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No. 178 ◆ FOURTH QUARTER, 1939

Nehemiah Rebuilding the Walls of Jerusalem

The CAPTIVITY and RESTORATION of ISRAEL

Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly

THE CAPTIVITY AND RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

Lesson 1, for October 7, 1939

For Daily Lesson Study Records Only.

SABBATH	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY

The Captivity of the Ten Tribes

MEMORY VERSE: "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." Hosea 6:4.

STUDY HELP: "Prophets and Kings," pp. 279-300.

God's Message to Israel

1. What message did the Lord send to Israel before the Assyrian captivity? Amos 5:14, 15.

NOTE.—While the exact dates of the prophecies of Hosea and Amos are not agreed upon, their combined prophetic activity probably covered a period of sixty to seventy years before the fall of Samaria and the captivity of Israel in 721 B. C.

"The closing years of the ill-fated kingdom of Israel were marked with violence and bloodshed such as had never been witnessed even in the worst periods of strife and unrest under the house of Ahab. For two centuries and more the rulers of the ten tribes had been sowing the wind; now they were reaping the whirlwind. King after king was assassinated to make way for others ambitious to rule. 'They have set up kings,' the Lord declared of these godless usurpers, 'but not by Me: they have made princes, and I knew it not.' Hosea 8:4. Every principle of justice was set aside; those who should have stood before the nations of earth as the depositaries of divine grace, 'dealt treacherously against the Lord' and with one another. Hosea 5:7.

"With the severest reproofs, God sought to arouse the impenitent nation to a realization of its imminent danger of utter destruction. Through Hosea and Amos He sent the ten tribes message after message, urging full and complete repentance, and threatening disaster as the result of continued transgression. 'Ye have plowed wickedness,' declared Hosea, 'ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men. Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people,

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and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled. . . . In a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off.' Hosea 10:13-15."—*"Prophets and Kings,"* pp. 279, 280.

The ten tribes, Israel (the remnant of Joseph), had gone from bad to worse. The time had come when God could bear with them no longer. Yet in mercy God sent them warning after warning before He finally let them go into captivity to Assyria. If they would "hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate," God would yet be gracious unto them.

2. How did God regard their worship? How did they regard the Sabbath? How did they treat the poor? Amos 5:21-24; 8:4-7.

NOTE.—From these verses it is clear that while Israel still held to the outward forms of religion, they had lost the true conception of worship. They offered sacrifices, they kept the feasts, but they were unjust in business and cruel in their oppression of the poor. "Surely," said the Lord, "I will never forget any of their works."

3. Despite the apostasy of Israel, how did God express His love for them and His reluctance to punish? Hosea 6:4; 11:7-9.

NOTE.—God loved Israel, but He knew that their promises to do better were but empty words. They might mean well, but their goodness was as a morning cloud and as the dew which soon goes away.

There are those who picture God as anxious to punish and delighting in it. But such is not a true view of God. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" the Lord says, "how shall I deliver thee, Israel?" The Lord is presented as doing His utmost to save His people. He does not want to give up until He has exhausted every possibility of helping them. When at last He gives up, it is because there is "no remedy." 2 Chron. 36:16.

The two cities referred to in Hosea 11:8, Admah and Zeboim, together with Sodom and Gomorrah, were destroyed when God destroyed the cities of the plain. Deut. 29:23.

In the case before us, God decides to wait a little longer and give the people another opportunity. "I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger," He says, "I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man."

"For a season, these predicted judgments were stayed, and during the long reign of Jeroboam II, the armies of Israel gained signal victories; but this time of apparent prosperity wrought no change in the hearts of the impenitent, and it was finally decreed, 'Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land.' Amos 7:11. . . .

"The words spoken against the apostate tribes were literally fulfilled; yet the destruction of the kingdom came gradually. In judgment the Lord remembered mercy, and at first, when 'Pul the king of Assyria came against the land,' Menahem, then king of Israel, was not taken captive, but was permitted to remain on the throne as a vassal of the Assyrian realm. 'Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him to confirm the kingdom in his hand. And Menahem exacted the money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria.' 2 Kings 15:19, 20. The Assyrians, having humbled the ten tribes, returned for a season to their own land."—*"Prophets and Kings,"* pp. 286, 287.

The Last Kings of Israel

4. What took place in the days of Pekah, king of Israel? 2 Kings 15:29; 1 Chron. 5:25, 26.

NOTE.—Pekah was next to the last king in Israel. Before him had reigned Menahem, ten years, and Menahem's son Pekahiah, two years. These had both been wicked kings. In the reign of Menahem, the king of Assyria had come against Israel, and had only been bought off by the payment of a tribute of a thousand talents of silver. 2 Kings 15:19. This should have served Israel as a warning of what was coming, but Israel did not heed. The king of Assyria took captive many of Israel in the days of Pekah and carried them to Assyria.

"From this terrible blow the northern kingdom never recovered. The feeble remnant continued the forms of government, though no longer possessed of power. Only one more ruler, Hoshea, was to follow Pekah. Soon the kingdom was to be swept away forever."—*"Prophets and Kings,"* pp. 287, 288.

5. What took place in the ninth year of the reign of the last king of Israel? 2 Kings 17:5, 6.

NOTE.—Hoshea was the last king of Israel. He had made a treaty with the king of Assyria to pay him tribute. It was not long, however, before he conspired with the king of Egypt and refused any longer to pay tribute to Assyria. Shalmaneser thereupon shut Hoshea up in prison, besieged and took the capital, Samaria, in 721 B. C., and carried the ten tribes into captivity to Assyria. Verses 1-5.

6. What had Israel done to deserve such punishment? Verses 7-12.

NOTE.—"Groves" is an English translation of the Hebrew word Asherim, the plural of Asherah, which was the name of the goddess of fertility, widely worshiped throughout Syria and Canaan. The erection of these images was strictly forbidden, and their destruction was commanded. Judges 6:25; 2 Kings 23:6; 1 Kings 15:13.

Israel had sinned grievously. They had "walked in the statutes of the heathen." 2 Kings 17:8. Instead of keeping the commandments of God, they had followed the customs of the heathen, and had done "secretly those things that were not right." Verse 9. They had set up "images," had "burnt incense" as "did the heathen," and had "served idols." Verses 10-12. They had done all the abominations which the heathen had done. God could bear with them no longer.

7. How far had they gone in their evil ways? Verses 15-17.

NOTE.—"They followed vanity, and became vain," that is, they followed the customs of the world, "concerning whom the Lord had charged them, that they should not do like them." Verse 15. They set at naught "all the commandments of the Lord," and "made them molten images, even two calves." Verse 16. Israel of old had made one golden calf. Ex. 32:1-4. These made two. They "worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal," the sun-god. They offered human sacrifices, used divination—ancient spiritism—and sold themselves to do evil. 2 Kings 17:17. They could hardly do worse.

Hezekiah's Attempt to Help Israel

8. What last effort did God make to save them before they were finally carried away into captivity? 2 Chron. 30:1-5.

NOTE.—In the third year of Hoshea's reign over Israel, the good king Hezekiah began to rule in Judah. He instituted needed reforms in the kingdom, and among other things invited all to come to Jerusalem for the celebration of the Passover which had been neglected. To this celebration he invited the neighboring kingdom of Israel, and had a proclamation made "from Beer-

sheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the Passover unto the Lord God of Israel at Jerusalem: for they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written." Verse 5. This was the last invitation ever sent to Israel.

9. What admonitions did the proclamation contain? How was it received? Verses 6-12.

NOTE.—This last appeal of God to Israel as a nation, sent through a sister nation, is a touching one. "Yield yourselves unto the Lord," Judah pleaded, "and enter into His sanctuary. . . . The Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away His face from you, if ye return unto Him."

This plea fell mostly on deaf ears. A few from Asher and Manasseh and Zebulun "humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem," but the majority "laughed them to scorn, and mocked them."

10. How did the Lord feel about the attitude of Israel? What did He do? 2 Kings 17:18, 22, 23.

NOTE.—"About two years later, Samaria was invested by the hosts of Assyria under Shalmaneser; and in the siege that followed, multitudes perished miserably of hunger and disease as well as by the sword. The city and nation fell, and the broken remnant of the ten tribes were carried away captive, and scattered in the provinces of the Assyrian realm.

"The destruction that befell the northern kingdom was a direct judgment from heaven. The Assyrians were merely the instruments that God used to carry out His purpose. Through Isaiah, who began to prophesy shortly before the fall of Samaria, the Lord referred to the Assyrian hosts as 'the rod of Mine anger.' 'The staff in their hand,' He said, 'is Mine indignation.' Isa. 10:5.

"Grievously had the children of Israel 'sinned against the Lord their God, . . . and wrought wicked things.' 'They would not hear, but . . . rejected His statutes, and His covenant that He made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He testified against them.' It was because they had 'left all the commandments of the Lord their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal,' and refused steadfastly to repent, that the Lord 'afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until He had cast them out of His sight,' in harmony with the plain warnings He had sent them 'by all His servants the prophets.'

" 'So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria,' 'because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God, but transgressed His covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded.' 2 Kings 17:7, 11, 14-16, 20, 23; 18:12."—"*Prophets and Kings,*" pp. 291, 292.

The Origin of the Samaritans

11. After the king of Assyria had carried away the children of Israel, whom did he put in their place? 2 Kings 17:24.

NOTE.—This is an instance of the practice which was common in those days of replacing a population with nationals of the conqueror or with such as were loyal to him. In this case the king transported a large number of Babylonians, and settled them in the land of Israel.

12. What happened to the new settlers in Samaria? What was told the king? What was done about it? With what result? Verses 25-34, 41.

NOTE.—The Babylonian settlers were heathen, and did not know the true

God. When lions came into their territory, an appeal was made to the king to send someone to teach these heathen about the true God. One of the priests who had been carried away captive was sent back to teach them, but was evidently not very successful. While the people made some change in their worship, still "every nation made gods of their own." Verse 29. The result was a mixed worship, a combination of heathenism and Jewish religion. "They feared the Lord, and served their own gods," is the way the Bible puts it. Verse 33.

Some of the Jews had remained in the land of Israel. These intermarried with the Babylonian settlers, and the resulting race was the Samaritans mentioned in the New Testament. With these the strict Jews would have nothing to do, and the Samaritans on their part did not hold the Jews in high esteem. The antagonism between the two peoples was very marked in the time of Christ.

Reflections

God does not delight in punishing. To Him it is a "strange act." Isa. 28:21. Before resorting to extreme measures, He does everything that love can devise to save, so He can truly say that there is nothing that could have been done that He has not done. Isa. 5:4.

It is worthy of consideration that though God waits long, the threatened punishment is sure to come unless there is genuine repentance. God will not forget any labor of love we may do, neither will He forget our evil deeds. Heb. 6:10; Amos 8:7. Unless we repent and abstain from sin, the day of reckoning will surely come. We should also remember that God is the same, that with Him there is no respect of persons. The sins that brought about the captivity of Israel of old will not be overlooked today, either in God's people or in the people of the world.

Lesson 2, for October 14, 1939

For Daily Lesson Study Records Only.

SABBATH	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY

Jeremiah the Prophet

MEMORY VERSE: "What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" Isa. 5:4.

STUDY HELP: "Prophets and Kings," pp. 407-421.

