outburst simply, for the sacrifice of praise should be "continually" upon the lips of the believer now (Heb.13:15). The knowledge of deliverance and eternal redemption should produce this. Truly the note may be more sweet at one time than at another, and the song may be louder; but praise and thanksgiving to God by our Lord Jesus Christ should ascend with characteristic continuity from the believer, as he

makes melody in his heart, to the One who loves him with an unchanging love.

Jeremiah's praise had scarcely left his lips when, like Job, he curses the day wherein he was born (14), and the man also who brought the tidings of his nativity to his father, because he slew him not. He asks, "Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame" (18). This deep depression is often seen with the godly souls of the Old Testament. It stands in complete contrast to what is characteristic of the New, where we have the blessed God fully revealed in the Son and the believer eternally blessed in Him. Many pious people, however, go back to the experiences of the Psalms, and live there; only to rob themselves of the fullness of joy that is properly ours now in the elevating knowledge of the Father and the Son. This exalted privilege is ours continuously; no failure in the assemblies need be allowed to interrupt it, for there is no failure on the part of our living Lord in His present service of love for us; and it is pre-eminently in the last of the inspired writings, after failure had come in, that this fullness of joy and eternal life are made known for our faith to appropriate.

"It more than satisfies, as here we glean
The foretaste of His love, till all be light."

Ch.21-24. The Royal House of David.

The next four chapters will complete the first main section—the “moral section” of the book. In the first twelve chapters the prophetic *pleadings* with the people are prominent; in the second twelve the *signs* and their significance strikingly stand out. Another noticeable feature of this whole section is the almost entire absence of dates, which frequently occur in other parts of Jeremiah.

In our present four chapters all *the kings of Jeremiah's* time are spoken of. In a very significant style they are grouped together in a small space; then follows the triumphant foretelling of *the coming King, Jehovah Tsidkenu*; and lastly, completing the section, in chapter 24 we are given the sign of *the two baskets of figs* along with the explanation.

We see clearly in chapters 21 and 22 that the order given by the Holy Spirit in Jeremiah is not chronological, for in the twenty-first we have king Zedekiah, and in the next chapter the kings who reigned before him. The contents of these chapters illustrate, however, what we said before, that the ordered arrangement is according to the bearing of the word upon the central event of the book, i.e., the overthrow of the metropolis. This involved such tremendous issues, not only for Israel, but for all the nations of the earth, that we can quite understand why it should be so signalized. Indeed, chapter 25, which commences the next section, gives the formal statement of this, setting out explicitly the sad consequences in a concise manner, as we shall see.

The first *king* brought before us in chapter 21 is the last. It is Zedekiah. He is disturbed by the approach of Nebuchadnezzar, who was to overthrow Jerusalem. The king sends to Jeremiah to enquire of the Lord for them, but the answer gives them no hope, and only shows that the Lord Himself will fight against them (1-7). To the people it is said, “Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.” To *live*, they must fall away to the Chaldean army, which God was bringing; to *die*, they need only stay in the sinful city (8-10). Then the house of the king is addressed as “*the house of David*” (12), for the great question is now to be raised concerning the fulfilment of God's promise as to David's Seed. How can this possibly be carried out if consuming judgment falls upon this whole family? Where shall anyone then be found to sit for David upon his throne as God had promised? Where shall the king come from of David's royal line, who is to

order and establish the kingdom and fill the earth with the glory of the Lord?

Such a king must “judge with justice in the morning, and deliver him that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor” (21:12). Zedekiah failed in this, therefore the fire of judgment should consume their dwellings and the royal dynasty be overthrown. This whole question of “the house of David” and “the throne of David” is of the most momentous importance. If David’s seed has failed for ever then there is no Gospel for us today! for the Gospel makes known the sure mercies of David! Neither is there any coming age of world-wide blessing for this earth, for He that rules and reigns to that end must be of David’s line! Our present four chapters, however, show that that day will come, and with the help of the Holy Spirit we shall be enabled to see the explanation.

The Royal Family Condemned

Beginning with *king Zedekiah* in chapter 21 we end with him in chapter 24. He and his princes and the residue, like bad figs, are to be cast away from the land of their fathers. The recurrent expressions “*House of David*” and “*Throne of David*” (21:12; 22:2,4,30), and “*unto David*” (23:5) emphatically show us what is in the mind of the Spirit. If there was one of that family to be found executing righteous judgment and mercy, then there should be given “kings of this house sitting *for David* upon his throne, riding in chariots and on horses he, and his servants, and his people” (22:4); but if not, “I have sworn by Myself, saith the Lord, that this house shall become waste” (5). Those who afterwards beheld the desolation should know that it was because they had forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God and served other gods (6-9). Following upon this statement, it is shown that the kings Shallum (Jehoahaz), Jehoiakim (18), and Coniah (Jehoiachin, 24) are to be all alike the subjects of the judgment of God; and though this royal house was as Gilead and the summit of Lebanon to the Lord yet it should be devastated. Shallum’s father, Josiah, is spoken of also (11 and 16); but only to contrast him with the wickedness of his sons. Most striking is verse 16, which tells us “He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the Lord.” For those who rightly value the importance of the true knowledge of God this is a notable verse. It should be well weighed by every believer.

After dealing with each of these kings of David's line, the chapter ends by emphasizing the ruin of this royal dynasty upon which the world's peace and prosperity depended. The whole earth is called to listen to what is said to Coniah (Jehoiachin): "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord! Thus saith the Lord, write this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah" (29,30). The significance of this verse is not that he should have no family, for it speaks of his seed; and Matthew 1:11-12 shows his descendants. What we are told is, God had decreed that as far as the throne of David was concerned he was to be written childless, for none of his seed should rule any more in Judah. God had determined the end of this sinful stock.

Chapter 23

The pastors also, who should have cared for the sheep of his pasture, were to be punished likewise, for they had destroyed and scattered the flock (23:1-3); nevertheless God will graciously gather them again and richly supply them with abundance of blessing (3-4); but for this long-looked-for day to dawn, we know from many other Scriptures, a King of David's royal line must be found to introduce it. Where, then, is this deeply desired King, this One upon Whom so much depends? Is he living today? What is His Name? The answer to these questions is given in 2 Timothy 2:8: "*Jesus Christ of the seed of David raised from among the dead.*"

The Seed Royal Preserved

The New Testament opens with the genealogical proof that Jesus Christ is of David's royal line; yet the Old Testament foretold that He should suffer and be put to death before He took the throne; and thus it came to pass: He was cut off out of the land of the living; God, however, raised Him from among the dead and exalted Him to His right hand. The heavens now conceal him from the sight of Israel: The time of their repentance will come and He will return for their salvation and blessing. Indeed, a few weeks after they had rejected Him it was said to them, "Repent, therefore, and be converted, for the blotting out of your sins, so that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and He may send Jesus Christ, who was fore-ordained for you, whom heaven indeed must receive till the times of the restoring of all things" (Acts 3:19-21). They did not repent, as we know, and the nation is still without Him. The apostle

Paul in Acts 13, speaking of David in verse 22, continues, “Of this man’s seed according to promise has God brought to Israel a Saviour, Jesus” ; they, however, compassed His death; but being raised from among the dead, “He said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David” (34). Those who believe on Him now truly come into a far higher order of blessing as members of His body, the assembly; but, when will these sure mercies be brought to Israel? Not till after our Lord Jesus Christ has taken the assembly away to her heavenly home to be with Himself. Afterwards He will revive, recover, and restore Israel. He will come out of heaven for that purpose. Like Thomas, who is a type of the repentant remnant of Israel in the future day, they will exclaim when they see Him, “*Our Lord and our God!*” Indeed, as our chapter in Jeremiah tells us, “This is the Name whereby He shall be called JEHOVAH TSIDKENU” (23:6).

Son of David and Son of God

Notice the definite way the prophet first foretells His connection as Man with the house of David: “I will raise up unto David a righteous Branch” (5). That has been fulfilled as we know, but being cut off, as was plainly prophesied, He has been taken by God to heaven. Jesus Christ was raised from among the dead of the seed of David. The great Gospel treatise, written to the believers at Rome, begins by showing that this is the foundation of all the rich blessings which are afterward unfolded for faith; and upon this firm basic truth, coupled with the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ is also the Son of God, they rest securely. Thus we read, “Come of *David’s seed* according to the flesh, marked out *Son of God* in power, according to the spirit of holiness, by resurrection of the dead.” Here, then, lies open before us the revealed secret of the believer’s blessings now, and of Israel’s blessings by-and-by. This also explains many apparently obscure passages, some speaking of Him as Man, and others of Him as God, and sometimes both being involved in one verse even. Oh, how it cheers the heart to think of the great and glorious Son of God, the One who was rich in Godhead glory, coming down to us in our lost estate; becoming poor—a poor man asking for a penny—owing to the darkness and distance of the cross, that we, and Israel too, through His poverty may be rich; a Man who has come close to us: God over all, Who is ever above us! Blessed Lord and Saviour, we may well worship and adore Thee.

“We love Thee for the glorious worth
Which in Thyself we see;

We love Thee for that shameful cross,
Endured so patiently.”

How bright and beautiful does this splendid promise, given in verses 5 to 8, shine out after the stormy blackness which forebodes the destruction of the house of David after the flesh. Clearly and calmly its rich radiance beams before the eyes of the believer now blessed through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, for there is no longer anything unexplained: all is intelligible in the light of the Person and work of our blessed Saviour. How rejoicing to the heart are these priceless promises, these precious words, whereby, we are told, we become partakers of the Divine nature:—

“Behold the days come, saith the Lord,
That I will raise up unto David a righteous Branch
Who shall reign as King and prosper,
And shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.
In His days Judah shall be saved,
And Israel shall dwell in safety:
And this is His name whereby He shall be called,
Jehovah Tsidkenu (The Lord our righteousness).
Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord,
That they shall no more say, The Lord liveth,
Who brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt;
But the Lord liveth, who brought up
And who led the seed of the house of Israel
Out of the north country, and from all
Countries whither I have driven them;
And they shall dwell in their own land.”

These words (23:5-8) describe a greater deliverance than that whereby God made His Name to be known among the nations when He brought Israel out from under the tyrannous oppression of Pharaoh, for it tells of the salvation and national settlement of Israel in righteousness through our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Seed of David in resurrection power; a power which has already triumphed over Satan, in that Christ is now in the place of supreme authority; and under Him Israel will become again the national head of the world, while the assembly will be united to Christ in His exalted universal supremacy. To God be the glory for ever and ever.

The Truth and the Knowledge of God

It is for the believer to know the truth which sanctifies him, and to stand in it; for “the eyes of the Lord are upon the truth.” From verse 9 we have a solemn indictment against the prophets who did not stand in the truth. Carnality, unreal activity, lightness and lying marked them, though they spoke in the name of the Lord. He asks, “*Who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord?*” (18), and, again, He saith, “If they had *stood in My counsel*, and had caused My people to hear My words, then they should have turned them from the evil of their way, and from the evil of their doings” (22). It is in regard to standing in the truth that failure has been at all times. “Having done all TO STAND,” is said in Ephesians 6, and that in the face of unseen powers of darkness. Let the word of the prophet be remembered and we shall be strong to stand in the truth: “Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord” (24). We are to be strong in Him, not in ourselves; not in self-confidence, but in the Lord. From verse 33 to the end of the chapter we see that the people, the prophet and the priest are all alike walking in vanity and not in the truth. They use the Name of the Lord in vain; therefore saith the Lord, “I will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you.” They should be cast out of His sight, and be a perpetual shame (39-40).

