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FROM PELOUBET'S SELECT NOTES

First Quarter.

Lesson VIII. For Feb. 21, Ezra 1:1-11; 3:8-12.

THE SECOND TEMPLE.

GOLDEN TEXT.

They praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.—EZRA 3:11.

I. THE CAPTIVITY.

(I) The captivity of the Jews was begun B. C. 604, by the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. But there were several other times afterwards when captives and treasures were carried to Babylon.

(II.) THE MORAL CAUSES of the captivity were,—*first*, the sins of the Jews; idolatry being the chief. *Second*. The object of the captivity was not only to punish the Jews, but to renew and purify the nation, that it might hold and spread the true religion.

(III.) THE CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE DURING THE CAPTIVITY. Their treatment seems to have varied in different localities and at different times, but, at least in the earlier years, the iron of slavery entered deeply into their souls. Gradually, however, matters improved. Many were allowed to live in the capital, where a happier lot was offered. Bitterness gradually subsided, and they began to fall into their place as a recognized portion of the general community. In later years, many of the exiles possessed not only slaves, but horses, mules, camels, and asses, though the mass had still, necessarily, to support themselves by humble labor.

(IV.) NUMBERS. Probably not more than 100,000 were carried away to Babylon; but doubtless there was a large increase during the seventy years, and many of the descendants of the exiles from the kingdom of Israel (B. C. 721) joined with those from Judea (Neh. 7:34; Jer. 50:4).

(V.) THE EFFECT OF THE EXILE. (1) It broke the charm idolatry had hitherto exercised. (2) It produced a selected stock from which the renewed kingdom of God should grow. Among the exiles were the noblest of the Jewish race, the flower of the princes, patricians, and priests of Judah, of its skilled mechanics and once substantial burgesses. And only the most pious and devoted and heroic would be likely to join in the return. Thus there was a double sifting process. (3) It led to renewed study of the sacred scriptures. The Exile was the period in which the guardianship, transcription, and study of the written Scriptures became the special care of a distinct class, afterwards famous as the great order of the Scribes. (4) It had also the grand result of leading men to set increasing value on the spiritual services of religion, as contrasted with the merely ritual.

II. THE DECREE OF CYRUS. 1. *In the first year of Cyrus.* His first year as king at Babylon. He was king, 20 years before this, of Elam, and gradually extended his empire over the Persians and Medes, Babylonians and Chaldeans. *King of Persia.* Cyrus the great, the founder of the great Medoe-Prsian empire. *That the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled* (see Jer. 25:12; 29:10). This reference is a parenthetic statement of the historian, and did not form part of the proclamation. *The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus.* By the direct influence of his Holy Spirit. *Made a proclamation.* This was an official document.

2. *The Lord* (Jehovah) *God of Heaven.* "God of Heaven" seems to have been a usual title of the Supreme Being among the Persians. *Hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth.* Of course this is a somewhat extravagant boast of Cyrus, but he did possess a large part of the most prominent countries. *He hath charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem.* It is reasonable to conjecture that the king's attention was drawn by Daniel (see under verse 1) to the prophecy of Isaiah (44:28). Cyrus probably accepted this prophecy as a "charge" to rebuild the temple.

3. *Who is there among you?* The edict was not compulsory, but granted full permission to the Jewish exiles, in every part of his kingdom, who chose to return to his own country. *He is the God.* The great, living, supreme God. Cyrus and the Persians worshipped other lesser deities, but believed in one supreme God.

4. *Let the men of his place help him.* Cyrus finishes his decree by calling upon his heathen subjects to come to the aid of the poor Israelites, and assist them, in order that none may be hindered by poverty, or by the want of beasts of burden, from joining the band of emigrants, and setting out on their return to Jerusalem. *Besides the freewill offering.* The "offering" here intended is probably that made by Cyrus himself. (See vers. 7-11.) Cyrus required his subjects generally to follow his example, and to "help" the Jews out of their stores.

