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nov 6

## The Sabbath-School.

### INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

[FROM PLEURET'S NOTES.]

FIRST QUARTER.—Lesson 2.—Jan. 10.

JEREMIAH PREDICTING THE CAPTIVITY.—Jer. 8: 20-22; 9: 1-16.

GOLDEN TEXT.—The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.—Jer. viii. 20.

I. THE LOST OPPORTUNITY.—Vers. 20-22. 20. The harvest is past. These are the words of the people, in the form of a proverb; that is, Jeremiah utters them as expressing the feelings of the people.

The proverb regards the people either as the fruit of the field not gathered into the place of safety, but left exposed in the fields while the harvest time is past; or as the farmer who finds the harvest time gone by, and yet he has gathered in nothing for his support. The summer is ended. Rather, the fruit-gathering, which follows the corn-harvest. As then the husbandman, when the corn has failed, hopes that there may still be a good vintage, and plenty of olives and figs, and gives way to despair only when the fruit-gathering has also proved unproductive; so despair seized the people when they saw opportunities for their deliverance again and again pass by, till God seemed utterly to have forgotten them. And we are not saved. Not saved from their sins; not saved from the calamities which threatened them; not saved from their enemies, who not long afterwards laid waste their country, destroyed their city, and carried the people away captive. And yet they might have been saved had they been willing to obey God. But they rejected their Father in heaven; they were deaf to his voice of love.

21. For the hurt. Literally, "the breaking," the being crushed. Of the daughter of my people, i. e., the nation under the image of a beautiful woman. I, the prophet, am hurt, or crushed. His heart was broken because he saw (1) that their hurt was dangerous; (2) they refused all help and would not be healed; (3) all his efforts to save them were in vain.

22. Is there no balm in Gilead? Balm is the fragrant, resinous exudation of a rare plant, which was once cultivated in the Holy Land, but is not now found there. It was used both externally and internally for allaying pain, and was so costly as to be very much prized. Is there no physician there? Naturally, where the balm was found there would also be people skilled in the application of it. Why then is not the health... recovered? The meaning is, that, as one would be astonished to see a person unhealed without medicine and without care, right in the place where medicine was most abundant and physicians most plenty; so the prophet is astonished that a people with a divine law, and teachers sent from God, and a God who is able to do all things for them, should yet be so full of sin, and so devastated by their enemies.

Every sinner is sick with the disease of sin, and nigh unto death. Christ is the Balm of Gilead, and the Good Physician, able and willing to heal. (1) His method of cure goes to the root of the disease; (2) it is universal in its application; (3) it is complete in its efficacy; (4) it has proved itself by healing thousands. Why, then, are any lost? not for want of salvation; not for want of a Saviour; not for want of invitation and urging. If any are lost, it is simply because they would not come and be healed. They are moral suicides.

II. MOURNING OVER HIS PEOPLE'S SINS AND MISERIES.—Vers. 1, 2. 1. Oh that my head were waters. So that his eyes might become an inexhaustible fountain of tears that would never cease to flow. And mine eyes a fountain, rather, "reservoir" of tears, to express his grief for the sins and calamities of his nation. For the slain. For the multitudes who would soon be slain on account of their sins.

Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging place. A caravanserai for companies travelling in the desert. It was a square building enclosing an open court. Though a lonely and often a filthy dwelling, Jeremiah would prefer even it to the comforts of Jerusalem, so as to be removed from the pollutions of the capital, from the sight of the calamities, from his vain exertions to save them.

III. THE SINS WHICH BROUGHT THE CALAMITIES UPON THEM.—Vers. 2-8. (1) IMPURITY. For they be all adulterers. They were faithless to God in breaking their covenant with him, to serve idols; and they worshipped the idols, Baal and Ashor-eth, whose very worship was lascivious and adulterous. They broke the First and Second Commandments, and also the Seventh, which forbids all impure thoughts as well as deeds.

(2) TREACHERY. An assembly of treacherous men. Men who are faithless, perfidious in private life, and traitorous to the State.

(3) LYING. They bend their tongues like their bows for lies. Here is broken the Ninth Commandment. (4) MISUSE OF POWER. They are not valiant for the truth. The prophet has in mind the great and mighty, who had power in their hands and used it to oppress their inferiors. As the Rev. Ver. puts it, "They are grown strong, but not for truth;" they use their strength in the wrong way. Thus breaking the last five commandments. They proceed from evil to evil. They add sin to sin. Each sin is a stepping-stone to another sin.

