

2. Rev-

Henry W. Todd

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NOTES

ON THE

INTERNATIONAL

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

FOR 1878.

PART I.

OLD TESTAMENT.

BY

JOHN E. TODD,

Pastor of the Church of the Redeemer, New Haven, Conn.

PART II.

NEW TESTAMENT.

BY

MATTHEW B. RIDDLE, D.D.,

Professor of New Testament Exegesis, Theological Institute of Connecticut, Hartford.

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his grave in peace. Encouraged by these assurances, Josiah assembled the people, and caused the book of the law to be read to them; and, in concert with them, made a solemn and general renewal of the covenant. The work of reformation then went on with renewed vigor; the remains of idolatry and other kindred abominations

were thoroughly removed; the passover was celebrated with a splendor, and on a scale, unknown from the foundation of the kingdom; the land was seemingly purified, and the highest hopes were entertained for the future of the nation.

LESSONS.

Every wicked age undervalues, neglects, and almost loses the word of God.— God will not allow his word to be wholly lost.— Truly pious men are faithful men.— The repair of the temple led to the recovery of the Scriptures: zeal for God's house is always rewarded.— The power of the Scriptures over the human heart and conscience (Ps. xix. 7, 8).— A good man is desirous of knowing the will of God.— The gifts of God are without distinction of race, rank, or sex.— The power of the Scriptures to reform whole communities and nations.— The finding of the book of the law by Hilkiah, compared with the discovery of the Bible in the University Library at Erfurth, by Luther.

LESSON III. — APRIL 21.

JEREMIAH IN PRISON. — JER. xxxiii. 1-9.

INTRODUCTION.

In the thirty-first year of the reign of Josiah, Pharaoh-necho, king of Egypt, thinking that the decayed and divided condition of the Assyrian Empire afforded him an opportunity to make extensive conquests, marched with a large army for the Euphrates, following the coast-line of Palestine, and crossing to the east in the northern part of the country, through what had been the kingdoms of Hamath and Syria. This course carried him past the kingdom of Judah, with which he did not intend or wish to meddle. But Josiah insisted upon meeting him in battle. Some think that Josiah was in alliance with the king of Babylon, and therefore felt bound to oppose the progress of his enemy; others think that Josiah merely acted under the pressure of a military party at Jerusalem, which insisted upon a war and victory of some kind, to give their country greater importance. The battle was fought at Megiddo, on the southern border of the plain of Esdraelon, and the result was disastrous to the Jews. Their army was utterly routed, their king himself having fallen in the battle. His remains were carried to Jerusalem, and buried in the royal sepulchre; and elegies were composed on that occasion by Jeremiah and other poets. The people then immediately recognized the youngest son of Josiah as their king, the older sons having been passed over, probably because they had shown a disposition to reverse their father's policy, and make terms with the king of Egypt. Jehoahaz, then, meaning, whom Jehovah holds, also called Shallum, meaning, retribution, the seventeenth king of the separate kingdom of Judah, ascended the throne 610 B.C., when twenty-three years of age. His reign lasted only three months; for the king of Egypt, having reached Riblah in the kingdom of Hamath, sent back an army, which overran the country, deposed Jehoahaz, and put his elder brother Eliakim upon the throne, his name being changed to Jehoiakim, and his country being laid under a tribute of a hundred talents of silver and one talent of gold, or nearly two hundred thousand dollars, as a punishment for its opposition to the king of Egypt. Jehoahaz was carried in chains to Riblah, and thence to Egypt, where he died. Eliakim, meaning, whom God will establish, called Jehoiakim by the king of Egypt, meaning, Jehovah appoints, the eighteenth king of the separate kingdom of Judah, was the second son of Josiah. He ascended the throne when twenty-five years of age, and reigned eleven years, from 610 to 599 B.C. He was one of the worst of all the kings of Judah. In the fourth year of his reign, or 606 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar, the second and greatest of the kings of Babylon, having utterly defeated Pharaoh-necho, king of Egypt, in a great battle in the east at Carchemish, and compelled him

