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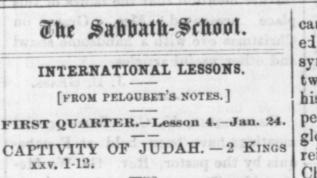
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GOLDEN TEXT. - By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down ; yea we wept when remembered Zion.-Ps. cxxxvii. 1.

INTRODUCTION .- We turn again to the Book of Kings to continue the history of the kingdom of Judah. The same account is given almost word for word in chapter lii., an appendix to the Book of Jeremiah. Also more briefly in 2 Chron. xxxvi., and Jeremiah xxxix. We need to read them all in order to obtain a complete account of the last year of the kingdom, the destruction of Jerusalem and the great captivity.

I. APPROACHES TO THE FINAL DOOM. FIRST CAPTIVITY, B. C. 604. -Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was approaching Jerusalem when Jeremiah sought, by means of the tested faithfulness of the Rechabites, to persuade the Jews to repent and be obedient to God. But it was all in vain. The people grew worse and worse. King Jehoiakim did evil in the sight of the Lord. He taxed the people heavily. He was not only a merciless tyrant, but a heartless persecutor of the Lord's prophets,-so recklessly defiant of God that he could cut in pieces the roll of Jeremiah's prophecies and burn them in his parlor fire (Jer. xxxvi. 23); and withal false to his treaty obligations with the Chaldeans. Nebuchadnezzar surrounded Jerusalem, captured it, and carried away

came King of Babylonia, and founded the Empire on the ruins of As-

RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCER.

Chaldeans from the leading tribe. (III.) METHODS OF ATTACK. He King Zedekiah with them (Jer. | VII. LAMENTATIONS .-- Jeremiah's and all his host. These consisted of xxxix. 4.) the fierce and cruel Chaldeans, with warriors from the surrounding naxxiv. 2.) Compare Jer. xxxiv. 1, where the vastness of the host is capture. very strongly marked, -- "Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and all his army, and all the kingdoms of the earth of his dominion, and all the people, fought against Jerusalem." Pitched against it. Surrounded it with armies to prevent all provisions from entering, and to starve it to submission, if they could not break down its walls. The army seems to have at first spread itself ever all Judea. It fought not only against Jerusalem, but "against all the cities of Judah that were left." And they built forts against it round about. These forts were probably movable wooden towers, sometimes the besiegers advanced against the the eyes of Zedekiah. Blinding has men are fitted to receive them. men on a level with their antagonists.

archers made the defence increas-

As the Chaldeans were encamped this captivity. They are read every tions, enemies of the Jews, and tri- around the city, the flight was im- year on the 9th of Ab (July) by the butaries of Babylon, the Syrians, mediately discovered. Overtook him. Jews, especially at Jerusalem, in Moabitics, and Ammonites (2 Kings Both Jeremiah (xxxviii. 23) and the "Wailing Place" of the Jews. Ezekiel (xii. 13) had prophesied this LESSONS .- We see here an illus-

> Babylon, and they gave judgment go unpunished. xvii. 13-19; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 13.)

walls, thus bringing their fighting- long been a common oriental punish-The thud of the battering- of the younger Cyrus, men deprived will, and yet controlling the results. rams shook the walls day and night; of their sight were a common specingly hard, by constant showers alty is still inflicted by the Persians sorrows and troubles in the way. of arrows from the high wooden on princes who are declared to have Because the transgressor must tramforts; catapults of all sizes hurled forfeited their right to the throne. ple on the love and goodness of God, stones into the town with a force as Bound him with fetters of brass. The and resist all the influences God deadly as that of modern bullets, Assyrians' captives are usually re- puts in his way to keep him from and darts tipped with fire kindl- presented as bound hand and foot, sin and death. ed the roofs of houses; mines -the two hands secured by one

IV. JERUSALEM TAKEN, - FATE 12. The poor of the land. These FAMILY of ITS KING .- Vers. 4.7. 4. The had now some compensation for syria, B. C. 606. He lived only about city broken up. A breach was made their poverty. They had been optwo years, when Nebuchadnezzar, in the walls, and the city was enter- pressed by the rich and great, as his son and general, became Em- ed at midnight. The entrance was Jeremiah tells us; and now their peror (B. C. 604), and made Babylon effected by the northern gate. The oppressors are ruined captives, and glorious during the 45 years of his upper city and temple were not en- the poor have full opportunity in reign. The inhabitants were called tered till a month later (Ver. 8.) the country. Among those who re-And all the men of war fled. And mained was the prophet Jeremiah.