(5) GODLESSNESS, OR MORAL ATHEISM. And they know not me, saith the Lord. They do not recognize him as God, as judge, as having authority over them. They do not think of God; they try not to believe in him. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."

(6) DISHONESTY. 4. Take ye heed, etc. Such was their character that each one must be continually on his guard against his neighbors, and even his own brothers, lest he be cheated and defrauded out of his rights.

(7) SLANDER. And every neighbor will walk with slanders, will go about tale-bearing, telling lies, and distorting facts to the injury of others.

5. They have taught their tongue to speak lies, till lying is a habit, a second nature. And weary themselves. They are industrious in sin; they are so earnest in it that they exhaust their strength.

6. Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit. As in ver. 4.

7. Therefore (in order to punish and to correct), I will melt them and try them. The terms used are those of the refiner of metals, the first being the smelting to separate the pure metal from the ore; the second, the testing to see whether the metal is pure, or still mixed with alloy. As milder means have failed, God will now put the nation into the more powerful crucible of tribulation, that whatever is evil being consumed in the fire, all there is in them of good may be purified. For how shall I do? supply else as in the Rev. Ver. This is the only way left in which to save them.

8. Their tongue is as an arrow shot out. A murderous arrow, death-bearing. This is most consummate treachery,—to talk as if in peace and friendship, while in his heart he plots only ruin. Deceit and sin of the tongue are referred to so many times because they were the most deep-seated sins; the most common; the hardest to cure.

IV. THE CALAMITIES ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR SINS.—Vers. 9-16. 9. Shall I not visit them, i. e., with punishment. Shall not my soul be avenged? Shall I not express my soul's indignation against such conduct? God would not be holy, would not be love, unless he had such feelings toward sin.

11. And I (Jehovah) will make Jerusalem heaps. Not only the country, but the capital city, strongly fortified, enclosing the house of the Lord, even this shall become heaps of ruins. A den of dragons. The word meaning no dragons, but jackals, which prowl about ruins.

FULFILLMENT. The complete fulfilment of these prophecies can be studied in Les. 4. The Egyptians under Pharaoh Necho defeated and slew Josiah, b. c. 609. They soon after captured Jerusalem and Josiah's son. In b. c. 605, and again in 597, Nebuchadnezzar devastated Judah, and captured Jerusalem, and carried away the inhabitants captive; and once more, in b. c. 586, he utterly destroyed Jerusalem and ruined Judah.

our common wormwood, with a very bitter taste, and used as a tonic medicine. Water of gall, i. e., a bitter poison; probably it was the belladonna or deadly nightshade, used also as a medicine. These were symbols of the punishment he sent for their sins. But the very bitter things were to be also for a medicine to cure them of their sin.

16. I will scatter them, etc. Another statement of the captivity referred to above. Heathen "nations." Precisely these judgments had been threatened long before for these sins (see Lev. xxvi. 33, and Deut. xxviii. 64). Another prediction of this captivity, yet more full, may be seen (Jer. xxv. 9-11).

Their sins were the cause of these troubles in two ways. (1) A sickness is the result of imprudence, or poverty a fruit of idleness, or pain, sorrow and weakness the effect of drunkenness. They were the natural fruit of the course the Israelites took. (2) Because God sent these things upon them in his controlling providence.

PRACTICAL LESSONS. Vers. 20-22. God has abundant salvation, spiritual blessings, happiness, heaven, for all people. Many waste their opportunities and refuse to gather the harvest of good.

There comes a time when it is too late; when the door is shut fast; when the future is fixed. Opportunities are lost by neglect; by delay; by sin; by false confidence in self.

Vers. 1-2. We ought to mourn over the evils of our times, and do all we can to save the nation from them.

Vers. 3-8. The only real danger to a community is in the bad character of its people. Deceit and lying are among the most dangerous of sins, for they undermine the very foundation of virtue in the character.

Vers. 9-11. Punishment is certain to follow unrepented sin. Warnings against sin, punishment, and the announcement of punishment, proceed from love, not hate. If God hated, he would punish without warning, would let men go on sinning. If his ministers did not love men, they would not warn and entreat. Preaching future punishment is a proof of love.

Ver. 15. God's punishments here are not only bitter, but a medicine. They are intended to cure men of sin.

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