Chapter 24 the last of our section, shows by the sign of the two *baskets of figs* that a remnant shall be preserved, though the rest as bad figs are utterly rejected. Sad and solemn as it is to think of these latter, it is nevertheless cheering and comforting to think of those who are represented by the very good figs. Even in the land of the Chaldeans the eyes of the Lord are upon them for good. They should be restored again, too, and established in the land of Israel; but, better than the best of the land, they should know the Lord; and, better than returning to the place, they should return to Him, as He saith: “I will give them an HEART TO KNOW ME, that I am the Lord: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God: for they shall RETURN UNTO ME WITH THEIR WHOLE HEART” (7).

When the new covenant is established with Israel, the Lord says, “They shall all know Me” (31:34). That will, indeed, be a glad and glorious day. Then they will plenteously prove that the One who was forsaken and forgotten by wayward Israel is truly “the Fountain of Living Waters.” So rich is this blessing that it will be like life from the dead, and truly it will

be eternal life, though not in the same measure and relationship which belongs to the believer now. *They* will know Jehovah: we are brought to know the Father and the Son: “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee [the Father] the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:3). May we esteem this exalted privilege with worshipping hearts more and more.

Since in Christ we have redemption,
And with Him the church is one,
Now we taste our endless portion,
Know the Father and the Son.

Section 2. THE YOKE AND THE COVENANT (Ch.25-39)

The second section of the book which we are now to consider, contains teaching and principles of immense importance. Beginning with a formal declaration of the destruction of Jerusalem and the effect upon all the nations of the earth, it ends by showing us the accomplishment of God's word concerning Jerusalem, the city of His Name and the proper metropolis of the earth.

This second section embraces fifteen chapters (25 to 39). We have called it "*The Covenant Section*" because that expresses the prominent thought in it. The word itself occurs fifteen times in this second section, whereas it is used but eight times in all the rest of the book. Another fact is also very prominent in these chapters, namely, *The yoke of Nebuchadnezzar*. God had given him the dominion, Israel and all the nations therefore must submit to his yoke—his government. Israel had broken the covenant of the Lord and had not repented, therefore he removed from Jerusalem the central authority and gave power to Babylon, so the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar must be accepted. God, however, gave the great promise of a "New Covenant" in Chapter 31; a "New Thing" is to transpire in the earth, and this involves Jerusalem's supremacy once more. It will be for the good of all the world, for Babylon could never be the proper metropolis, not having the name of the Lord attached to it. A more complete title for this second division is therefore "The Yoke and Covenant Section."

Although *the signs* are significantly confined almost exclusively to the second twelve chapters of the first section of Jeremiah, yet we have an exception here in the case of the yokes (*see* chapters 27 and 28); and also in the purchase of a field (chapter 32); but this emphasizes what we have said and helps us to understand the remarkable arrangement of this book. Another feature of this section is the abounding of dates, so sparingly used previously, as we have seen; also the illustrative incidents so interestingly grouped together at the close (34 to 39).

In our chapters we have the rise of the Gentile power and the overthrow of Jerusalem; the covenant of the Lord broken and a new covenant promised; Jerusalem desolated but to become the exalted habitation of justice with the Name of the Divine Son of David (23:5-6) named upon her (33:16), so that both "He" and "She" are to be called "Jehovah Tsidkenu"! The

interesting details which abound with instruction may be considered as we proceed.

Like the first section this also falls into two main divisions, namely, chapters 25 to 33, and 34 to 39. These again subdivide as follows:

(I) chapter 25 stands alone, and is followed by three chapters together, 26 to 28; chapter 29 is also alone, but the four following stand together, 30 to 33.

(II) The six chapters 34 to 39 fall into two equal subdivisions of three chapters each. The Divine numbers 1 and 3 characterize this second section all through.

The exceptional group of four chapters (30 to 33) contain the new covenant promise and prophecies which involve world-wide blessing, though centring especially in Judah and Israel, cleansed, pardoned and restored under the Son of David their king, with Jerusalem for their metropolis. It shall be to the Lord for “a name of joy, a praise and an honour *before all the nations of the earth*” (33:9)!

Ch.25. Jerusalem and the Nations of the Earth.

Chapter 25 opens formally by fixing the date of this far-reaching word. This date in itself is of the greatest value to chronologists, for the fourth year of Israel’s king, Jehoiakim, is seen to coincide with the first year of the Gentiles’ king, Nebuchadnezzar. The Holy Spirit seems to emphasize its importance, for it is used in this hook no less than four times (25:1; 36:1; 45:1; 46:2). This synchronism, so important for chronological use, has doubtless a definite and Divine use also in measuring the times of the Gentiles. Up to this date the prophet shows that he had diligently declared the word of the Lord to them for 23 years though they hearkened not. He began in the thirteenth year of Josiah (3); and now, he tells them, “The Lord hath sent unto you all His servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear” (4). They had provoked the Lord to anger and gone their own way to their own hurt (5-7); therefore Israel and the surrounding nations should serve the King of Babylon 70 years (8-11). They should be punished and brought under his yoke, for Nebuchadnezzar was the Lord’s servant (9) to this end. This 70 years must not be confounded with that of Chapter 29:10, from which Daniel afterwards learned that God would restore the people. What

is said here is that “these nations” (not only Israel) should serve the King of Babylon 70 years, and at the end of that period they themselves should be punished for their own iniquity, and other nations and kings should serve themselves of Babylon (12-14).

To grasp the great import of the following verses (15-38) an important Scripture in Deuteronomy should be weighed (32:8) — “*When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord’s portion is His people.*” This planting of the nations around Israel is called the national “Garden of Eden” in Ezekiel. Here we find it is to be levelled to the ground and desolated. Jeremiah has to make “all the nations” drink of the cup of fury (17); yea, “all the kingdoms of the world” (26); but it should be noticed that this is the result of the metropolitan breakdown: “For, lo, I *begin* to bring evil on the city which is called by My Name, ... I will call for a sword upon *all the inhabitants of the earth*, saith the Lord of hosts” (29). World-wide effects followed: beginning at His own habitation, the cry reached “to the ends of the earth” (31). Although God has mercifully maintained authority among the Gentile nations since that time, the world has never yet been governed according to His law, nor will it be until the national order with Israel as the head and central nation be restored, and they themselves are governed by our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of David, who will also then be owned as the nations’ Emperor “*the Prince of the kings of the earth.*” It is as this order is understood, the solemn and awful import of the word in this chapter 25 will be duly appreciated. At the close, the shepherds of Israel are called upon to howl and wallow in the dust for the fierce anger of the Lord. All is to be laid waste, and the place of His Name — the place which He loved — “His Covert” in the earth — He hath forsaken as a young lion (38). Nor will the world be at rest until in Christ He returns again to that Covert in a more glorious way than ever before.

The assembly which is now builded by Christ the Son of the Living God, upon the revelation of Himself as such by the Father, must also first be completed and be set in her place of administration as the heavenly Jerusalem, for the nations are to walk in that coming day by her light (Rev.21:24), Israel having a special relationship therewith (Rev.21:12): the glory of God in connection with administration being the light of the heavenly city, and this she *mediately* passes on to those upon the earth, our

blessed Lord Jesus Christ as the Lamb being the *immediate* bearer of it, for He is the Lamp thereof (Rev.21:23, N.Tr). The shining of that day will be like a lustrous gem, beauteous and blessed, rich and radiant, for the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in the city, and therefrom shall also flow forth the river of the water of life, bright and bountiful with everlasting vitality. *The throne* tells us of the eternal stability of its source: and *the Lamb* of the fact that its full-flowing waters bear their *life-giving* blessedness as the result of Christ's *atoning death*.

“Then the wide earth, in glad response
To the bright world above,
Shall sing in rapturous strains of joy,
In memory of His love.”

Ch.26-28. Gentile Supremacy.

Chapters 26, 27 and 28 continue to speak of the solemn fact that the removal from Jerusalem to Babylon of the divinely appointed authority must take place and must be submitted to. This latter is signified by *the sign of the yokes*. The actual accomplishment took place fully in Zedekiah's day, but the word and sign of it were given "in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim" (25:1; 26:1; and 27:1 ²). These three chapters show, first, that the house of the Lord and the city are to be desolated; second, that the yoke of the king of Babylon must be received; and, lastly, the punishment of the prophet who speaks contrary to this, for he is guilty of "rebellion against the Lord" (28:16), who in His wisdom and power had raised up Nebuchadnezzar to be His servant for this very purpose. This shows the immense importance, for any who serve the Lord at any time, of being assured of His way as well as His will.

The prophet took his stand in the court of the Lord's house to speak the word concerning it. This house, which gave its character to the city, was to have been a centre of blessing to all nations and a house of prayer for all people, but because of the wickedness of the people the Lord declares, "I will make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth" (26:6). What a contrast between His will and His way is seen here! The priests, prophets and people seized the prophet because of his word, and sought to compass his death, bringing him before the princes. The prophet declared that the Lord had sent him to speak thus, and he exhorted them to amend their ways and obey His voice, then the Lord would repent Him of the threatened evil. As for himself, in the calm consciousness of fulfilling the mind of God, Jeremiah told them to do to him as seemed good and right in their eyes, but that if they slew him they would bring innocent blood upon their heads. The princes favoured the prophet, and certain elders quoted precedents—those of Micah (18) and Urijah (20)—the former case argued for Jeremiah and the latter rather against him. We are told, however, "The hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death" (24). We learn here that when the priests and those who were professedly nearest to God (who should therefore best

² Some read "Zedekiah", but see Mr Vine's comments in the paragraphs following.

know His mind) became the greatest enemies of the truth, others were used by the Lord for His servant's deliverance. Sometimes the most unlikely are so used, as the princes in this case, and even the name of one, *Ahikam*, signifies "*of the enemy*." This teaches those who serve Him to trust in the Lord at all times. We also see in the cases quoted by the elders that the blessed Lord was using others to diligently warn the people of the same thing that Jeremiah spoke of, so solemn and stupendous was this giving up of the world's right centre of earthly government. In the next chapter we have the new centre referred to.

The dominion in the fullest sense, as well as the kingdom, belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of Man; but here we are told that God (27:5-7), who made all things—the earth and all upon it—had now given to His servant the King of Babylon all the beasts of the field as well as all nations to serve him. In Daniel 2:38 we read that the fowls of the heavens were likewise given into his hand. In Genesis 1:28 we learn that the fish of the sea were also to come under man, but these are not named in connection with Nebuchadnezzar's dominion. When, however, the dominion of the Son of man is spoken of in Psalm 8, all these are included, and indeed much more is involved in the language there used.

