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# THINKING THROUGH THE BIBLE

BY

REV. JOHN McNICOL, D.D.

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Volume II  
THE OLD TESTAMENT  
JOB TO MALACHI  
*Revised*

In the first volume of this work God's redeeming purpose for men was seen coming down the ages and moving through the historical part of the Old Testament. In the present volume it is seen progressively unfolding throughout the rest of the Old Testament and preparing for the advent of the Saviour of the world.

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THINKING THROUGH THE BIBLE



# THINKING THROUGH THE BIBLE

BY

JOHN McNICOL, D.D.

*Principal Emeritus of Toronto Bible College*

VOLUME II

THE OLD TESTAMENT

JOB TO MALACHI

SECOND EDITION

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To My Wife  
LOUISA BURPE MCNICOL  
"The College Mother"





## PREFACE

IN the Preface to the first volume of this work the author explains the aim he has in view and the method he is following. The aim is to enter the inner shrine of the Scriptures and discover the spiritual world in the Bible, the world that makes it the Word of God. The method is to take the Bible in the form in which it has come to us, and then to allow it to speak for itself, and, wherever possible, to be its own interpreter.

The first volume dealt with the historical part of the Old Testament—the books that contain the records of God's dealings with Israel as a nation. There, book by book, His redeeming purpose for mankind was seen to come out from the early ages of the world into the patriarchal and Mosaic eras, and then to move down through the centuries of Israel's national life. In that part of the Old Testament we have the historic background on which God's approach to man was first made.

This second volume deals with the rest of the Old Testament—other kinds of books, in which the redeeming purpose of God is manifested in other ways. In the Poetical Books, we are shown first the heart of humanity in its deep need reaching out after God and searching for His approach. Then we are taken into the inner religious life of the devout Israelites, who responded to the Divine approach which they found in the revelation of the Law.

In the Prophetical Books, we are introduced to the highest form in which Divine revelation appeared

in Israel. Here are heard the unmistakable accents of that voice which spoke "unto the fathers in the prophets" (Heb. 1:1). Here all the lines of the preparatory revelation of redemption which had been coming down through the ages are seen to converge directly toward the final revelation in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the Old Testament leads us, through the Prophets, to the threshold of the New.

It is perhaps superfluous for the author to say that these books of his should not take the place of the reading and study of the Bible itself. They are intended to be read along with the Bible, and to guide the student in thinking through the Word of God for himself. The present book is a revision and enlargement of the original second volume. The Scripture quotations are taken by permission from the American Standard Edition of the Revised Version.

J. McN.

September, 1947.

## CONTENTS

### THE OLD TESTAMENT—POETICAL BOOKS

	Page
The Poetical Books - - - - -	1
The Book of Job - - - - -	3
The Book of Psalms - - - - -	29
The Book of Proverbs - - - - -	60
The Book of Ecclesiastes - - - - -	65
The Song of Solomon - - - - -	71
The Book of Lamentations - - - - -	79

### THE OLD TESTAMENT—PROPHETICAL BOOKS

The Prophetical Books - - - - -	83
The Book of Isaiah - - - - -	88
The Book of Jeremiah - - - - -	142
The Book of Ezekiel - - - - -	177
The Book of Daniel - - - - -	203
The Book of Hosea - - - - -	230
The Book of Joel - - - - -	241
The Book of Amos - - - - -	248
The Book of Obadiah - - - - -	257
The Book of Jonah - - - - -	260
The Book of Micah - - - - -	265
The Book of Nahum - - - - -	273
The Book of Habakkuk - - - - -	278
The Book of Zephaniah - - - - -	283
The Book of Haggai - - - - -	288
The Book of Zechariah - - - - -	293
The Book of Malachi - - - - -	311



**THE OLD TESTAMENT  
POETICAL BOOKS**



## THE POETICAL BOOKS

THE five books from Job to the Song of Solomon, together with the Book of Lamentations, were written for the most part in poetical form. They deal mainly with the inward side of religious and moral life. The Historical Books have traced the development of the Law as it was manifested in the corporate life of Israel as a nation. The Poetical Books now set forth the development of the Law as it was realized in the life and experience of the individual Israelite.

Poetry is not so sharply distinguished from prose in Hebrew as in English. Some books are partly in prose and partly in poetry. In Job the narrative passages are in prose and the discourses in poetry. The elevated oratory of some of the Prophets, especially Isaiah, often glides into poetry.

The characteristic mark of Hebrew poetry is parallelism, pairs of lines corresponding in thought. The second line may repeat the thought of the first line in altered form, or add something so as to complete it, or state something in contrast with it. Occasionally the lines are grouped in strophes or stanzas, as in Psalms 42 and 43. Sometimes an acrostic structure is used, following the order of the Hebrew alphabet. This occurs in several Psalms, notably the 119th, and in the Book of Lamentations. This feature, of course, cannot be shown in translations of the Bible.

The King James Version of the English Bible (A.V.) does not distinguish poetry from prose, but the Revised Version sets out the poetical sections



in their parallel lines. The rhythm which gives balance to the parallelism in the Hebrew cannot be represented in a translation. Fragments of poetry and several extended poetical passages occur in the preceding books of the Old Testament. Among these are two songs of Moses (Exod. 15:1-18; Deut. 32:1-43), Deborah's war song (Jud. 5), Hannah's song of thanksgiving (1 Sam. 2:1-10), and David's elegy over Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. 1:17-27).

The Hebrews cultivated two kinds of poetry: didactic poetry, intended for teaching and appealing to the mind, and lyric poetry, intended for singing and appealing to the heart. The six Poetical Books contain both kinds. They can be classified accordingly in two corresponding groups: (1) Books of Wisdom—Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes—which are didactic in character, and deal with the religious convictions. (2) Books of Devotion—Psalms, Song of Solomon, and Lamentations—which are lyrical, and deal with the religious affections.

## THE BOOK OF JOB

THE theme of this book is the problem of pain in the providence of God, or the mystery of suffering in the lives of the righteous. Why do good men suffer? The subject is not dealt with in an abstract or theoretical way, but is wrought out in the living experience of a righteous man.

Job is mentioned in other parts of Scripture in such a way as to imply that he was an actual person and not an imaginary character (Ezek. 14:14, 20; Jas. 5:11). The story reflects the conditions of life in a pastoral age like that of the patriarchs. The Septuagint, which is the ancient Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures, has a note at the end of the book identifying Job with Jobab, a descendant of Esau (Gen. 36:13, 33). This would place him in the age between Abraham and Moses, and near the time of the latter.

The date and authorship of the book are not known. It is clearly the work of a masterly mind. That it is very ancient, and was written before the revelation of the Law, may be inferred from the fact that in the entire discussion of God's moral government there is no reference to the Decalogue or the Levitical system of worship.

It is an attractive supposition, and not an unreasonable or improbable one, that Moses heard the story of Job and wrote the book when he was dwelling in Midian, during the years between his flight from Egypt and his call to deliver Israel (Exod. 2:15). This is more consistent with the internal evidence and the general character of the book than

the theory of a late date, which is based on an evolutionary theory of religion and assumes that its ideas could not have been developed so early. There is no known writer in any age to whom it can be referred better qualified than Moses, or more likely to have written a book like this. The person who was capable of such an accomplishment could hardly have remained unknown to history.

The Book of Job is dramatic in form, and it may be divided into five progressive parts and analyzed as follows:

- I. The Afflictions of Job—Chs. 1-3
- II. Job's Controversy with His Friends—  
Chs. 4-31
  1. The First Round of Speeches (Chs. 4-14)
  2. The Second Round of Speeches  
(Chs. 15-21)
  3. The Third Round of Speeches (Chs. 22-24)
  4. Job's Final Speeches (Chs. 25-31)
- III. The Intervention of Elihu—Chs. 32-37
- IV. The Revelation of Jehovah—Chs. 38-41
- V. The Restoration of Job—Ch. 42.

#### THE AFFLICTIONS OF JOB (Chs. 1-3)

The book opens with a series of scenes, alternating on earth and in Heaven, which reveal the source of Job's afflictions, describe their nature, and show how he bore them.