The First Captivity of Judah

1. What did Judah fail to learn from the captivity of Israel? 2 Kings 17:18, 19; Jer. 3:8.

NOTE.—It might be expected that Judah would have learned a lesson from the fate that overtook Israel, specially in view of the plea which Judah had made to Israel to repent, as studied in last week's lesson. 2 Chron. 30:6-9. But such was not the case. Judah learned nothing. After Israel had gone into captivity, God still bore more than a hundred years with Judah, but "Judah kept not the commandments of the Lord." 2 Kings 17:19. "Judah

feared not, but went and played the harlot also." Jer. 3:8. She did even worse than her sister, Israel. "She was more corrupt in her inordinate love than she," says the prophet. Ezek. 23:4, 11.

2. Because of her sins, what happened at last to Judah? Dan. 1:1, 2; 2 Kings 24:1-4.

NOTE.—It was in the year 606 B. C. that Nebuchadnezzar first came to Jerusalem. More than a hundred years had elapsed since Israel had been taken to Assyria, but Judah during this time had gone from bad to worse, and the time had come for God to intervene.

Though Nebuchadnezzar besieged the city, he did little damage to Jerusalem at this time. He spared the temple and took only "part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god." He also took some hostages and carried them to Babylon, among whom were Daniel and his companions. Dan. 1:3-6.

At this time Nebuchadnezzar also made a treaty with Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, by which Jehoiakim became a servant of Babylon. However, he soon broke the treaty, rebelled, and declared his independence of Nebuchadnezzar. As the Babylonian king by this time was engaged in warfare elsewhere, he could not immediately return to Jerusalem. With a promise of help from Egypt, Jehoiakim was emboldened, and felt secure.

At this time God sent urgent messages to the king and the people. Prominent among the messengers used was Jeremiah, the prophet, who had been called to the prophetic office some time previous, and who for more than forty years faithfully delivered the warnings which God sent by him.

Jeremiah's Call to the Prophetic Office

3. At what period in life was Jeremiah called to the prophetic office? What reason did he give for wanting to be excused? What did God answer? Jer. 1:4-10.

NOTE.—We are not told the age of Jeremiah when he was called of God. He was probably a young man, so young that he felt it impossible for him to be "a prophet unto the nations." But the Lord told him not to be concerned about his age. "Be not afraid of their faces," God said, "for I am with thee to deliver thee."

4. What was one of the early messages which Jeremiah was told to deliver? Jer. 3:12-14.

NOTE.—This is one of the most beautiful messages ever sent to a people by the Lord. "Only acknowledge thine iniquity," said the Lord, "that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God." If they repented and turned to Him, the Lord said, "I will not cause Mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, . . . and I will not keep anger forever." But Judah did not heed, in spite of all that befell Israel.

5. Which commandment is pointed out as one of those Judah did not keep? How did they relate themselves to the admonition given? Jer. 17: 19-23.

6. What promise was given them if they would observe the Sabbath as God had commanded the fathers? What would happen if they did not? Verses 24-27.

The Temple and Shiloh

7. In what did the people put their trust? Jer. 7:1-4.

NOTE.—The cry of the people was, "the temple, the temple, the temple." In their zeal for the temple, they almost forgot the God of the temple. It is to be noted that the people of Judah were not irreligious. On the contrary, they were highly religious and performed many of the ordinances of the Lord and of the temple. But this alone was not sufficient. Nebuchadnezzar would soon be at the gates of the city unless the people repented and did their first works. When Nebuchadnezzar should come the second time, he would not treat them as leniently as he had the first time. Now was the time to repent before it was too late.

8. What did God want the people to do? What did He want them not to do? Verses 5-11.

NOTE.—God wanted the people to amend their ways thoroughly, to turn completely around. He did not want them to think that they could steal, murder, commit adultery, and swear falsely, and yet come to church and pretend to be God's people.

9. To what experience did Jeremiah refer as a warning? Verses 12-16.

NOTE.—The temple of God, in which they trusted, had become a den of robbers. Verse 11; Mark 11:15-17. Because His people had refused to heed the call which He had sent to them, God now threatens to do to them as He had formerly done to Shiloh. To make it very plain God says, "I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim" (Israel).

10. When the ark was brought out of Shiloh, what took place? 1 Samuel 4.

NOTE.—Israel was at war with the Philistines, and was defeated in battle. The elders decided that they were defeated because they had neglected to take the ark with them into battle. "Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us," they said, "that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies." Verse 3.

So they fetched the ark of the Lord, and took it into battle that it might save them. In doing so, they substituted something else for God, and were defeated. The Philistines not only smote them, but also took the ark away from them.

11. How did the people, the priests, and the false prophets respond? Jer. 26:8, 9.

NOTE.—All understood only too well Jeremiah's reference to Shiloh. They became so wrought up that they were ready to kill the prophet. "Thou shalt surely die," they said.

12. How was Jeremiah saved from death at this time? Verses 10-16.

NOTE.—The priests and the false prophets had said to the princes, "This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears." But the princes recognized the villainy of the priests and said, "This man is not worthy to die: for he hath spoken to us in the name of the Lord." Thus was Jeremiah saved from the priests by the princes.

When a people go so far in their rebellion against God that they are ready

to kill the prophets of God that are sent to them with warnings, they have nearly filled the cup of their iniquity. This was the case with Judah, yet God made still other attempts to save them from their fate.

Reflections

"Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets." Amos 3:7. Before the Lord sent Israel or Judah into captivity, He could truly say: "I have sent also unto you all My servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers." Jer. 35:15. The story of the captivity is a revelation of the mercy and forbearance of God.

We are not to forget that all these things are written for our learning. It is not enough that we are religious, or that we have great respect for the temple. It is not enough that we are members of the church and pride ourselves upon the good deeds we do. God demands purity of heart and consecration of life. We all need to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith.

Lesson 3, for October 21, 1939

For Daily Lesson Study Records Only.

SABBATH	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY

In the Reign of Jehoiakim

MEMORY VERSE: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9.

STUDY HELP: "Prophets and Kings," pp. 422-439.

The Rechabites

1. What was Jeremiah commanded to offer the Rechabites? What reason did they give for not wanting to drink wine? Jer. 35:1-6, 8.

NOTE.—"To illustrate the importance of yielding implicit obedience to the requirements of God, Jeremiah gathered some Rechabites into one of the chambers of the temple, and set wine before them, inviting them to drink. As was to have been expected, he met with remonstrance and absolute refusal. 'We will drink no wine,' the Rechabites firmly declared; 'for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons forever.' "—*"Prophets and Kings,"* p. 423.

2. What message did God send to the men of Judah? Verses 12-17.

NOTE.—"God sought thus to bring into sharp contrast the obedience of the Rechabites with the disobedience and rebellion of His people. The Rechabites had obeyed the command of their father, and now refused to be enticed into transgression. But the men of Judah had hearkened not to the words of the Lord, and were in consequence about to suffer His severest judgments." —*"Prophets and Kings,"* p. 424.

3. What blessing was pronounced upon the Rechabites? Verses 18, 19.

NOTE.—"Thus God taught His people that faithfulness and obedience would be reflected back upon Judah in blessing, even as the Rechabites were blessed for obedience to their father's command.

"The lesson is for us. If the requirements of a good and wise father, who took the best and most effectual means to secure his posterity against the evils of intemperance, were worthy of strict obedience, surely God's authority should be held in as much greater reverence as He is holier than man. Our Creator and our Commander, infinite in power, terrible in judgment, seeks by every means to bring men to see and repent of their sins. By the mouth of His servants He predicts the dangers of disobedience; He sounds the note of warning, and faithfully reproves sin. His people are kept in prosperity only by His mercy, through the vigilant watchcare of chosen instrumentalities. He cannot uphold and guard a people who reject His counsel, and despise His reproofs. For a time He may withhold His retributive judgments; yet He cannot always stay His hand."—*"Prophets and Kings,"* pp. 425, 426.

A Comforting Message

4. In the midst of prophecies of disaster, what message came to Jeremiah? Jer. 18:1-4.

NOTE.—There are few more comforting passages in the Bible than the incident here recorded. God is the potter, we are the clay. God could cast men aside because they are marred, but He does not do so. He gives them another opportunity. The words, "He made it again another vessel," reveal the love of God as do few other statements in the Bible.

5. What principle of God's dealing with men and nations is now announced? Verses 5-10.

NOTE.—God's word is sure and steadfast, yet all promises of blessings and threatenings of disaster are conditioned upon men's response to God's message. No promise is absolute, no prophecy of calamity to come is absolute. They are dependent upon the attitude of the people to whom they are addressed. This principle is of universal application. By repentance, calamities may be averted; by turning away from God promised blessings may be canceled.

Baruch the Scribe

6. In an effort to get the king and the people to realize the seriousness of their position, what did the Lord command Jeremiah to do? Jer. 36:1-4.

NOTE.—Jeremiah was commanded to write all the messages which the Lord from time to time had sent to Israel, Judah, and the other nations. The Lord hoped that when Judah heard of all the evil that would come upon them unless they repented, they would turn "every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin." Jeremiah therefore called Baruch, the scribe, and dictated to him the messages of the Lord.

7. What did Jeremiah command Baruch to do? Verses 5-10.

8. When Michaiah heard the words of the roll, to whom did he report? What was Baruch now commanded to do? How did the princes accept the words? Verses 11-16.

NOTE.—As soon as Michaiah heard the words, he went down to where the princes were gathered together and told them what had happened. They im-

mediately sent for Baruch, who read the roll to them. When they heard the threatenings of the Lord, they became "afraid both one and other, and said unto Baruch, We will surely tell the king of all these words."

9. What question did they ask Baruch? What answer did he give? What advice did the princes give Baruch and Jeremiah? Verses 17-19.

NOTE.—Evidently they had some question as to the genuineness of the writing. They wanted to know just how it was done. When they were satisfied upon this point, they were ready to report to the king.

Jehoiakim and the Roll

10. What did the king do as the roll was read? What show of emotion was not made? Who protested the burning of the roll? Verses 20-25.

NOTE.—Few more dramatic scenes are recorded than this of the reading of the roll before King Jehoiakim. Without fear the king cut the roll to pieces as it was read, and consigned it to the flames. This was the high-water mark in defiance of God. There was little more that God could do. There was no other appeal He could make.

11. What did the king command should be done with Baruch and Jeremiah? Verse 26.

NOTE.—The king had defied the Lord and burnt His message. Now he was ready to persecute God's messengers; but the Lord mercifully hid them.

12. What final word came to Jeremiah concerning the king? Verses 27-32.

NOTE.—"The burning of the roll was not the end of the matter. The written words were more easily disposed of than the reproof and warning they contained and the swift-coming punishment God had pronounced against rebellious Israel. But even the written roll was reproduced. 'Take thee again another roll,' the Lord commanded His servant, 'and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned.' The record of the prophecies concerning Judah and Jerusalem had been reduced to ashes; but the words were still living in the heart of Jeremiah, 'as a burning fire,' and the prophet was permitted to reproduce that which the wrath of man would fain have destroyed.

"Taking another roll, Jeremiah gave it to Baruch, '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.' Jer. 36:28, 32. The wrath of man had sought to prevent the labors of the prophet of God; but the very means by which Jehoiakim had endeavored to limit the influence of the servant of Jehovah, gave further opportunity for making plain the divine requirements."—*"Prophets and Kings,"* pp. 436, 437.