to retreat to his own country, approached on a great expedition of conquest. He took Jerusalem, and carried off a part of the treasures and vessels of the temple, and also a large number of captives, including many from the noblest families. It was at this time that Daniel and his three friends were carried into captivity. Jehoiakim was permitted to remain upon the throne upon his agreement to be tributary to the king of Babylon. This agreement he kept for three years; but at the end of that time, thinking that the king of Babylon was so occupied with his wars in the east that the opportunity was a good one, and urged on by the Egyptian party in Jerusalem, which was always the stronger, he rebelled. The king of Babylon, not being able to leave the wars in which he was engaged, in order to punish his rebellious vassal, stirred up the tribes surrounding Judæa, all of whom were subject to him, to attack the country. Their incursions created great distresses and disorders, in the midst of which, in some way or other, Jehoiakim was killed, and his remains were thrown over the wall of the city, and dragged away to a dishonorable burial. He was succeeded on the throne by his son **Jehoiachin**, meaning, appointed of Jehovah, also called **Jechoniah**, and **Coniah**, who was at that time only eight years of age. His reign lasted only three months; for **Nebuchadnezzar**, having settled affairs in the east, now came to subdue his rebellious province. Jerusalem was taken; and immense treasure and great numbers of captives, including the king and all his court, were carried away to Babylon. An uncle of Jehoiachin, the third son of Josiah, originally called **Mattaniah**, meaning gift of Jehovah, but whose name was changed by the king of Babylon to **Zedekiah**, meaning justice of Jehovah, was left upon the throne by Nebuchadnezzar, with the name of king, but in the position of a mere satrap. **Zedekiah**, the twentieth and last of the kings of the separate kingdom of Judah, ascended the throne when twenty-one years of age, and reigned eleven years, from 599 to 588 B.C. He did evil, like most of his ancestors, but was a weak man, wholly in the hands of his nobles and his party, rather than a wicked man. In the fourth year of his reign there was a general movement through all the region, in favor of rebellion against the king of Babylon; and ambassadors came to Jerusalem from several of the neighboring nations, to induce him to join an alliance. He was persuaded not to do so, and even went to Babylon, to remove all suspicions of his fidelity. Four years later, however, he was induced to sign a treaty with Egypt, which was equivalent to rebellion. The result was an immediate invasion by the Chaldeans, under the command of Nebuchadnezzar himself. The whole country was conquered and wasted, with the exception of two or three cities. In the beginning of the year 589 B.C., the city of Jerusalem was besieged. In their first terror the people began to inaugurate reforms: the nobles emancipated those of their countrymen whom they held as slaves; the sabbath was more strictly observed, and all religious duties were more carefully performed; but on the approach of an Egyptian army, the Babylonians raised the siege, and retired to some distance; and upon the removal of immediate danger, the people relapsed into their old ways: the emancipated slaves were again brought into bondage, religion was neglected, and the wickedness of the nation was seen to be incurable. Their doom therefore approached. The Egyptian army soon retired; and the Babylonians returned, and resumed the siege with greater vigor than ever. During all these reigns, for a period of more than forty years, Jeremiah, a native of Anathoth, a small village about three miles north of Jerusalem, exercised his ministry, chiefly in the capital. During the latter half of the reign of Josiah, he vigorously denounced the idolatries and sins of the people, and exerted himself in support of the new order of things; and his influence must greatly have encouraged and helped Josiah in his work of reformation. At the death of Josiah he composed a lament for that monarch. During the succeeding reigns and idolatrous and wicked times, he not only continued to denounce the sins of rulers and people, but, rightly perceiving that the only hope for his country was to be found in a temporary subjection to the king of Babylon, he constantly endeavored to bring this about. This brought upon him the hostility of the Egyptian party in Jerusalem, which was for most of the time in the ascendant. Often the prophet's life was in danger, from the hostility of powerful nobles; but he was protected by influential friends at court. On the approach of the Egyptian army, during the last siege of Jerusalem, Jeremiah, perceiving that he could accomplish nothing, but that his life was in danger from the overwhelming influence of the Egyptian party, endeavored to retire to Anathoth, his native village. He was arrested, however, as he

was going out of the gate of Jerusalem, on the charge of attempting to desert to the camp of the Babylonians. His denials went for nothing, and he was committed to prison. Subsequently, through the malice of his enemies, he was let down into a horrible dungeon, where he would soon have perished. At the intercession of his friends, he was at last taken out of this place, and confined again in the court of the prison. It is here that the opening of this lesson finds him, the city being now closely invested once more by the Babylonians, and greatly distressed by famine.

