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THE TEACHER.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1872.

SUNDAY, June 23rd, 1872.

Judah carried Captive.—2 Kings 24: 10-16.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down; yea, we wept when we remembered Zion." Ps. cxxxvii. 1.

SCRIPTURE SELECTION.—2 Chron. xxxvi; Psalm cxxxvii.

SUMMARY.—For the people's sin Judah was vanquished, Jerusalem captured, the temple rifled and afterward burned, and the nation itself for seventy years held as captives in Babylon.

ANALYSIS.—1. The war, vs. 10-12. 2. The spoils, vs. 13-16.

EXPOSITION.—Transition.—Last Sabbath we were in the sick chamber of a godly king, heard the death message, saw the anguish, listened to the prayer, noted the answer and the joy of a new hope. Then it was Judah wrestling in prayer with God for deliverance from the terrible and threatening Assyrian. We now pass over more than a century. Hezekiah lived his fifteen years, and was quite as conspicuous for his high-handed wickedness and irreligion as his father had been for virtue and piety. ch. xxi. Ope good king, Josiah, follows, ruling thirty-one years. Three wicked kings of brief reign follow, and another evil-doeer Jehoiachin, takes the throne. ch. xxiv. 6. He became king at an early age, and has been but three months on the throne when our lesson introduces us to him. vs. 8. The mighty, boastful Assyrian power, according to God's prophecy, was twenty-five years before smitten down never to rise. Zephaniah ii. 13-15; Nahum, especially iii. 19. Instead of the Assyrians are the Chaldeans. We are now to hear, not prayer and the prediction of safety, but the tumult of war, the enemy's shout of triumph, and the wail of noble captives carried with the spoils of the temple from the holy land to the plains of bondage.

Verse 10.—"At that time," mentioned in vs. 8. It was in early spring. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 10. "The servants of Nebuchadnezzar" were his generals, and indeed his army. This was not the first visit of this same army to Jerusalem. It came on the same mission once and again before, and how successfully learn from Daniel i. 1, 2. Compare 2 Chronicles xxxvi. 5-7; 2 Kings xxiv. 1-4. For a good idea of the character of Nebuchadnezzar read the first four chapters of Daniel. For the first notice of Babylon see Genesis xi. 1-9. "It was situated on the Euphrates, two hundred miles above the Tigris, and three hundred above the Persian Gulf, and the same distance south by west from Nineveh [the capital of the Assyrian empire]. It stood on a perfect plain, and was an exact square of from ten to fifteen miles on each side of it." It was surrounded by a massive wall, according to Herodotus three hundred and thirty-seven and a half feet high and eighty-five feet thick; and through the midst of it ran the river Euphrates. Its final utter overthrow is predicted in Jeremiah l. and li; and nothing now marks its site but mounds formed by the ruins buried for many, many a century. The name has a singular symbolic spiritual significance in the book of Revelation. Babylon, this great city, was the capital of the Chaldean empire. Two weeks ago we were in a besieged city, where starvation met us; then in Samaria, Israel's capital; now in Jerusalem, Judah's capital. Behold the severity of God, his retributive justice, how he punishes his chosen but guilty people; and remember, God changes not. The principles of his government abide forever.

Verse 11.—This is so worded that some have taken it to mean that Nebuchadnezzar first sent on his army to begin the siege, and that afterward he came in person to press the siege to a termination. He was, as the sequel shows, in dreadful earnest; for Judah had shown itself rebellious (vs. 1), and had been wont to look to the Egyptians for help; but the king of Babylon had cut off that staff. vs. 7. The Lord was now to make destruction sure; for the time was come.

Verse 12.—Hope fails. The city is in extremity. Famine and ruin stare king and people in the face, as at Samaria. Is there no Eliash to promise coming plenty?

Shall not a sound of horses and chariots as there be made to smite the ears and hearts of the besiegers? A prophet is not, has not been wanting, 2 Chronicles xxxvi. 15, 16. Jeremiah still lives; but he cannot speak save as he is bidden, and from the skies comes no promise of relief; hence nothing remains but to starve or surrender. The latter is preferred. The wicked king sowed the wind; now comes the whirlwind harvest. Perhaps Jehoiachin and his councillors hope by surrender to be left in Jerusalem, only paying tribute; but if so, they mistake. The sun must share the father's fate. 2 Chronicles xxxvi. 6.