Reflections

Nebuchadnezzar had already been to Jerusalem once, and was about to return. Jeremiah faithfully warned of this, but to no avail. The hearts of the people and of the king were fully set in them to do evil, and they would not repent. God had done everything possible for them, but there was no remedy. Shortly after the events recorded in this lesson Nebuchadnezzar appeared before the gates of the city, took many captives, and did great damage. Had the people listened to the word of the Lord sent them through Jeremiah, this could have been prevented.

Lesson 4, for October 28, 1939

For Daily Lesson Study Records Only.

SABBATH	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY

Jehoiachin and Zedekiah

MEMORY VERSE: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Ps. 46:1.

STUDY HELP: "Prophets and Kings," pp. 440-453.

The Second Captivity

1. Who followed Jehoiakim on the throne of Judah? In what other respect did the son follow the father? 2 Kings 24:8, 9.

NOTE.—The father's utter contempt for God and His word was shown in last week's lesson. The son was no better. Young though he was, he did "according to all that his father had done."

2. What took place at this time? Verses 10-12.

NOTE.—Jehoiachin did not attempt any serious defense of the city. It was easily taken and the king deposed.

3. How did Nebuchadnezzar treat the city? Verses 13-16.

NOTE.—Nebuchadnezzar was not as lenient this time as he was the first time. He carried away all the treasures of the temple, as well as of the palace. That this was no small amount is evident from the number and the value of the vessels of gold and silver that were taken from the temple as enumerated in Ezra 1:7-11. As the number mentioned in Ezra comprises only the vessels that were returned, it takes no account of those that were cut to pieces before being brought to Babylon. This would add many more. (See 2 Kings 24:13.) This was about the year 597 B. C.

4. Who was now made king? What did he do? 2 Kings 24:17-20; 2 Chron. 36:11-16.

The Proclamation of Liberty

5. While Nebuchadnezzar was besieging the city, what covenant did Zedekiah make with the people? Jer. 34:8-10.

NOTE.—Zedekiah "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord." 2 Kings 24:19. When Nebuchadnezzar for the third time returned to Jerusalem and besieged it, Zedekiah began to realize that perhaps the words of Jeremiah were true, and that God was about to punish him and his people for their wickedness. Under these conditions he did what many people before and after him have done, namely, turn to the Lord and attempt to do something which he thought would please God.

There was slavery in Jerusalem. Men oppressed their brethren. God had commanded that every seventh year all Hebrew servants should go free. Ex. 21:1-6. Judah had not done this. But now the situation was serious. Nebuchadnezzar was pressing at the gates. The promised help from Egypt had not appeared. So the king and the people together agreed that they would liberate their brethren, hoping thus to please God. Every man "let his manservant, and

everyone his maidservant, go free, that none should serve themselves of them any more, then they obeyed, and let them go." Jer. 34:10.

6. After this, what did the king ask of Jeremiah? Jer. 37:3.

NOTE.—"Pray now unto the Lord our God for us." This was the first time Zedekiah had asked this of Jeremiah. The king had lived a wicked life. Now his sins were about to overtake him. Jerusalem was being besieged by Nebuchadnezzar, and the king could not expect any mercy from him. Zedekiah needed help, for Egypt had failed him, and so he asks Jeremiah to pray for him. Had he not liberated the slaves? Why should not God help him now?

7. As if in answer to prayer, what did the Babylonian army which had been besieging Jerusalem do? Verse 5.

NOTE.—In Zedekiah's extremity, as Nebuchadnezzar was about to capture Jerusalem, Pharaoh's army came out of Egypt. The Babylonians withdrew, for they heard that the Egyptians were coming, and the city was saved for the time being. We are not told if this withdrawal was the result of the prayers of Jeremiah. Jeremiah himself says that the Babylonians withdrew "for fear of Pharaoh's army." Verse 11. In any event, the crisis was past. The Chaldeans were withdrawing, the Egyptians were coming, and the Jews thought themselves safe.

8. What did the Jews now do? Jer. 34:11.

NOTE.—The people had liberated their servants. They had made a show of doing God's will. The king had asked for prayers. There was every sign of repentance. From the record we understand, however, that their repentance was not very deep. When their city was besieged and they were in danger, they cried unto God. When the Egyptians came to their rescue and the Chaldeans withdrew from the siege, they immediately turned and brought again into subjection those they had before liberated. This showed that their repentance was not genuine.

The Covenant

9. What message does Jeremiah now give them? Verses 12-16.

NOTE.—God refers to the covenant He made with their fathers as recorded in Exodus 21:1-6. This covenant definitely stated that they were to liberate their servants at the end of six years. The people to whom Jeremiah spoke had entered into a covenant with the Lord in regard to the same thing. God said, "Ye were now turned, and had done right in My sight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbor; and ye had made a covenant before Me in the house which is called by My name." Verse 15. Now they had repudiated that covenant so solemnly made.

10. What would God do to those who had broken this covenant? Verse 17.

11. By what solemn ceremony had the covenant been established? Verses 18, 19.

NOTE.—This was a particularly solemn covenant into which they had entered. A calf was taken and cut in two parts from head to tail. These two pieces were placed side by side with enough room so that a person could pass between the parts. The contracting parties would then solemnly pass between the parts, by this ceremony signifying that if they broke this covenant they should be cut in pieces as the calf had been cut. In this case the princes, the priests, and the people had passed between the parts. Verse 19.

12. How does God further amplify the judgment that should come upon them because of their failure to observe the covenant? Verses 20-22; 37: 7-10.

NOTE.—God here renews the threats He has formerly made. The Chaldeans are departing for fear of the Egyptians. But they shall come back. God Himself shall command them to return. Their return and the destruction of the city is so sure that if only wounded men were left among the Chaldeans, yet they should take the city and destroy it.

Reflections

Too many people call upon God only when they are in trouble, and forget Him as soon as the immediate danger is past. We are tempted to think that the people of Judah were very wicked in forgetting the vows they had made when they were in danger. But people have not changed much. There are many who today promise the Lord that they will do His will and obey Him, who forget their promises nearly as soon as Judah did. We will do well to examine ourselves. We may have done no better than the people of God of old.

Lesson 5, for November 4, 1939

For Daily Lesson Study Records Only.

SABBATH	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY

The Third Captivity

MEMORY VERSE: "I will deliver thee in that day, saith the Lord: and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou art afraid." Jer. 39:17.

STUDY HELP: "Prophets and Kings," pp. 453-463.

Ebed-melech

1. What happened to Jeremiah on leaving Jerusalem after pronouncing God's judgment upon the city? Jer. 37:11-15.

NOTE.—Jeremiah was falsely accused of treason. The princes who had formerly defended him now deserted him, and Jeremiah was put in prison, where he remained "many days."

2. What did the princes at last demand of the king? Where was Jeremiah now put? Jer. 38:1-6.

NOTE.—Jeremiah was accused of weakening "the hands of the men of war." He was put into a dungeon full of mire, into which he sank.

3. How was he saved from this slow death? Verses 7-13.

NOTE.—It is not necessary to follow the history of Jeremiah further to establish the fact that Judah had fallen about as low as it was possible for them to fall. Jeremiah had faithfully warned them, but his only reward was prison and torture. God could do no more for Judah than He had done. They had filled the measure of their iniquity. It was of no use for God to wait any longer. Judah would only add to their sins.

4. How was the Ethiopian remembered for his kindness to Jeremiah? Jer. 39:15-18.

The Last Siege of Jerusalem

5. How did Nebuchadnezzar treat Zedekiah's rebellion? What was done to the king and his sons? 2 Kings 25:1-7.

NOTE.—At this third visit to Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar did not spare. He quickly took the city. The king and the soldiers fled, but the armies of the Chaldeans pursued them, scattered Zedekiah's army, slew the king's sons, put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and carried him captive to Babylon.

6. What happened to the temple, the palace, and the city of Jerusalem? Verses 8-12.

NOTE.—This destruction took place in 588 B. C. The temple and the king's palace were burned, the walls of the city broken down, and "every great man's house burnt" with fire. The people who were left in the city were taken to Babylon, and only a few of the poor remained behind.

7. What was done to some of the prominent men? Verses 18-21.

NOTE.—The men here mentioned—the chief or high priest, the second priest, and the other men—had probably taken an active part in the revolt. They were now singled out from the rest, taken before the king of Babylon, and killed. By this time there were not many left in Judea. The princes had been killed, the high priest and other prominent men slain, the king blinded, and the whole city with the temple destroyed. The rebellion was thoroughly broken.

The Remnant Goes to Egypt

8. Whom did Nebuchadnezzar appoint over the people that remained in the land? What did Ishmael do? As a result, what did the people decide to do? Verses 22-26.

NOTE.—Judah kept rebelling till the last. Only a few people remained, but few though they were, they were ready to rebel. Ishmael killed Gedaliah, the ruler whom Nebuchadnezzar had set over them; and the people, being sure that the king of Babylon would not let them go unpunished, decided that their best course would be to flee to Egypt.

9. As they counseled with Jeremiah regarding their contemplated flight into Egypt, what word did he have for them from the Lord? Jer. 42:19-22.

NOTE.—From a reading of the forty-second chapter of Jeremiah, it is clear that the people were not honest in their request of Jeremiah. They had asked him to pray for them as Zedekiah formerly had done, and they had promised that whatever word he had for them from God, they would obey. Verses 2-6. The sequel shows that they did not mean what they said.

10. When Jeremiah advised them not to go into Egypt, of what did the leaders accuse him? Who, did they say, had set him on? Jer. 43:1-7.

NOTE.—While they had faithfully promised to obey the Lord, they changed their mind when the Lord's advice was not what they had expected or wanted. In excusing themselves for not obeying the voice of the prophet, they blamed Baruch, the scribe, for influencing Jeremiah. "Baruch the son of Neriah setteth thee on against us," they said. The accusation that the helpers of a prophet have undue influence over the prophet is not new. In Jeremiah's time this charge was used as an excuse for not obeying the word of the Lord through the prophet. Times have not changed.

11. How long were the people to remain in captivity in Babylon? 2 Chron. 36:20, 21.

NOTE.—Nebuchadnezzar came three times to Jerusalem,—606, 597, and 588 B. C. The first time Daniel and a few of his brethren with some of the princes were taken captive. Dan. 1:1-6. The second time, Nebuchadnezzar carried away Jerusalem and all the princes with ten thousand of the mighty men of valor and all kinds of craftsmen, together with much treasure. 2 Kings 24: 11-16. The third time, he took many more of the people, destroyed the city, the palace, and the temple, and only a few people were left. 2 Chron. 36: 17-20. The people thus carried into captivity were to remain in Babylon until the seventy years spoken of by Jeremiah were fulfilled. Jer. 25:8-11.

Reflections

Despite all the warnings which had been sent to Judah the people could not believe that God would do what He had said He would do. They still trusted in the fact that they were the people of God and that God would not permit the heathen to rule over them. They had seen Israel go into captivity, but even this did not convince them that God was in earnest. False security was and is one of the besetting sins of God's people. We must all make sure that we do not put our trust in the fact that we have the truth or that we belong to God's people. Only as we renounce sin and trust in the Saviour have we a sure hope.

Lesson 6, for November 11, 1939

For Daily Lesson Study Records Only.

