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INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

First Quarter Lesson IX—Feb. 23.

JEREMIAH PERSECUTED.

Jer. 37:11-21.

GOLDEN TEXT.—I am with thee,

saith the Lord, to deliver thee.—Jer.

1:19.

THE SECOND CAPTIVITY (B. C.

598).—The first captivity, when the

70 years foretold by Jeremiah began,

took place in B. C. 606 B.C., in the

fourth year of Jehoiakim. It was

at this time that Daniel and his

friends were carried to Babylon.

Toward the close of Jehoiakim's

reign, so full of iniquity and rebel-

lion, Nebuchadnezzar again came to

Jerusalem, and bound King Jehoia-

kim in fetters to carry him to Babil-

on; but he seems to have died in

Jerusalem before the plan was car-

ried out. His son Jehoiachin

(Jeconiah) attempted to be king,

but he had only a troubled reign of

three months. He immediately re-

belled against Nebuchadnezzar, who

had retired a short distance; but he

sent back his army to Jerusalem,

and forced him to give him as

tribute a great amount of treasures

from the palace and the temple,

which he sent to Babylon, with 10,

000 of the more important of the

people. Among these were King

Jehoiachin, who lay 37 years in

prison at Babylon, and then was

released; the prophet Ezekiel, and

the great grandfather of Mordecai,

Queen Esther's cousin.

THE THIRD SIEGE lasted a year

and a half, beginning in the ninth

year of Zedekiah. Famine within

the walls aided the besiegers with-

out; and it was speedily followed

with an outbreak of pestilence.

Food was well-nigh gone. Mothers

were at last driven to murder and

eat their children. The richest

citizens, even ladies, wandered about

searching for scraps in the dung-

hills. The houses were full of sick

and wounded; there were bloody

fights between contending parties,

as to surrendering or holding out,

the roar of the siege filled the air.

Jeremiah's Land Purchase. We

read in Jer. 32:6-15 that the pro-

phet during the siege bought a piece

of land on which the Chaldean army

were encamped, showing his perfect

faith in the Word of God, and in the

promise of a return from captivity.

Jeremiah's deed of purchase, was

performed in a jar. These jars

served the purpose of our modern

safes.

The Emancipation of Slaves. In

Jer. 34 we have an account of a

brief and false repentance of the

leaders in Jerusalem. Contrary to

the Jewish law, they had held their

own countrymen in slavery. Now,

in the agony of the attack, they set

them free. The utter worthlessness

of the repentance which led the

nobles to free their slaves to return

into their service (34:11-22). For

this Jeremiah declared that nothing

could save them from captivity; that

God would set free the sword and

pestilence and famine to destroy them.

No power could prevent the

catastrophe unless they repented.

Pray for us. In his great trouble

Zedekiah sent to Jeremiah, saying,

"Pray unto the Lord our God for us"

(Jer. 37:3). This was right; only

he wanted relief from his trouble,

but not salvation from his sin. It

is useless to ask God's people to pray

for us unless we mean to turn unto

God, and be obedient to his will.

THE RESPIRE.—Ver. 11. During

the siege Pharaoh Pophra came up

with his army from Egypt to attack

Nebuchadnezzar's army. It seemed

a good opportunity to strike a blow

at his great enemy from Babylon.

The army of the Chaldeans. This

was the general name for the people

of Babylonia. Was broken up from

Jerusalem. They broke up their

camp around the city, and marched

to meet the Egyptian army. For

fear of Pharaoh's army. Fear lest

in their present situation they

would be at a disadvantage.

JEREMIAH UNDERTAKES TO VISIT

HIS ANATHOTH HOME.—Ver. 12.

Then. While the besieging army

was away, and the road was clear,

Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusa-

lem to go into the land of Benjamin.

His home was at Anathoth in Ben-

jamin, four miles north of the city.

To separate himself. It was appar-

ently to secure his share of the

tithes and produce. Knowing that

the Chaldeans would return, it was

imperative that he should obtain

the means of subsistence to take

back into the city. Others think it

was to secure himself in the posses-

sion of an inheritance. In the midst

of the people; i. e., accompanied by

others, who had a right to share in

the produce of the priests' lands.

THE PROPHET ARRESTED AS A

TRAITOR, AND PUT IN PRISON.—

Vers. 13-16. The gate of Benjamin.

In the north wall, not in the direc-

tion of the Chaldeans. Captain of

the ward, or guard. Irijah. He

was one of the princes. Thou fallest

away to the Chaldeans. The fact

was that he had advised the people

to give up and yield to the Chal-

deans as the only way of safety.

Then said Jeremiah. . . false; I fall

not away to the Chaldeans. He

made an open and square denial.

The princes. The new princes or

nobles, who had gained great influ-

ence in the government. Were

wroth with Jeremiah. But for him

they would have had all their own

way. In prison in the house of

Jonathan the Scribe. The official

residence of one of the secretaries

of state. They had made that the

prison. The house of Jonathan

seems to have been specially adapted

for a prison. Possibly it was con-

nected with the temple precincts.

Jeremiah was entered into the dun-

geon. The underground excavation

or pit. And into the cisterns. The

vaulted cells, like cisterns, arched

overhead, which belonged to the pit,

and opened into it. Here Jeremiah

remained many days.

JEREMIAH AND ZEDEKIAH.—Vers.

17-21. Then Zedekiah the king sent,

and took him out. The Chaldeans

had returned to the siege after de-

feating the Egyptians, during the

"many days" Jeremiah was in prison.

The danger was so pressing that

Zedekiah felt impelled to ask Jerem-

iah, Is there any word from the

Lord? He did this secretly because

virtually powerless in the hands of

his court. Weak and irresolute, he

could not brave his anger by acting

as became his office. And Jeremiah

said, There is: for, said he, thou

shalt be delivered into the hand of

the king of Babylon. Jeremiah was

as courageous as ever; not even to

save himself from dungeon and

death would he change the word of

the Lord. He would not learn the

lesson that there was no door of

escape except through repentance

and obedience to God. He chose

death, when he might have had life.

Moreover Jeremiah said unto King

Zedekiah. The prophet was indig-

nant at the injustice of his treat-

ment, and applied to the king for

redress. Where are now your prop-

hets? etc. The event had proved

Jeremiah to be the Lord's prophet,

and those on the other side to have

been false. Commit Jeremiah into

the court of the prison. This greatly

improved Jeremiah's circumstances.

While he would be under guard, he

would be in a light and airy place,

with company and food. Bakers'

street. Persons in the same busi-