Verse 13.—We have seen that this was not the first act of plunder and taking captives. Nothing before had equalled this in extent; yet one afterward, recorded in chapter xxv. 6-20, when the temple was not only rifled but burned, was final and decisive. These are the two principal deportations, the heavy strokes of wrath. That there was great and tempting treasure of gold in the magnificent temple built by Solomon, and so cherished by the true Jew, may be seen from 1 Kings vi. 13-38, and vii: yet not all was now taken, as appears from chapter xxv. 13-17. The golden vessels carried away formerly were probably such as the candlesticks, ark, etc. Daniel i. 2. Now "they cut in pieces," or rather simply "cut" the dishes, the utensils. Some conjecture that this refers to the cutting or stripping off of the gold borders and plating, others that it shows the vandalism and sacrilege in throwing the vessels together and disfiguring them. In either case it must have shocked to the utmost the sensibilities of a pious Jew, and been thought of with horror ever after; but so does God teach us to fear him and dread sin. "As the Lord had said" to Hezekiah when his heart was lifted up with pride after his recovery, and by the mouth of Isaiah, ch. xx. 16-18.

Verse 14.—"All Jerusalem," a general, popular statement, as what follows shows. So in Matthew iii. 5, "Then went out to him [John] Jerusalem and all Judea," a very common and fit style of speaking. The ten thousand include all the different orders mentioned, and are what is meant by "all Jerusalem." "The princes" and "the mighty men of valor" are put together on the one hand, and "the craftsmen and smiths" on the other. The latter were in general mechanics or artisans, workers in wood, metals, etc., the former men probably of some wealth, and regarded as holding higher positions. "Mighty men of valor" sometimes means men of wealth, as the word translated "valor" means strength in money as well as in muscle or courage. See ch. xv. 20. "Princes" were men in authority, civil or military. The number of "the poorest sort" left behind is neither told nor known. There was no little power left. vs. 20.

Verse 15.—Here is a more particular designation of the most prominent captives. Note how the fate of the king is signalled by the words "to Babylon." No longer a king in his own capital, he lives a captive in the Chaldean capital. The contrast! "And his mother," who seems by this prominence to have been the regent. Though vs. 8 makes him at this time eighteen years old, 2 Chronicles xxxvi. 9, and Matthew i. 11 make him but eight.

Verse 16.—The word here translated "might" is the same as that rendered valor in vs. 13. The seven thousand of this class and the thousand of the artificers leave two thousand of those mentioned in vs. 15; and here we have a reason why these were taken. They were dangerous to the Chaldeans if left behind; for such as they make and carry on war. They must be shorn of their power and made safe. Now to the desolation here described add that recorded in chapter xxv. 9-21, and remember the Jews' pride and love and hope, the strong national and social and religious feelings, make it all vivid in thought, not as a far off, long past, dead fact, but as a real experience of living men and women and children of a glorious favored city, and we cannot wonder at the deep sorrow that saturates the prophecies of the patriotic, tender-hearted, God-fearing Jeremiah; nor can we fail to bow before God with a deeper reverence for his character and a profounder conviction of the evil of sin. If we learn the majesty of divine law, the horrible evil of transgression and the certainty of the punishment of the guilty, we shall be well paid for our study.

QUESTIONS.—What was our last lesson? How many years between that and this? ch. xx. 6; xxi. 1; xxii. 1; xxiii. 36; xxiv. 8. Who at the time of this lesson

was king? vs. 8. What is said of his reign? vs. 9. Had there been prophets in Judah during the reigns of the bad kings? 2 Chronicles xxxvi. 14-16. How had they been treated?

Who was king of Babylon? vs. 10. Of what nation was Babylon the capital? ch. xxv. 5. What can you tell of the city? Genesis xi. 1-9. What was prophesied concerning it? Jeremiah l and li. What can you tell concerning Nebuchadnezzar? Daniel i. to iv. Had the Chaldeans been against Jerusalem before? vs. 2; Daniel i. 1, 2.

What did Jehoiachin and the chief men of the nation do? vs. 12. For what purpose? Was there any prophet in Judah at this time? Jeremiah i. 1-3. Why was not deliverance promised and given as in the last lesson and in the preceding one? vs. 3, 4. Does the love of God assure any one of endless forbearance? Roman ii. 4, 5.