SABBATH	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY

The Return From the Captivity

MEMORY VERSE: "All the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid." Ezra 3:11.

STUDY HELP: "Prophets and Kings," pp. 557-566.

The Decree of Cyrus

1. As the end of the seventy years' captivity drew near, who was king of Persia? What proclamation did he issue? 2 Chron. 36:22, 23.

NOTE.—God had borne long with Judah, but at last they were sent into captivity to Babylon. There they were to remain seventy years. In 538 Cyrus overthrew Babylon, and soon thereafter he issued a decree that all who wished to might go up to Jerusalem to restore the temple.

2. How did Cyrus come to issue this decree? Isa. 44:28; Ezra 1:1.

NOTE.—"As the king saw the words foretelling, more than a hundred years before his birth, the manner in which Babylon should be taken; as he read the message addressed to him by the Ruler of the universe, 'I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me: that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside Me;' as he saw before his eyes the declaration of the eternal God, 'For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel Mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known Me;' as he traced the inspired record, 'I have raised him up in

righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build My city, and he shall let go My captives, not for price nor reward,' his heart was profoundly moved, and he determined to fulfill his divinely appointed mission. Isa. 45: 5, 6, 4, 13. He would let the Judean captives go free; he would help them restore the temple of Jehovah."—*"Prophets and Kings,"* pp. 557, 558.

3. How definitely had Isaiah prophesied what Cyrus should do? Isa. 45:13.

4. How definitely was this fulfilled? Ezra 1:2, 3.

NOTE.—Cyrus recognized God as the One who had charged him to build the temple at Jerusalem. According to the prophecy he issued the decree allowing the people to go up to Jerusalem, "not for price nor reward." Isa. 45:13.

Cyrus Encourages the Jews' Return

5. What did Cyrus ask those to do who could not go up to Jerusalem? Ezra 1:4.

6. Who went up to Jerusalem at this time? What did the others do? Verses 5, 6.

7. What did Cyrus give the returning captives to take along? Verses 7-11.

8. How many took advantage of the permission to return? Ezra 2: 64-67.

9. After they arrived in Jerusalem, what did some of the chief of the fathers do? What was the measure of their liberality? Verses 68-70.

NOTE.—Not all gave freely of their means to build the house of God, but only "some of the chief of the fathers." But those who gave contributed "after their ability unto the treasure of the work." This is a good principle to follow.

Building the Altar

10. What two leaders are mentioned by name as having a part in the building of the altar of burnt offering? Ezra 3:1, 2.

NOTE.—Jeshua, or, as it is written in the margin, Joshua, was the high priest, and Zerubbabel was the governor. Haggai 1:1. They took a prominent part in the building of the whole temple.

11. What was offered on the altar? Ezra 3:3-5.

NOTE.—The first thing the returned captives built was the altar of burnt offering. This was outside the temple proper, in the court, and was used for offering up sacrifices to God. Morning and evening a lamb was to be offered on this altar. Num. 28:3-8. This was called the continual offering or the "daily." There were also other offerings for special occasions and feast days.

Laying the Foundation of the Temple

12. When did they begin to use the altar? When was the foundation of the temple laid? How did the people respond to the laying of the foundation? Ezra 3:6-11.

NOTE.—It was in the second year of their return that the foundation of the temple was laid. This was about 535 or 534 B.C. When the people at last saw the foundation of the temple laid, they all "shouted with a great shout"

and praised the Lord. They were at last in their own land. God had been merciful to them, and they were permitted to build again the temple that had lain in ruin these many years.

"The workmen engaged in the preparation of the building material, found among the ruins some of the immense stones brought to the temple site in the days of Solomon. These were made ready for use, and much new material was provided; and soon the work was advanced to the point where the foundation stone must be laid. This was done in the presence of many thousands who had assembled to witness the progress of the work, and to give expression to their joy in having a part in it. While the cornerstone was being set in position, the people, accompanied by the trumpets of the priests and the cymbals of the sons of Asaph, 'sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because He is good, for His mercy endureth forever toward Israel.' Ezra 3:11."—*"Prophets and Kings,"* p. 563.

13. What did some of the ancient men do? Why? Verses 12, 13.

NOTE.—Some of the ancient men had seen Solomon's temple. When they saw this temple, they wept as they thought of the departed glory. Zerubbabel's temple, as this was called, did not begin to compare with Solomon's temple in magnificence. Yet it would have been better if they had cherished a spirit of thankfulness rather than one of complaint. God had been merciful to them, and they should be thankful, and not dampen the joy of the people on this festal day.

Reflections

God does not forget. When the time for the ending of the captivity drew near, God stirred up the spirit of Cyrus to fulfill the prophecy about himself. The vessels which the people thought were lost forever were restored. In God's providence they had merely been stored in Babylon until they were needed.

We should all cherish a spirit of thankfulness and of content. It is not good to dwell continually on past experiences and moan for the good old times. Some of those times were not so good.

Lesson 7, for November 18, 1939

For Daily Lesson Study Records Only.

SABBATH	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY

The Samaritan Adversaries

MEMORY VERSE: "O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong." Dan. 10:19.

STUDY HELP: "Prophets and Kings," pp. 567-572.

The Perfidy of the Samaritans

1. What did the adversaries of the Jews say to Zerubbabel? Ezra 4: 1, 2.

NOTE.—These adversaries were Samaritans, descendants of the men who had been brought over from Assyria to take the place of the Jews who had been carried into captivity. Many of them had intermarried with the Jews

who remained in the land. "They feared the Lord, and served their own gods." 2 Kings 17:33. Despite this they claimed: "We seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto Him." Now they wanted to help build the temple. "Let us build with you," they said.

2. What answer was given them? Ezra 4:3.

NOTE.—The Jews had just come back from captivity into which they had been carried because of their sins. To permit the Samaritans to help them would throw them right into contact with idolatry again. The answer which they returned was decisive and plain. "Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God," they said. They made it clear that they would build the temple themselves, and did not want any help from the Samaritans.

3. How did the Samaritans show that they were not honest in their desire to help? Verse 4.

NOTE.—Had they been honest, they might have felt sad that they were not permitted to help build, and they would not have tried to harm the men of Judah. Because of their opposition the work went hard, and progress was slow.

4. How far did the people go in their opposition to the Jews? Verse 5.

At the Court of Persia

5. What was taking place in Persia at this time? Dan. 10:1-3, 12, 13, 20, 21.

NOTE.—Daniel had not returned to Jerusalem with the other Jews, but had remained in Babylon. We do not know the reason for this, but as Daniel was an aged man by this time, this may have been the reason. It may also be that God had work for him to do at the court of Cyrus which no one else could do so well.

It was at the court of Cyrus that the counselors, whom the Samaritans had hired to frustrate the work of the rebuilding of the temple, were doing their work. Daniel could not have been unaware of this. He was right there at the court, and doubtless knew of the attempt to stop the work in Jerusalem.

Under these circumstances Daniel betook himself to prayer. A mighty struggle was in progress between the powers of good and evil for the control of Cyrus, king of Persia, with whom the evil counselors were working. It was "a great warfare." Verse 1, R. V.

"The controversy was one in which all heaven was interested. Through the prophet Daniel we are given a glimpse of this mighty struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil. For three weeks Gabriel wrestled with the powers of darkness, seeking to counteract the influences at work on the mind of Cyrus; and before the contest closed, Christ Himself came to Gabriel's aid. 'The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days,' Gabriel declares; 'but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.' Dan. 10:13. All that heaven could do in behalf of the people of God was done. The victory was finally gained; the forces of the enemy were held in check all the days of Cyrus, and all the days of his son Cambyses, who reigned about seven and a half years.

"This was a time of wonderful opportunity for the Jews. The highest agencies of heaven were working on the hearts of kings, and it was for the

people of God to labor with the utmost activity to carry out the decree of Cyrus. They should have spared no effort to restore the temple and its services, and to re-establish themselves in their Judean homes. But in the day of God's power, many proved unwilling. The opposition of their enemies was strong and determined, and gradually the builders lost heart. Some could not forget the scene at the laying of the cornerstone, when many had given expression to their lack of confidence in the enterprise. And as the Samaritans grew more bold, many of the Jews questioned whether, after all, the time had come to rebuild. The feeling soon became widespread. Many of the workmen, discouraged and disheartened, returned to their homes, to take up the ordinary pursuits of life."—*"Prophets and Kings,"* pp. 571, 572.

A Letter of Accusation

6. What did the adversaries of the Jews do in the reigns of Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia? Ezra 4:6-10.

NOTE.—The Ahasuerus here mentioned was the son of Cyrus, and reigned a little more than seven years, 529 to 522, B. C. During his days the Samaritans wrote letters of protest to the king against the Jews, and attempted to hinder the work.

It was not until the next king, Artaxerxes, who reigned less than a year, 522, that they were successful in getting an edict to stop the work. This Artaxerxes, called the false Smerdis in profane history, was a usurper and was soon put out of the way, but the hostile officials chose the opportunity of his reign to oppose the Jews.

The letter was said to come not merely from the men mentioned in verses 8 and 9, but also from "the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Osnappar brought over, and set in the city of Samaria, and in the rest of the country beyond the river." R. V. It was thus made to appear to be the unanimous desire of all the nations that the work be stopped. It was probably the work of only a few, and the others were named merely for effect.

7. How did this letter characterize Jerusalem? How far had the work progressed? Verses 11, 12.

NOTE.—It cannot be denied that Jerusalem had been "the rebellious and the bad city." It would appear likely that if the Jews were permitted to enclose the city with strong walls, past history might be repeated and the city again revolt. The past record of Jerusalem was against it.

8. What did the adversaries say would happen if the city were permitted to be finished? What reason did they give for being interested in this matter? Verses 13, 14.

NOTE.—"Toll, tribute, and custom" would make a strong appeal to the king. If the revenues of the king were in danger, the complaint of the Samaritans would be worth looking into. It should be noted, however, that they were entirely hypocritical in this matter. They had themselves offered to help build the very city which they now stated would be so injurious to the king's interests. Had they been permitted to help, they would not have sent word to the king that a dangerous project was being undertaken. But under the circumstances they feigned great patriotism.

An Investigation and Its Results

9. What investigation did they recommend? What warning did they repeat? Verses 15, 16.

NOTE.—They well knew that a search of the records would sustain their charges. It must be admitted that the letter was well written and would probably accomplish what was intended. The motive which prompted them in writing it, however, must be entirely condemned. Not being permitted to help in the building of the city, they now showed that they would go to any length to cause as much harm as possible. This also shows that they were not honest in wanting to help in the first place.

10. In his answer, what did the king say had been done to the letter? What had the search revealed? Verses 17-19.

11. What is said of the kings who had ruled in Jerusalem? Instead of paying tribute, what had these kings received? What decree was now given? Verses 20, 21.

NOTE.—It appears from this that the Persian records contained not only an account of what was taking place in their own country, but also what was happening to neighboring nations. This record showed that there had been "mighty kings" in Jerusalem, and that so far from *paying* "toll, tribute, and custom," they had been *receiving it*. This, of course, would make it more unlikely that kings who had been in the habit of receiving tribute should now be satisfied to pay tribute. A decree was, therefore, issued that the work should cease until further orders.

12. What admonition was given to the officials who had written the letter? What did they immediately do? Until what time did the work cease? Verses 22-24.