III. THE RETURN. (1) Their numbers. As the fruit of the proclamation a large number of the Jews went up to Palestine. There were 42,360 Jews, with 7,337 servants, including a band of 200 singers to aid the worship and cheer the march. The total was just about 50,000 (Ezra 1:64-67), so that more remained than went. (2) What they took with them. They had 435 camels, 736 horses, and 6,965 beasts of burden. Cyrus sent with them the treasures taken from the temple, numbering 5,400 vessels of gold and silver (Ezra 1:8-11). Their personal property must have amounted to considerable, for on their arrival at Jerusalem they contributed $400,000 in gold and silver for the rebuilding of the temple. "Nebuchadnezzar little thought that he was unconsciously preserving the sacred vessels of Israel in a safe and inviolable stronghold, till the day when Jehovah would bring about their restoration to his people." (3) Their leader was Zerubbabel, of the royal line of David. (4) Their journey must have taken over four months (Ezra 7:9).

IV. SETTLING IN PALESTINE. (1) On their arrival in their own land, the exiles, it would seem, proceeded first of all to their several cities, their first duty being to settle down in homes of their own.

(2) They made a great offering of property for the temple, 61,000 darics of gold= $275,000, and 5,000 minas of silver= $135,000.

(3) All the autumn and winter they made their preparations for the rebuilding of the temple, sending for materials as far as Lebanon and Joppa by the sea (Ezra 3:7).

V. LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE TEMPLE. 8. *Jeshua*, the same as Joshua the high priest. *And all.* Not only priests, but all those who returned, joined in the work. *And appointed the Levites.* Those left of the tribe of Levi, including priests.

10. *The builders, i. e.*, Jeshua and Zerubbabel, who were at the head of affairs (see ver. 2). *Priests in their apparel.* The elegant and beautiful official robes used by the priests in their celebrations, especially the blue and scarlet and purple robes, with gold and gems, of the high priests and others, described in Exod. 39.

11. *And they sang ... by course.* This probably means alternately or responsively. *He is good*, etc. These words first appear as the doxology at the close of the psalm written by David, and sung at the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem (1 Chron. 16:34). *And all the people shouted with a great shout.* To express with all the intenseness possible their joy.

12. *Many ... ancient men.* They must have been at least 80 or 90 years old to have remembered the former temple, destroyed 70 years before. *Wept with a loud voice.* The weeping was not because the new temple was smaller than the first, for it was at least one-third larger in every dimension (compare Ezra 6:3; 1 Kings 6:2); but (1) in magnificence of structure and adornment it promised little in comparison (Hag. 2:3; Zech. 4:10). (2) The ark of the covenant, the sacred fire on the altar, the Urim and Thummim, were absent. (3) All the associations that gathered around the old temple were wanting in the new. *Many shouted for joy.* The younger were joyful that they had any temple.

The old man is forever looking back; nothing will ever be as great as what he used to see. The young man is forever looking forward; nothing has ever been so great as what is going to be.

PRACTICAL.

I. God's control is over nations and events as well as over his church.

2. God uses the world to chastise his people when they disobey; he also makes the world aid his cause and his people, when they return to him and obey him (as Cyrus, as scientific researches, explorations among the ancient mouments, literature, inventions, etc.).

3. God's promises are sure to be fulfilled in due time.

4. When the work to be done by affliction is completed, God sends deliverance.

5. God wants volunteers for his work. They will do the best work.

6. Those who remain at home should contribute liberally in aid of those who go forth to preach the gospel.

The Old, Old Story.

BY REV. FREDERICK G. CLARK, D. D.

It was not told by a minister, not even in the Sunday-school, but in the home of a devoted teacher to a congregation of one. This is the way the story was told, and this is the way it went down into one human heart.

A poor ragged boy was found one Sunday by the teacher among the regular scholars of her class. The lady had no idea how the thing happened. But there the boy was in his pitiful plight, and the other boys were having a little fun over the awkwardness and poverty of the stranger. The teacher drew the boy close to her side, and asked his name. Hanging his head he muttered 'My named is Jimmy.'

'How old are you?' was asked, with other questions which drew out the fact that the boy was ten years old, and that he could not read. The case was so pitiful that the teacher only whispered 'I want you to come home with me after school.'

At length the teacher was seated in the house with the strange boy, to whom she gave an apple to make him feel at home, when the conversation went along something like this:

'Jimmy, is your mother living?'

'I never had any mother as I knowed of. I allers lived with Benjamin the bone-picker.'

'Well, Jimmy, I hope you love Jesus?'

