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The Sabbath-School

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Fourth Quarter, Lesson 11 Dec. 11 '98

TRYING TO DESTROY GOD'S WORD.—JEREMIAH 36 : 20 32.

Read Jeremiah 36.

Commit Verse 32.

Golden Text.—The word of our God shall stand forever.—ISA. 40 : 8.

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time of this event, B. C. 605 4. about the fourth year of Jehoiakim.

Place.—Jerusalem, in the palace.

Kings.—Jehoiakim, king of Judah, Nebuchadnezar, king of Babylon; Pharaoh Necho, of Egypt.

The Seven Sages were flourishing in Greece.

THE PROPHET JEREMIAH AND HIS WORK.—His name means "exalted of the Lord." His father was Hilkiah probably the high priest. He was born probably about B. C. 647. His office was that of both priest and prophet. He never married. His public life continued more than forty years. Jeremiah was naturally of a timid disposition, shrinking from public life, sensitive and desponding. The great work he had to do was contrary to his natural disposition. At the same time, as often occurs, he was the bravest of the brave. Timid in resolve, he was unflinching in execution; fearless when he had to face the whole world. He stood almost alone. At any moment his life might be sacrificed. He must preach unpopular truth, not only to the people, but face to face with kings Yet he never quailed before the factions that clamored for his life, nor faltered in duty. He stood against the whole land. It was a mission requiring courage, faith, will. Jeremiah is one of the very great men of the world.

ILLUSTRATION.—Some one reported to Napoleon that one of his officers turned pale when ordered to a dangerous duty. "That officer," replied Napoleon, "is one of the bravest in the whole army; he sees most clearly the danger, but will do his duty in spite of it." Two soldiers were charging up a hill with their regiment, in a desperate attempt to capture a battery. "When half way up, one of them turned to the other, and said, 'Why, you are as pale as a sheet. You look like a ghost. I believe you are afraid' 'Yes, I am' was the answer; 'and if you were half as much afraid as I am, you'd have run long ago.'"

To such a man this hard, and almost hopeless, duty of reform was appointed. It is no wonder that he is called "the weeping prophet." He was the butt of ridicule and scorn. He was put in the stocks. He was publicly whipped. He was misrepresented. He was imprisoned. But he kept right on. It is no wonder that he was sometimes discouraged, disappointed, almost desparing. The only wonder is that he ever had such glorious gleams of hope, and that his prophetic eye ever pierced the darkness and saw the rays of the coming dawn.

APPLICATIONS.—Most reformers have stood for a time where Jeremiah stood. All things, for a time, seemed against them; as to temperance missions, anti slavery, the rescue of the poor, the conversion of the ungodly. But in all cases there is a vision of hope; and success, however far away, is sure to come.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE EARLY PART OF JEHOIAKIM'S REIGN.—(1) The Egyptians marched through Palestine to attack and conquer Assyria. (2) Josiah joined the Assyrians, and attacked the Egyptians He was defeated and slain, and the Egyptians tried to make themselves masters of Syria and Palestine. (3) His third son Jehoahaz was made king, but Pharaoh took him prisoner, after a three months' reign and carried him away a captive. (4) Jehoiakim, an older brother, was made king. (5) He neglected the people. He was unjust, and shed innocent blood, even murdering a prophet. The allusions to Jehoiakim by Jeremiah are all unfavorable. (6) Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, was conquered and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Then Egypt was defeated by the Babylonians. Then in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the young Babylonian conqueror swept down upon Syria and Palestine. Jehoiakim was thrown into fetters, to be carried to Babylon, but Nebuchadnezzar restored him to his throne as his vassal. He carried away with him some captives, among whom were Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael. This was the small beginning of the Great Captivity.

JEREMIAH'S PROPHECIES READ BEFORE THE PEOPLE.—Jeremiah had been prophesying for twenty three years, persuading the people to repent and return to God. But his efforts had failed. Now, as the last resort, he is commanded by God to write out the substance of all these addresses in one roll.

These prophecies were read publicly to the people on a fast day. Jeremiah himself could not read the book, because he was "shut up," not imprisoned but "restrained;" probably forbidden by the king to preach to the people. Baruch therefore took the roll, and read it to the assembled multitudes.

A son of one of the nobles was so impressed that he reported the message to the council. They asked Baruch to read the roll to them, and it made a deep impression upon them. Thus far the plan was having a good effect.