NOTE.—These men probably did not need any encouragement to make haste in this matter. They were only too anxious to stop the work. They did not, therefore, waste any time getting to Jerusalem, and "by force and power" causing the work to cease. Thus the work was stopped until the second year of the reign of Darius, a period of perhaps less than two years. Darius Hystaspes began to reign 521 B. C.

Reflections

It is not our enemies only who do us harm. Often pretended friends are more to be feared. The Samaritans claimed to serve the same God as the Jews and offer the same sacrifices. Nevertheless, they were enemies and not friends. Zerubbabel did well in not accepting their help.

"It is not the open and avowed enemies of the cause of God that are most to be feared. Those who, like the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin, come with smooth words and fair speeches, apparently seeking for friendly alliance with God's children, have greater power to deceive. Against such every soul should be on the alert, lest some carefully concealed and masterly snare take him unaware. And especially today, while earth's history is closing, the Lord requires of His children a vigilance that knows no relaxation. But though the conflict is a ceaseless one, none are left to struggle alone. Angels help and protect those who walk humbly before God. Never will our Lord betray one who trusts in Him. As His children draw near to Him for protection from evil, in pity and love He lifts up for them a standard against the enemy. Touch them not, He says: for they are Mine. I have graven them upon the palms of My hands."—*"Prophets and Kings,"* pp. 570, 571.

Birthday gifts are for new enterprises. Do not forget yours.

For Daily Lesson Study Records Only.

SABBATH	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY

Arise and Build

MEMORY VERSE: "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord." Haggai 1:8.

STUDY HELP: "Prophets and Kings," pp. 572-577.

Haggai, the Prophet

1. At what time did the Lord send a message by Haggai, the prophet? Haggai 1:1, first part.

NOTE.—Darius Hystaspes, or Darius the king, as he is also called, reigned in Persia from 521 to 485 B.C. Seventeen years had elapsed since the first return of the Jews from captivity. But little work had been done on the temple throughout these years, and again and again the work had been hindered by adversaries. The worst blow came when the Samaritans succeeded in getting a decree from Artaxerxes demanding that the work cease.

The Jews were much discouraged. They had little hope of ever being permitted to finish the work which they had begun. The decree issued by Artaxerxes gave their adversaries a legal advantage, and it also gave those who were not anxious to build an excuse for doing nothing. It was at this critical time that the message came from the Lord encouraging them to arise and build.

2. From whom did the message come? By whom did it come? Unto whom did it come? Verse 1, last part.

NOTE.—The word came from the Lord, by or through the prophet, unto Zerubbabel and Joshua. The word did not originate with the prophet. It only came *by* him. God was the author of the message.

Of Haggai we know little. There is no genealogy recorded of him. Here and in Ezra 5:1 he is merely introduced as "Haggai the prophet." If we measure a prophet by the results attained, Haggai ranks high. In a very short time his message took effect, and in a few years the temple was finished.

Zerubbabel, thought to be the same as Sheshbazzar, was the civil leader of the people. He had helped set up the altar and lay the foundation of the temple. Ezra 3. He had also opposed the participation of the Samaritans in building the temple. Ezra 4:2, 3. He was appointed governor by Cyrus, and Joshua was then the high priest. Zech. 3:1; Ezra 5:14.

3. What title is here given to the Lord? Haggai 1:2, first part.

NOTE.—The designation, "Lord of hosts," is characteristic of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. In these three books it occurs more than eighty times. The exact meaning of the term is not known. Some take it to mean that God is Lord of the hosts of heaven, the angels; some take "hosts" to mean the stars or powers of the heavens, others that it means the hosts of Israel. The Hebrew is "Jehovah Zebaoth." In the absence of exact knowledge, we see no reason why the title might not include all these meanings. God is the great God who commands the hosts of heaven, the angels, and they obey Him. He marshals

the stars, and they perform His bidding. This great God is the same God who leads the hosts of Israel to victory. The evident meaning is that God is the great God, who speaks and it is done, who commands, and it stands fast.

The Time Is Not Come

4. What are the people quoted as saying? Verse 2, last part.

NOTE.—"The time is not come." In reality they were saying, "Let us wait a little longer." Many years had gone by since the foundation of the temple was laid, and still the people were not ready to build. True they had been hindered in many ways, but times had changed. The usurper king was dead. Another king, Darius, friendly to the Jews, was on the throne. Might not this be the time to start building again?

The time is not come, they said, "the time that the Lord's house should be built." There were other things for which the people thought the time had come; but they did not believe that the time had come to build the Lord's house. That, they thought, could wait.

5. By what question does the Lord gently rebuke the people? Verse 4.

NOTE.—In Palestine there was an abundance of stones, but not wood. By ceiled houses is meant wood-paneled houses, which in a country where wood is scarce was considered an extravagance. Says the prophet: "Woe unto him . . . that saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and *it is ceiled with cedar.*" Jer. 22:13, 14. The Lord is in effect saying: "You are not poor; you are ceiling your own houses, which is not necessary, while you are neglecting My house. This must not be. The time has come for you to build My house."

A lesson for our own time is not far to seek. Many are now living not only in comfort but in luxury, while the cause of God is languishing. Many are saying in their hearts, if not in words, that the time has not yet come to sacrifice for God. To such, and to all, the message of Haggai applies.

Results of Lack of Liberality

6. What does the Lord ask them to consider? To what five things does He call attention? Haggai 1:5, 6.

NOTE.—The five things to which God calls attention concern sowing, eating, drinking, clothing, and wages. He asks them to consider their experience in these matters. They sow, eat, drink, dress, and earn wages, but there is no satisfaction in any of these things. They got but little out of their endeavor. God's blessing had not been with them. They had little to show for their work. Consider this, says God.

7. What does the Lord ask the people to do? What two things will result? Verses 7, 8.

NOTE.—The people were asked to go up into the hill country, and bring down wood to build the house of God. As has been stated before, wood was scarce in Palestine. But the people had been able to get wood for their own houses. God now asked them to get it for His. If they did this, God would take pleasure in it, and He would also be glorified.

"Build the house." This is a definite command. Do not neglect God's work while you are doing your own. Do not live in ceiled houses while God's cause languishes.

"I will be glorified." When we give to God that which we should like to have for ourselves, He will not only take pleasure in it, but will be glorified

by it. We are not to be extravagant except in the matter of giving to God. The very wood which was an extravagance if used in their own houses, God asks them to use in His. With such God is pleased, and by such He is glorified.

8. For what did they look? What did they get? What happened to that which they brought home? Verse 9, first part.

9. How does the Lord answer the question which He raises? Verse 9, last part.

NOTE.—The Lord here plainly tells them that the reason they do not have more success is that every man is busy with his own affairs and neglects the house of God. He says, "I did blow upon it."

We are not to pass judgment upon others; we are to consider ourselves. Have we been as faithful as we should be? Have we been as interested in the Lord's work as we should be? We can readily think of others whom we believe the Lord "did blow upon." But we should consider ourselves first. Let all do this.

10. What did God say He had done because of their unfaithfulness? Verse 10.

11. For what did God call? Verse 11.

12. How are we not to consider those upon whom some calamity might fall? Luke 13:1-5.

Reflections

We are apt to consider others, and to judge others rather than ourselves. A word of warning needs to be given here. In studying a lesson of this kind we readily call to mind things that have befallen someone we know, or know of, and we use their experience as an object lesson. We should be careful of this. It is not always true that every calamity is a result of sin or, that those whom it befalls are sinners above the rest. Some people thank God that there are no visible signs of God's displeasure resting upon them. But this is not evidence that all is well. There was little evidence of God's displeasure resting upon Sodom and Gomorrah until the day the fire fell. The Jews believed themselves to be the people of God, while judgment was hanging above them. There were some who thought that those upon whom the tower of Siloam fell were very wicked. It is best for us not to judge others. We are to consider ourselves.

Lesson 9, for December 2, 1939

For Daily Lesson Study Records Only.

SABBATH	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY

"I Am With You, Saith the Lord"

MEMORY VERSE: "Then spake Haggai the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the Lord." Haggai 1:13.

STUDY HELP: "Prophets and Kings," pp. 577, 578.

The Lord's Messenger

1. How did the leaders and the people respond to the prophetic message? In doing so, whom did they obey? Haggai 1:12.

NOTE.—The people as well as the leaders "obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet." They accepted the admonition of Haggai as coming from the Lord and "did fear before the Lord."

2. What encouraging message did Haggai give the people? What title, indicating the work of the prophet, is given Haggai? Verse 13.

NOTE.—Haggai is here said to be "the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message." What a descriptive title that is! The true prophet is a messenger. And he is in the "message." While the prophet in a special sense is a messenger, it is also true that every one of God's people should be a "messenger in the Lord's message."

"I am with you." Haggai had warned and entreated the people. Now when they turn to the Lord to do His will, He sends them a word of encouragement. There can be no greater joy than to know that we are engaged in a work where the Lord is with us. The expression reminds us of "Emmanuel, . . . God with us."

3. How does Paul express his confidence that if God be with us, all will be well? Rom. 8:31.

NOTE.—The returned remnant had had great opposition in their effort to restore the temple service. Even at this time when they had decided to obey the voice of the Lord through the prophet, their way was not clear; for there was a definite decree from King Artaxerxes that the work should cease, and this decree had not been repealed. They were to learn, however, that when they placed themselves wholly on the Lord's side, He would find a way out of the difficulty.

Stirring Up the People to Work

4. Whom did the Lord stir up? What did they do? Haggai 1:14.

NOTE.—God wants His people to be stirred up and work. There are some who are always satisfied with things as they are, and are afraid of becoming stirred up. But God wants His people to be in earnest. It is to be noted, however, that it is not enough merely to be stirred up. The men whom the Lord stirred up in the verse before us, became so stirred up that "they came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God." Any stirring up that is to meet God's approval must result in going to work. Any other stirring fails to meet God's standard.

5. What is one complaint which the Lord has against His people? Isa. 64:7.

NOTE.—"There is none . . . that stirreth up himself." Apparently God wants His people stirred. To this end He sent His messengers and ministers to awaken them. But this is not always easy. The Bible is filled with examples of men who failed to get stirred up to the point where they "did work."

It is well that God sends messengers to His people to stir them up. But it is better if they stir up themselves. God's people should be in a position where the events they see transpiring about them should cause a mighty stir among them. Are there not enough calamities, sin, signs, and portentous events to stir the people to the very depths?

6. On what date did the people begin the work? How long was this after the message had first come to them? Haggai 1:15; 1:1.

Zechariah Joins Haggai

7. About this time, what other prophet joined Haggai in his work? Ezra 5:1; Zech. 1:1.

NOTE.—According to the dates given, it was about two months after the events described that Zechariah joined Haggai in his work of encouraging the people to work. It may be that the difficulties that still confronted them in the building of the temple made necessary that Zechariah unite with Haggai in encouraging them to persevere. In any event, from this time on the two prophets worked hand in hand, one strengthening and encouraging the other, and both presenting a united front to the people.

8. How does the Lord express Himself concerning their fathers? Zech. 1:2.

NOTE.—Their fathers had sinned and were carried away into captivity. God had done everything possible to save them. He had sent His messengers to them, "but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, . . . till there was no remedy." 2 Chron. 36:15, 16.