The word concerning this supremacy of the King of Babylon and the sign of submission seem to have been first made known to the prophet "in the beginning of the reign of *Jehoiakim*" (27:1). He was told to make bonds and yokes to be sent to the kings of the nations around Israel, and the prophet himself was to wear this sign, for it illustrated the great burden of his whole prophetic word; and then as opportunity occurred he was to give the representatives of the various nations these signs to carry to their kings with the word of the Lord as to the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar. This was carried out in Zedekiah's day as verses 3, 12, and 28:1, show; but that gives no reason for altering the name *Jehoiakim* in 27:1, to *Zedekiah*, as some would do, for it simply tells us when the word came to Jeremiah. This sign of the bonds and yokes was characteristic rather than special. It signified that God had decreed that all must submit to the yoke of the King of Babylon. In Chapter 28 Hananiah speaks against this, and he does so with "*thus saith the Lord*" (11) upon his lips. To do such a solemn thing, however pious and optimistic it might sound, was to speak "revolt against the Lord" (16) who had made Nebuchadnezzar His servant, and given him power and dominion. Hananiah's doom was therefore sealed and executed

that same year (28:17)! He had spoken a lie like the diviners and soothsayers—the spiritualists of the nations (27:9-10)—and like other false prophets who sought to turn men from submission to the yoke of the King of Babylon (27:15-16). This lying spirit is often in evidence among those who profess to speak the mind of God for the time. Yokes of iron were to take the place of the yokes of wood (28:13) which Hananiah had broken, and even the remaining vessels of the house of the Lord and of the house of the king were to be taken to Babylon till the time of the foretold restoration under Cyrus (27:21-28). Hananiah falsely fixed two years for the breaking of Babylon’s yoke; God fixed 70.

The Yoke Of A Greater Than Nebuchadnezzar

Power from God, although corrupted, is still with the Gentile nations today, and when the Lord came in lowly grace to His people they were under the Roman yoke. When He was brought before Pilate He meekly acknowledged this authority, and even said he (Pilate) could have had no power against Him except it were given from above. Pilate was perturbed and, marvelling at the Divine Stranger, asked if He were a king. Yes, truly, a greater than Rome ever saw! The yoke of kings had usually been oppressive, but the yoke of this gracious King would be found easy and beneficial.

In every way He is pre-eminent. In the nation of Israel, with its many advantages, even the Sabbath was made oppressive; but when clearing His disciples from a false charge as to it, He reminded His hearers that even the Sabbath and its rules were subject to Him, saying, “*The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath*” (Matt.12:8)! The temple, too, and its rich ritual became a burden when used wrongly, and at the time we have referred to the Lord Jesus reminded them of His pre-eminence also in this respect when He said, “*There is here a Greater than the temple*” (Matt.12:6)! In the same chapter the striking sign of the prophet Jonah and the rare result of his preaching is spoken of, but only to show that all this is surpassed in Christ — “*Behold, a Greater than Jonas is here*” (12:38-41)! After Solomon’s royal reign of regal splendour his subjects complained of its burdensomeness and of the oppression of its yoke, though the Queen of the South travelled far to hear His wisdom. When standing amidst His own nation, in grace and lowliness doing works of power and mercy and speaking words of Divine instruction, the Lord Jesus said, “*Behold, a Greater than Solomon is here*” (verse 42)! All this surpassing greatness

and pre-eminence was plentifully proved for those who truly saw and heard by the works which He did, and by the words which He spake, as well as by His heavenly ways amongst men. There stood the Son of God before their eyes as

1. The Son of Man, Lord of the Sabbath (8);
2. The One who was Greater than the temple (6);
3. The Prophet and Preacher Greater than Jonah (41);
4. In wisdom the Greater than Solomon (42).

This is *the* Son of Man whose dominion is greater than Nebuchadnezzar's! This is the Great King whose kingdom shall have no end! This is the One whose yoke the believer loves.

In the last verse of the previous chapter of Matthew He Himself says, "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (11:30). God has given all things into His hands, and though this is hidden from the wise and prudent of the world, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has revealed it to true believers, yea, even to babes in the faith. The Son receives all things from the Father, and reveals Him now to His own in all that the precious Name *Father* means; whilst the Son Himself, in the impenetrable depths of His peerless Person, is only fully known by the Father. So great and glorious is our gracious Saviour, our beloved Lord, that He is beyond our finite comprehension, although so well known to us in His grace and love. Nevertheless, the Father knows and loves the Son perfectly, and has given all things into His hands, and ourselves also. We are His through redemption—through His blood! We are His, too, as the Father's love-gift to the Son! The weakest believer can wear His yoke with facility and felicity, with comfort and cheerfulness! Indeed, the least in the kingdom now is greater in privilege and position than the greatest who went before. The law and the prophets prophesied up to John the Baptist, and no one greater was born of woman; but He who is greater than all had then come to open up the new way; and the least now, who has come to our Lord Jesus Christ, is greater than John, as this chapter tells us (Matt.11:11). It is an honour given to such to take His yoke upon them. Many benefits accrued to those who willingly accepted Nebuchadnezzar's yoke; but the Son of God is greater than Nebuchadnezzar; yea, *greater than all!* and those now in the kingdom where He is supreme are also *greater than the*

greatest of men who went before in the way we have said, in privilege and position. It may not be understood fully at first, but this yoke is intended to prove pleasant to those who accept it, giving ease and quietness to the soul in tranquil restfulness; and that we might rightly understand it, this Pre-eminent One graciously says, “*Learn of Me.*” The soul rest we speak of has never been found in connection with the yoke of the best of kings. Oppression, and burden, and toil, and trouble, and bloodshed, and sorrow have characterized the continued story of the nations—sometimes worse than at other times—but tens of thousands have responded to and proved the preciousness of these wealthy words of our great and gracious Saviour:—

“Come unto Me, all ye that labour
And are burdened, and I will give you rest.
Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me;
For I am meek and lowly in heart:
And ye shall find rest unto your souls.
FOR MY YOKE IS EASY,
AND MY BURDEN IS LIGHT.”
(Matt.11:29-30.)

What grace and glory shine here! One who is meek and in heart lowly, yet the Supreme One in might, and in majesty, and in dominion, and in power, inviting the weary to come to Him, and to learn from Him, and gratefully to prove the gentleness and blessedness of His Divine yoke. Nothing to compare with this has been known before or since.

We are also told afterwards that He will show forth judgment, not to Israel only, but to the nations (Matt.12:18). Nebuchadnezzar failed, but after the assembly is taken to heaven, our Lord Jesus Christ will take up the government of the nations, ordering everything aright, “and in His Name shall the nations trust” (21). His yoke will then be accepted publicly and generally, not as now in faith by the few who are privileged and honoured to own Him during the time of His rejection before He returns in royal splendour and majesty.

Ch.29. God's Present Mind.

And now the remarkable letter which Jeremiah wrote to the captives in Babylon concerning Nebuchadnezzar's yoke, is given in Chapter 29, a chapter which stands alone. The letter was sent to encourage them to peacefully rest under the yoke, for this was God's mind concerning them, and those who spoke otherwise in the Name of the Lord would be punished, for it was rebellion against Him. Ahab and Zedekiah are specially singled out (20-23), also Shemaiah (24-32). The two former were not only active as lying prophets, but they also committed villainy in Israel. Shemaiah attempted to silence Jeremiah, who, he said, had made himself a prophet. Severe judgment was to come upon them, and upon all such, and likewise upon those who heeded them (15-19).

In the former part of the letter, it is instructive to notice the way God orders matters for the good of His people, even when they are captives in Babylon, in the place which is to become most obnoxious to Him, and from which He afterwards calls upon them to flee. This is an important principle for believers today, in the midst of Christendom (which will eventually develop into the corrupt system of Babylon), whose awful judgment is described in Revelation 18. We are to pursue that which is good, whilst avoiding what is evil. The Lord through Jeremiah tells them to build houses, plant gardens, eat the fruit, take wives, and beget sons and daughters, that they may be increased; also to "Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace" (5-7); and they were to be careful not to allow anyone to deceive them as to this; even though it be a prophet who came and spake to them in the Lord's Name (8-9).

To be happy, and to be peacefully pursuing what was good, was God's mind for them then: it is no less His mind for us now. This does not mean that either they or ourselves are to become Babylonish. We see in Daniel, who was one of those who were at Babylon, the sort of behaviour which was pleasing to God. He said "*No*" to the king's meat, yet he sought the good of those about him, according to the Word of the Lord. We do well to grasp this principle and have grace to put it into practice.

Verses 10 to 14, however, show the limitations of this abnormal state of things. After seventy years it would be God's mind that they should return

to Jerusalem. This shows the importance of making sure of the mind of God for us at this moment. It was evidently from these very verses that Daniel gathered God's mind concerning this return, and it set him praying with his whole heart (*see* Daniel 9:1-4). The wonderful fulfilment of this restoration, "*after seventy years,*" is so well known that we need not dwell upon it here (*see* 2 Chron.36:21-23 and Ezra 1:1). It should, however, be remarked that Daniel himself did not return though his face was constantly turned towards Jerusalem. He was used in regard to it *in prayer*, as Cyrus was *in providence*, and as our prophet Jeremiah was *in prophecy*, whilst God Himself was behind all working *in purpose* and *in power*. We are to know what it is to stay ourselves upon God at all times, having grace and peace multiplied to us in the knowledge of Himself, for He keeps in *perfect peace* the one whose mind is stayed upon Him, because he trusteth in Him. He can raise up servants, kings and prophets as He wills: we are to know Himself, His love, His grace, His purpose, and His power. He works all things after the counsel of His own will. Cyrus did not know Him though He raised him up and even surnamed him before he was born (Isa.44:28; 45:1-4). Those who are called in grace today are called to "*know Him,*" and to know Him too as Father, and to know His present mind and will. This leads the heart to confide implicitly in Himself.

“Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.”

Ch.30-33. Jacob's Trouble And Salvation.

Chapters 30, 31, 32 and 33 are linked together and contain truths of transcendent excellence, truths involving new things of such unparalleled importance that they not only affect the nation of Israel, whose glorious restoration and revival in Christ is immediately in view, but they also affect those who belong to the assembly today. It is in chapter 31 that the "New Thing" is spoken of, and likewise the "New Covenant." In chapter 32 we learn that the fields of the land shall be possessed and prosper according to an everlasting covenant, and chapter 33 shows us that the glory and gladness and greatness of that day of blessing will be enduring, because of the Branch of righteousness, the Man of the house of David, our Lord Jesus Christ.

The story begins in chapter 30, and Jacob's name becomes prominent at once, for, like his, the nation's way to the glory is through trial and trouble, and this too is further indicated by the reference to Rachel's anguish (31:15); but "Benoni" — the son of her sorrow — becomes "Benjamin" — the son of the right hand. The story of the nation is enigmatically contained in the stories of Jacob, Rachel and her children, and in the last, the sorrow and suffering connected with the birth of their great and glorious King is fore-shadowed, as we see in the use made of it by the Holy Spirit of God in Matthew 2:18, where we are told of Herod slaying all the boys from two years old and under in Bethlehem and its borders, and of the Royal Child being Divinely preserved.

These four chapters begin then with the declaration of the full deliverance both of Israel and Judah (30:1-3). God had given the land to their fathers, and it shall yet be possessed by them according to God's Word; but immediately we are reminded of a moment of great anguish which must come just before this is fully accomplished. It will be like the travail of a woman before the joy of a man-child's birth (4-6). "Alas!" cries the prophet, "for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even THE TIME OF JACOB'S TROUBLE; but he shall be saved out of it" (7). It was so with Jacob personally: it shall be so with his descendants. There was a certain night which stands out in Jacob's history: there will be a certain time of tribulation, of *great* tribulation, which shall distinguish Israel's history. It will indeed come upon all the world after our Lord Jesus Christ has taken from the world the assembly, His bride, to be with Him. It will truly be "*the* great tribulation" (Rev.7:14), not simply "tribulation" as now, or a time of tribulation as sometimes happens, but it will be unparalleled; yet, though the whole world will be affected by it, the heaviest weight will fall upon the Jews; and even they, who have suffered so much, will never have known before such "a time of trouble" (Dan.12:); nevertheless, as Jacob was freed from serving another, so we are told in verse 8, Israel also shall be freed from the future yoke of Babylon, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him. The Jews, however, shall not only be freed from bondage, but as being thus liberated, they shall have their long-looked-for Messiah as their glorious King; the true David, the beloved One shall return to them, and "they shall serve the Lord their God and David ['The Beloved'] their king" (9). They shall then know that our Lord Jesus Christ whom they rejected is truly the preserved Seed of David, raised as He was from among the dead by God, who had hidden Him in the heavens until

this time, when His appearing shall show Him again to the troubled and repentant of Israel, when in deep distress and anguish they will gladly receive Him, owning Him like Thomas to be their Lord and their God.