1. Job's Happy State (1:1-5). Job's life was right with God and man. His outward lot was marked by the special favour of God. The sacrifice which he offered habitually as the patriarchal head of the family was an evidence of his devotion to God and his care for the moral and spiritual welfare

of his children. His piety was so deep that it recognized the secret sins of the heart.

2. The First Council in Heaven (1:6-12). The veil is now drawn aside and the spiritual world is disclosed. The scene is described with restrained and simple dignity. The angelic agents of God's government present themselves before Him, and Satan comes among them. He has come from a restless and ceaseless survey of the lives of men upon the earth: "from going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it". (cf. 1 Peter 5:8).

The scene reveals the intimate relation between earth and Heaven. The righteous life of Job on earth had been honouring God in Heaven: "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" Satan has his retort ready. Job is pious because piety is profitable. Let his prosperity be taken away and his devotion to God will fail.

This charge against Job involves the honour of God. Satan insinuates that God is honoured only because of what He gives. There is but one way of refuting this charge, and that is to test Job. Satan is accordingly given permission to afflict him with adversity, but not to touch his person. Here we get the first light on the problem of suffering. Satan is the primary agent in the infliction of it, but God permits it, to prove the righteousness and piety of His servants on earth and so vindicate His own honour in Heaven.

3. Job Stripped of All (1:13-22). The scene changes to earth again, and events take place which have their springs in Heaven. The secondary instruments in the infliction of suffering now come into view. One day when Job's children were enjoying their usual happy family fellowship, four messen-

gers came rushing into the father's presence in quick succession, and announced a series of calamities of which they were the sole survivors. In a single day he was stripped of all his wealth and bereft of all his children.

Job's actions manifest his deep and genuine grief, but his piety does not waver. He recognizes that he is now as poor as he was at his birth, but instead of finding fault with God's providence, he bows before Him in reverential worship and gives renewed expression to his faith in God.

4. The Second Council in Heaven (2:1-6). A considerable time must have elapsed before the next scene takes place. Job has stood the test long enough to prove his integrity and his loyalty to God. He has not only borne up under the first shock of disaster; he has endured the long strain of it afterwards. When the second council in Heaven opens, God claims the victory: Satan's accusation has been refuted. Satan, however, has another charge ready. With an insolent sneer he insinuates that Job cares only for his own skin. Let him be smitten in body and his devotion to God will fail. And now for the second time Job is put to the test. Satan may afflict his person, but is not allowed to take his life.

5. Job Among the Ashes (2:7-10). Satan goes forth to his malevolent work, and Job is subjected to the most searching of all tests, a loathsome and incurable disease. He is obliged to sit upon the ash-heap where the rubbish of the city is burnt, an outcast from his fellows, a pathetic and pitiful figure. The patience of his wife breaks down at last. She seems to have stood by Job in the first trial; but now, in the frenzy of her sympathetic anguish, she has lost her faith in God's goodness. But no word of complaint escapes Job's lips. There

is no harshness in his reply to his wife, but rather a tender tone of pained surprise. She has not spoken with her usual wisdom: "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

One purpose in Job's afflictions has now been achieved. Satan's attack on Job's character and God's honour has been foiled. It has been proved that righteousness and piety are not grounded in self-interest, and that God is worthy of being served and trusted for His own sake. Job's trial still goes on, however, for there is a higher purpose in it which has yet to be attained; but Satan appears in the book no more.

NOTE:—It is not to be inferred from these scenes that Satan appears in Heaven now as the accuser of God's people. He is still our adversary, but as our accuser he has been cast out of Heaven. Job lived under Old Testament conditions, before the redeeming work of Christ was done. As the death and resurrection of our Lord have made a change on earth, so His ascension has made a change in Heaven. By His atoning death on the cross He removed the ground of Satan's accusation against us. Just before His crucifixion He declared, "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John 12:31). At His ascension He entered Heaven as our representative and advocate, and Satan had no longer any right to be there. The vision in Rev. 12: 7-12 symbolizes the casting out of Satan from Heaven as following immediately after the event described in the words, "her child was caught up unto God, and unto his throne" (v. 5). That is, Satan's expulsion from Heaven as the accuser of the saints was the immediate result of the ascension of the Lord. Instead of an accuser we have now "an

Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1; cf. Rom. 8:33-39).

6. The Coming of Job's Friends (2:11-13). The three friends of Job were men of wealth and influence like himself. They have heard of his affliction and have come from distant places to condole with him. By this time a considerable interval must have elapsed. Job has had time to realize the full bitterness of his condition. The terrible disease that afflicts him has so changed his appearance that his friends do not recognize him. They are profoundly moved by their first sight of the sufferer. Their grief is deep and genuine. They do not inflict upon him the common platitudes of speech, but sit down with him in silence for seven days and seven nights. This is true sympathy and real friendship.

7. Job's Outcry (Ch. 3). In the presence of these companions of his former prosperity, Job's grief at last finds expression. No longer attempting to control himself, he breaks out into a passionate, pitiful cry for death. It is his response to the silent sympathy of his friends.

From this point to the middle of the last chapter, the book is composed of a series of addresses, which are all in poetical form. The present one containing Job's lamentation is in three parts, and it may be summed up as follows: "Oh that I had never been born" (vs. 1-10); "Oh that I had died at my birth" (vs. 11-19); "Oh that I might die now" (vs. 20-26).

This cry is very different from Job's first expressions of sublime faith, but it does not mean that he has renounced God or abandoned his integrity. It is to be remembered that Job has not been told why this evil has come upon him. He knows nothing of what has gone on in Heaven. He has not the New Testament light that we enjoy. He goes through

his trial destitute of those grounds of consolation that suffering saints now possess. He has never heard that all things work together for good to them that love God. In the absolute darkness he trusts God still, and there can be no greater test of faith. But it is this very darkness that causes him at last to cry out. He has no clue to God's ways with him. He is "a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in" (v. 23). What is the meaning of life for a man when God has dealt with him so? The mystery of it has forced this cry from his lips.

This speech provides the basis for the discussion which follows. It leads the friends of Job to address him, and they begin at once to remonstrate with him about it. They have come to sympathize with Job and to comfort him, but they have their own theory about suffering, and they mean to apply it to Job's case. God sends suffering as a punishment for sin. Since Job suffers, sin must lie at his door. If he will confess it, and repent and turn to God, he will be delivered and all will be well. This is their belief, and it is the background of all the debate. Each man speaks in turn and Job replies to each. The debate goes round the circle three times.

### THE FIRST ROUND OF SPEECHES

(Chs. 4-14)

The scene is still the ash-heap where Job is sitting with his friends around him (2:8, 13). The course of the discussion reveals the various characteristics of the three men. They press their arguments from different points of view. Eliphaz, who is perhaps the oldest because he speaks first, argues from what he has seen (4:8; 5:3; 15:17). He is the elderly man of experience and observation. Bildad is the



learned man who refers to his authorities and appeals to the results of study and investigation (8: 8-10). Zophar is the blunt man who has opinions of his own and prides himself on saying what he thinks (11:1-6; 20:2). Thus the wisdom of Eliphaz, the learning of Bildad, and the dogmatism of Zophar, are brought to bear on Job's case. The three men represent all that human philosophy has to offer on the problem of suffering. The real scene of the drama is the inner life of Job, and his speeches are the windows through which we see into his soul.

In their first speeches the friends deal mainly with the ways of God's providence. They argue that it is God's way to punish sin with suffering. In doing so Eliphaz emphasizes the goodness of God, Bildad the justice of God, and Zophar the wisdom of God.

1. Eliphaz (Chs. 4-5). He begins with a courteous apology for speaking at all, and proceeds to lay down the general law of sowing and reaping in the moral world (4:1-11). This was revealed to him once in a silent vision of the night (4:12-21). He describes a concrete case (5:1-7), and advises Job to seek God (5:8-16), promising him a happy result if he will submit to the chastenings of the Almighty (5:17-27).