9. What message did the Lord send to them? If they turned to the Lord, what would He do? Zech. 1:3.

NOTE.—God's return to us is dependent upon our return to Him. It was when the prodigal son turned and started home that the father ran to meet him. But it is just as true that God invites us to turn that He pleads with us to do so, and that He is anxiously waiting for the first signs of change on our part. If we do our part, God will do His.

Be Not As Your Fathers

10. Whom were they counseled not to be like? What had the former prophets cried? How had the fathers heeded the counsel given? Verse 4.

NOTE.—"Be ye not as your fathers." This had a very definite application to those to whom it was spoken, but it has also a present application. We are not to do and believe as the fathers did merely because they are our fathers. Their ways might be right or wrong. That a belief has been held a long time and adhered to by even good men is no assurance that it is right.

By the "former prophets" is meant those before the captivity, such as Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Micah.

11. What question is asked concerning the fathers and the prophets? Verse 5.

NOTE.—This verse connects closely with the following one. The thought is this: the fathers who have received the warnings are dead; the prophets who gave the warnings are also dead. But this in no way affects the message. Prophets may die, but God's word abides forever.

12. How had God's word and statutes affected the fathers? What were they compelled to acknowledge? Verse 6.

NOTE.—"Did they not take hold of your fathers?" or better (as in the margin, or R. V.), "Did they not overtake your fathers?" The fathers thought that they might escape the threatenings of God, but His word overtook them. Punishment, though delayed, caught up with them. They were compelled to acknowledge that as God had thought to do unto them, "so hath He dealt with us."

Reflections

God wants His people to be enthusiastic in their work; He wants them to be mightily stirred. But this enthusiasm must be intelligently directed, or it may do more harm than good. Often those in error are more enthusiastic than those who have the truth. This ought not to be. Above all, God does not want a lukewarm people. Rev. 3:15.

Some are much interested in "the fathers." Whatever the fathers taught and believed, they think and believe. But there is danger in this. We are to get our faith from the word of God, not from any human source. The fathers are to be followed only as they followed the Lord.

Lesson 10, for December 9, 1939

For Daily Lesson Study Records Only.

SABBATH	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY

Difficulties Surmounted

MEMORY VERSE: "Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid." Ezra 6:3.

STUDY HELP: "Prophets and Kings," pp. 578-580; 598-600.

Tatnai Investigates

1. As a result of the admonition of Haggai and Zechariah, what did the leaders of the people in Jerusalem begin to do? Who helped them? Ezra 5:1, 2.

2. Who came to them at this time? What questions did they ask? Verses 3, 4.

NOTE.—It would be natural for the governor to inquire into the matter of building, for the preceding king had given strict orders that the building should cease. Ezra 4:21, 22.

The American Revised Version of Ezra 5:4 makes it clear that the elders gave to Tatnai the names of the leaders who were carrying forward the building. In his letter to Darius, Tatnai says he asked for this information. Ezra 5:10.

3. How was God's protecting care shown to the remnant? Verse 5.

NOTE.—God's eye was over His people. It would be most natural for the governor to demand that the work cease until he received notice from the king as to what should be done. On the contrary, he permitted the work to go on until word came from the king that the former order was canceled or was still in force.

The Governor's Report

4. What did the governor report to the king concerning the progress of the work in Jerusalem? Verses 6-8.

NOTE.—Tatnai was evidently impressed with the work which was being done on the temple. He mentions the "great stones" they were using, and

says that the work "goeth fast on, and prospereth in their hands." Haggai might not think that the work was moving fast enough, but to an onlooker it appeared that much was being done.

5. What questions did Tatnai report that he had asked, and what answers were given? When Israel provoked the Lord, what had God done? Verses 9-12.

NOTE.—These questions are the same as reported in verses 3 and 4. The answers which the Jews return are frank and truthful, and Tatnai reports them correctly.

It is evident from the answers given, that Israel was not in doubt as to the reason for their captivity. They knew that they had provoked God and that they deserved the punishment they had received. It is refreshing to know that they did not hide even from the governor the mistakes they had made. Such practice is always commendable.

The Decree of Cyrus

6. What decree had Cyrus issued many years previously? What command had he given concerning the vessels of gold and silver? Verses 13-15.

7. Who did the Jews say had laid the foundation of the temple? Verse 16.

NOTE.—When Sheshbazzar, who is thought to be the same as Zerubbabel, is mentioned as having laid the foundation of the temple, it is because he was the civil leader, appointed governor of Judea by the king. Joshua, the high priest, and others also, had part in laying the foundation. Ezra 3:8-13.

8. What request did the governor make in regard to the decree of Cyrus? Ezra 5:17.

NOTE.—It appears that Tatnai was fair in his report. He was not as much opposed to the work as was his predecessor, but permitted the work to proceed.

9. When, after a futile search at Babylon, the decree was finally found in the palace at Achmetha (sometimes called Ecbatana; now Hamadan), what was it found to contain? Ezra 6:1-5.

NOTE.—The decree of Cyrus had been accurately reported by the Jews. It not only permitted the house to be built, but provided that the foundation be "strongly laid," and that "the expenses be given out of the king's house." It also provided for the return of the vessels to Jerusalem that they might be put in the house of God.

10. What did Darius command as to the building of the temple? Verses 6, 7.

NOTE.—Tatnai was commanded to let the builders alone. "The governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews" were definitely permitted to go on with the work. The immediate crisis was past, and the Jews could proceed with the work.

The Decree of Darius

11. What decree did Darius issue? Verses 8-10.

NOTE.—This was more than might be expected. The Jews would have considered it a wonderful deliverance to get permission to continue to build. But the king goes farther than this. He commands that the expenses of building be met from "the tribute beyond the river," and that it be done "forth-

with." He provides further that all the things necessary for sacrifice be given from day to day "without fail," and that the Jews "pray for the life of the king, and of his sons."

12. What further decree did the king issue? Verses 11, 12.

NOTE.—This was rather drastic, but shows that the king was in earnest. If any man as much as altered any of the king's decree, his house was to be torn down and the timbers from it used to erect a gallows on which he was to be hanged. As a closing signature the decree states, "I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed."

This second decree for permission or command to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem was in harmony with the decree of Cyrus given formerly. It was in reality a confirmation of what had already been commanded and permitted.

13. After the issuance of this decree, what did Tatnai do? Verse 13.

NOTE.—Tatnai had no choice now. And he did not seem to hesitate. He "did speedily" what was required of him.

Reflections

The experience recorded in this study contains an important lesson. The Jews were face to face with a legal enactment which forbade the erecting of the temple. Most of them were clear that nothing could be done. "The time has not come to build," they said.

But among the people were some who had faith, and when the prophet encouraged them, they were ready to go ahead. And as they followed the lead of the prophet, God opened the way. One king dies, another king comes to the throne who is more favorable, and they begin the work in faith. When the governor, Tatnai, inquires of their activities, they give an honest and persuasive answer, and are permitted to continue to build until word comes from the king. The leaders had wisdom so to put their case that when search is made, their contention is verified. We are assured that there is light in this experience for the children of God today. We are to work in harmony with whatever government we are under, but we are also permitted to take advantage of such openings as God in His providence provides.

"Under the favor shown them by Cyrus, nearly fifty thousand of the children of the captivity had taken advantage of the decree permitting their return. These, however, in comparison with the hundreds of thousands scattered throughout the provinces of Medo-Persia, were but a mere remnant. The great majority of the Israelites had chosen to remain in the land of their exile, rather than undergo the hardships of the return journey and the re-establishment of their desolated cities and homes.

"A score or more of years passed by, when a second decree, quite as favorable as the first, was issued by Darius Hystaspes, the monarch then ruling. Thus did God in mercy provide another opportunity for the Jews in the Medo-Persian realm to return to the land of their fathers. The Lord foresaw the troublous times that were to follow during the reign of Xerxes,—the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther,—and He not only wrought a change of feeling in the hearts of men in authority, but also inspired Zechariah to plead with the exiles to return."—*"Prophets and Kings,"* pp. 598, 599.

THIRTEENTH SABBATH OFFERING

December 30, 1939—Southern Asia

For Daily Lesson Study Records Only.

SABBATH	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY

The Glory of the Second Temple

MEMORY VERSE: "Be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts." Haggai 2:4.

STUDY HELP: "Prophets and Kings," pp. 596, 597.

The Two Temples Contrasted

1. When did the next message come from the Lord? Haggai 2:1.

NOTE.—The seventh month corresponds roughly to our September. The events related in the last lesson took place in the second year also. Very likely the decree of Darius permitting the Jews to proceed with the building of the temple had not arrived at the time this message came to Zerubbabel.

2. To whom was the message sent? What questions were asked? Verses 2, 3.

NOTE.—Those who had seen Solomon's temple were painfully aware that the present structure did not compare with the former temple in magnificence and glory. "Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?" God asked, and the people were ready to agree that it so seemed to them.

"But the second temple had not equaled the first in magnificence; nor was it hallowed by those visible tokens of the divine presence which pertained to the first temple. There was no manifestation of supernatural power to mark its dedication. No cloud of glory was seen to fill the newly erected sanctuary. No fire from heaven descended to consume the sacrifice upon its altar. The Shekinah no longer abode between the cherubim in the most holy place; the ark, the mercy seat, and the tables of the testimony were not to be found therein. No voice sounded from heaven to make known to the inquiring priest the will of Jehovah."—*"The Great Controversy,"* p. 24.

3. What encouraging word was sent to Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the people? What comforting message is repeated? Verse 4.

NOTE.—Three times the admonition "be strong" is repeated in this verse. To this are added the significant words, "and work." The complete admonition is, therefore, "be strong and work." God has a purpose in giving a man strength, or wealth, or blessing. It is not that he may consume it upon himself, but that he may use God's blessings for the benefit of his fellow men.

"I am with you." These are the same words that are used in Haggai 1:13. Even though the decree permitting them to build most likely had not as yet arrived from Darius, upon receiving encouragement from Haggai and Zechariah the people had resumed building. God wanted them to know that He was with them.

4. According to what covenant was God's promise to be with His people? What is said of the Spirit? Haggai 2:5.

NOTE.—The exact reading of the original of this verse is difficult to determine, and it is, therefore, variously translated. But the general intent is clear. God had made a covenant with Israel when He brought them out of Egypt.

Ex. 19:3-7. That was hundreds of years before, and many things had befallen Israel since that time. But God had not forgotten His covenant with them, though they had often forgotten God and broken the covenant which they had so solemnly made. At that time they had built the tabernacle as God commanded them, in which sacrifices and offerings had been made day by day which could never take away sin. Heb. 10:1-4. Now Israel was engaged in building a temple to which the Redeemer Himself should come, the One whom all the offerings typified. God remembered His part of the covenant even if they had forgotten theirs.

"My Spirit remaineth among you." The temple they were building could not compare in outward glory with Solomon's temple, which many of the older men had seen. But God's promise was, "I am with you," and "My Spirit remaineth among you." Under such conditions they would not need to be discouraged. On the contrary they had all reason to be strong and finish the work.