“Therefore,” it is said, “Fear thou not, O my servant Jacob” (10). Even if others were brought to an end, it should not be so with him. Chastening and correction he needed, and should receive, but the Lord was with him, though his false lovers had failed and forgotten him. Zion, like Jacob, had been called “*Outcast*,” but the Lord who had smitten him would restore health and healing to him (10-17). Carrying on the thought of Jacob’s typical history, it is said, “*Jacob’s tents*” shall appear again (18). The city and the palace shall resound with gladness and thanksgiving, with the voice of them that make merry. The people shall be multiplied and glorified. Their Illustrious One (as “nobles” should read in verse 21) and their Governor shall not be any more of another nation, He shall be truly of Israel, He shall be the One who is also entirely devoted to God, not only their King and Ruler, but with full qualification, such as no king ever had before, to approach as Priest to God, as He says, “I will cause Him to draw near and He shall approach unto Me” (21). This illustrious King and Priest, the Governor of Israel, can only be found in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then, when He governs them, it shall be abidingly true of Israel, — they shall be His people, and He shall be their God (22). Through the distressful storms and bitter trials of the time of Jacob’s trouble they shall be brought to this desired haven, to be blessed under the royal rule of their glorious Governor, and to rest and rejoice in Him they had once rejected. “In the latter days ye shall consider it” (24).

“Crown the Saviour! Israel own Him!
Rich the blessing Jesus brings!
In the seat of power enthrone Him!
While the vault of heaven rings.”

Ch.31. The New Thing And The New Covenant.

The Holy Spirit continues to encourage the heart with bright expectations of the coming glory in chapter 31, and makes known that the underlying secret of it all is the unchanging and eternal love of God, as He says, “Yea, I have loved thee with *an everlasting* love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee. Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin

of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy timbrels, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry” (3-4).

If, however, the Holy Spirit used Jacob’s name in the previous chapter, here He brings in Rachel, and gives prominence to one of her grandchildren, the chief representative of the ten tribes — *Ephraim*. We see Divine wisdom guiding the prophet here very strikingly, for Israel and Judah are to become one under the New Covenant, under our Lord Jesus Christ. A new thing is to come to pass. The woman Israel (including both Judah and Israel) centring at Jerusalem shall no more compass the ark of the covenant — that is to be forgotten (3:16) — but she shall compass a Man (*Geboa — a mighty Man*), our Lord Jesus Christ. He supersedes all that went before. In an entirely new way, such as has never been known in any nation, this strong Man, in resurrection power, shall become their centre and their strength, though in themselves they are like a feeble woman. Speaking naturally, in the multitude of people is the glory of a king, and his destruction is through the lack of them (Prov.14:28); but they are not His strength here; He is theirs. This alone can be the explanation of the “*New thing in the Earth*” (22); for it is something which has never been before. A temple, a throne, or an ark may have been owned, or a dynasty supported by nations — one man after another passing away — but here is a Man of strength who continueth ever. This is new altogether.

Doubtless the virgin birth is involved in this “*New Thing*,” just as the *suffering* connected with Christ’s birth is enigmatically contained in Rachel’s anguish. This is specially referred to in verses 15 to 17, and cited by the Spirit in Matthew 2:18, but even this anguish points on also to the future travail of the nation just before their labour is rewarded (verse 16) by the presence of Christ with them, their Messiah in resurrection life, the Man Child who has been brought forth before their travail (*see* Isa.66:7). The comforting truth, that joy cometh in the morning, though weeping may endure for a night, is exemplified in all this as to Rachel and her children.

As to the birth of the Mighty Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, being involved in what is said as to the “*New Thing*,” we should note the language of the Spirit in Luke as to it. There we read, “the *power* of the Highest” should overshadow the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:35) and that the holy thing which should be born of her should be called the Son of God. This is indeed a “*New Thing in the Earth*,” and this One is to possess the throne of His father David (verse 32). In this we read, “He hath wrought *strength* with

His arm” (51) and “raised up *an Horn* of salvation for us in the house of His servant David” (69), as He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, Jeremiah among them. Again we read of this Child — “The glory of Thy people Israel” (Luke 2:32). The multitude of the heavenly host also praised God concerning Him and said, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men” (N.Tr.). The promised Man was at last found amongst men, and God could now find pleasure where He had found none before. This also was a new thing.

God had moreover said in Isaiah 42:6, and 49:8, in regard to Him — “*I will give Thee for a Covenant of the people.*” This promise involves both the New Thing and the New Covenant. The truth as to our Lord Jesus Christ solves these Old Testament enigmas. With Christ, the “Gebor” of God (Jer.31:22) as their Centre, their metropolis, the city of the great King, Jerusalem, shall become the habitation of justice, and the mountain of holiness (23). Such a city has never yet been seen. Men have longed for it; Abraham by faith saw it was to come in with Christ’s day and he rejoiced; Jeremiah in verse 26 having previously spoken of it, says, “Upon this I awaked, *and behold*; and my sleep was sweet to me.” Whilst this would surely be the prophet’s personal experience, yet it must signify the long prophetic sleep, the cessation of prophetic activity, till the New Thing is “*beheld*,” and Jerusalem is permanently built according to the last three verses of the chapter. Sweet indeed will their rest seem to them when they awake to behold the good things they foretold now accomplished in and through *our* Lord Jesus Christ, *their* promised Messiah.

The New Covenant shall then be established with both Israel and Judah (31-34). No longer standing on the ground of responsibility merely before God, but blessed sovereignly by the Lord, all shall know Him from the least to the greatest. He will be their God and they shall be His people in very truth. His law shall be engraved within them—in their inward parts—it will be in their *hearts* and in their minds,—not simply in the Pentateuch. With *love* and with *intelligence* they shall then serve Him and know Him. Having pardoned all their iniquity He will remember no more their sin, for the atoning work of our blessed Saviour, their Messiah, has put all away according to Isaiah 53. Their sin, *once remembered* at the Cross in atonement, will now be remembered *no* more. It is not simply forgotten.

This New Covenant is as sure as the ordinances of day and night, of sun, moon and stars, of heaven and earth. God made them; man cannot alter

them; so is it with the New Covenant. The “I WILL” of the Unchanging One has fixed it. It must be. Israel and Judah shall be blessed together in Christ, the Surety and Mediator of this New Covenant. All is established in Him. He sums it all up. Therefore believers now are also blessed *according* to it, for they have believed on Him during the time of His rejection. The Gospel, and the cup at the Lord’s Supper both remind us of this. His blood is the blood of the New Covenant, and all the promises of God are Yea and Amen in Him. The New Thing and the New Covenant are both explained in Christ, the Messiah of Israel, the Son of Man and the Son of God.

“God’s record doth for ever stand
Of life and blessing, from His hand,
To all in Him the Son.”

The Lord alone is exalted in the blessing of Israel and of ourselves now, that according as it is written, we may glory not in the flesh, but in the Lord Himself, who is worthy to be exalted and extolled by all. Praise, endless praise, to His holy Name.

Ch.32-33. Jerusalem's New Name — Jehovah Tsidkenu.

Very vividly do **chapters 32 and 33** picture the public metropolitan and national pre-eminence of Jerusalem and Israel in the time of the coming glory, when King David's greater Son shall reign in regal right according to the divine decree. The city shall then dwell safely beneath His royal rule; taking her character too so entirely from Him, her once rejected Lord, that she shall even be called by His own Name — Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness (33:16). As the happy bride receives the name of the rejoicing bridegroom, so here Jerusalem is given the Name which is exclusively her Lord's in chapter 23:6.

The precious promises in these two chapters were given at a moment specially signaled by the imprisonment of the prophet of God (see 32:2 and 33:1). Jerusalem was then besieged by the king of Babylon's army; Zedekiah sought to stop prophetic utterance, God was shut out, and everything looked very black — despair and desolation faced them. At such a moment God illustrates His redemption and grace by instructing the prophet to purchase the field of Hanameel, for "*the right of redemption*" belonged to Jeremiah (7:12). Just so it is with God — the right of redemption is His. Here is a fine subject for gospel preachers. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land" (15), and that in the right of redemption and according to "an everlasting covenant" (40) — "Man's extremity is God's opportunity!" Those who have proved His redeeming love know this.

Jeremiah turns to God at this moment and speaks of His former ways with Israel, of His bringing them out of Egypt with great power and giving them the land, but they had not obeyed His voice, and now the city was about to fall into the hands of the Chaldeans. Yet Jeremiah had obeyed and bought the field for money when all looked hopeless, for God was his confidence — He had made the heavens and the earth: the Great, the Mighty God, Jehovah of hosts is His Name. Says the prophet to Him, "There is *nothing too hard for thee!*" God then assuringly enquires, "*Is there any thing too hard for Me?*" "Behold, I am Jehovah, the God of all flesh." The city is to be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, for the people, princes, priests and prophets had sinned and done evil from their youth to provoke Him to anger. Yet are they to be regathered. "Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My

whole heart and with My whole soul.” The fields and lands and cities are again to be possessed and prosper plentifully (26-44). What a God is Israel’s! What a God is ours!

“This is our redeeming God!
Ransomed hosts will shout aloud:
Praise, eternal praise be given
To the Lord of earth and heaven!”

Continuing in **Chapter 33**, the Lord encourages the heart to call unto Him, for He will show great and unfathomable things previously unknown. He will grant cleansing and pardon to those who had sinned against Him, and bring health and abundance of peace and truth to the once wicked city (1-8). “*And it shall be to Me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them*” (9). They shall say, “Praise the Lord of hosts: for the Lord is good; for His mercy endureth for ever” (11). Many voices shall harmoniously blend in blessing the Lord, whilst peace and prosperity shall be on every hand. Both houses shall be blessed together — Israel and Judah: God will give them one heart and one way. They are “the two families which the Lord hath chosen” (24). To this end we see divine wisdom in the terms and names used in these chapters which lead up to the exalted hour when our Lord Jesus Christ, raised from among the dead, of the Seed of David, shall bless the people, the land, and the city, and she shall be called *Jehovah Tsidkenu* “The Lord our righteousness.”

Verses 17 and 18 tell us that David should never want a man for the throne, nor the Levites a man for approach and sacrifice to God. Why? Verses 15 and 16 answer this and other questions also which may arise in connection with what we have said. The Man spoken of in these verses is altogether righteous. In resurrection, after having died to secure an eternal redemption, He establishes kingship and priesthood in Himself according to God. In the day of the coming glory “He shall be a priest upon His Throne” (Zech.6:13), uniting in Himself both kingship and priesthood. The present cry of the nations — “*Wanted a man!*” will be heard no more, — the *Man has been found!* True believers know Him already in a more intimate way as the Bridegroom of the assembly to which they belong. Notice how the Holy Spirit distinguishes this Man of David’s royal line in two expressive scriptures in Jeremiah, viz., 23:5-6, and 33:15-16. They help to solve many problems, so read these verses carefully.