2. Job (Chs. 6-7). He has been pained by the speech of Eliphaz. He protests that the greatness of his calamity has not been taken into account (6: 1-13). He expresses deep disappointment at the attitude of his friends (6:14-23), and challenges them to show him wherein he has sinned (6:24-30). Then he renews his bitter cry, describing the misery of his life (7:1-10), and appealing to God to be left alone (7:11-21). This frank and open speech of Job, with all its terrible energy and depth of

feeling, differs greatly from the pious moralizing of Eliphaz, with its utter lack of sympathy.

3. Bildad (Ch. 8). Less courteous than Eliphaz, he begins by reproving Job. He affirms that God's justice has been illustrated in the fate of Job's children, and tells him that it will be illustrated in his own restoration to prosperity and happiness if he will turn to God.

4. Job (Chs. 9-10). He admits the general truth of what his friends say: "Of a truth I know that it is so". And then he raises a far deeper question: "How can man be just with God?" He discusses this in the light of God's great power as contrasted with his own helplessness, and expresses the need of a daysman or umpire between himself and God (ch. 9). Then he makes a new appeal to God, seeking to discover why God should destroy the work of His own hands and why He will not leave him alone (ch. 10).

In this speech Job reaches the most agonized depths of doubt, and his words show how insoluble is the soul's problem on the lines of human righteousness. But from this point he reaches out to give expression to a great need. He utters the cry of the heart of humanity for a Mediator (9:33). It is really an aspiration: the Septuagint renders it, "Would that there were a mediator for us, who would hear the cause between us both". It shows that man was made for the Gospel by proving that the Gospel corresponds to the deepest craving of the human heart. Jesus is God's answer to Job's cry.

5. Zophar (Ch. 11). The third friend now breaks into the debate in a blunt, dictatorial way. He is perhaps the youngest of the three, and carries on the debate with hot-headed zeal and self-confidence. Reproving Job as a man "full of talk", he

wishes God would speak to him. In the light of the wisdom of God, he exhorts Job to put away his iniquity and he will have a happy end.

6. Job (Chs. 12-14). He pours contempt upon the superior wisdom his friends assume, and shows that he knows more about God's ways than they do (12:1-13:2). He declares that his appeal is to God Himself (13:3-19). Then he begins to plead his cause with God (13: 20-28). He describes the frailty of man's life, and raises the question: "If a man die shall he live again?" If he knew this was so, he could endure through all the days of his affliction till his release should come (ch. 14). This speech attains a high and noble tone. Job's suffering has developed in him sympathy with the human race. His faith reaches upward to the thought of a life for man beyond this one.

NOTE:—In this first round of speeches, each of the three friends has revealed his own character; and they have all applied their theory, each in his own way, to Job's case. Their view that suffering is sent as a punishment for sin is true so far as it goes, but it does not explain why a righteous man should suffer. The friends have failed to understand Job because they have not taken a sympathetic approach to his problem. Their addresses have been cold theoretical discussions of an abstract doctrine. They have brought the sufferer no help and no comfort.

Job's speeches, on the other hand, have been full of intense feeling. While he admits the general truth of what they say, he sweeps aside their application of it to his case and appeals to God Himself. What makes his affliction so heavy is, that he knows it has come from God and yet God leaves him in darkness about it and gives him no explanation. But Job never abandons his confidence in God. In

the midst of his own sufferings he is learning to sympathize with all who suffer. He identifies himself with mankind in general, and so he discovers the deepest needs of the human heart. His cry is a cry to God from the heart of humanity, and his faith reaches out to God for an answer to that cry. Before this round of speeches has come to an end he has gained a presentiment of the Incarnation and of Immortality.

### THE SECOND ROUND OF SPEECHES (Chs. 15-21)

The friends now change their line of approach to Job and base their theory on the history of the wicked. Eliphaz argues that the wicked man has a terrible experience, Bildad that he has a disastrous end, and Zophar that he has but brief prosperity. All this describes Job's case, and therefore he must be a wicked man. The friends now become more violent and bitter in their attack upon him.

1. Eliphaz (Ch. 15). He rebukes Job for his last speech (vs. 1-16), and depicts the troubled conscience and the terrible experience of the wicked man (vs. 17-35).

2. Job (Chs. 16-17). His friends are miserable comforters (16:1-5). He pictures his disconsolate condition (16:6-17), and appeals to God as his witness and vindicator (16:18—17:5). He is sustained by an inward assurance that God will do him justice: "Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and he that voucheth for me is on high" (v. 19). Then he goes on to describe his helpless and hopeless state (17:6-16).

3. Bildad (Ch. 18). He rebukes Job (vs. 1-4), and describes the downfall and disastrous end of the sinner (vs. 5-21).

4. Job (Ch. 19). He reproaches his friends for their attitude toward him (vs. 1-6), laments his sufferings as proceeding from God (vs. 7-12) and from men (vs. 13-20), makes a pathetic appeal for sympathy (vs. 21-22), and then rises to the utterance of a lofty faith in God (vs. 23-29): "As for me I know that my Redeemer liveth, and at last he will stand up upon the earth: and after my skin hath been thus destroyed, yet from my flesh shall I see God" (vs. 25-26; marg.).

The original term for the word "Redeemer" in this passage is "Goel", which conveys something of the meaning of the word "Vindicator" also. The Goel was the man whose duty it was, in the law of that age, to buy back the property of a kinsman for him if he had lost it, or to purchase his freedom if he had become a bondsman, or to avenge his death if he had been unjustly slain. Job must soon die, but he grasps the thought that his Redeemer, his Goel, will live on after him. His faith anticipates a time when God Himself will vindicate his honour upon the earth, and restore, even in the flesh, the rights which he has lost. This is the highest and most wondrous flight of his faith. He has caught sight of the Resurrection.

5. Zophar (Ch. 20). He expresses his indignation at Job, and declares that the prosperity of the wicked is brief (vs. 1-11). Sin brings its own retribution, and the sinner cannot enjoy his prosperity (vs. 12-29).

6. Job (Ch. 21). He bids his friends be silent while he speaks (vs. 1-6), declares that the real mystery is the prosperity of the wicked (vs. 7-16), for it is no invariable rule that they are overwhelmed with calamity (vs. 17-26), and rebukes his friends

for their false conclusion and vain comfort (vs. 27-34).

Job's replies in this round of speeches contain three strands of thought: (1) The terrible loneliness of sorrow. Job is a type of Him who was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief". (2) The triumphant flight of faith. The noblest expressions of Job's trust in God occur in these chapters (16:19; 19:25). (3) The real mystery of life. It consists in the prosperity of the wicked being more manifest than their downfall (21:7-9, 17).

### THE THIRD ROUND OF SPEECHES (Chs. 22-26)

Having no further arguments to bring, the friends now charge Job directly with sin. Eliphaz makes the definite accusation, and Bildad follows it up with a brief speech. Zophar is silent altogether, showing that the attempt of the friends to convict Job has been exhausted. Job does not reply directly to the charge. He has maintained his innocence before, and he now deals mainly with the mystery of God's silence.

1. Eliphaz (Ch. 22). He charges Job with great wickedness (vs. 1-11), warns him that God takes note of his sin (vs. 12-20), and admonishes him to repent and return to God (vs. 21-30). This speech shows the effect of controversy on good men, and the length to which they will go for the sake of a theory. It is an impressive illustration of the fact that dogmas, however true in themselves, lose all their power for good unless they are inspired and maintained by love.

2. Job (Chs. 23-24). He wonders at the mysterious silence of God in his own case—"Oh that I

knew where I might find him" (ch. 23)—and at the apparent absence of justice in God's government of the world (ch. 24). He points out instances of public wrong-doing (vs. 1-12), and secret sins (vs. 13-25), that go unpunished. This speech shows that Job's own misery has opened his eyes to the misery of his fellow men. What saddens him is that he cannot see any good end subserved in the wrongs and calamities that men have to endure.

3. Bildad (Ch. 25). He has only a few words left to say. God is too great and high for man to be pure in His sight.

4. Job (Ch. 26). He expresses sarcastic admiration of Bildad's words (vs. 1-4). He silences his friends by showing that he has a far more majestic conception of God's greatness than they have (vs. 5-13). He closes this round by indicating that the very greatness of God hides the mystery of man's problem (v. 14).