JEREMIAH'S BOOK DESTROYED BY THE KING.—Vs. 20 26. The nobles decided to make known these words to the king. Everything else had failed to move him to a better life *And they* (the princes) *went to the king into the court.* The inner court of the palace. *They laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe.* The secretary of State, so that it might be safe from the king. *So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll.* So that he might have possession of it, and might learn the contents from the roll itself. *The king sat in the winter house* The interior and more sheltered room. *In the ninth month.* December, as their year began two weeks before the Passover. *There was a fire on the hearth burning.* Rather in the fire pan. *When Jehudi had read three or four leaves.* Columns of writing. *He,* the king apparently in anger snatching the roll, *cut it with the penknife,* used for sharpening the reeds used as pens, *and cast it into the fire.* Only the first portion was read, but, *all the roll was consumed in the fire.* The warning would interfere with his plans of pleasure, compel repentance, lead to hard work. *Yet they were not afraid.* This expresses the depth of depravity, the hardness of heart of the king and his attendants, as if they imagined that burning the roll would destroy the Word of God. *Nor any of his servants,* his personal attendants, *Nevertheless Elnathan,* etc These were some of the princes. *Made intercession.* The princes were not in sympathy with the king's course. *The king commanded ....to take....Jeremiah the prophet: but the LORD hid them.* Perhaps by means of some of his servants, perhaps by the Lord s sending him out of the country. He is not heard of for several years.

BUT THE WORD OF GOD WAS NOT DESTROYED.—Vs. 27 32 *Take thee again another roll,* etc. In this was written all his former words, and many more like words were added. *Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land.* Nebuchadnezzar was going to return and destroy the land. Nothing but repentance on the part of Jehoiakim and his people could prevent it. It was the asserting of this which was Jeremiah's offense. *He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David.* His son Jehoiachin, 18 years old, attempted to do it for three months, but the whole time the land was occupied by Nebuchadnezzar's army. *His dead body shall be cast out.* The body of the king was to be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. The king was dragged in chains with the other captives, and probably died on the journey. *I will bring....all the evil that I have pronounced against them.* Destroying the book, or murdering the prophet, would not prevent the fulfilment of God's word.

PRACTICAL HINTS.

How men may try to destroy God's Word:

By forbidding people to read it, as is done in several countries.

By rejecting the Bible as the Word of God, hating it, ridiculing it, perverting it, denying it

By neglecting it, treating it as if it did not exist, letting it remain unread, unstudied.

By persecuting those who preach and teach it.

All joking about the Bible, connecting puns and funny stories with its most precious verses, using its truth irreverently.

By not obeying its precepts.

Sometimes we cut out some leaves of the Bible:

By denying or softening its warnings and reproofs.

By reading only portions of the Bible and not the whole. By recognizing and emphasizing only a part of its great truths.

By false interpretations or misrepresentations of its meaning.

All efforts to destroy the Bible are in vain:

The more it is opposed, the more it is spread abroad.

Trying to put out a fire may scatter the sparks everywhere and kindle a whole forest or village. A man tried to destroy the thistle in his yard by scattering and stamping it into the ground. Soon his whole farm was covered with it.

The injury comes to those who try to destroy it.

Only fools imagine that stopping the fire bell will put out the fire; or tearing up the doctor's prescription will cure the disease; or refusing to hear the warnings against an evil way will prevent the consequences; or stopping the ears to unpleasant truths will destroy the truths.

The drunken captain may cut in pieces the chart that tells of the rocks in the vessel's course, and put in irons the sailor who calls his attention to it, but neither will avert the crash that must ensue unless the helm is turned.

A Century Clock.

A thing to rival the seven wonders of the world, if not in size, at least in ingenuity and variety, is a clock that requires winding only once in 100 years. Nor is it a modern piece of mechanism. Such a curiosity is actually in existence, and is now in the possession of M. Pottin who lives in Ivey-sur Seine, France. Nearly a decade ago he bought it of a farmer, who had inherited it from his father. Neither the latter nor his son could tell how it came to be an heirloom in the peasant family.

Expert clockmakers claim that it is the work of some inventive genius of the period of Henry II. For some reason all imitations thus far attempted have been failures. The original is a sort of water clock, not, however, in the accepted sense of the term.

It is made in the shape of a narrow upright chest. In its front slits a cylinder is suspended on stout cords. The cylinder turns on its axis as it moves up and down, and indicates the time on the two face boards, on the one the hours and on the other the half and quarter hours. When the cylinder is on the top then all the cord is twined around it, and as it descends, the cord is unwound.

It takes the cylinder just 36 hours to make the round trip, 18 hours each way. It is thus that the points of the axis are made to serve as correct time indicators.

What puzzles the investigator most is how it is made possible for the unwound cylinder when it has arrived at the bottom to again wind the cord around itself and be drawn up to the top.