TEXT.

1. Moreover, the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah the second time, while he was yet shut up^a in the court of the prison, saying,

2. Thus saith the LORD, the maker thereof,^b the LORD that formed it, to establish it; ^cThe LORD is his^d name;

a chap. xxxii. 2, 3... b Isa. xxxvii. 26.....c JEHOVAH.....d Amos v. 8; ix. 6.

NOTES.

1. **Jeremiah.** Meaning, probably, Jehovah will exalt. He is said in Jer. i. 1, to have been the son of Hilkiah, and one of the priests belonging in Anathoth. Whether his father was the same Hilkiah who was high priest in the reign of Josiah is uncertain and disputed; but many of the best scholars think that he was. This would account for the similarity of names of the relatives of Jeremiah and of Hilkiah the high priest, it would also account for the more than ordinary respect felt for the prophet by Jehoiakim and Zedekiah. "While the former put Urijah to death without scruple (Jer. xxvi. 23), he spared Jeremiah, whose fate was a matter of so great importance that the princes of the people and the elders, assembled probably in some solemn law-court, keenly debated it (Jer. xxvii. 16, 17). He seems to have been on terms of personal friendship with Ahikam (Jer. xxvi. 24), and remained with his son Gedaliah on the appointment of the latter as governor over the land (Jer. xl. 5, 6). We find again the princes treating Jeremiah with great respect when he wrote the roll in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (Jer. xxxvi. 11-19, 25); and when the captains would have slain him, towards the end of the siege, doubtless because his words did render the defence of the city difficult, and seemed therefore unpatriotic or even traitorous, Zedekiah was glad by stealth to frustrate their purpose (Jer. xxxviii. 8-10). It is noteworthy also that he not only had in his service a scribe, but one who was a high noble; for Baruch was the grandson of Maaseiah the governor of the city (2 Chron. xxxiv. 8), and brother of Seraiah the king's chamberlain (Jer. li. 59). Even the Chaldees held him in great respect (Jer. xl. 1-4), and throughout the book every-thing agrees with the supposition that he was a

man of high birth." (*Speaker's Commentary*.) Anathoth, the native village of the prophet, was a small town belonging to the priests, about three miles north from Jerusalem. For the main particulars of Jeremiah's life, see Introduction, latter part. When the remnant of the Jews that had been spared by the Babylonians at last fled to Egypt for refuge, in spite of the warnings of Jeremiah, they took the prophet with them (Jer. xliii. 1-8); and, according to tradition, he was at last stoned to death by them for his faithful rebukes. The public ministry of Jeremiah continued from the thirteenth year of Josiah (Jer. i. 2) to the fall of Jerusalem, a period of about forty years, or from 626 to 586 B.C. How old he was when he began his ministry is not known: he calls himself "a child" (Jer. i. 6), but that expression need not be interpreted strictly. Nor is it known how long his life and ministry continued in Judæa and Egypt after the fall of Jerusalem. **Second time.** That is, for the second time while he was in prison. For the first time, see Jer. xxxii. 1, 2. **The court of the prison.** Rather, the court of the guard, "a part of the king's palace (Neh. iii. 25), probably where the royal guard had its quarters. There would no doubt always be a picket on duty in the guard-chamber at the entrance of the court, but in his own apartment Jeremiah was probably left unmolested." For the circumstances which caused this imprisonment, see Introduction, latter part.