NOTE:—Throughout the debate, Job has not only been answering the arguments of his friends, but has also been searching for the light. He has been groping his way in the darkness. In his affliction he has been sounding the utmost depths of human need. He has expressed this need from time to time in the course of the debate in a number of cries out of the darkness. Each of these cries is either a profound question which he cannot answer, or the utterance of a profound faith in God. None of the cries is answered in the book itself, or even in the whole Old Testament. But each of them is met by the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and its answer is found in the New Testament.

These cries of Job are the elemental aspirations of the heart of humanity. Thus "deep calleth unto deep"—the deeps of man's great need to the deeps of

God's great grace. Seven such cries may be found in the speeches of Job. They may be set forth with their New Testament answers as follows:

1. "How can man be just with God," (9:2).—  
"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24).  
"Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18).

2. "There is no umpire betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both" (9:33).—"There is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5).

3. "If a man die, shall he live again?" (14:14).—  
"Our Saviour Christ Jesus abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10).

4. "Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and he that voucheth for me is on high" (16:19).—  
"If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).  
"He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25).

5. "As for me I know that my Redeemer liveth, and at last he will stand up upon the earth, and . . . . from my flesh shall I see God" (19:25-26)—  
"Our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20).  
"We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is" (1 John 3:2).

6. "Oh that I knew where I might find him" (23:3).—"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him (John 1:18). "I am



the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6).

7. "He knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (23:10). —"I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to usward" (Rom. 8:18).

### JOB'S FINAL SPEECHES

(Chs. 27-31)

The three friends have no more to say. Their theory that suffering is God's way of punishing sin may be true as a general principle of God's moral government, but it does not meet Job's case. Job never gives up his faith in the goodness and justice of God, but he also maintains that he is innocent of any conduct that would account for his suffering at God's hand more than others. He now makes his final reply, (1) closing the debate by establishing his innocence against the charge of his friends, and (2) reviewing his whole case to show that his sufferings must have a deeper cause than his moral conduct.

1. A Reply to his Friends (Chs. 27-28). He solemnly protests his innocence and integrity (27:1-12), and describes the treatment of the wicked at the hand of God as different from his own experience (27:13-23). Then comes a splendid chapter in which Job describes the unsearchableness of wisdom (ch. 28). Men penetrate into the bosom of the earth in mining operations and bring forth its treasures (vs. 1-11). But wisdom cannot be found, nor can it be purchased (vs. 12-22). God alone knows it (vs. 23-28). By wisdom Job means the secret of things, the solution of the problems of life,

the moral order of the world. The answer to Job's search for wisdom is found only in Jesus Christ.

2. A Review of his Case (Chs. 29-31). Now Job goes back in imagination over his own history. He recalls the happiness of his past life (ch. 29), and bewails the misery of his present experience (ch. 30). Then he solemnly and deliberately protests the innocence and integrity of his life (ch. 31). In doing so he reviews his personal life (vs. 1-8), his domestic life (vs. 9-15), his civil life (vs. 16-23), and his religious life (vs. 24-40).

In these chapters Job reveals himself more than anywhere else in the poem. There is both pathos and beauty in them. The story Job relates in ch. 30 bears a strange likeness to the path of the Cross trodden by the Son of God, and suggests that his history was not only a pattern of the ways of the Lord with His children, but also a foreshadowing of the experience of Christ. Here is the path of derision and contempt (vs. 1-8), of indignity and insult (vs. 9-15), of pain and distress (vs. 16-23), of loneliness and darkness (vs. 24-31). But while there is a striking similarity in their paths of suffering, there is a striking contrast in their endurance of suffering. Job's language is all full of self—self-vindication, self-pity, self-assertion.

In the three chapters the first personal pronoun occurs nearly 200 times. There is no expression of conscious weakness, no token of a broken and submissive spirit. How differently Paul dealt with his own justification (1 Cor. 4:4)! Job at last stands revealed. In vindicating himself he shows that he has needed the refining fire. Here we see, not a sinful man in whom sin needs to be punished, but a righteous man in whom self needs to die. This is the end to which the debate has led, and it pre-

prepares the way for the ultimate purpose of God in Job's affliction, which is worked out in the rest of the book.

### THE INTERVENTION OF ELIHU (Chs. 32-37)

The three friends have been put to silence, and Job himself has nothing more to say: "The words of Job are ended" (31:40). He relapses into silence, but the mystery still remains. A young man now comes into the discussion who has waited till the older men finished. He has been among the bystanders around the ash-heap listening to the debate. He speaks under the constraint of the spirit within him (32:17-18). He feels moved by "the breath of the Almighty" (32:8; 33:4). Thus he represents those who are enlightened by God and taught by His Spirit.

1. Elihu's Introduction (Ch. 32). The effect of the debate on Elihu is stated. He was indignant with Job, because he could only justify himself by accusing God; and indignant with the friends, because they could only justify God by accusing Job (vs. 1-5). Then he introduces himself and explains his reason for taking part in the discussion (vs. 6-22). Being young, he has listened with deference while his seniors were debating the question of Job's affliction. But he has come to see that years do not always bring wisdom, for their arguments have been unconvincing. There is a Divine spirit that gives true enlightenment to man, and because of this Elihu declares what he calls "mine opinion" (vs. 6, 10, 17), the conviction that has been wrought within him. He first addresses the friends (v. 6), and then turns to the bystanders (v. 15). Finally he begins to speak directly to Job himself (33:1).

2. His First Address (Ch. 33). He refers to Job's complaint that God was afflicting him without any cause (vs. 1-12), and then goes on to show that suffering is one of God's ways of speaking to man (vs. 13-22). God speaks in two ways (v. 14): in dreams and visions (vs. 15-16), and in suffering and affliction (vs. 19-22). What man needs is "an interpreter" to explain God's righteous purpose (v. 23), and what God provides for man is "a ransom" (v. 24). God is gracious and uses suffering to keep man back from possible sin and danger (vs. 17-18), and also to give him new life and blessing after suffering has done its work (vs. 25-30). Elihu then closes his first address by challenging Job to answer him if he has anything to say (vs. 31-33).

Job's silence after this speech of Elihu's shows that he has been impressed by it. Elihu has brought a new view to bear on Job's case. Suffering is one of God's gracious methods of dealing with men. The sufferings of the righteous have a purifying purpose. They are sent of God to restrain men from self-righteousness and from possible sin, and to discipline the soul for a richer and fuller life.

NOTE:—The two ways in which, Elihu says, God speaks to man, correspond with His written Word brought home to our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and His providential dealings with us interpreted by His Word and Spirit. There was no written revelation in the days of Job. Dreams and visions were God's method of conveying His revelation in the days of the patriarchs. He no longer speaks in that way; His revelation is now conveyed through the Scriptures. God still speaks to us, however, through His providences, and through suffering and affliction. Elihu's idea of the "ransom" by which God accomplishes His purpose in dealing thus with men intro-

duces the shadow of the Cross. Elihu does not explain it, but he makes two points clear: the ransom is provided by God and not by the sinner; and it is provided on the ground of his confession and repentance (vs. 23-28).

Considered in the light of the New Testament, Elihu's "opinion" is that suffering is the means God uses for helping His people to crucify self. The two strongest characteristics of the self-life are referred to in v. 17, namely, self-will and pride. Suffering helps the Christian to die to self, to reckon himself crucified with Christ and dead unto sin, to deny self and to take up his cross and follow Christ (Rom. 6:11; Gal. 2:20; 6:14; Col. 3:1-3).

3. His Second Address (Ch. 34). Job remaining silent, Elihu proceeds. He first appeals to the wise men around him, asking them to listen in order to try his words as he goes on to answer Job (vs. 1-4). He meets Job's complaint that God was afflicting him unjustly (vs. 5-9), by stating that God cannot do wickedness and that justice is shown in God's government of men (vs. 10-30). He then points out the true way to bear suffering: by penitent and patient submission to God, and willingness to learn what He would teach us (vs. 31-37).