> book of Lamentations consists of 5. And the army of the Chaldees. | five poems or dirges, written about tration of the justice of God. It is 6. Brought him up to the King of slow but sure. The wicked cannot

upon him, i. e., brought him to trial as | But God's justice is tempered ever a common criminal, not as a king. with mercy and love. The punish-He had violated his oath (Ezek. | ment comes slowly at first, in smaller measures, in order to give oppor-7. Slew the sons of Zedekiah be- tunity for repentance. It is accomfore his eyes. The punishment of panied by earnest warning and en-Zedekiah was doubly cruel; first, treaties. It is intended to save men his being made to witness the exe- from sin. If individuals persist in cution of his own sons, and then his going on in sin, and receiving their being deprived of sight, so that the final doom, yet the punishment will last scenes impressed upon him aid in making the world, as a whole, would be the death agonies of his better. There is, therefore, because children. According to Jer. lii. 10. God is love, no escape except by reand xxxvi. 6, all the nobles of Judah | penting and forsaking sin. But God who had fled with the king, were is always waiting to confer the blesprovided with battering-rams, which also slain before his eyes. Put out sings he loves to bestow, as soon as

> We see God's wise providence ment. In Persia, during the time over men,-giving them their free We see that the way of transgrestacle along the highway. This pen- sors is hard. On account of the

Jerusalem, to Babylon. Among were dug under the walls, and chain, the two feet by another. Jno. Richards & Son,



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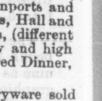
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them was Daniel, then a very young man, and his three companions (Dan. i. 1-6). This was the beginning of the 70 years' captivity foretold by Jeremiah (Jer. xxix. 10; 2

Chron. xxxvi. 21.) After this Judah was ravaged by roving bands of surrounding nations, Moabites, Syrians, and Ammonites (2 Kings xxiv. 2).

many of the treasures of the temple,

and many of the leading persons of

SECOND CAPTIVITY, B. C., 598. Toward the close of his reign, so full of iniquity and rebellion, Nebuchadnezzar again came to Jerusalem, and bound King Jehoiakim in fetters to carry him to Babylon (2 Chron. xxxvi. 6), but he seems to have died in Jerusalem before the plan was carried out (2 Kings xxiv. 6; Jer. xxii. 18, 19). His son

Jehoiachin (Jeconiah) was made king in his stead. He was only 18 years old and was as bad as his father. He seems to have immediately rebelled against Babylon, for he had reigned but three months when Nebuchadnezzar sent back his army to Jerusalem, captured the city, sent a great amount of treasures from the palace and the temple to Babylon, with 10,000 of the more important of the people (: Kings xxiv. 9-15.) Among these were King Jehoiachin, who lay 37 years in prison at Babylon and then was released (2 Kings xxv. 27.30) the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. i. 1-2) and the great-grandfather of Mordecai, Queen Esther's cousin (Esther ii. 5-6.)

11. OBSTACLES IN THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSORS. --- God did everything He wisely could to prevent His people from rushing down to their own destruction. He laid upon them several lesser evils as warnings to avoid the way which would lead them swiftly on to their final destruction. The doom came slowly, and in mercy, to give time for thought and repentance. Prophets were sent to warn and entreat. Jeremiah had been speaking God's word to them for forty years in Jerusalem. For nearly ten years Ezekiel, also, from the land of captivity in Babylonia, had been uttering earnest words to the Jews in Palestine. We cannot understand the history of these times without reading these Prophets; nor do we see the meaning of the Prophets

renewed at every favorable opportunity

(IV.) THE DEFENCE. Jerusalem was at this time a city of 20,000 inof the occasion.

(V.) CAPTIVES TO BABYLON. Durfrom the horrors of the famine in the died (lii. 11.)