2. **The Lord.** Wherever in our translation these words occur in small capitals, the Hebrew has Jehovah. **The maker thereof.** Rather the doer of it. **It.** That is, the thing which he says. Thus saith Jehovah, who not only says but does it. **Formed.** Rather, formeth. **The**

3. Call^a unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and^d mighty things, which thou knowest not.

4. For thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city, and concerning the houses of the king of Judah, which are thrown down by the mounts,^e and by the sword;

5. They come to fight with the Chaldeans, but^b it is to fill them with the dead bodies of men, whom I have slain in mine anger, and in my fury, and for all whose wickedness I have hid my face from this city.

6. Behold, I^f will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance^g of peace and truth.

e chap. xxix. 12; Pa. xcl. 15 f hidden. Isa. xlviii. 6 g chap. xxxii. 24 h chap. xxi. 4, 5 i chap. xxx. 17 j Exod. xxxiv. 6; Isa. lv. 7; John x. 10; Tit. iii. 5, 6; Heb. vi. 17, 18; 1 Pet. i. 3.

Lord is his name. Jehovah, the covenant name of God, was given as a pledge of his faithfulness to his promises and to his people: see Exod. iii. 14, 15. The fact that God's name was Jehovah was therefore often referred to as a ground of hope and confidence: see references.

3. Call. This is addressed to the prophet. **Mighty.** Rather, difficult. In Isa. xlviii. 6 we find a similar passage, of which possibly this is a quotation. The great and difficult things referred to are the deliverance and restoration of the people of Israel, promised in the following verses. Such a restoration was difficult to bring about, and difficult to believe in or even conceive of. **Thou knowest not.** The views and prophecies of Jeremiah had been for the most part dark and threatening: he had not as yet looked beyond the storm, and seen the clouds clearing away, or thought of such a thing as possible.

4. Houses . . . thrown down. "In ancient sieges, as the works of the enemy approached the walls, it was usual to build inner fortifications; and for this purpose houses were pulled down, both to give the vacant space necessary, and also to supply materials. Compare Isa. xxii. 10." **By the mounts, and by the sword.** Rather, against the mounts, and against the sword. The mounts were mounds of earth thrown up by the besiegers, on which they erected their battering-rams, catapults, and other engines of war (Jer. vi. 6; Ezek. iv. 2, xvii. 17). Swords were used by the besiegers in digging a passage through the walls, — unless, as some think, the word is sometimes used to denote other sharp instruments: see Ezek. xxvi. 9, where the word for "sword" is translated in our version, "axes."

5. They. That is, not the houses, but the people, the Jews. **Chaldeans.** Chaldæa was the lower or southern half, as Assyria was the upper or northern half, of the great valley of the Tigris and the Euphrates. It was the cradle of the human family, becoming an empire as early, probably, as 2500 B.C., and remaining

such for about 1,200 years, or down to 1300 B.C. At that time it was conquered by Assyria, which had previously been one of its provinces; and from this time it formed a part of the Assyrian empire for nearly seven hundred years. For much of the time, however, it was restless under the Assyrian yoke, and engaged in frequent rebellions. At length, in 625 B.C., when the Assyrian empire was broken and near its fall, Chaldæa re-asserted its independence, and soon became the seat of a second, or lower, commonly called the Babylonian empire. It was a splendid empire, but lasted less than a hundred years. The founder of the new empire was Nabopolassar, who reigned from 625 to 604 B. C. In 607 B. C. he associated with him his son Nebuchadnezzar, who became the greatest of the Babylonian monarchs. It was by this king that Jerusalem was besieged at the time referred to in this lesson. For the causes which led to this attack upon Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, see Introduction. **Them.** That is, the houses spoken of in the preceding verse. The meaning is, the Jews insist upon fighting with the Babylonians, and for this purpose tear down their houses to strengthen the walls of the city against the engines and weapons of the besiegers; but the result will be, that they will only fill these ruins with corpses of men slain by the Divine anger using the Chaldeans as its instruments — in other words, with their own dead bodies. **Anger and . . . fury.** Such language is not to be understood as teaching that God is subject to sinful human passions: the holy displeasure of God is something very different from the purest human indignation; the Scriptures ascribe anger and other human passions and feelings to God, and in various ways represent him as a man, simply because it is only thus that they can convey *approximately* correct ideas of him.