4. His Third Address (Ch. 35). Job had questioned the advantage of serving God, and seemed to set up his righteousness as more than God's (vs. 1-3). Elihu now points out that man's sin does not hurt God, nor does man's righteousness add anything to Him (vs. 4-8). The reason why men do not find God is because they make no true devout appeal to Him (vs. 9-16). If God does not hear the afflicted, it is not because He does not care, but because they ask amiss. Their cry is only a cry for help and not a cry for God. Men should not cry

out like the brutes simply because they are hurt. They should learn to trust in God as their Maker, and as One who can give them songs in the night (v. 10; Psa. 32:7; Heb. 12:11).

5. His Fourth Address (Chs. 36-37). Having answered Job's arguments, Elihu now begins his last address. He beseeches Job to listen for he has something more to say on God's behalf (36:1-4). Then he proceeds to give an exalted description of God's character, and to explain the discipline of suffering in His providence (36:5-23). God's gracious wisdom is revealed in the way He uses suffering, for He has something to teach men which they can only learn through pain. It has different results according as men bear it in the right or the wrong way. His purpose is to lead the afflicted through their affliction out into a broad place of blessing.

Elihu then gives another description of God's greatness drawn from His wonderful operations in nature (36:24-33). A storm has been rising as the discussion progresses, and Elihu describes its approach as it gathers over the sky. Then the storm breaks, and in a vivid and splendid passage he magnifies the greatness and power of God as revealed in the mighty forces of nature (37:1-13). This storm is a fit symbol of the storm of affliction that has broken over the head of Job. Elihu appeals to Job to hear it, and to consider it, and to ask himself if he knows God (37:14-24). But the theme is too much for Elihu, and, in the presence of this overwhelming manifestation of God's power and majesty, he stops speaking. However, he has prepared the way of the Lord, for now Jehovah Himself begins to speak to Job out of the whirlwind (38:1).

## THE REVELATION OF JEHOVAH

(Chs. 38-41)

When the voices of men have all ceased, the voice of God is heard speaking home to the heart of Job out of the storm. He speaks in reply to Job's repeated cry that God would appear and solve the mystery of his sufferings (13:22; 31:35). The answer is altogether unlike what Job had expected. The Lord does not refer to Job's particular case at all, nor does He say a word about his sufferings. In a series of splendid pictures from the material world and the animal creation, He makes the glory of His power and wisdom pass before Job. The sufferer's thoughts are turned away from himself altogether, and they are fixed on the greatness and goodness of God. In the midst of his sufferings, Job receives such a revelation of God's character as he has never had before. In the light of this vision he is completely humbled, and he is brought to understand his own littleness and imperfection.

1. Jehovah's First Address (Chs. 38-39). Beginning with a challenge to Job to gird up his loins like a man and answer Him (38:1-3), God proceeds to put a number of questions to him. The whole speech is a series of questions which make the magnificent panorama of creation to pass before Job. First, there is unfolded a view of the inanimate world of earth and sea and sky (38:4-38). Then comes a survey of the animal world (38:39—39:30). In all this sublime description of the universe God is suggesting His own complete understanding of it and joyous sympathy with it, and the perfect ease of His own activity through it all. At the heart of it there is a redeeming tenderness. The end in view is not to crush Job into submission, but rather

to lead Job to realize the true character of God and the deeper needs of his own life before God.

2. The Effect Upon Job (40:1-5). Now comes a pause in which the Lord asks for an answer from Job. The answer shows that he is beginning to learn the required lesson: "Behold, I am of small account."

3. Jehovah's Second Address (40:6—41:34). The voice of the Lord, still speaking out of the storm, goes on to challenge Job again. Let Job clothe himself with majesty and assume the reins of government in this world of God's with its vast variety of mystery. Let him bring down the proud and overthrow the wicked. When Job can do this, then God will acknowledge that his own right hand can save him (40:6-14).

Finally the Lord brings before Job two of the great creatures He has made, and suggests that Job should exercise his power and authority over them. Behemoth is either the elephant or the hippopotamus (40:15-24), and leviathan is no doubt the crocodile (ch. 41). The power of the latter creature is depicted with great fulness of detail. If Job cannot govern these animals, how can he assume the functions of the Creator and Moral Governor of the world?

The essential truth brought out by the speeches of the Lord in this part of the book is that God is always giving a sympathetic revelation of Himself in His own creation. He rejoices in the life and activity of His creatures, and in their own way they manifest His power and goodness. The Lord does not argue on His own behalf or justify Himself to Job. But Job's very afflictions make it possible for him to get such a revelation of God from these speeches as he never had before. It is when men



are passing through the great trials of life that their hearts are especially sensitive. Then their minds are open to receive new revelations of God's character and to realize the deeper needs of their own lives.

### JOB'S RESTORATION

(Ch. 42)

The speeches of the Lord have a profound effect on Job and make him feel his nothingness. The revelation of the greatness and goodness of God brings him to utter self-abasement. This prepares the way for new life and new blessing. God's final purpose in Job's trial is now reached. There are three steps in his restoration:

1. Self-Surrender (vs. 1-6). These verses form a dialogue. The first clause of v. 3 and all v. 4 are spoken by the Lord. Job has come to the end of himself. Instead of self-justification there is now humiliation and confession. "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes". Thus the solution of Job's problem comes about, not through his intellectual discovery of new truth, but through the yielding of his heart and will.

2. Vindication (vs. 7-9). As soon as Job's self-surrender takes place and he ceases to vindicate himself, then the Lord vindicates him before his friends. They are reprovved because they have been unjust to Job. They thought he was suffering because he was a sinner. They did not realize that God may call a man to suffer because he is a saint. The Lord uses the expression, "my servant Job", four times in these few verses. Job is the true serv-

ant of God. His three friends had been attempting to bring Job to God by their philosophy; Job now brings them to God by prayer and intercession.

3. Newness of Life (vs. 10-17). When Job prayed for his friends, that is, when he ceased from himself and entered into co-operation with God for the sake of others, then his affliction was removed and his prosperity was restored.

Job lived a new life from now on, a larger life than he had lived before. "Jehovah blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning". His wealth was twice as much as it had been before. He enjoyed new fellowship with his kindred and his acquaintance. A new family grew up around him, and he lived a long and fruitful life. The material prosperity given to Job was the blessing of the Old Testament. It is representative and symbolical of that spiritual prosperity which is the highest blessing of the New Testament dispensation.

### THE MESSAGE OF JOB

The story of Job illustrates the various uses of suffering in the moral government of God. It shows that Satan is the author of suffering and that God permits and overrules it for His own high ends. Each of the five parts of the book brings out a special purpose which suffering serves in the lives of the righteous. All these are to be found in the New Testament also, and they receive deeper significance in the light of the Cross: They may be stated as follows, in the order in which they occur in the story:

1. Suffering is a test of righteousness and faith. This was the reason why Satan was permitted to afflict Job. See Luke 22:31-32 and Jas 1:2-3.

2. Suffering is chastisement for actual wrongdoing. This was the theory of the friends. See Heb. 12:7-11.

3. Suffering is a means of restraining the believer from self-righteousness and possible sin. When properly borne it results in the suppression of self-will and the refining of character. This was the view of Elihu. See Rom. 6:11; Gal. 5:24; 6:14.

4. Suffering prepares one to realize a fuller knowledge of God and His ways and a deeper understanding of oneself and one's need. This was the experience of Job when the Lord spoke to him out of the storm. See Phil. 3:10; Heb. 2:10.

5. Suffering leads to the highest blessing and the richest life. This was the Lord's final purpose in the afflictions of Job. See Rom. 8:17-18.

## THE BOOK OF PSALMS

THIS book is composed of hymns or sacred songs written by David and a number of other psalmists. It was Israel's book of praise and prayer. It contains the response of the heart of Israel to the revelation of God in the Law and in the nation's history. The historic background of the book stretches over a thousand years—from the time of Moses to the post-exilic period.

The Psalter is the very heart of the Bible. It occupies a unique place amid all the religious literature of the world. It has served as an instrument of worship not only for the Jews, but also for the Christian Church throughout the centuries. The mark of inspiration is more manifest here than in any other part of the Hebrew Scriptures. One fourth of all the quotations in the New Testament (40 out of 160) are taken from the Book of Psalms.