It is vested with this power of regular movement by a very complex system of small water filled reservoirs, with which it is connected, and which serve as a propelling power. The incessant moving up and down of the cylinder keeps up a constant change of the centre of gravity. The receiving tubes are so made that only a measured quantity of water is admitted into the reservoirs, and the same precaution is taken at the outlets. It has been calculated that the cords wear out in a little more than 100 years, and that enough rust collects in the buckets to require cleaning after the same length of time.—Scrap-Book.

A Bible-Reading on Etiquette.

Will you tell me what you mean? I asked. She smiled a little and said,

Why, I wanted above all things, as I suppose every mother does, that my boys should be well bred, courteous, polite—in a word, gentlemen—but I soon found out that the continual teaching to do or not to do each particular act was never going to make them what I wanted. It must be deeper than that, and after a while I came back and rested on the Bible, and especially on Paul. Did you ever read the twelth chapter of Romans with reference to manners? No guide to etiquette or rules for deportment could do as much for one as that. My boys and I finally took the one broad rule: Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another. That in its broadest sense, includes every thing. The talking to disagreeable people, the being cordial and hospitable, the trying to entertain others and give them pleasure with any talent we have, are all, I think, being kindly affectioned, and in honor preferring one another may mean everything, from the offering of one's chair to the giving up of one's life. I think I learned this once when it was my lot to live for a time in a little Western village with what you may call very common people. Uncultivated they certainly all were, but I saw there what a perfect substitute true Christianity is for good manners, as society calls them. There were there some people who never offended. Quaint and amusing they might be in their ways and expressions, but never rude, never curious nor prying and conceited. They were always considerate and thoughtful, always full of some kind-hearted plan for other people's pleasure. They were kindly affectioned and preferred one another. I remembered all this when I came to the training of my own boys. and so far Paul has been my authority on manners. I do not say that through him I can teach my boys to use the right fork for oysters or to make a faultless bow, but I do say that I can teach them to be so manly, so gentle, so thoughtful of others and unassuming about themselves, that even if they blundered in every small matter they would still undeniably be gentlemen The small matters of etiquette are chiefly mechanical; they can easily be learned outside even if they are not in one's own home; but it is with the great underlying principle. in honor preferring one another, that the true training must begin.—Bessie Chandler.

Lessons in Purity.

Let me tell a little story as it came to me. Said a young mother: I wanted to foster in my boy a love of purity, inward and outward He would soon be old enough to enter the public school. Before he went out from me into life among the little company of village children I wanted to feel that he was armed against the temptations that I knew would beset him.

He had always rebelled against the necessary bathing and dressing. It was all very well so long as I let him splash the water freely and attempted no interference. But, after the twin babies came, I was forced to make the matter a serious business and not a play, and the bath was a trial to him and to me as often as it came. As I had the younger ones to bathe and prepare for bed, I had lately allowed him to wash himself as perfectly as he could, only supplementing his work with a little of my own.

I began to plan so as to give him more of my time. On bath night I allowed him to sit up half an hour later than usual, that the babies might be safely tucked away in bed before his turn came. Then, when his part of the work of purifying was done. I gave him half an hour of my undivided attention. While I examined the creases, to see how faithfully he had bathed, I talked to him about loveliness of being clean. When the white nighty was on I cuddled and kissed him in a fashion that I had allowed to fall into disuse. It went to my heart to see how ready mother's little man was to enjoy again the privileges of babyhood.

You love me just as much as you used to before the twinnies came, don't you? Will you do it this way every night, mother? he asked, as he tried to cuddle his long legs up into my lap.

I will if my boy will want to be clean as much as I want him to be, I said.

I will! I won't make a fuss at my bath any more, but I'll do it all myself just as nice as I can, he promised, with earnestness.

Will you try to be clean all through, as clean inside as you are now outside? I asked.

How mother?

God sees you all through. He looks into your heart to see if that is clean, and He loves to have you perfectly pure. Some boys are not pure. Their talk is unclean and their doings are unclean. Will my boy keep away from such and be a clean boy all through?

Yes, I will. I want to.

Then, after to-day, you may put this in your prayer: Create in me a clean heart, O God.

This lesson, in varied forms, I repeated as often as the night for the bath came round, impressing and making it palatable with mother-love and caresses. When the day came that my boy must begin his school life, I let him go with the feeling that I had done my best to arm him and to lead him to put on the armour of God.—Mary A Gillette.

So Pleasant.

In a New England village graveyard there is a headstone over an obscure grave, with an inscription of only four words upon it: "She Was So Pleasant." Short as it is, it speaks the regret of a whole community for the loss of a beloved member. There are a great many clever girls in the world, a great many active ones, a great many who have special talents—but how many are there who oil every wheel of life about them with kindness who radiate cheerfulness and sympathy as a sunbeam gives light, and of whom every person who knows them could say, They are so pleasant! The girl who is pleasant everywhere and to every one is always needed and always appreciated.

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