(VI.) JEREMIAH'S LAND PURseige, bought a piece of land on had prophesied distinctly that he which the Chaldean army were en- would be carried to Babylon (Jer. camped, showing his perfect faith xxxii. 5; xxxiv. 3). Ezekiel had in the word of God which he preached, and in the promise of a return. lon" (xii. 13). His deprivation of in Nineveh at that time. "Jeremian's deed of purchase, moreover, was preserved in a jar, like the numerous clay deeds of the Egibi banking-firm, which existed at Bajars served the purpose of our mo- him by Jeremiah. dern safes." The whole transaction was striking at such a time. We

people must explate their sins by captivity for two generations in a far distant land.

(VII.) A SPASM OF REPENTANCE. the leaders in Jerusalem. Contrary to the Jewish law they had held their own countrymen in perpetual slavery. Now, in the agony of the

attempts at escalade by ladders were | There is in the British Museum a pair of bronze fetters, brought from

Nineveh, which weigh eight pounds eleven ounces, and measure sixteen and a half inches in length. These habitants. Against the huge en- probably resemble the fetters put on gines of Asiatic warfare the beseig- Zedekiah. The rings which enclose ed citizens constructed counter-en- the ankles are thinner than the gines, and the struggle was worthy other part, so that they could be

hammered smaller after the feet had passed through them. And carried ing the first year of the seige, pro- him to Babylon. According to Jewbably the 3023 captives mentioned ish tradition Zedekiah was, like in Jer. lii. 28 were sent to Babylon. other slaves, forced to work in a They were from the surrounding mill at Babylon. Jeremiah tells us country, or those attempting to escape that he was kept in prison till he

Thus were reconciled in a very remarkable way prophecies, apparent-CHASE. We read in Jer. xxxii. 6- ly contradictory, which had been 15, that the prophet, during the made concerning him. Jeremiah said that he should not "see Baby-The deeds were written on clay as sight before he was carried to the conqueror's capital fulfilled the predictions of both prophets. The punishment pronounced upon Zedekiah was the merited reward of the breach of his oath, and his hardenbylon from the age of Nebuchad- ing himself against the counsel of nezzar to that of Xerxes. These the Lord which was announced to

V. DESTRUCTION OF THE CITY AND THE TEMPLE.-Vers. 8-10. 8. extol the patriotism of the Roman, And in the fifth month on the seventh who bought at its full price the land | day of the month. Instead of the on which Hannibal's camp was seventh day we have the tenth in Jer. pitched outside the gates of Rome, lii. 12. This difference might be but it was even nobler, in the son reconciled on the assumption that of a feeble race like the Jews, to the burning of the city lasted sevbuy a field at the moment in the eral days, commencing on the hands of a mighty power like Baby- seventh and ending on the tenth. lop, knowing, as he did, that before | There was a month's delay after the the purchase could be of value, his capture of the city before its destruction.

9. He burnt the house of the Lord. Compare the prophecies of Jeremiah (xxi. 10 ; xxxiv. 2 ; xxxviii. 18-23.) In Jer. xxxiv. we have an account | The temple, the palace, the houses of a brief and false repentance of of the nobles, were deliberately set on fire. The very bones and framework of Jerusalem appeared to be wrapped in flames. The walls and gates seemed to lament and cry, as CARDIGAN attack they set them free. But dur- they sunk into the earth. The seping the seige, Nebuchadnezzar called ulchres, even the consecrated cataaway a part of his army to meet combs of the kings, were opened and the invasion of Pharaoh Hophra of the bodies thrown out to the vulwithout a clear and comprehensive Egypt. The Jews thought that their tures and beasts of prev, which view of the history and the times. All trouble was ended, and immediately flocked to their frightful feast out-

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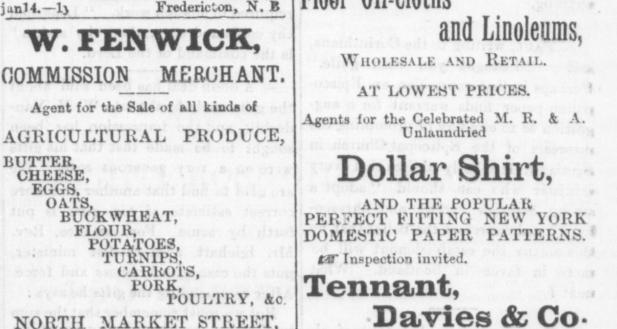
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