### THE CHARACTER OF THE PSALMS

The hundred and fifty separate psalms which make up the book are marked by great variety. In general, they may be said to have a threefold character:

1. They are devotional. They are intended for worship. This is their primary purpose. They lead the worshipper directly into the Divine presence and express the thoughts and feelings of the devout soul before God. All the elements of true devotion are found in the book: adoration and praise, penitence and confession, submission and trust, love and gratitude. These are expressed in a great variety of

forms. Here the Christian worshipper will find some expression for any attitude his soul may take in the presence of God.

2. They are experimental. All the varieties of the soul's experiences find expression in this book. There is no circumstance, and no combination of circumstances, into which any saint can come that is not represented in the Psalms. Here we find faithfully portrayed the believer's hopes and fears, his strength and weakness, his trials and triumphs. Here the inner life is laid bare and a mirror is held up in which the Christian may examine himself.

3. They are also prophetic. The Psalms are pervaded with the spirit of prophecy. It is not that they contain predictions in the same sense as the prophetic Scriptures, but that the experiences reflected in the Psalms are often foreshadowings of the experiences of our Lord. Expressions used by David and other psalmists describing their feelings under varied circumstances are applied in the New Testament to the Lord Jesus Christ. The words of these inspired poets were often so shaped by the Holy Spirit that they expressed by prophetic anticipation the mind of Christ in the days of His flesh.

#### THE THEMES OF THE PSALMS

While the purpose of the book is worship in its broadest sense, the separate psalms deal with many different themes. These may be grouped under the following general subjects:

1. The Law of the Lord (e.g., 1, 19, 119)
2. The Messianic King (e.g., 2, 45, 72, 110)
3. God's Glory in Creation (e.g., 8, 19, 29, 104)
4. God's Goodness in Providence (e.g., 34, 37, 91, 103, 107)

5. The Experience of the Saint, or God's Dealing with the Individual (e.g., 3, 4, 23, 27, 32, 51, 73)
6. The History of Israel, or God's Dealing with the Nation (e.g., 46, 68, 78, 81, 105, 106, 114, 135, 136, 137)
7. The Kingdom of God, or the Lord's Reign on Earth (e.g., 47, 93, 95-99, 145).

### THE TITLES OF THE PSALMS

A large number of the psalms have headings or superscriptions prefixed to them. It is not known when these were given or how they originated. They do not belong to the inspired text, but they are very ancient and are not to be regarded as worthless. They embody the oldest tradition about the psalms and are not conjectures of a later age. They are varied in character and were intended to serve several purposes:

1. Authorship. One hundred psalms have titles referring to their reputed authors.

2. Historical occasion. Thirteen psalms have headings of this kind and in every case they relate to David.

3. Religious purpose. Headings of this kind are attached to Psalms 38, 70, 92, 100, 102, 120-134.

4. Literary character. The following terms occur: a song, a prayer, a praise, Maschil, Michtam, and Shiggaion. The meaning of the last three is obscure.

5. Musical directions. Fifty-four psalms are headed with the words, "For the Chief Musician". Probably they were given to him to be set to music for the Temple services. Twenty-seven of these have additional directions, the real meaning of which has

been lost. They were lost very early, for the translators of the Septuagint in the second century B.C. did not understand them. They were doubtless technical terms belonging to the musical arrangements of the Temple in use before the Exile. The Temple services were suddenly terminated by the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. After that the meaning of these musical terms gradually faded from the minds of the Jews.

These musical directions always stand first in the headings where they occur. A comparison of these psalms with Hab. 3, which is a psalm with a title of authorship at the beginning and a musical direction at the end, has suggested the theory that, after their meaning was lost, the musical directions in the Book of Psalms dropped out of their proper place, which should be at the end of the preceding psalm in each case. This would remove the difficulty in the title of Psalm 88, which seems to attribute the psalm to two different authorships.

The "selah" which occurs in the body of many psalms seems to denote a musical interlude of some kind, perhaps a pause in the singing while the instruments continued to play. Another view regards it as a liturgical note marking an ascription of praise.

### THE WRITERS OF THE PSALMS

The titles of authorship have not the authority of the sacred text, but that is not a sufficient reason for discarding them. They should not be rejected on subjective or hypothetical grounds, but should command our careful and respectful consideration as representing a venerable tradition that goes back into the age out of which the book has come.

The whole book is sometimes mentioned under the name of David (Heb. 4:7), in the sense that he was the originator of the collection and the outstanding author. Seventy-three of the hundred and fifty psalms bear his name. Fifty are anonymous. Some of these also may have been written by David. The Second Psalm is ascribed to him in Acts 4:25. The Ninth and Tenth are linked together by an acrostic structure in the original, which brings them both under David's name. The Thirty-third bears his name in the Septuagint.

Psalmody began long before David's day. Psalm 90 is ascribed to Moses, and the 91st also may be his, for the heading of one psalm sometimes extends to the one immediately following (e.g. 10, 43). Two other songs by the Lawgiver are contained in the Pentateuch (Exod. 15:1-18; Deut. 32:1-43). No psalm is attributed to any writer between Moses and David; yet the stream of sacred song had been flowing without intermission. We have Deborah's song in Jud. 5 and Hannah's song in 1 Sam. 2:1-10. In Samuel's time music was cultivated in the schools of the prophets (1 Sam. 10:5). Some of David's skill in psalmody may have been gained under Samuel and in association with these "sons of the prophets". Two psalms (72 and 127) are ascribed to Solomon.

The other writers named in the book belonged to the Temple singers. When David brought the Ark to Jerusalem he appointed three of the Levites to have charge of the service of song. They were Asaph, Heman, and Ethan who is also called Jeduthun (1 Chron. 15:16-19). These men, and their "sons" or descendants, conducted the music and song in the worship of the sanctuary from David's time onward (1 Chron. 25). Twelve psalms are attributed



to Asaph (50, 73-83), some of which were probably composed by his descendants. Heman is named as the author of Psalm 88, and Ethan as the author of Psalm 89. The sons of Korah, to whom eleven psalms are ascribed (42-49, 84, 85, 87), probably composed Heman's choir. The genealogy of Heman recorded in 1 Chron. 6:33-38 shows that he was a descendant of Korah. The mercy of the Lord is manifested in taking up the descendants of the man who had been destroyed for his rebellion against Moses and Aaron (Num. 16) and giving them a place of honourable service in the Temple of Solomon.

David himself was the greatest of the psalmists; he was called "the sweet psalmist of Israel" (2 Sam. 23:1). He had by nature a rare poetic genius. The wide and varied experiences of his life gave him a thorough knowledge of the human soul. He was a man after God's own heart; he trusted God fully, and thus he came to know God and understand His ways. Above all this he was inspired by the Holy Spirit for the special purpose of praising God in psalm and song (2 Sam. 23:2).

Almost every part of David's life is reflected in the book. His early years in the open fields as a shepherd boy are seen in Psalms 8, 19, 23, 29; his persecution at the hands of Saul in Psalms 11-14, 27, 31, 34, 52-59; his reign in Zion in Psalms 15, 18, 24, 68, 101, 132; his wars in Psalms 20, 21, 60; his sin and repentance in Psalms 32, 38, 51; his flight from Absalom in Psalms 3-7, 41, 64; his last years in Psalms, 37, 61, 62, 65. When these psalms are read with the background of David's life in view, they receive a richer meaning for us and have a more direct application to our own spiritual experiences.

## THE CURSES IN THE PSALMS

A few of the psalms contain curses upon enemies and seem to breathe the spirit of hatred and revenge. The most notable of these are Nos. 35, 58, 59, 69, and 109, which are known as the Psalms of Vengeance or Imprecation. A few isolated passages marked by a similar spirit occur in other psalms: e.g. *Psa.* 137:8-9. How are such psalms and such statements to be explained? Several considerations help us to understand them.

1. They belong to the Old Testament dispensation. They are to be judged from that point of view, and not as belonging to the dispensation of the Spirit where we now stand. The progressive character of Divine revelation is always to be kept in mind.