'Jesus, who is he?'

'Why, Jimmy, you must have heard of Jesus—stop and think.'

With an honest and wondering look the boy replied 'Upon my word and honor I never heard tell on him. I suppose he is some big gentleman what wouldn't speak to Jimmy.'

The teacher had never before met a person that had not heard of Jesus. At first a strange chill came over her, and next a thrill of joy at being permitted to tell the story of the Cross to another for the first time. A prayer was sent up—'Lord help me,' and the lady went on talking of Jesus. The boy listened with a stare of bewilderment; his gaze was riveted more and more upon his teacher as he drew closer and closer to her until his elbow rested on her lap. Tears came filling his eyes and running down his cheeks, when he said 'It seems awful strange; nobody ever told me before that Jesus died for me. Are you sure there is no mistake about it? I allers thought I was of no account anyhow.' Please tell me where they buried Him. I wish I could put some flowers on his grave.'

When the teacher could recover her self-control after the pathos of these words, she said 'Jimmy, I have not told you the best of all. The grave could not hold Jesus,' and she went on to tell the boy about the resurrection and ascension. Her listener was spell-bound, as he heard still further of Christ's praying for Jimmy, and that He was just as near to him as the boy was to the teacher, and that Jesus had a home for him in heaven by-and by.

The story had now penetrated Jimmy's heart, and he said 'I don't see how anybody could help loving One that died for 'em; but how can I tell what He wants me to do? I can't see Him, nor hear Him talk. I wish I had seen Him before He died.'

The teacher went on to tell about the Bible, about the strength Christ gives to them who try to obey Him, and how near we can all be to Him now that He is risen from the dead.

Jimmy said inquiringly 'You told me that Jesus would come and live in my heart but I know He wont stay where there is so much badness. Only yesterday I tried to steal some apples, and when I feel awful hungry, I just think I could steal anything. How can I get this awful feelin' out of me, so as to be good?' to which the teacher replied by telling more of the love of Christ and His cleansing blood.

'Now please, teacher,' said the boy, 'won't you tell Mr. Jesus who I am? I don't know how to ask Him, as long as I can't see Him. Mebbe I won't ask Him mannerly-like, and He won't answer me.'

The teachers replied that praying is talking to Jesus. 'You can tell Him just what you want, and ask Him for it.'

'Well,' replied Jimmy, 'I think I would like to have you tell Him about me first, for you have known Him so long, and He will take more notice of Jimmy if somebody comes with him.'

They knelt in prayer, the teacher introducing Jimmy to Jesus, as the boy expressed it. Then in honest and rude faith Jimmy said 'I feel so well acquainted with Him now, you bet it won't be the last time I'll talk to Him.'

The boy took up his old torn cap as if hurrying away, when the teacher said, 'What is your hurry, Jimmy?'

In a subdued and confidential tone the boy replied, 'I want to hurry home and tell Benjamin about Jesus; he is so sickly-like, and it would be an awful thing if he should die and not hear about Jesus.' Then half-covering his mouth with his hand, he whispered 'And he told me to steal the apples, and that is why I am in such a hurry. Good-bye'

This is a real incident. Such paganism may be found within pistol shot of our church spires. Here we see the charm of the old, old story, as fresh and powerful as ever. How many of us could tell the story so simple? What Christianity wants most to-day is not a better philosophy, but lives so true and hearts so loving, that it shall not be so hard to get the story told. —*Evangelist.*

Private Life of Gladstone.

Mr. Gladstone is an early riser, and when at Hawarden Castle, his country residence, may be seen, shortly after eight o'clock in the morning, walking down to prayers in the village church, where his son ministers. Daily devotion and breakfast over, he gives the remainder of the morning, till the gong sounds for luncheon at two o'clock, to work, reading, writing, meditation, or to the performance of arithmetical feats which no Cabinet Minister has ever surpassed, or, in the proper season, to a bout of tree-felling, at which he is an expert. After luncheon more reading follows, and in due time he shows himself at dinner to be "a singularly temperate man in meat and drink."