6. I will bring it health and cure. Literally, "I will lay upon it a bandage and healing;" that is, a healing bandage, a plaster with healing medicines. **Them.** The sudden change from

7. And I will cause the captivity of Judah, and the captivity of Israel, to return, and will build them as ^{at} the first.

8. And I will cleanse¹ them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon^m all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me.

9. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praiseⁿ and an honor before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall^o fear and tremble for all the goodness, and for all the prosperity, that I procure unto it.

k Isa. i. 26. l Esek. xxxv. 25; Zech. xiii. 1; 1 John i. 9; Rev. i. 5. m chap. xxxi. 34. n chap. xiii. 11; Isa. lxii. 7
 o Isa. lx. 6.

it, that is, the city, to *them*, that is, the inhabitants, is common in Hebrew. **Will reveal, &c.** An abundance, rather than *the* abundance. The meaning is, "God will lay open before them a hidden treasure whence they may take an abundance of peace and truth, that is, security arising from God's faithfulness."

7. **Captivity.** That is, captives. **Judah and Israel.** The promise extends to the people of both kingdoms. **Will build them as at the first.** The figure is taken from the process of constructing an edifice: compare Eph. ii. 20-22. The promise is, that the people shall become as in the early days of the monarchy, in the times of David and Solomon, a united and prosperous nation.

8. **I will cleanse.** The preceding verses contain a promise of external prosperity: this verse goes farther, and promises a *heart-restoration*, or spiritual renewal of the people. The forgiveness of sins, consequent upon repentance, is the distinctive mark of the new covenant: see Jer. xxxi. 33, 34; Heb. viii. 8-13. **Pardon.** There is an essential difference between cleansing and pardon. A man may be pardoned, that is, personally forgiven, without having either his legal guilt and responsibility, or his love of sin, which will lead him to further transgression, removed. So, on the other hand, a man may be cleansed from guilt, and from sinful affections, without being personally forgiven. The promise in this verse is all-inclusive.

9. **It.** That is, the city. **Shall be to me a name of joy.** That is, its name will be mentioned with joy, the mention of the name shall excite joy. We are not to understand from the

words "to me," as some do, that it is to God, and to him only, that the name of the city will be a name of joy, &c., but the city will be a name of joy, a praise and an honor unto all nations. **For me.** That is, it will become such for my benefit and glory. **Them.** Another sudden change from *it*, the city, to *them*, the inhabitants. **They shall fear and tremble.** There is no inconsistency between this statement and the one in the first part of the verse, that Jerusalem shall become a name of joy, and a praise and an honor before all nations; for the fear here spoken of is the feeling of awe and reverence, rather than that of fright and terror: compare Ps. ii. 11; Phil. ii. 12.

The prophecy here recorded is one of the fullest and richest of the many that were given to the Jews. One peculiarity of it is, that it was given before the evil that had been threatened had fully come. Jerusalem had not yet fallen. The prophet looked forward to the morning, while the night had not yet come. As to the fulfilment of the prophecy, it is true that the "captivity" of the Jews returned after about seventy years, and the nation rose to a considerable degree of prosperity, not, however, to any such prosperity as could be called a fulfilment of this prophecy. We are to regard this and similar prophecies given to the people of God, as destined to receive their accomplishment in the future history of the Christian church, which, as the true Israel, has entered into the inheritance of the promises, rather than as fulfilled in any thing that has been, or is to be, in the history of the Jewish people.

LESSONS.

Believers may receive great spiritual privileges and blessings in the midst of outward misfortune and trouble. — The name of God is a pledge to his people of his power and faithfulness. — No human efforts can avert divine judgments; sincere repentance is the most hopeful means. — The divine threatenings are always tempered with mercy. — God chastises but does not destroy his people. — God has given "exceeding great and precious promises" to his people, among whom all true Christians are numbered; and the design of these promises is, to stimulate us to purify ourselves from the corruptions of the world. — It is a glorious thing to belong to a people who have such a glorious future assured to them.