2. The above five psalms are all attributed to David. David was naturally generous, and his character was singularly free from malice and vindictiveness. Such psalms cannot be explained as the expression of his private feelings. The curses they contain were not pronounced merely upon personal enemies. The Messianic promise given to David made him a representative character. His enemies were God's enemies, and what he asks for is the vindication of God's cause and not his own.

3. The meek and lowly Jesus Himself used language about the punishment of the wicked as appalling as any that occurs in these psalms: e.g. *Matt.* 23:13-36; 13:41-42; *Mark* 9:42-48.

4. These psalms are quoted in the New Testament as prophetic of the Lord Jesus Christ. *Psalm* 69 is quoted five times in this way: *John* 2:17; 15:25; 19:28-30; *Rom.* 11:9; 15:3. *Psalm* 109 is applied in *Acts* 1:20 to Judas's betrayal of Jesus.

5. These curses, therefore, are to be regarded as revealing, in Old Testament language and from an Old Testament point of view, the mind of the Spirit regarding the enemies of God and His Kingdom. They express His righteous indignation and His zeal for the vindication of God's justice and righteousness. They emphasize the reality of Divine retribution and the majesty of Divine justice in the only way that this could be done under the old dispensation. The Old Testament punishes in this life: the New Testament transfers the final judgment to another world and another life. These Psalms remind us that there is such a thing as the vengeance of God (Deut. 32:35, Psa. 94:1, Nah. 1:2, Rom. 12:19), and the wrath of the Lamb (Rev. 6:16).

#### SOME GROUPS OF PSALMS

1. The Messianic Psalms. Many of the psalms seem to refer, by prophetic anticipation, to the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. David was a representative and type of the Messiah, and experiences which he records of his own life often reflect the experiences of Christ in His earthly life. The same thing is true in a lesser degree of other psalmists. The Spirit of Christ is subjectively present in the whole book, and circumstances which are primarily those of the writer often foreshadow the circumstances of our Lord's life. This is especially true of the sufferings of Christ.

There are a few psalms, however, which are so objectively Messianic that they can have no adequate explanation or fulfilment but in Christ alone, and are to be understood in the light of the New Testament. These are the following: No. 2, His resurrection and royal authority (Acts 4:25-26; 13:33).

No. 22, His sufferings on the cross (Matt. 27:46, Mark 15:34). No. 45, His union with the Church (Heb. 1:8-9). No. 72, His everlasting kingdom and universal reign (Rev. 11:15). No. 110, His ascension and heavenly priesthood (Matt. 22:44, Mark 12:36, Luke 20:42-43, Acts 2:34-35, Heb. 1:13).

2. The Penitential Psalms: Nos. 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130 and 143. Since the early days of the Church, these seven have been known by this name because their prevailing idea is penitence and confession of sin. They have been distinguished by the Church Fathers as marking seven steps in the ladder of repentance: fear of punishment (6:1), sorrow for sin (32:5), hope of pardon (38:15), prayer for cleansing (51:7), longing for heaven (102:16-17), distrust of self (130:5-6), and prayer against final doom (143:2).

3. The Pilgrim Psalms: Nos. 120-134. All these bear the same title: A Song of Ascents (A. V. Degrees), literally, "A Song of Goings up". The Israelites were to worship at the central sanctuary three times a year—at the feasts of the Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Deut. 16:16). This collection of fifteen psalms probably formed a separate song book for the pilgrims as they travelled up to the Temple. A musical people like the Jews would be sure to beguile the way with songs. There is a tender and graceful beauty about the whole group. With one exception (132), they are all short, the utterance of a single thought or feeling.

4. The Hallelujah Psalms. The word "Hallelujah", meaning "praise ye Jehovah", occurs first in the Bible in the last verse of Psa. 104. After that a number of the psalms either begin or end with the word. These are Nos. 104-106, Nos. 111-117 (see the note on Psalm 113), No. 135, Nos. 146-150.

In this last group the Hallelujah occurs both at the beginning and at the end of each psalm. Psalms 113-118 formed a group, called "the Hallel", which was sung at the Passover. It was probably the "hymn" sung by the Lord and His disciples at the Last Supper (Matt. 26:30).

### THE DIVISIONS OF THE BOOK

The Book of Psalms is composed of five parts, or five smaller books. These form separate collections, which are marked by doxologies at the end of Psalms 41, 72, 89, 106. Psalm 150 is itself a grand doxology closing the whole collection. These five divisions seem to indicate stages in the growth of the Psalter. This explains the note at the end of Psalm 72. It marked the end of a collection of David's psalms which was complete at the time. The whole Psalter was not complete till after the return from Babylon. Some of the psalms reflect the conditions of the Exile (e.g. 137), and some the period of the Restoration (e.g. 118). Each of the five books has a keynote of its own, which is usually found in the first psalm of the collection. According to the Rabbis, the five parts of the Hebrew Psalter correspond to the five books of the Law.

The two Divine names, Elohim (represented by our word God) and Jehovah (represented in the A.V. by Lord in capital letters), occur with great frequency in the Psalms. They are not used at random but with intelligent purpose. Elohim (sometimes El) is the common and more general name for God, and designates Him as the Creator and Providential Governor of the world. Jehovah is the special and peculiar name by which He revealed Himself to Israel, and designates Him as their Redeemer

and Covenant God. The use of this name gave a vivid personal touch to the religion of the devout Israelite.

Psalms in which the former name predominates have in view the power and holiness of God, and call out feelings of reverence and humiliation before Him. Psalms in which the latter name predominates have in view the mercy and faithfulness of God, and call out feelings of gratitude and love to Him. The proper name, Jehovah, is the prevailing one in the first division of the Psalter and in the last two divisions. The common name, Elohim, is the prevailing one in the second and third divisions. Psalms 14 and 53 illustrate the use of these names, for they are substantially the same, except that Jehovah is the Divine name in the one and Elohim in the other.

#### BOOK I PSALMS OF DAVID

(Nos. 1-41)

All the psalms in this group are attributed to David, except Nos. 1, 2, 10, and 33, which are anonymous. The keynote of the collection is holiness and happiness. The prevailing Divine name is Jehovah, which occurs 278 times. It is used in every psalm at least twice, and in one (29) as many as eighteen times. The word God occurs 48 times, and from thirteen psalms it is absent altogether.

Psalm 1 is an ideal description of the righteous man. It forms an appropriate introduction to the whole Psalter. Its complete realization is found in the Son of Man alone.

Psalm 2 introduces the Messianic King, and appropriately follows the ethical psalm. It is dramatic in character, and contains four scenes:

The nations in rebellion on earth (vs. 1-3); Jehovah speaking from Heaven (vs. 4-6); Christ, the King, speaking from the throne (vs. 7-9); the psalmist speaking, announcing the call of the Gospel (vs. 10-12).

Psalms 3-5 are morning and evening prayers. No. 3 is a morning prayer of faith and courage (v. 5); No. 4 is an evening prayer of tranquil trust (v. 8); and No. 5 is a Sabbath morning prayer of worship (vs. 3, 7).

Psalm 6 is the first of the seven Penitential Psalms. It is the prayer of a soul in sore trouble under the chastening hand of God.

Psalm 7 is a slandered soul's appeal to God, the righteous Judge of all the earth. Cush, whose name occurs in the title, is not mentioned elsewhere. He is probably the same as Shimei, who is called "this Benjamite" in 2 Sam. 16:11.

Psalm 8 is the first of a number of psalms which celebrate the glory of God in the world of nature. It describes the impression produced in the heart of David as he gazed upon the heavens by night (v. 3). It has a prophetic import as foreshadowing the exaltation of Jesus as the Second Man. (Heb. 2:6-9).

Psalms 9 and 10 form a pair, being linked together by an alphabetic structure in the original. They are prayers for "times of trouble" (9:9; 10:1). One is marked by triumphant trust in God (9:10). The other is a plaintive appeal to God (10:12).

Psalms 11-15 are prayers of the righteous in the midst of "this present evil world" (Gal. 1:4). The psalmist was distressed because of the prevalence of wickedness around him, and he was driven to God in prayer about it. The prayer of the Old Testament saint for the coming of the promised

Redeemer is expressed in 14:7. This prayer suggests the description of the ideal citizen of Zion in Psalm 15, for that would be realized when the Messianic salvation had been accomplished.

