

NOTES ON THE PROPHECY AND LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH

“The Weeping Prophet”

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CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

THE HISTORICAL APPENDIX

(Chap. 52)

We have no means of knowing to whom, under God, we are indebted for the historical account of Zedekiah's captivity here narrated. It has pleased God not to reveal the name of the man whom He chose for this. The chapter is practically a duplication of II Kings 24:18-20 and 25 et al. Doubtless the Holy Spirit was pleased to have it transcribed from the other record in order that the prophecy and the record of its literal fulfilment might thus appear together. It is not necessary that we know exactly who the writers of the various Old Testament books were, in order to be sure of their divine inspiration.

Our Lord has settled that beyond the peradventure of a doubt by declaring that “**the Scripture cannot be broken;**” thus setting His seal upon every portion of the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, as we know them. The Holy Ghost has likewise told us, through the apostle Paul, that “**all Scripture is inspired** [God-breathed];” and it is to be remembered that the present portion was accepted as a part of the Scripture at the time the words were written.

False prophets had predicted the ultimate triumph of Zedekiah over Nebuchadrezzar. Jeremiah had proclaimed the unpopular truth of his crushing overthrow. History attests the reliability of his words. Zedekiah reigned eleven years in all. He was a brother of both Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim, and therefore a son of the pious Josiah; his mother being identical with the mother of the former king, namely, Hamutal the daughter of another Jeremiah, whose ancestral home was in Libnah (ver. 1).

We have already noted that this Zedekiah, like his two immediate predecessors, forsook the ways of his father, and “**did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.**”

He had been placed upon the throne as a kind of vice-king by Nebuchadrezzar after the carrying away of his brother to Babylon, having pledged himself to serve the Chaldean. Treacherous, and in every sense untrustworthy, he shortly after added to his manifold iniquities that of rebellion against his liege lord, in violation of his oath of fealty (vers. 2, 3), seeking an alliance with Egypt. This it was that brought the armies of the king of Babylon once more to the gates of Jerusalem.

The siege was begun on the tenth day of the tenth month, in the ninth year of Zedekiah. Upon the ninth day of the fourth month, in the eleventh year, the garrison became so weakened by means of war, pestilence, and eventually by famine in the city, that a breach was made in the wall, and all the men of war fled **“by night by the way of the gate, between the two walls, which is by the king’s garden.”**

Zedekiah himself essayed to go with them, as before noted in chapter 39, only to be apprehended in the plains of Jericho, by the Chaldeans. Taken to Riblah, where Nebuchadrezzar was at the time, he was most severely dealt with. His two sons slain and his own eyes put out, he was carried in fetters to Babylon and kept in prison until the day of his death (vers. 4-11). Thus he had to learn that it was an evil thing and bitter to have forsaken the Lord his God. Jerusalem was burned to the ground (including the temple built by Solomon) and the walls broken down; it doubtless being the intention of the conqueror that it should be ruined beyond repair (vers. 12-14). This was not God’s mind, however; He had decreed as to Babylon what its king thought to do to the capital of Judah.

Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, transported the bulk of the surviving population to Babylon, leaving a few of the poorest of the people to be vinedressers and husbandmen. Even in this he was fulfilling the Word of the Lord, though he probably knew it not (ver. 15).

With the captives, he carried away the temple furniture, and even its pillars, thus despoiling the house of the Lord and dedicating its sacred things to idols. The various pieces are mentioned in detail, recorded in God’s book, and are precious as setting forth in various aspects the Person or work of His beloved Son (vers. 17-23); and when the impious Belshazzar defiantly used them in honor of his false deities in his revelry, how fitting that the predicted judgment should fall on that night of culminative blasphemy! *

*** Shortly after this, by order of Cyrus, they were brought out from the idol temples where Nebuchadrezzar had placed them; and, carefully numbered, were returned to Jerusalem with the returning remnant. (See Ezra 1:7-11).**

A number of priests, as well as officers and princes, besides threescore men of the city, were taken to Riblah and slain before the haughty tyrant who held court there. Thus, without mercy, was Judah devoured by the wild beast of the nations (vers. 24-28).

Three separate times the king of Babylon carried away a portion of the people. In his seventh year he deported over three thousand Jews (II Kings 24:12). In his eighteenth year over eight hundred and thirty more were enslaved. This is the occasion here referred to. Later, in his twenty-third year, he was responsible for the carrying away of seven hundred and forty-five persons, making thus three distinct deportations (vers. 28-30).

Thus had Judah been ruined; her cities destroyed; her fields trodden down; and her people slain or brought into captivity. Such had been the awful result of forgetting the law of her God. But He had thoughts of compassion for her still, and would yet grant a deliverance from her cruel enemy. Accordingly, the book closes by giving a hint of better days coming.

In the thirty-seventh year of Jehoiachin's captivity, Evil-Merodach (who came to the throne of Babylon 561 B. C).. conferred signal honor upon the deposed king of Judah by taking him out of the prison and speaking kindly to him: giving him a throne and a position of honor above other vassal kings in Babylon, he changed his prison garments and gave him to eat of the royal fare (vers. 31-34). Thus a measure of prosperity was restored to him, through the favor of Evil-Merodach, who appointed him a regular allowance till the day of his death.

Zedekiah had died in prison. His predecessor on the throne was advanced to a position of honor. Jerusalem still lay a ruined heap amid the desolations of Immanuel's land; but God's heart was toward His people, and the year of her release drew on.

~ end of chapter 26 ~

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