What was done to the temple and the king's palace? vs. 13. Had the temple been partially despoiled before? Daniel i. 1, 2; 2 Chronicles xxxvi. 6, 7. How came there to be so much gold in the temple? 1 Kings vi. 20-38, and vii. 1 Kings xx. 13, 18.

Whom did the king carry away? vs. 14, 15. How many? Whom did he leave behind? Who was made king of these? vs. 17. To what place were the captives taken? What was afterward done to Jerusalem? ch. xxv. 2, 21. How long was the Babylonian captivity? 2 Chronicles xxxvi. 21. Of what worse captivity are we in danger? Timothy ii. 26. What is the remedy?

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. Scripture Catechism, 50, 51.

REVIEW of the Lessons of the past Three Months.

Youths' Department.

THE SLEEPY BOY.

I know a little boy: And I've often heard it said, That he never was so tired That he wished to go to bed. Though he scarcely can hold up His drowsy little head, Yet this very foolish boy Cannot bear to go to bed.

When the big golden sun Has lain down to sleep; When the lambs every one Are lying by the sheep; When underneath its wing Every chick tucks its head,— Still this odd little boy Does not like to go to bed.

Primroses and daisies Have shut their bright eyes; Grasshoppers and crickets Are singing lullabies; The fireflies have lighted Their lamps bright and yellow; And I'm sure it's dreaming-time For this sleepy little fellow.

The houseless little child Who has no place to sleep; Who on the ground must lie, Or in some doorway creep; O'er whom no clean white sheet, No blanket soft, is spread,— How happy he would be If he could "go to bed!"

But with a pretty nest All warm and soft and white, That's waiting for this boy, When it's time to say "Good-night!" With mamma's loving kiss, And her hand upon his head,— How strange a sleepy boy Should not like to go to bed!

THE CAPTAIN AND THE JEW.

A pious sailor went as one of the crew of a passenger steamer down the river to the sea. Over the ocean hovered a heavy, threatening fog. They went forward into it. Near the chimney a youth was shivering evidently in great anxiety. After a while he asked the sailor—

"Shall we have a storm?" "Do not allow yourself to be anxious, since the Lord knows in what condition we are, and 'like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.'"

With these words he turned away to his work. Years passed, and the sailor had become a captain. On one of his voyages a well-dressed gentleman drew near him with the question—

You remind me of a sailor who spoke encouragingly to me on my first voyage."

"What did he say?"

"I was terrified at the rough waves, and he told me, 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.' I was then a Jew, so the text was not unknown to me, but I could not call God my Father. Yet the sailor was, I plainly felt, quiet and happy as a child on his father's knee. First I wondered what could give a man such confidence, then I prayed and sought for it, and am now a Christian, and a missionary to my own people. Let me give you my card."

"How long is it since you were first on the high seas?"

"Seventeen years."

"Should you know the sailor if you saw him?"

"O, certainly, I have thought of him so often."

"He stands before you now."

"Impossible, captain. He was a common sailor."

"Is not yours a still more remarkable change. You were a Jew, and are now a Christian and a missionary. Why then in seventeen years' time should not a sailor become a captain?"

BACKBONE.

When you see a fellow-mortal Without fixed and fearless views, Hanging on the skirts of others; Walking in their cast-off shoes; Bowing low to wealth and favor, With abject, uncovered head, Ready to retract or waver; Willing to be drove or led; Walk yourself with firmer bearing; Throw your moral shoulders back; Show your spine has nerve and marrow— Just the things which his must lack. A stronger word Was never heard In sense and tone Than this, backbone.

When you see a theologian Hugging close some ugly creed, Fearing to reject or question Dogmas which his priest may read; Holding back all noble feeling; Choking down each manly view; Caring more for forms and symbols Than to know the Good and True; Walk yourself with firmer bearing; Throw your moral shoulders back; Show your spine has nerve and marrow— Just the things which his must lack. A stronger word Was never heard In sense and tone Than this, backbone.

When you see a politician Crawling through contracted holes; Begging for some fat position, In the ring or at the polls; With no sterling manhood in him; Nothing staple, broad or sound; Destitute of pluck or ballast; Double-sided all around; Walk yourself with firmer bearing; Throw your moral shoulders back; Show your spine has nerve and marrow— Just the things which his must lack. A stronger word Was never heard In sense and tone Than this, backbone.