The first scripture speaks of our blessed Lord in a way that involves His resurrection, though not specifying it — He is “a” righteous Branch *raised up* unto David. *The second* Scripture views His birth and life more — He is “*the*” righteous Branch caused to *grow up* unto David. In *both* He is designated righteous and of David’s line. This could only be said of Christ, for there is none righteous in an absolute way save Him. His resurrection after He had suffered and made atonement for sin declared it. So *both scriptures* looking on to His coming reign of glory, tell us that He shall execute “righteousness.” *The first* Scripture specifies the salvation of Judah and Israel at that time: *the second* that of Judah and Jerusalem, for the metropolis of Israel is specially in view — the city of this great King. So in this second Scripture we read, “SHE shall be called Jehovah Tsidkenu,” whilst in *the first* we are told “HE shall be called Jehovah Tsidkenu.” This divine designation means, as we know, “The Lord our Righteousness.” Here we have the climax of terrestrial governance.

Christ, in resurrection of David’s seed, will come again to take guilty Jerusalem for Himself. The city that stoned the prophets, that gave Jeremiah a dungeon, that refused the Lord, shall yet be His administrative centre on earth, and bear His Name and His character. We are told this is as sure as the ordinances of the heavens and the earth. God’s covenant with David His servant (21) must be fulfilled, for it is impossible for the ever blessed God to lie. Then will flow forth worldwide blessing, and the glory of the Lord shall fill the rejoicing earth. Amen. Hallelujah!

Ch.34-39. Divine Faithfulness And Human Failure.

The illustrative incidents so interestingly brought together in **Chapters 34 to 39** give a special character to this second main division of our section, and as we have said these 6 chapters divide again into 3 and 3. The stories of the broken covenant, the Rechabite faithfulness, and the burning of the roll of Scripture are given to us in the first 3, whilst the raising of the siege, the imprisonment of Jeremiah in the dungeon and the capture of Jerusalem are given in the second 3. The peculiar order of the book is strikingly seen in these 6 chapters. Zedekiah the last king is first spoken of, then in the next chapter we are taken back to the time of Jehoiakim, and again to his fourth year in the next chapter. After that we have various incidents in Zedekiah's days, but in an ordered way all is ranged in regard to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Desolation and darkness were to cover the scene of destruction, as God had long foretold. This is illustrated in the case of the last king. His "eyes" are often in the prophetic mind (see 34:3, also 32:4; 52:10, etc.) The light was to become darkness, so this section, which begins with speaking of Zedekiah's eyes (34:1-3) tells us at the end that they were put out (39:7), and this is significantly repeated in the final chapter of the book (52:11). Israel is blind, darkness covers the people, and they must await the coming again of the One who opens the eyes of the blind, and opens the prison doors for those who like Zedekiah are bound in chains. They must now learn to hope in the Lord, who shall yet be exalted in their coming salvation.

Chapter 34 illustrates the unfaithfulness of the people. They made a covenant to liberate their servants who were Hebrews. This they did, but afterwards they turned from their covenant and brought back their servants. Upon this the Lord reminds them of His covenant which they had transgressed to that very day; therefore He proclaims "liberty" for them — to destruction, desolation, famine and dispersion!

Chapter 35 contrasts the obedience of the house of the Rechabites with the disobedience of the house of Israel. This illustrative incident is introduced here from the time of Jehoiakim. It most suitably follows the subject of the previous chapter. The Rechabites obeyed the commandment of Jonadab their father. They kept all his precepts, but Israel hearkened not to the Lord. "Therefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel,

Behold I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them” (17). On the other hand we have an instructive word concerning the Rechabites, showing how the blessed God approves the obedience of children to parents, or of descendants to the good word of their forefathers. “Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before Me for ever.” What a high honour! To be represented at court before the king would be a mark of dignity, but to be represented before God Himself, and that for ever, is an exalted and surpassing honour. This strikingly shows what value God sets upon obedience. May we be marked by it at all times.

But what a contrast we see in Christ Jesus who represents us now, before God our Father, in a far greater position of exaltation. We, however, were not marked by obedience like the Rechabites: we were sinners, disobedient, enemies; but we have been reconciled to God by the death of His Son, and now we are taken into everlasting favour in Him, the Beloved: His place is ours. Blessed be God for the exceeding riches of His grace!

“Saviour and Lord! we own
The riches of Thy grace,
For we can call Thy God our God—
Can bow before His face.

Thy Father, too, above,
We worship as our own,
Who gave with Thee the Spirit’s cry
To us His sons foreknown.”

Chapter 36 records the profane way in which the writings of God were treated. It is a solemn lesson. This mutilation and destruction of the prophetic roll happened before the destruction of Jerusalem. The same sort of thing will take place before the judgment of Christendom. Not that man can get rid of the Word of God: He knows how to preserve it just as He did in this case, but man by his treatment of it manifests his guilt and profanity, and secures for himself the judgments of which God’s word speaks, even as we read of the *Scripture-mutilating king* in our chapter. “Thus saith the Lord, *Thou hast burned this roll*, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and

destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast? 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. And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for *their iniquity*” (29:31).

God is not mocked! He knows the way men are treating His own God-breathed records, profaning and humanizing them, and He will treat them accordingly. Here Baruch wrote the words of God from the mouth of Jeremiah, and read them in the hearing of the people, and of the princes, afterwards. They showed a certain respect to them, but feared to withstand the king. “Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words” (32). This is God’s answer: none of His words shall perish: they increase and prosper in that for which they are sent.

Ch.37-39. The Metropolis: Its Fall: Its Rising Again.

Stirring scenes now come before us. The armies of the Chaldeans are before the gates of Jerusalem! They demand admission (**Chapters 37, 38, and 39**). They are God’s messengers of judgment, for the city had refused to hear His prophetic messenger. Neither king Zedekiah, nor his servants, not the people of the land, did hearken unto the words of the Lord which He spake by the prophet Jeremiah (37:2): contrariwise, they put him in prison, and it was only when the city fell that he got liberty, being treated better by the king of Babylon than by the king of his own people whom he served so faithfully. This is often the case with true servants of the Lord.

For a time it looked as if the judgment of God upon the city would be frustrated. Pharaoh’s army came forth out of Egypt, and Jerusalem was relieved. The Chaldeans retired. The prophet warned them not to deceive themselves, for the Chaldeans would return, and supported his prophecy by his action, in departing from the city to be amongst God’s people in Benjamin. However, they took Jeremiah, and falsely accusing him of falling away to the Chaldeans, they put him in a dungeon, though the vacillating king sent for him later, and granted him a measure of relief, after listening to his words (17-21).

The army of the Chaldeans, as the prophet said, returned with determination, to accomplish without further delay the destruction of the city. A touching personal incident is recorded as having taken place within the walls at that time. Jeremiah having been let down into a miry dungeon (38:6) after further false accusation by certain who sought to compass his death (1-4), Zedekiah being too weak to withstand them, one named Ebed-melech, an Ethiopian, having some sense of right and wrong, when it seemed to have departed from Israel altogether, engaged himself to effect the prophet's deliverance from the miry pit. He reasoned with the king as to the evil done to Jeremiah, and having secured the monarch's consent, he tenderly with the help of thirty men drew Jeremiah out (6-13). Thus the Lord cared for His servant even amidst the fiery trials of a siege: nor did He forget Jeremiah's kind helper, for at the end of chapter 39 we find a special word from the Lord to Ebed-melech, the Ethiopian, saying, "I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey to thee, BECAUSE THOU HAST PUT THY TRUST IN ME, SAITH THE LORD." Blessed indeed are all they that trust in Him!

The prophet earnestly and compassionately counselled the weak king to recognize God's hand and yield to Nebuchadnezzar (38:14-23), for He had sent again for Jeremiah. He listened, but sad to say, being afraid of the princes he did not obey (24-26). He does not seem to have seen the king again, as he remained in the court of the prison till the city fell before the besieging army. "In the eleventh year of Zedekiah in the fourth month the ninth day of the month, the city was broken up" (39:2). Zedekiah fled when he saw the princes of Babylon sitting in the middle gate, but he was overtaken; his sons were slain "*before his eyes*"; then those "*eyes*" were put out. Laden with chains he was carried to Babylon, Jerusalem was burned, and Jeremiah was left free to dwell with the remnant of his people (11-14). Thus was fulfilled the word of the Lord.

Destruction and desolation fell upon the true metropolis of Israel and of the whole earth. Its light was withdrawn, its rightful ascendancy was taken away, and given over by God to the Gentiles, with whom it has been ever since, whilst a veil darkens the thoughts of the Jew still (see 2 Cor.3:14); but Jerusalem shall rise from her ruin, shaking off her shame, and yet shining with resplendent radiance as never before. Truly she failed under the old covenant, but she shall be established and blessed under the new. Christ, raised from the dead, shall return to her with the sure mercies of

David. Then shall she arise and shine, for her light will be come and the glory of the Lord will be risen upon her.

If in that day the glory of *the earthly metropolis* will be so great, what words can express the supernal splendour of *the heavenly metropolis*, Jerusalem above, the Lamb's wife, the assembly which is being built now while He is rejected? It will *then* shine forth with the glory of God, of which our Lord Jesus Christ is the Lamp, for none other could bear that glory *immediately*, though, wonderful to say, the assembly will transmit its beauty and thus benefit mediately the nations of the earth. WELL MAY WE REJOICE IN HOPE OF THE GLORY OF GOD!

“Then the wide earth in glad response,
To the bright world above,
Shall sing in rapturous strains of joy
In memory of His love.”

Section 3. IN BABYLON OR IN EGYPT? (Ch.40-45)

The short section which we now come to consists of six chapters only. We have called it the *historical section*.

Chapters 40 to 45 are embraced in this third section of the book, and they give the history of the remnant which was left after the destruction of Jerusalem, also Jeremiah's words to them in the land and in Egypt, where we last hear of them and the prophet. A special word is given to Baruch in chapter 45. These six chapters naturally subdivide into three twos. The *first two* giving us the story of the remnant and Gedaliah in the land; the *second two* that of the remnant with Johanan and their going down to Egypt; the *third two* give the words of Jeremiah concerning the Jews and Baruch.

There is a peculiar interest attaching to this short history, for the story of this remnant stands out as a complete contrast to that of the remnant which was at Babylon. These go down into Egypt, contrary to the word of the Lord, to be consumed by sword and famine and pestilence: those at Babylon have peace and prosperity and plenty provisionally promised to them. These carry Jeremiah with them into Egypt though he pronounces their doom: the others have Ezekiel and Daniel with them at Babylon, where the latter prevails in prayer with God for their deliverance and restoration. God at the beginning redeemed the people out of Egypt, but Babylon became the place of their captivity when they had backslidden from the Lord. To return to Egypt therefore was fatal, but from Babylon there was deliverance.

Babylon represents the worldly-religious confusion which abounds, where many real believers weep, and where they long for Zion in the true spiritual sense. From this both the Old and New Testaments speak of deliverance. Egypt on the other hand represents the place which was ours by nature, under Satan's power, and for those who once professed to accept deliverance from this through our Lord Jesus Christ to return thither again, means that they secure for themselves the displeasure and wrath of God; and we read, "Their last state is worse than the first. For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them." By so doing they show that they were never true believers at all, never the "*sheep*" of Christ, who are clean every whit, but as the Holy Spirit so carefully continues to explain, they are really like the unclean animals named in the

Old Testament, as He saith, “That word of the true proverb has happened to them: The dog has turned back to his own vomit; and the washed sow to her rolling in mud” (2 Peter 2:20-22).