Signs in the Heavens and on the Earth

5. What does God say will happen in "a little while"? Haggai 2:6.

6. In what setting is this text placed in the book of Hebrews? Heb. 12:25-27.

NOTE.—The writer of Hebrews mentions the time when God spoke the Ten Commandments from heaven and "Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." Ex. 19:18. As the earth at that time was shaken by the voice of God, so "yet once more" will God "shake not the earth only, but also heaven." This will take place in connection with the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven. Just before the coming of the Son of man, "there appears against the sky a hand holding two tables of stone folded together. Says the prophet, 'The heavens shall declare His righteousness: for God is judge Himself.' Ps. 50:6. That holy law, God's righteousness, that amid thunder and flame was proclaimed from Sinai as the guide of life, is now revealed to men as the rule of judgment. The hand opens the tables, and there are seen the precepts of the Decalogue, traced as with a pen of fire. The words are so plain that all can read them. Memory is aroused, the darkness of superstition and heresy is swept from every mind, and God's ten words, brief, comprehensive, and authoritative, are presented to the view of all the inhabitants of the earth."—*"The Great Controversy,"* p. 639.

In connection with the presentation of the Ten Commandments to all the inhabitants of the earth, "above the terrific roar of thunder, voices, mysterious and awful, declare the doom of the wicked."—*Id.*, p. 638.

At last "the King of kings descends upon the cloud, wrapped in flaming fire. The heavens are rolled together as a scroll, the earth trembles before Him, and every mountain and island is moved out of its place. 'Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people.' Ps. 50:3, 4."—*Id.*, pp. 641, 642.

7. What does God say He will do to the nations? Haggai 2:7, first part.

NOTE.—Before the coming of the Son of man, there shall be a shaking of the nations. We are witnessing some of this today. Of this Christ says: "There

shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." Luke 21:25, 26.

The Desire of Nations

8. Who shall come? Haggai 2:7, second part.

NOTE.—"The second temple was not honored with the cloud of Jehovah's glory, but with the living presence of One in whom dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily—who was God Himself manifest in the flesh. The 'Desire of all nations' had indeed come to His temple when the Man of Nazareth taught and healed in the sacred courts. In the presence of Christ, and in this only, did the second temple exceed the first in glory."—*"The Great Controversy,"* p. 24.

9. What did God say that He would do to the temple they were building? Verse 7, last part.

NOTE.—In these verses we have an example of what are called double prophecies, that is, prophecies having a double application.

Commentators throw doubt on the interpretation given above, that the phrase "Desire of all nations" can be applied to Christ, pointing out that this cannot be, as the noun is in the singular while the verb is plural. We submit that no other interpretation fits the case as well as the one given, and that no grammatical construction so far suggested by any commentator will clear away all the difficulties of the language. We stand on as good ground as our critics when we interpret the text as above. Also, it should be noted that many Bible scholars, despite the findings of the critics, accept the interpretation of the "Desire of all nations" as being Christ, as on the whole the most probably correct one.

The statement, "I will fill this house with glory," seems to refer definitely to the presence of Christ in the temple here on earth. "In the presence of Christ, and in this only, did the second temple exceed the first in glory."—*"The Great Controversy,"* p. 24. We are, therefore, compelled to believe that when God says that He will fill "this house with glory," He has reference to the first coming of Christ when He walked among men and taught in the temple.

It does not seem possible, however, to apply all the statements of verses 6 and 7 to the first coming of Christ. Indeed, while the statement that the "Desire of all nations" shall come may be equally applicable to the first and to the second coming of Christ, the other statement that God will "shake all nations," seems to have a clear application to the second rather than to the first coming. We do not deny that there was a shaking of the nations before the first coming of Christ, but the evident and clear application of this part of the prophecy is to the second coming. Under these circumstances we accept the principle of the double application of prophecy, rather than to attempt to find a strained and unnatural fulfillment of the predictions. We therefore hold that verse 6 and the first part of verse 7 have particular reference to the second coming of Christ, while the latter part of verse 7 refers to the first coming.

10. What does God say belongs to Him? Verse 8.

NOTE.—The connection in which this statement is found is significant. The old men were bemoaning the difference between the house they were build-

ing and Solomon's temple. To them it was "as nothing" in comparison. Verse 3. But God was calling their attention to something more important than outward show. With all the glory of Solomon's temple, God had not been pleased with the service the people had rendered Him. Though they had offered thousands of rams and ten thousands of rivers of oil, their worship was not acceptable. Micah 6:7. They had failed to see the intent of the service, failed to look to Him to whom all offerings pointed.

But this insignificant temple, this house that was contemptible in their eyes, should be honored above all other dwellings on earth. The "Desire of all nations" should come to it. God is in effect saying, "Gold and silver is not all. It all belongs to Me. There is something more important. *I* am with you. *My Son*, the 'Desire of all nations,' shall come to you. *My Spirit* remains among you. With God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, you need not worry over the appearance of the house. If I am satisfied with it, you should be."

11. What does God reaffirm as to the glory of this latter house? Haggai 2:9, first part.

12. What does God say He will give in this place? Verse 9, last part.

Reflections

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. 8:31. The Jews had been hindered in many ways in their building, and at this time were confronted with the possibility of being stopped again at any moment. But God assures them that He is with them, and that they need not fear. The blessed Trinity, the Lord of hosts, the "Desire of all nations," and the Spirit, is guarantee of the success of the work.

We have the same assurance. If nations stand in the way, God will shake the nations. If means are lacking, God wants us to know that all the gold and the silver are His. If the temple looks insignificant in comparison with what some of the old men have seen, God has something in mind that will make it more glorious than all the gold in the world could accomplish. The lesson therefore is, trust God, do what He says, and all will be well.

Lesson 12, for December 23, 1939

For Daily Lesson Study Records Only.

SABBATH	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY

Blessings Upon Condition of Obedience

MEMORY VERSE: "From this day will I bless you." Haggai 2:19.

STUDY HELP: "Christ's Object Lessons," pp. 288-290.

Two Important Questions

1. When did the word of the Lord next come to Haggai? How long was this after the previous message? Haggai 2:10, 1.

NOTE.—There was a little more than two months between the messages. From verse 18 we learn that the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month was

counted as the day on which the rebuilding began. There had been some work done previous to this, but now the work began in earnest.

2. Whom were the people to ask concerning the law? What was the duty of the priests? Verse 11; Mal. 2:7.

NOTE.—The people had a right to expect the priests to know the law, "for the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth." Mal. 2:7. The reason given for this is that he "is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." This puts a great responsibility upon the minister. He is expected to know the law.

3. What was the question asked of the priests? What answer did they return? Haggai 2:12.

NOTE.—Certain offerings were eaten by the priests, "in the holy place shall it be eaten, in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation. Whatsoever shall touch the flesh thereof shall be holy." Lev. 6:26, 27. Only such as were ceremonially clean might eat of the flesh or touch it. A priest might take a piece of the flesh offered in sacrifice and carry it from one place to another, perhaps for the purpose of eating it. In thus carrying it he would cover it with the skirt of his garment so that it would touch nothing unclean on the way. The garment being holy as well as the flesh, the question was this, that if on the way the garment—not the flesh—should touch something eatable, such as "bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat," would such article become holy because it had touched the garment? The priests promptly and rightly answer no. Holiness is not thus conveyed. While the flesh itself was considered holy—in Lev. 6:29 it is called "most holy"—and while the garment or skirt in which it was carried also was holy, that which the garment touched did not therefore become holy.

4. What other question was now asked? What answer was given? Haggai 2:13.

NOTE.—The priests also answered this correctly. A man may not be unclean in himself, but if he touches anything unclean he not only becomes unclean himself, but whatever he thereafter touches he defiles.

The intent of the lesson is clear. A holy thing cannot transmit its holiness, but a polluted thing can transmit its pollution. Num. 19:22. Sin is more contagious than righteousness. Children, young people, older people, all, are more easily affected by sin than by righteousness.

The Application of the Lesson

5. What lesson does Haggai draw from these answers? Haggai 2:14, first part.

NOTE.—"So is this people, and so is this nation." Some doubtless had the idea that because they were the chosen people of God; because God had been gracious to them and brought them back to the land from which they had been banished years before; because they were now building the temple and thus carrying on a holy work, therefore God, because of these favors, would overlook some of the things they were doing which were not right. In other words, being engaged in a good work, would not their other shortcomings be covered over and excused by that good work?

Some people think that because they belong to the church, or are faithful in tithe paying, or go to prayer meeting, or do some other good thing, these

good deeds ought to recommend them to God and cover their sins in other respects. God wants us to know that holiness is not communicated to that which is unclean in itself because the one who does the unclean thing is carrying on a holy work. One good deed does not cover over another evil deed.

A good illustration of the attitude here portrayed is found in the parable of the Pharisee who thanked God that he was not as other men. Luke 18:11, 12. Surely, he thought, these good deeds ought to commend him to God.

To illustrate further: The tithe is holy, even as the flesh which the priest carried was holy. Does the fact that a man pays tithe, or that he receives tithe, sanctify all that he does? If such a man touches the unclean, if he does what he ought not to do, if he does an unclean thing, is that thing sanctified because it is done by a man who carries or receives that which is holy? There are those who think so, and would like to have the law thus interpreted. But let all know that an unclean thing is not condoned, not sanctified, not overlooked, because a man is engaged in a holy cause. Sin is sin whoever commits it, and no amount of good which a man may have done will condone any wrongdoing. The unclean act is not made clean by being committed by one who carries "holy flesh."

6. What did God say was the condition of that which they offered? Haggai 2:14, last part.

NOTE.—The remnant was at this time engaged in a meritorious work, that of rebuilding the temple. But apparently things were not as they should be. That which they offered was unclean, and was not acceptable to God. This does not mean that they offered unclean animals, but that their lives were not clean, and that hence their worship was not accepted of God.

God had spoken very plainly to them that they were to consider their ways. With all their present zeal for building, yet God could say to them as He does in verse 17 that they had not turned to Him. This means nothing less than that there was still sin in the camp, that the people were really not yet converted, and that God under these circumstances could not accept their offerings. That they were now engaged in a good work would not atone for their other shortcomings.

Consider Now

7. What are the people again told to do? Verses 15, 18.

NOTE.—While the people had been at work for some time, it was not until they turned to the Lord that God could accept their work and bless them.

8. What had the people found before this time? With what had God smitten them? What had they not done? Verses 16, 17.

9. What question does God ask? How does He answer it? What promise does He make? Verses 18, 19.

NOTE.—These words of the Lord constitute a challenge comparable to that recorded in Malachi, "Prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Mal. 3:10. God is now telling the people that if they will turn to Him, the very day they do so will mark a turning point in their history, and from that day God will bless them.

If God asked Israel of old to build Him a house, and at the same time told them that their work and offerings were accepted only as they at the same time laid aside sin, we may be certain that God will ask no less of His people today.

"Is the seed yet in the barn?" that is, is there anything left of last year's crop? The answer is expected to be in the negative. It was now the ninth month, and there were yet four months until the wheat harvest. It was too early to know what the coming harvest would be, but God here promises them an abundance if they will do His will. It was for them to decide what the future should be. If they would do God's will, "from this day will I bless you."

A Personal Word of Encouragement

10. What statement does God emphasize through repetition? Haggai 2:20, 21. (See also verse 6.)

11. What will God overthrow? How will He accomplish this? Verse 22.

NOTE.—God often uses one nation to overthrow another. In this case God says that they shall "come down, everyone by the sword of his brother." God used Medo-Persia to overthrow Babylon, and Greece to overthrow Medo-Persia. Thus God did with other nations, and thus God did in the land of Canaan. Brother nations were often used by God for the purpose of punishing His people.