A modest song and plainly told— The text is worth a mine of gold; For many men most sadly lack A noble stiffness in the back.

A LETTER FROM JAPAN.

Mrs. Prun from Albany, who has gone to Yokohama, in far-off Japan, to gather little children into the fold of Jesus, wrote this letter to Mary, Bertie, and Kitry, which I know you all will like to read.

"I think," she says, "there are more children in Japan, for its size and the number of grown-up people, than any other place in the world; and they are very good-natured children. Some folks say it is because their fathers and mothers let them do just as they please. Perhaps you think that is very nice; but I do not believe you would say so if you were to see these poor little dirty, sore-eyed, sore-headed children which crowd about you every step you take. One thing is very strange; almost every child between six and twelve years old, or even as young as four, looks as if it had two heads. How do you think that can be? This way Little children are carried on the back instead of in the arms; the larger children

carry the smaller ones, and they are fastened on with a strap so that they may not fall off. When they come towards you, you see a little head sticking up over the shoulders of a big head; and it seems at first like a child with two heads.

"Almost all the children here are covered with sores. The people are very wicked, and God punishes them by letting them be very sickly. It makes me sorry for the poor little children, who cannot help it. And what makes it worse is, there are a great many fleas. The fleas are as thick as flies, and their bites on the sore places must be very hard to bear. The saddest thing about it is, that they know no better way to live. They do not know that if they were clean and industrious they would have better homes. They do not know that the idols they pray to cannot help them.

"I saw a boy who had very sore eyes go into a temple, and go up to a great red image as high as the top of your room, with its mouth wide open and its tongue hanging out, and looking, oh, so hideous and dreadful; and the boy rubbed his hands on the feet and legs of the idol, and then rubbed his eyes. This was to have the idol cure his eyes. We know that this is very foolish, and that it will do no good. Do you not think we ought to teach them better, and help them to learn about our dear Father in heaven and the loving Saviour, who when he was on the earth healed all kinds of sickness?"

"Another thing which makes me sorry for the children is, they never sing. It is so sweet to hear our dear children sing their beautiful Sunday school hymns; but the little Japs have never been taught that they had voices to sing with, nor have they a single hymn written for them.

"We, the missionaries, have come here on purpose to teach them those things which make our little people so much wiser and happier than heathen children are. And will you not try and help us do this? We have hired a nice, large house, and fixed it up pleasantly, and we mean to ask some of the children to come to school here; and some to live with us, in order to teach them to teach as we do and tell the people about our dear Lord Jesus, and how they can love and please him. You know it costs money to get a house and buy tables and chairs and beds and everything which children need to make them comfortable. They must have food, too, and clothes, and somebody must be paid for washing and cooking for them. So, you see, we must have money; and where can we get it? Why, it must be given by those who pity these poor children and want to do them good. I hope you feel so, and would rather put some of your money in the missionary-box than spend it all on yourselves. That would make you selfish; but if you do something to help others to become better and happier, you will be better and happier yourselves, and grow more and more like God's dear Son."

This very interesting letter I hope all our children will read, and do something for their poor brothers and sisters in Japan.—Child's Paper.

DEAF, DUMB, AND BLIND.

A little deaf and dumb girl was taken to the institution for mutes at F—. She was at first very self-willed; but it pleased God to give her a new heart, and the love of Jesus was a transforming power. She became amiable and sweet-tempered, and was much beloved. But she was stricken down by disease and became blind. Thus she could neither speak nor hear nor see.

One day, the superintendent went in to see her. She knew he had come by the jarring caused by his footsteps; for the other senses of the deaf grow very acute as they are required to supplement the want of hearing.

How was the superintendent to speak to her? He made signs with his hands, and she felt them with hers. Thus the deaf converse in the dark. He said to her in this mute way:

"Are you afraid to die?"

"No, I am not afraid."

"Do you not wish that you could still continue to live?"

"Why should I desire to live? I cannot hear; I cannot speak; I am blind. But up yonder I shall have my sight again. I shall see the beautiful city. And then I shall hear. I shall know what sweet music is." Then raising her emaciated arm, she spelt with her slender fingers these words:

"Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly."

What a dear Saviour we have in Jesus! When he lays his chastening hand upon us, he does it in love. He sustains us in the darkest hour. He never, no, never forgets us.

God glorifies himself even by the tribulations of his children. He manifests his power to comfort, to bless, and to save.—American Messenger.