Both the *dog* and the *sow* find their pleasure in this: the *sheep* on the other hand would be miserable in the mud. It is just so with the true believer, he has been spoiled for the world since he heard and believed the Gospel, and having a new nature he cannot as before find pleasure in the old life. We need, however, to be constantly drinking in the word, which ministers God’s gracious truth to us, so that the new nature may be well nourished, and thus our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the word speaks, will become better known to us, and we shall out-distance the ways of the world, and be known as those who find their true delight in the will of God. Thus pursuing the good we shall refuse the evil, and reflecting the virtues of our blessed Saviour we shall be well pleasing to God. It is thus, without thinking of self or of the pursuits of the world we grow in grace and are transformed to Christ-likeness.

“Like Him in faith, in meekness, love,
In every beauteous grace;
From glory into glory changed,
Till we behold His face.”

Ch.40-41. Failing Leaders: The Unfailing Leader.

With more detail than in the last section we are told how Jeremiah was treated when Jerusalem was broken up by the Chaldean army. We are also told that he went to Gedaliah (40:6) who was appointed governor by the King of Babylon and had the remnant committed to his care (7).

Chapters 40 and 41 expose for us the fallacy that a remnant in the land — in the right place — has necessarily some superior qualifications. To be in the right place without being right with the right Person will only expose us to bad behaviour and to impious hypocrisy such as is illustrated here. Even with the prophet of God amongst them, whose word they feigned to value, they acted deceitfully. To call upon the Lord Himself out of a pure heart is our safety, and to this end the Holy Spirit of God is here to exalt Him before the eyes of our faith.

Gedaliah seems to have been a sincere unsuspecting man. Jeremiah dwelt with him among the remnant (6), and all looked well for a short space. Gedaliah encouraged their hearts, and they gathered of the fruit of the land in abundance. Wine and oil and summer fruits were plentiful (9-12). The presence of Ishmael, however, meant the overthrow of Gedaliah. Johanan warned the latter of this, but he treated it as a false suspicion (13-16). It was nevertheless true, and Ishmael slew Gedaliah and those who were with him, and fled with the rest, after having added to his guilt by killing a company of worshippers who were on their way to the house of the Lord. Johanan, hearing what Ishmael had done, pursued him, and recovered the glad and grateful remnant.

They did not, however, quietly and confidently settle under the power and protectorate of Babylon, which God had established, but they moved *toward* Egypt, though remaining still in the land. Fear filled their hearts and not quiet confidence in God and in His will (41:1-18). The conflicts which they had seen increased this with them. There was no waiting upon God. They had no sense of the present mind of God for them even though His prophet was there. Where there is much restlessness, though a measure of deliverance is experienced, as in the case of this remnant, yet, unless time is taken to learn and act upon the present mind of God, worse calamity will follow than was known before. These things are recorded for our learning. The active leaders caused all the mischief with this remnant of God's people and it is the same today. How important, therefore that our

eyes and hearts should be directed to the one unfailing Leader — to the *Lord Himself!* The conflicts and failures would be turned to good purpose then, if we allowed them (as we did with our sins when we first discovered our need) to drive us to Him, for He not only meets our need, but does for us far beyond that which we ask or even think. May the Lord be exalted before us more and more, and thus may we cleave to Him though leaders and others fail, as they have done ever since the days of the apostles. (See Acts 20:29-32.)

“Keep us, Lord, O keep us cleaving
To Thyself and still believing,
Till the hour of our receiving
Promised joys with Thee!”

Ch.42-43. Abiding Or Departing?

What a picture is portrayed by the Holy Spirit in **Chapters 42 and 43!** The very leader who had been used to deliver the thankful remnant from Ishmael now leads them into Egypt after feigning a desire to know and obey the word of the Lord concerning them!

They ought to have understood it was God's present mind that His people should rest under the shadow of Nebuchadnezzar His servant, but all the captains and Johanan asked Jeremiah to inquire for them "the way wherein we may walk, and the thing we may do" (42:1-3). The prophet having undertaken to tell them all that God made known, they, on their part, undertook to obey the voice of the Lord, whether it be good or whether it be evil (4-6). After ten days they were told to abide in the land and the Lord would abundantly bless them (7-12), but if they went down into Egypt, the sword, the famine and the pestilence should overtake them there (13-18). The Lord knew their deceitful hearts, and the prophet plainly said to them, "Ye dissembled in your hearts when ye sent me unto the Lord" (19-22). He knew they were already determined not to abide in the land, but to depart into Egypt.

The whole state of their hearts and minds is exposed in the next chapter. Azariah, Johanan, and all the proud men accuse the prophet of speaking falsely, saying that Baruch was setting him on against them. There is something contemptible about these leaders of the remnant. The Holy Spirit calls attention to the "*proud men*"! After what had happened one would hardly have expected pride; they had been so humiliated, and their position at that moment was enough to deeply humble them! There were nevertheless those amongst them who evidently prided themselves that they were still the people. Disobedience to the word of God therefore followed although they had undertaken to obey it. Taking Jeremiah, Baruch and the remnant "they came into the land of Egypt; for they obeyed not the voice of the Lord: thus came they even to *Tahpanhes*" (43:1-7). It is the work of the Holy Spirit of God today to build up the saints of God in Christ, and to set their minds on things above where Christ is: it is very sad and serious work to turn the remnant in the downward direction, as we have illustrated so vividly in our chapter.

At the very spot they then reached, at *Tahpanhes*, the prophet is told to hide some great stones before their eyes, in the brick kiln which was at the

entry of Pharaoh's house. How eloquent was this sign! Did not the *brick kiln* remind them of Israel's former slavery in Egypt? They had reached this spot again in their effort to escape the dominion of the king of Babylon, the servant of the Lord! Had they escaped? Had they found the liberty they expected by thus disobeying the word of the prophet? To that very spot where these stones were placed God would send His servant Nebuchadnezzar and place his throne upon them! His royal pavilion should be spread over them! Egypt and its wealth and its goods should be given into his hands: and it was so.

This is an important lesson for believers who go hither and thither in their restless endeavours to find an easy path, and who do not abide in Christ where God has set them. We are not left to choose our own way, but we are to abide in the path of God's will, and not depart from it. There are difficulties doubtless. There were difficulties with this remnant. We are nevertheless to abide in Christ. To do otherwise is to increase the difficulties for ourselves and others. To abide in Him is to assure blessing and increase for ourselves and others also. May this be so with us for God's glory.

Ch.44-45. Great Things, Or The Lord Himself?

Chapters 44 and 45 conclude this section. They give us the prophet's final words to the Jews as well as their wilful reply, also an important word for the servant of the Lord to Baruch. In Egypt the word came to Jeremiah concerning them all (44:1-14). They had seen with their own eyes the destruction and desolation which God had brought upon Judah and Jerusalem because of their wickedness. He had pleaded earnestly with them, saying, "*Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate,*" but they hearkened not, so the judgment which lingered long came with fury and anger at last. They are told to let that lesson teach them not to provoke the Lord to wrath any more by their abominable idolatry, for if they heeded not they should be consumed utterly.

The people, however, had become so hardened in their evil ways that they tell the prophet without hesitation, "We will not hearken unto thee"! They boldly inform him they will continue their idolatry and burn incense to the queen of heaven, for, say they, when we did these things in Judah and Jerusalem we had plenty of bread and were well, and saw no evil (15-19). Jeremiah points out to them it was the very thing which brought God's judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem (20-23). Moreover the prophet made known to them, since they were determined to continue their abominable practices, the Lord had said, "Behold, I have sworn by My great Name, saith the Lord, that My Name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, The Lord God liveth," but they should be consumed, and as the king of Jerusalem had been given into the hand of the king of Babylon, so also should the king of Egypt be (24-30).

In the midst of wrath — righteous wrath — He remembers mercy, however. How comforting it is to hear Him say even at such a time, "*Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah*" (28). The blessed Lord knows the godly, and knows, too, how to deliver them. Some, doubtless, like the prophet and Baruch had been carried into Egypt by the proud and wilful. They were few and feeble. They were not there with a happy mind. They had been carried away by force of circumstances. It is always cheering to remind our hearts of that word, "The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim.2:19). In His own time He opens the way for them to walk where He would have them. This is always so. It is so now. The road is clear to follow

righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those who call on the Lord Himself out of a pure heart (2 Tim.2:22). What a privilege! What an honour! An open door for a feeble, tried remnant to have the Lord Himself to call upon!

It is just at this point the final word of this section is given — the word to Baruch (ch.45). Why should it be put here when it was spoken as far back as the fourth year of Jehoiakim, as the Spirit significantly tells us in verse 1? It is surely to teach us the lesson that our true wisdom is to act without question upon the Word of God. At the time this was recorded there was no opportunity for Baruch to secure any greatness for himself. When the word was given to him things were very different — princes and nobles were in Jerusalem; now it was devastated, and he was with the wretched remnant in Egypt. It is at this time the Spirit of God records the word given to the servant of the Lord. Ruin had been foretold, complete and irremediable; and when this is the case the faithful servant is to cleave to the Lord alone, acting upon the word, and not looking for great things here.

Baruch had said, “Woe is me now!” The Lord who had built and planted would break down and pluck up both the city and the people! It is said of the last of the assemblies mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3, “*I will spew thee out of My mouth.*” Therefore the path for us is the same in principle now. We can count upon the Lord’s personal interest and care like Baruch, but it would have been pride on his part to attempt the reconstruction of the city and the nation. Let those who know somewhat of the importance of the truth of Christ and the assembly beware of this snare of reconstruction today. Let not proud ecclesiastical thoughts turn the heart from the Lord Himself. *What governs us? great things, or the Lord?* As we cleave to Him alone, calling upon Him out of a pure heart, we may enjoy the privileges of the assembly and know the order of the house of God without setting up to be anything in ourselves, but just to be making our boast in the Lord. He never fails! The true assembly — *His assembly* — is built upon the revelation of Himself as the Christ, the Son of the living God, by His Father. The gates of hell therefore cannot prevail against it.

Some seem to think that it is only being built as some outward *order* is maintained. Order according to the truth will always be valued by real souls, but this building does not rest upon outward order. It rests upon *revelation* — the Father’s revelation of the Christ, the Son of the living God. This is specially unfolded in John’s gospel, though the word

assembly is not mentioned. He speaks of the one Shepherd and the one flock. Upon the rock foundation of the Father's revelation, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of man, is building His assembly. The work of others may fail: His will never fail. It is our wisdom, therefore, to rejoice in the Lord. We are told that this is safe (Phil.3:1).

It is an important question to settle alone with God, *Am I after great things here, or am I after the Lord?* Baruch was not to seek great things for himself! Many have brought sorrow on themselves and others also by seeking to be great as rebuilders of the assembly. Let us learn to trust the blessed Lord, and thus be at liberty to grow in grace and in the most excellent knowledge of Himself. All else that is pleasing to Him will follow.

O Lord, we cast each care on Thee,
And triumph and adore;
O that our great concern may be
To love and praise Thee more.