12. What special promise was given to Zerubbabel? Verse 23.

NOTE.—Commentators are generally agreed that this message to Zerubbabel has Messianic import. God says that He will shake the heavens and the earth. While we can find an application of this statement to the times then present in the overthrow of "the throne of kingdoms," we find the complete and satisfying fulfillment only in the overthrow of kingdoms at the second coming of Christ.

It is evident that there could be only a partial fulfillment at that time of the promise that Zerubbabel shall be made a signet. Babylon had already fallen. Medo-Persia would not be overthrown for another two hundred years; then a long time would elapse before Greece would fall, and another still longer time before the overthrow of Rome. If "that day" has reference to these events, it is not easy to fit Zerubbabel into the prophecy. On the other hand, if "that day" has reference to the last time, it is just as hard to have Zerubbabel have any part in the prophecy.

Commentators are, therefore, generally agreed that there must have been some local situation of which we do not know that fulfilled the requirements of the promise here given to Zerubbabel, but that in the larger sense, the prophecy is Messianic, and that Zerubbabel is a type of Christ.

A signet ring was used for sealing purposes; it was a sign of authority. When Christ is said in Hebrews 1:3 to be "the express image" of the Father, the word used designates a stamp, an impress, a seal, a signet.

Reflections

The people of God in the time of Haggai were not all that they should be. It is quite a shock to learn that even though they were engaged in building the house of God and were following the lead of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, their service was not accepted of God. In the two questions asked of the priests, God reveals the reason for His displeasure. The people were engaged in a holy work, they were building a temple for their God—in the words of the questions they were carrying "holy flesh"—but their lives were not right, and God could not accept them. A contemplation of this should cause all to review their lives and their motives.

On the other hand, we are not to forget the wonderful kindness of God in His willingness to forget the past the moment the people would turn to Him with all their heart. The people had sinned, they had come short in many ways, but "from this day will I bless you." God wanted them to forget the past, to begin again, and from the very day they turned, from that day He would bless.

That promise holds good today, for God is not a respecter of persons. You have sinned. You have done evil. But if you are ready to turn, from this day God will bless you. God issues this challenge. Shall we accept it?

Lesson 13, for December 30, 1939

For Daily Lesson Study Records Only.

SABBATH	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY

The Decree of Artaxerxes

MEMORY VERSE: "We do not present our supplications before Thee for our righteousnesses, but for Thy great mercies." Dan. 9:18.

STUDY HELP: "Prophets and Kings," pp. 607-611; 628-634.

The Commandment to Restore and to Build Jerusalem

1. From what event are we told to reckon the beginning of the seventy weeks? Dan. 9:25.

2. When was the third decree issued? Ezra 7:7, 11.

NOTE.—This Artaxerxes came to the throne in 464 B. C. His seventh year would therefore be 457.

"About seventy years after the return of the first company of exiles under Zerubbabel and Joshua, Artaxerxes Longimanus came to the throne of Medo-Persia. The name of this king is connected with sacred history by a series of remarkable providences. It was during his reign that Ezra and Nehemiah lived and labored. He is the one who in 457 B. C. issued the third and final decree for the restoration of Jerusalem. His reign saw the return of a company of Jews under Ezra, the completion of the walls of Jerusalem by Nehemiah and his associates, the reorganization of the temple services, and the great religious reformations instituted by Ezra and Nehemiah. During his long rule, he often showed favor to God's people; and in his trusted and well-beloved Jewish friends, Ezra and Nehemiah, he recognized men of God's appointment, raised up for a special work."—*"Prophets and Kings,"* p. 607.

3. What were some of the provisions of this decree? Verses 12-26.

NOTE.—" 'Thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counselors,' Artaxerxes declared to Ezra, 'to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand.' And he further decreed: 'Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?' Ezra 7:14, 23.

"In giving permission to the Israelites to return, Artaxerxes arranged for the restoration of the members of the priesthood to their ancient rites and privileges. 'We certify you,' he declared, 'that touching any of the priests and Levites, singers, porters, Nethinims, or ministers of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom, upon them.' He also arranged for the appointment of civil officers to govern the people justly, in accordance with the Jewish code of laws. 'Thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand,' he directed, 'set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not. And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.' Ezra 7:24-26."—*"Prophets and Kings,"* pp. 610, 611.

4. What response was made to Ezra's appeal to return to Jerusalem? Who were found to be lacking? What did Ezra command, and with what result? Ezra 7:7; 8:15-20.

NOTE.—"Ezra had expected that a large number would return to Jerusalem, but the number who responded to the call was disappointingly small. Many who had acquired houses and lands had no desire to sacrifice these possessions. They loved ease and comfort, and were well satisfied to remain. Their example proved a hindrance to others who otherwise might have chosen to cast in their lot with those who were advancing by faith.

"As Ezra looked over the company assembled, he was surprised to find none of the sons of Levi. Where were the members of the tribe that had been set apart for the sacred service of the temple? To the call, Who is on the Lord's side? the Levites should have been the first to respond. . . .

"Once more Ezra appealed to the Levites, sending them an urgent invitation to unite with his company. To emphasize the importance of quick action, he sent with his written plea several of his 'chief men' and 'men of understanding.' Ezra 7:28; 8:16.

"While the travelers tarried with Ezra, these trusted messengers hastened back with the plea, 'Bring unto us ministers for the house of our God.' Ezra 8:17. The appeal was heeded; some who had been halting, made final decision to return. In all, about forty priests and two hundred and twenty Nethinim,—men upon whom Ezra could rely as wise ministers and good teachers and helpers,—were brought to the camp."—*"Prophets and Kings,"* pp. 612-615.

Nehemiah Takes Action

5. What report came to Nehemiah some years later? What did he do? Neh. 1:1-4.

NOTE.—Nehemiah had not returned with Ezra to Jerusalem in 457. He was, however, much interested in the progress of the work. Thirteen years had gone by since Ezra left, and matters were not progressing as they should in the city.

"By messengers from Judea, the Hebrew patriot learned that days of trial had come to Jerusalem, the chosen city. The returned exiles were suffering affliction and reproach. The temple and portions of the city had been rebuilt; but the work of restoration was hindered, the temple services were disturbed, and the people kept in constant alarm, by the fact that the walls of the city were still largely in ruins.

"Overwhelmed with sorrow, Nehemiah could neither eat nor drink; he 'wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted.' In his grief he turned to the divine Helper. 'I . . . prayed,' he said, 'before the God of heaven.' Faithfully he made confession of his sins and the sins of his people. He pleaded that God would maintain the cause of Israel, restore their courage and strength, and help them to build up the waste places of Judah."—*"Prophets and Kings,"* pp. 628, 629.

6. What request did Nehemiah make of the king? What was the king's response? Neh. 2:5-8.

NOTE.—Nehemiah asked of the king, "That thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchers, *that I may build it."* It was now not a question of the *temple,* but of the *city,* the very thing concerning which Daniel 9:25 speaks. The king granted the request, but did not issue another decree. He therefore considered that the decree issued thirteen years before covered the point. It is evident that it took the three decrees of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes to fulfill the prophecy of Daniel regarding the command to *restore* and *rebuild* Jerusalem. Dan. 9:25. This third decree gave Ezra such power of jurisdiction as had not been given before. As a result of these three decrees, the temple, the city, and the government had been restored. The date of Artaxerxes' decree, 457 B. C., is, therefore, the time from which to reckon the beginning of the seventy weeks and the accompanying longer period, the 2300 days.

7. After Nehemiah had arrived at the city of his fathers and had inspected it, what invitation did he extend to the leaders of the people? How did they respond? Neh. 2:17, 18.

8. How long did it take to finish the wall? Neh. 6:15.

9. What were some of the difficulties confronting the builders? Neh. 4:7-12.

NOTE.—Nehemiah states, "We made our prayer *unto our God, and set a watch."* We are not to neglect to pray, neither are we to leave undone anything that we can do to help ourselves.

10. How diligent were the men in the work? Verses 19-23.

11. When the wall was finished and the people gathered together, what took place? Neh. 8:1-8.

NOTE.—The people were all gathered together by the water gate where Ezra and his companions read to them out of the book of the law "distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." The congregation at that time numbered about 50,000. Neh. 7:66, 67.

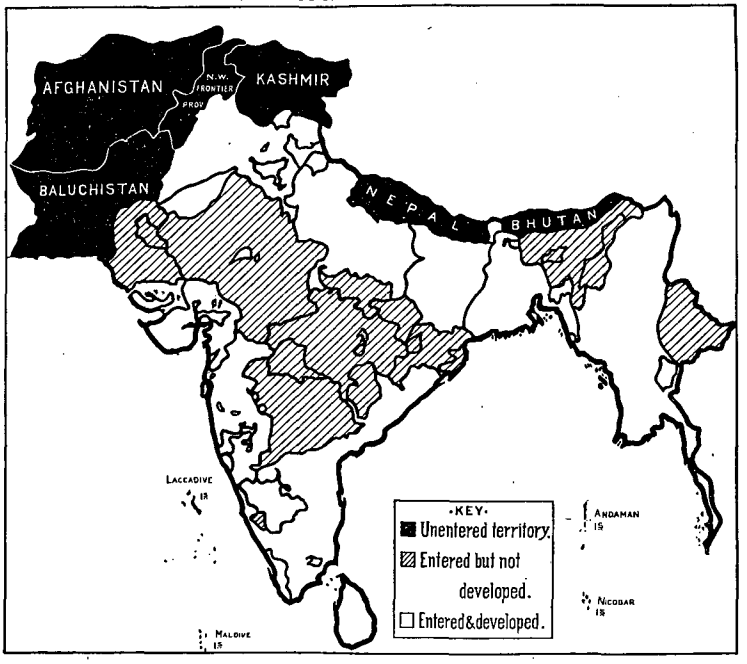
This was a most solemn occasion. There was yet much work to be done, for "the city was large and great: but the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded." Verse 4. But the temple was finished, the city was enclosed with walls, and God's people had once more a place where they could worship God unmolested. With fasting and sackcloth they turned to the Lord, separated themselves from the strangers, stood and confessed their sins and their iniquities, read in the book of the law one fourth part of the day, and another fourth part confessed and worshiped the Lord their God. Neh. 9:1-3.

12. What were the final acts in this great consecration? Neh. 9:38; 10:28-31.

NOTE.—As a fitting conclusion to this great service of consecration, the people pledged themselves to walk in the statutes of the Lord and to do His will. Particularly they agreed to "observe and do all the commandments of the Lord." They agreed that they would not intermarry with the people of the land, and that they would keep the Sabbath. Verses 29-31. Their agreement also included the payment of the third part of a shekel for the temple service, —we would call it church expense,—the payment of first fruits and tithes, and that they would not forsake the house of God. Verses 32, 37, 39.

This great consecration took place at the beginning of the twenty-three hundred days. As the beginning of this period was a time of turning to the Lord with fasting and prayer, a time of consecration and of entering into covenant relationship with God, so it might be fitting that the same spirit of consecration should possess those who are living at the close of the period.

Southern Asia Division



THIRTEENTH SABBATH OFFERING

The greatest need of India and Burma today is a larger indigenous ministry; in order to meet this need, added facilities must be supplied to our two training schools—Spicer College in South India and Vincent Hill School at Mussoorie. Will you not help by giving a liberal offering on the last Sabbath of the quarter?

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