Although he is the best controller of the National Exchequer that England has ever had, and is notoriously by no means a wealthy man, his personal charities are almost reckless. In the course of his long walks in the neighborhood of Hawarden his pockets have an astonishing knack of emptying themselves, and amusing stories are told of his having had to walk home inconvenient distances of ten and twelve miles in the dark because of his inability to raise so much as a railway fare. As Prime Minister he refused an increase of salary, and it is not generally known that he has never drawn the pension to which he is legally entitled since his retirement from office, showing plainly that he has no desire to become rich or even to increase his comforts at the nation's expense.

His piety is, in its manifestations, of an humble and unaffected character. Even when Prime Minister of England he has been found in the humblest houses, reading to the sick or dying consolatory passages of Scripture in his own soft, melodious tones.

Two of Mr. Gladstone's sons, Wm. H. and Herbert, are members of Parliament, and a third, Stephen Edward, is a clergyman of the Protestant Episcopal church.

—That was a good bit of advice given by an old and revered minister to some young theologues who were seeking hints as to sermon writing. "Choose your text," he said, "then try to live it for a week, and at the end of that time you will be in a condition to write." If this method of preparation were in more frequent use, audiences might have less reason to complain of "dry" discourses.—*Congregationalist.*

—The diplomatic triumph of M. de Freycinet, in Madagascar, seems to have been prematurely sounded, and his treaty must take its place in the museum with Balaam's sword. "Here," said the exhibitor, in "de varry sword dat Balaam had." "But Balaam," said one, "had no sword, he only wished he had one." "Ah! well, dis is de varry sword he wished he had." The latest report from Paris is that negotiations in Madagascar were in "the elementary stage," and it was feared would fail altogether. There is no doubt that the French ministry "wish" they were well out of the affair.—*Watchman.*

—Prof. Christlieb says that "the Rationalistic preachers now consist only of a small minority in Germany. The pulpit has become more Biblical, more direct, and more practical, and many churches once empty are now filled. Even in liberal pulpits there is a great change, the ministers laying stress on trust in God, the love of Christ, attachment to the missionary activity, and practical religion."

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1885. WINTER ARRANGEMENT. 1886.

Miles.	TRAINS GOING WEST.	Exp. dy. A.M.	Acc. dy. M.W.F. A.M.	Acc! dy. P.M.
	Halifax,—leave,	7 00		2 30
1	Richmond,		7 45	2 33
14	Windsor Junction,	7 25	7 15	3 30
45	Newport,	8 43	9 12	4 58
48	Windsor,	8 50	10 05	5 33
53	Hantsport,	8 57	10 37	6 03
64	Wolfville,	9 04	11 25	6 46
69	Port Williams,	9 09	11 35	6 55
71	Kentville—Arrive	10 15	11 55	7 10
	Lo—Depart.	10 30	12 35	
83	Berwick,	11 03	1 17	
89	Aylesford,	11 18	1 40	
95	Kingston,	11 36	2 10	
102	Middleton,	11 57	3 00	
116	Bridgetown,	12 40	4 00	
130	Annapolis—arrive	1 20	4 55	

Miles.	GOING EAST.	Acc. dy. A.M.	Acc. dy. T.T.S.	Exp dy. P.M.
	Annapolis—leave		6 15	1 30
14	Bridgetown,		7 10	2 13
23	Middleton,		8 10	2 58
35	Kingston,		8 40	3 19
42	Aylesford,		9 15	3 37
47	Berwick,		9 35	3 52
59	Kentville—arrive	A.M.	10 30	4 25
	Do—depart,	5 40	11 15	4 40
64	Port Williams	6 00	11 35	4 55
66	Wolfville,	6 10	11 44	5 03
77	Hantsport	6 58	12 30	5 39
84	Windsor,	7 50	1 20	6 05
90	Newport,	8 10	1 44	6 21
116	Windsor Junction,	10 00	3 45	7 28
129	Richmond,	10 40	4 27	
130	Halifax—arrive,	10 45	4 30	8 05

N. B.—Trains are run on Eastern Standard Time. One hour added will give Halifax time.

Steamer "Secret" leaves St. John every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday, a.m. for Digby and Annapolis, returning from Annapolis the same day.

Steamer "Evangeline" leaves Annapolis every Tuesday, Thursday and Friday p. m. for Digby.

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Steamer "Dominion" leaves Yarmouth every Saturday evening for Boston.

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