Section 4. GOD AND THE NATIONS. (Ch.46-51)

The seven chapters which we are now to consider conclude the book. **Chapters 46 to 51** form *the Gentile section*, or the section concerning the nations. Chapter 52 stands alone, being an added conclusion. The book begins thus — “*The words of Jeremiah,*” and chapter 51 ends — “Thus far are *the words of Jeremiah.*” Chapter 52 therefore is added for a special reason, as we saw was the case with the short chapter 45 at the end of the last section. These cases, and others we have spoken of, show that the book of Jeremiah has a peculiar arrangement of its own.

This *Gentile section* gives us the prophet’s words to *the nations*, with cheering words also concerning Israel interspersed; language being used which shows that the future deliverance of Israel is still in view. Indeed, it ends by foretelling God’s judgment upon Babylon and Israel’s deliverance, whereas Jeremiah began by foretelling God’s judgment from Babylon and Israel’s captivity. At the end, we are told, not Babylon but Israel is the power God will use! “Thou art My battle axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms” (51:20). On the other hand we read, “As Babylon hath caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth” (49).

The section begins — “The word of the Lord which came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the nations” (46:1). 1. Egypt (46:2); 2. The Philistines (47:1); 3. Moab (48:1); 4. The Ammonites (49:1); 5. Edom (49:7); 6. Damascus (49:23); 7. Kedar (49:28); 8. Hazor (49:30); 9. Elam (49:34); 10. Babylon (50 and 51).

Ch.46. Egypt.

First as to **Egypt**, a word was given to foretell the overthrow of Pharaoh-necho’s army which had gone up to the river Euphrates (46:2-12). Egypt would have liked the pre-eminence among the nations, but Israel having failed and lost it, God had decided that it should be given to Babylon. All the nations must therefore be judged, and we see the care and patience of God in giving His word to them concerning this.

But not only does the prophet foretell the overthrow of the Egyptian army at the Euphrates; he also shows the coming of the king of Babylon into Egypt to smite the land (13-26). In eloquent and energetic language he

describes the breaking away of its defenders before the resistless tide “because the Lord did drive them” (15). Though Nebuchadnezzar is used yet it is the work of “the King whose name is the Lord of hosts” (18). At the end, when Israel is restored to national pre-eminence under our Lord Jesus Christ, Egypt shall be inhabited as in the days of old. In the following verses (27-28) comforting words are spoken to Israel: the Lord significantly calls the nation, “*My servant Jacob*” twice, because like him they were wanderers and in much fear and dread, yet He will save them and restore them after correcting them with judgment. It is interesting to find this cheering and consoling word added to that given to Egypt; for, in the coming age, under the reign of Christ, they are to be blessed along with Israel (*see* Isaiah 19:24-25). Then it shall be said, “*Blessed be Egypt My people ... and Israel Mine inheritance.*”

Ch.47-49. Spiritual And Fleshly Enemies

The **Philistines**, the enemies of God’s people in the land, are judged in **Chapter 47**. They represent the powers against whom those who are blessed in the heavenlies in Christ have to struggle today (Ephesians 6:12). Verse 1 speaks of Pharaoh smiting their headquarters. The rest of the chapter foretells the rising up of the waters out of the north and of their overflowing the land like a flood! The king of Babylon should conquer them. *This is the sword of the Lord* (verse 6). In the future, when the opposing powers in the heavens lose their standing there (Rev.12:9), Satan will set himself against Israel, of whom our Lord Jesus Christ came according to the flesh (verse 13), but as Egypt helped Israel and smote Gaza, the earth (some ordered government under God’s providence) will help Israel (16). Finally Christ will appear. *The sword of the Lord* to smite the nations will not then be in the hand of any earthly king, for it is seen with the King of kings and Lord of lords when He comes in victorious power and great glory (*see* Rev.19:15-16). Then shall Satan be bound in the abyss, and his work of deceiving the nations shall cease for a thousand years.

Then as to **Moab**; “We have heard of the arrogance of Moab, he is very proud — his loftiness and his arrogance, and his pride, and the haughtiness of his heart” (48:29). Unlike the Philistines, however, he had a certain relationship to Jacob. Moab and Ammon (of whom we hear in the next chapter) were both children of Lot. Truly Moab was proud and magnified himself against the Lord and derided Israel His people (26-27), therefore

he should be punished accordingly; nevertheless, though he be destroyed from being a people (42), yet in the latter days the Lord will turn again the captivity of Moab (47).

If we have the *spiritual* enemies, which are against those who are now blessed in Christ, typified by the Philistines, it is rather the *fleshly* forces which are represented by Moab and Ammon. Of the former we are told, he trusted in his works and in his treasured up riches (7), also, ease had marked him from his youth: he settled on his lees and had not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither had he gone into captivity (11). It is just so with those who have not been awakened to the fact that there is “*no good*” in the flesh, but when that bitter awakening comes to the sincere soul his ease disappears and he finds a principle within him that brings him into captivity. This we are told in Romans 7. It is after he has been emptied from vessel to vessel, after he has found he has *no strength* to withstand the evil or to do the good which he would, that he learns the way of deliverance. Of Moab it is said, “His taste remained in him and his scent is not changed.” This must be altered before he can be blessed according to the last verse; and so likewise is it with the soul now. The old tastes and pleasures of *the flesh* must go. “Joy and gladness is taken from the plentiful field” (33) and the “riches that he hath gotten are perished”: this must be understood figuratively for us now. God sent His Son in the likeness of *flesh of sin*, and He became a sacrifice for sin upon the cross: there God condemned it utterly, that we might have deliverance from it. Christ rose from among the dead, and the new principle of life in Him is that in which we are made free.

Concerning the **Ammonites (49:1-6)**, we have a short but very instructive word in this connection. Fear, a characteristic of the flesh, is to take them (5), even as it came upon Moab (48:43). They are to be judged with consuming fire (2) even as the flesh was in type in the sin offering. They must learn like Moab not to trust in their treasures (4), and like him they shall eventually know deliverance (6). The flesh, as such, can have no standing in Christ, although those who were once in sin, but who now know Him as their Saviour, Lord, and Deliverer, are “in Christ” where there is a new creation. Such are no longer *in the flesh*, though the *flesh is in them* still; but they are in the Spirit. The flesh is to be allowed no place. In verse 1 we find the Ammonites were in the land, in that place which belonged to Israel. It is therefore asked, Hath Israel no sons? Hath he no

heir? Believers today are sons and heirs of God, and this relationship and inheritance are enjoyed as we walk according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God” (Rom.8:14). We have not received a spirit of fear, but the Holy Spirit, by whom we cry, ABBA, FATHER.

Deliverance

Edom comes next (**49:7-23**). The Lord says, “I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him.” This is instructive. The use of the name of the nation’s father, Esau, indicates what is in the mind of the Spirit. Truly we have described very graphically the judgment of God which fell upon Edom at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, but there is always a deeper lesson to be learned in these records. They are written for our learning as we are told, for the learning of those who have to meet the Esau *character* now. Even in the days of the apostles, warning was given as to this by the Spirit “Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, *as Esau*, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it [*the blessing*] carefully with tears” (Heb.12:15-17).

Esau was more closely related to Jacob than Moab and Ammon. It is in him we have the profane character of the flesh typified. In no sense can those who are in the flesh please God. True believers now are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. This we are told in Romans 8, where the contrast between the flesh and the Spirit is shown.

There was pride and ambition as well as profanity with Edom. Judgment must therefore fall upon this nation. We read, “Edom shall be a desolation”; also, “I have sworn by Myself, saith the Lord, that Bozrah shall become a desolation.” All this came true in the government of God. In the latter days, too, when the Lord Himself returns for the salvation of Israel, He will execute judgment upon Edom in a more terrible way than took place under Nebuchadnezzar. In Isaiah 63:1 it is asked, “Who is this that cometh from Edam, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.” The day of vengeance was in His heart, and the year of Israel His redeemed had come. Esau must fall and

Jacob be delivered and blessed. The Lord will come again from heaven to bring this to pass after He has taken the assembly, His heavenly bride, to be with Him for ever. The overthrow of Edom will then be final, as was the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah (verse 18).

For the believer now it is the judgment of sin in the flesh at the cross of Christ, so that being delivered and set free from the principle of sin and death, he may, in the life of Christ risen and in the power of the Spirit, have his mind on spiritual things and serve God happily in reverence and piety. As the judgment of Edom when Christ comes again will mean the deliverance of Israel, so the judgment of sin in the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ means the deliverance of the true believer now.

In the rest of the chapter (**23 to 39**) we have pictured for us the judgment of **Damascus** which is seized with fear and waxes feeble, also the overthrow of **Kedar** by the king of Babylon, likewise the deliberated destruction of **Hazor**, finally the smiting and scattering of **Elam**. A special word was given to the prophet concerning Elam early in the reign of Zedekiah (34). The first word to the nations is dated in the reign of Jehoiakim (46:2). No reason is given for the smiting and scattering of Elam, but it is done in justice and judgment, for the Lord of hosts sets His throne there (38). In the last verse is added a similar word to that which was said of Egypt, Moab, and Ammon, but not of the others: "In the latter days, I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith the Lord." When Israel turns to the Lord and is delivered and established in her proper pre-eminence among the nations with our Lord Jesus Christ as her glorious King, then shall these broken nations be delivered also; reappearing according to God's gracious promises they will form the national garden of Eden again, of which Ezekiel speaks, the paradise of administrative beauty and excellence of which Christ will be the honoured Centre. Babylon, the disputant of all this, must first be judged. Two whole chapters now follow regarding this very important competitor.

Ch.50-51. The Lord: Babylon's Judge and Israel's Redeemer

Again we must remind ourselves that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning" (Rom.15:4). These two chapters (50 and 51) certainly show us what happened to Babylon and the land of the Chaldeans; but the prophecy goes deeper than what is merely historical, showing us principles which develop in the harlot Babylon of

the book of Revelation, and which bring down the righteous judgment of God. As here (51:48), so in Revelation 18:20 and 19:1, those in heaven rejoice in the overthrow of this cruel and idolatrous system.

The book of Jeremiah has clearly explained to us that God Himself raised up Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, to be His servant. He gave him world power and dominion. He took it away from Jerusalem, His proper city of earthly government, and directly bestowed it upon Babylon. Guilty Jerusalem was set aside and Babylon was exalted. Since that time several Gentile powers have had authority from God, as derived from that bestowed upon Babylon in a direct way. In our two chapters, however, this is not so much in view, for Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon are looked at from the side of their own actings. Instead of being spoken of as the Lord's servant the king is styled contemptuously, "*This Nebuchadnezzar*" (50:17), and Babylon, "*O destroying mountain*" (51:25). She had destroyed instead of ruling the earth; she had corrupted the nations also; therefore she is rejected by God in these two chapters, and the redemption of Israel and Judah is determined. We have the opposite of what was spoken of before in Jeremiah. Babylon was to be in the ascendancy, and Israel was to go into captivity: now Babylon is to sink and not rise again, whereas Israel is to "*remove out of the midst of Babylon*" (50:8; 51:6,45) and return to Jerusalem. This again reminds us of Revelation 18. There we are told of the corrupting influences of the Babylon of the future, and, as in the Scriptures we have just referred to, God calls to the Jews to leave her, just before Babylon is thrown down to be found no more at all (21), saying, "*Come out of her, My people*" (Rev.18:4).

Many details in Jeremiah 50 and 51 give us to see there is more in the mind of the Spirit than the overthrow of Babylon by Cyrus and the partial restoration of Israel afterwards. The day is yet to come when Israel is to be joined to the Lord in "a perpetual covenant which shall not be forgotten" (50:5), and the day is yet future as Revelation 18, shows when "every purpose of the Lord shall be performed against Babylon" (51:29), when finally "Babylon shall sink and shall not rise" again (51:64). It is as we understand this we are able to grasp that which is for our learning now in these chapters. Babylonish principles largely obtain today, and as we see the judgment of God concerning this system we ourselves will be intelligently kept clear of it. We cannot over-estimate the importance of this for those who seek to exalt the Lord and to call upon Him out of a pure

heart. That which is Babylonish is always ready to ensnare such, but as we learn the mind of God we are fortified against the inroads of this lawless and superstitious system. We see that the Lord has purposed to judge it, to overthrow it altogether, also that He will save His people from its power. In this connection it is said, “THEIR REDEEMER IS STRONG” (50:34). This is encouraging for us today in the face of the rapid development of Babylonish religion with world power on its side. Thank God, divine power is given into the hands of Him on whom we call.

It was to be declared “among the nations” of which Babylon was mistress that she and her idols are confounded and broken in pieces (chapter 50:1-3). Israel and Judah then seek the Lord their God. Their face is turned Zion-wards: to the One who is their only hope they are seen going and weeping as they go (4-8). The provisional centre of government is overthrown: the proper centre is established when Christ returns and Israel returns to Him who is so strikingly styled here, “The Lord, the habitation of righteousness, even the Lord, the Hope of their fathers,” against whom they had sinned. It is not simply a nation, but an assembly of great nations which destroy Babylon: so in Revelation 17:16. The holy character of this judgment is to be known in Zion, for it is the vengeance of the Lord, the vengeance of His temple (50:28; 51:11). The Redeemer of Israel and Judah pleads their cause. He is strong to overthrow their oppressors in judgment as He did Sodom and Gomorrah, and to deliver His people and give them rest. The earth is moved at the fall of Babylon and the cry is heard among the nations (33-46). All this goes beyond the past overthrow of Babylon.

Ch.51. Babylon Cast Down: The Lord Exalted.

Chapter 51 goes deeper still into the moral degradation of Babylon, but the deliverance of God’s people is still in view. Men may think that He is showing very little care for them, but he assures such, “Israel is not forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the Lord of hosts,” He will deal with them and He will judge Babylon, He will render recompense. “The Lord God of recompenses will certainly requite” (56). She had made the nations drunken so that they became mad, she had corrupted them with idolatry the work of errors, therefore the Lord will punish Babylon which “dwells upon many waters” (13; see also Rev.17:1). Her end shall come (1-18).

The Lord, who is exalted in the overthrow of this cruel and corrupt system, is the “Portion of Jacob”: He is the “Former of all things” and Israel is the

rod of His inheritance, His battle axe and weapons of war; Israel is the nation which is peculiarly His, they are His earthly treasure. The assembly shares Christ's rejection now as to the world: she is to reign with Him in the day of His glory. The false church, Babylon, seeks to reign now — “that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth” (Rev.17:18). She shall receive righteous retribution, and “I will do judgment upon the graven images of Babylon,” says the Lord, but the people of God shall be brought to Zion where God will set the true King according to Psalm 2; and then they shall rejoice and say, “*The Lord both brought forth our righteousness*” (10). That involves Christ being known as “*Jehovah Tsidkenu.*” The judgment of Babylon “reacheth unto heaven” (9). “The heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, shall sing for Babylon” (48). Revelation 19 answers to this, “I heard *a great voice* of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are His judgments: for He hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth.”

The great voice of discord is destroyed out of Babylon (55): the great voice of harmony is heard in heavenly gladness above (Rev.19:1). Supremacy is taken from Babylon: the true King is to be found in Zion, in Jerusalem. It is only from thence that the earth can rightly be ruled. The King is of David's royal line, as Matthew 1 shows, not Nebuchadnezzar's. He must also be divine — the Son of God. It is with this in view, probably, that 51:57 tells us that the One who decrees the destruction of the Babylonish princes and rulers is “THE KING, WHOSE NAME IS JEHOVAH TSEBAHOTH.” Israel shall own Him as their Lord and their God, just as Thomas did when He showed Himself the second time to His gathered disciples. Thomas would not believe till he saw: Israel will believe when they look on Him whom they pierced (Zech12:10).

“Seraiah.” “The Lord Has Prevailed”

The symbolic act recorded in the last 6 verses of our chapter is very interesting. It occurred as early as the fourth year of Zedekiah's reign. This is another instance of the exceptional arrangement of Jeremiah which we have pointed out. The placing of this incident here is most appropriate.

Seraiah, who was Baruch's brother (see 32:12), went with Zedekiah to Babylon at the time named. Jeremiah gave him a book which he was to read when he arrived, and having learned therefrom the terrible judgments

which were to come upon Babylon (the greatest city the world has ever seen, and which was then rising rapidly into fame), he was to bind a stone to the book and cast it into the river of Babylon, the Euphrates, and say, “Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise, because of the evil that I will bring upon her, and they shall be weary.” This signifies more than the overthrow of Babylon in the past: the Babylon which is to rapidly rise in worldly religious splendour presently is also in view. In the book of Revelation where the Spirit reveals this to us we read of “the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates” (9:14); also that “the waters thereof were dried up” (16:12), and as if continuing the thought expressed by Seraiah in the words of Jeremiah, “A mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all” (Rev.18:21). This strikingly signifies the end of the wearisome, worldly, religious working of fallen man. This same system, which rises up and claims unrivalled supremacy, saying, “I am, and none else beside me,” is foretold by Isaiah. “Thou art wearied,” he says, “in the multitude of thy counsels” (47:13). Their conferences, schemes, and plans and labours are all wearisome and worthless! Our chapter says, “The people shall labour in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary” (58)! Thus, too, Seraiah concludes his words which pronounce Babylon’s doom — “And they shall be weary” (64)! This is enough to cause any servant of the Lord to cease from Babylonish building today and to turn to Christ alone and labour for His glory, “Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain” (Ps.127:1). “Your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor.15:58), but it is altogether vain and wearisome, too, in worldly religion, *in Babylon*.

Babylon signifies confusion, and, thank God, this is to be ended both politically and religiously. The Euphrates means rushing, and probably signifies that Babylon grows up beside the rapid tides of fallen man’s will and energy. It is singularly striking also that Seraiah means “The Lord has prevailed”!

Man may exalt himself, and claim the supremacy which belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ alone, and may even for awhile appear to prosper, but eventually the Lord alone shall be exalted: in all things He shall have the pre-eminence: all things in heaven and earth shall be headed up in Him,

and all shall see that “THE LORD HAS PREVAILED,” The heart which knows Him responds, “He is worthy!”

Ch.52. “The Exaltation Of The Lord”.

The last chapter of Jeremiah — the added chapter — has a special character of its own. The previous one closed with saying, “Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.” This chapter 52 therefore is rightly separated from the rest and called, *The Concluding Section*. Commencing with the beginning of Zedekiah’s reign, it touches upon important events and carries us right forward to the thirty-seventh year of the captivity of Jehoiachin.

The Holy Spirit of God has a special reason for giving us such a comprehensive summary in this added conclusion. It is to picture for us the complete failure of man on the ground of responsibility, and that illustrated in the most favoured nation of all, the nation to which God gave special privileges and a peculiar place of nearness to Himself. The importance of this is seen in that it demonstrates clearly that man cannot be trusted with national direction, for if the most favoured fails then nothing better can be expected from the others, but rather worse.

At the age of twenty-one opportunity was given to Zedekiah to show that he had benefited by the stern and striking lessons which God had taught the nation through the lips of the prophet and by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, but “he did that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that Jehoiakim had done” (2). He also rebelled against the king of Babylon, whom God had used to set him on the throne at Jerusalem. We are told in verse 3 that this happened because the anger of the Lord was against Jerusalem and Judah till He had cast them out of His presence.

Judah, the representative at that time of the nation of Israel, still had the city of government and a king of David’s line on the throne. The house of the Lord still stood before them, and spoke to them of the preserving mercy of God; the chief priest and others still maintained the ministry, but they not only failed to do the good, for they did that which was positively evil in God’s sight.

We see the story repeated in another connection in Revelation 2 and 3. The assemblies, divinely set up — as we have symbolized in the seven golden

candlesticks there spoken of — soon sink so low, that we read of Satan dwelling among them, and of some holding the doctrine of Balaam and other vile things, till finally the faithful and true Witness, our Lord Jesus Christ, says, to the angel of the assembly in Laodicea, “I am about to spew thee out of My mouth” (3:16). This tells us of the failure of Christendom on the ground of responsibility; Jeremiah 52 tells us of the failure of Judaism. May we learn the lesson and cleave to the Lord Himself, abiding in Christ that our joy may be full in spite of the failure, and that we may be to God’s glory in these “difficult times.”

Verses 4 to 7 show us the overthrow of the city, and verses 8 to 11 the punishment and blinding of the king; verses 12 to 23 the destruction of the house of the Lord and all in connection with it; verses 24 to 27 the killing of the chief priest and others; solemnly closing with the words, “Thus Judah was carried away captive out of his land” (27). The next three verses give us dates and details of the three lots of captives which were carried away to captivity.

The last four verses conclude this remarkable book by presenting to us an incident at the palace of Babylon, which stands in vivid contrast to that given of Daniel at the same royal establishment. Daniel would not defile himself with the king’s meat, but God gave him distinction nevertheless, by endowing him with divine wisdom and understanding. At this time, when Evil-merodach became king, Daniel does not seem to have been prominent; but Jehoiachin, the Coniah of chapter 22:28, a despised broken idol, an outcast of the Lord, is raised up. Evil-merodach, the son and successor of Nebuchadnezzar, brought him out of prison and exalted him above the other royal captives at the palace, and gave him a daily allowance till the day of his death.

The things which happened to Zedekiah on the one hand and to Jehoiachin on the other, typify the lot of the Jews during the times of the Gentiles, whilst the house of the Lord and Jerusalem are desolated, as we have depicted in this chapter. “Wrath is come upon them to the uttermost” (1 Thess.2:16), and like Zedekiah blindness has overtaken them. Chained and cast into prison, many have died fearful deaths: sufferings of the severest sort have been theirs. Like Jehoiachin, however, some have held exceptionally exalted places among the kings of the Gentiles, and indeed do so at this very time, and will do so increasingly; but it is not, generally

speaking, that they owe their high position to faithfulness to the God of Israel, as was the case with Daniel.

This state of things will be ended when our Lord Jesus Christ returns; then “all Israel shall be saved; according as it is written, The Deliverer shall come out of Zion; He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. And this is the Covenant from Me to them, when I shall have taken away their sins” (Rom.11:26-27). Their reception into favour again will not simply be a restoration, it will be like a resurrection to life, bringing in wealth and glory and blessing, as they rejoicingly recognize their once rejected but risen Messiah. They will repent and He will receive them, He will rule that nation as the head of all the nations, and great indeed shall be the glory. Nor need we wonder, for though Israel has been a nation terrible from their beginning, yet they are *the Israelites, who are as princes with God, “whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the law-giving, and the service, and the promises; whose are the fathers; and of whom, as according to the flesh, is THE CHRIST, WHO IS OVER ALL, GOD BLESSED FOR EVER. AMEN.* (Rom.9:4-5).

They shall yet be exalted in Him as a nation and He shall yet be exalted by them; yea, through Israel His Name shall be exalted in all the earth.