Psalm 16 is prophetic of the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:25-31; 13:35-37). Both Peter and Paul argue that, although the words quoted were spoken by David, they had a meaning that went beyond him. He spoke as the representative and type of Jesus Christ.

Psalm 17 also contains a foregleam of the resurrection (v. 15). The language of this psalm, like that of the preceding one, is inspired by the Spirit of Christ.

Psalm 18 is David's magnificent ode of thanksgiving for all the deliverances and victories which the Lord had given him. It is found, with a few variations, in 2 Sam. 22 also. In the metaphors he uses in vs. 1-2, David gathers together the results of a long experience of God's protecting care.

Psalm 19 contains David's daytime meditation on the glory of God as revealed in the heavens (vs. 1-6). Then it continues with his testimony as to what he found in the Law of the Lord (vs. 7-11), and closes with an appeal to the Lord as his Redeemer to keep him from sin (vs. 12-14).

Psalms 20 and 21 are closely connected. The first is a prayer of the people on behalf of the king as he goes forth to battle. The other is a thanksgiving when he returns from the battle with the victory won.

Psalm 22 is the first and greatest of the Passion Psalms. The others are Nos. 69 and 109. It is the psalm of the Cross; its opening words were used by Jesus in His cry out of the darkness (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34). It is in two parts: the lowly suffer-



ings of the Saviour as He endured the Cross (vs. 1-21), and the joy that was set before Him as through the travail He saw the triumph (vs. 22-31).

Psalms 23 and 24 are the most beautiful of all the lyrics. It has a tenderness and sweetness all its own. There is no other psalm in which the absence of all doubt and fear is so remarkable. There are but two persons in view—Jehovah and David, the Lord and I. Every blessing mentioned in the psalm is personal.

Psalms 23 and 24 were probably composed for the bringing of the Ark up into Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6; I Chron. 15). The first part (vs. 1-6) would be sung at the foot of the hill as the procession approached. The second part (vs. 7-10) would be sung antiphonally before the gates as they were summoned to open for their true king. With this historic background the psalm can be taken as prophetic of Christ's triumphal ascension into Heaven.

The preceding three psalms form a trilogy in which Christ appears successively as Saviour, Shepherd, and Sovereign. In No. 22 the Good Shepherd is giving His life for the sheep (John 10:11). In No. 23 the Great Shepherd, brought again from the dead, is caring for the sheep (Heb. 13:20). In No. 24 the Chief Shepherd is entering into the glory from which He will come again for His sheep (I Pet. 5:4).

Psalms 25-28 are suitable for devout meditation. They combine various aspects of prayer and praise. No. 25 begins with prayer (vs. 1-7), passes on to meditation (vs. 8-14), and ends with prayer (vs. 15-22). No. 26 is a prayer of self-examination in preparation for worship in the house of the Lord. No. 27 is composed of praise (vs. 1-6) and prayer (vs. 7-14), and No. 28 of prayer (vs. 1-5) and praise (vs. 6-9).

Psalm 29 describes a thunder-storm coming down over the land from the mountains of Lebanon. It has been called the Psalm of the Seven Thunders because of the sevenfold occurrence of the phrase, "the voice of Jehovah." It begins with "glory in the highest" (vs. 1-2), and ends with "peace on earth" (v. 11).

Psalm 30 is a thanksgiving for recovery from some sickness which brought David to the verge of the grave, mingled with reflection on the lesson it was sent to teach him.

Psalm 31 shows how trust struggles through trial and finally triumphs over it. Here we may trace the four seasons of a soul in the experience of life: autumn (vs. 1-8), winter (vs. 9-13), spring (vs. 14-18), and summer (vs. 19-24).

Psalm 32 describes David's experience when restored to the Divine favour after his great sin. It is the second psalm to begin with the word "Blessed". In Psalm 1 we have the blessedness of innocence; here we have the blessedness of forgiveness.

Psalm 33 begins by repeating the call to rejoice in the Lord with which Psalm 32 ends. It is the first "new song" (v. 3) of the Psalter. This description always indicates that the theme is redemption in some of its manifestations (cf. 40:3, 98:1, 144:9, 149:1, Isa. 42:10, Rev. 5:9, 14:3).

Psalm 34 is full of a sense of the Lord's goodness. Its keynote is, "O taste and see that Jehovah is good" (v. 8). This psalm and the next alone mention "the angel of Jehovah". In the one he is the agent of Divine providence (34:7), and in the other the agent of Divine vengeance (35: 5-6). The Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament is always a

foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Second Person of the Trinity (Isa. 63:9).

Psalm 35 is the first of the Psalms of Vengeance. It contains the suggestive and meaningful description of the saints as "quiet in the land" (v. 20), and it ends with a note of praise.

Psalm 36 begins and ends with references to the wicked, but the body of the psalm is a grand description of the character of God, in which His mercy or lovingkindness is especially emphasized (vs. 5, 7, 10).

Psalm 37 vindicates the righteousness of God in His government of the world. It is intended for those who are inclined to murmur because of the prosperity of the wicked. Its keynote is, "Fret not thyself" (vs. 1, 7, 8). It was written in David's old age (v. 25), and is the testimony of a lifetime of full and varied experience. His advice is, "Trust in Jehovah" (v. 3), "Delight thyself in Jehovah" (v. 4), "Commit thy way unto Jehovah" (v. 5), "Rest in Jehovah, and wait patiently for him", giving Him time to work out His purposes, (v. 7). Throughout the psalm runs a promise of inheriting the land, which is repeated again and again. To the Old Testament saint this "inheritance" is the sum of earthly blessing: to the New Testament saint it is the sum of spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3).

Psalm 38 is the prayer of a soul under the chastening hand of God. It is used in the synagogue on the Day of Atonement when "there is a remembrance made of sins year by year" (Heb. 10:3).

Psalm 39 is a sequel to Psalm 38. It is the lament of a chastened soul, realizing that he is a stranger and pilgrim on the earth. It is an elegy on the vanity of life in the world.

Psalm 40 is applied in Heb. 10:5-10 to the Lord Jesus Christ, vs. 6-8 being quoted as expressing His attitude of mind in the Incarnation. The quotation is taken from the Septuagint, which interprets the figure used in the Hebrew. The original of the words, "mine ears hast thou opened" (v. 6) is literally, "mine ears hast thou bored through", and refers to the sign by which the life of a servant was entirely devoted to his master (Exod. 21:5-6).

Psalm 41 also, while recording the experience of David, is prophetic of the experience of the Lord (cf. v. 9 and John 13:18).

#### BOOK II PSALMS OF DAVID AND THE TEMPLE SINGERS (Nos. 42-72)

In this collection of thirty-one psalms, eighteen are attributed to David, eight to the sons of Korah (42-69), and one to Asaph (50). One is under Solomon's name (72), and three are anonymous (66, 67, 71). The keynote of this book is trial and triumph. The prevailing Divine name is now God, being used 198 times. It occurs in every psalm at least twice, and in one (68) as many as 31 times. The name Jehovah occurs only 33 times, and from fifteen psalms it is absent altogether.

Psalms 42 and 43 form one song of three stanzas with a common refrain: "Hope thou in God". They are psalms for a soul cast down. The song begins with trust in God and ends with joy in God.

Psalm 44 expresses Israel's perplexity and appeal to God in a time of persecution. It is a prayer for saints who suffer for Christ's sake (v. 22, cf. Rom. 8:36).

Psalm 45 describes the marriage of a king after his victory in war. It is quoted in Heb. 1:8-9 as

referring to the Son of God. Hence it has a Messianic significance. It foreshadows the union of Christ with His Church (Eph. 5:25-27) and is prophetic of the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 19:6-8; 21:2).

Psalm 46 is a battle hymn. It was probably written to celebrate the deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrian army in the reign of Hezekiah (2 Kings 18-19; Isa. 36-37). It is in three stanzas, marked by *Selah*'s, with a twice repeated refrain. The phrase, "Jehovah of hosts", occurs seven times in the Psalms, and the phrase, "the God of Jacob", thirteen times.

Psalm 47 may belong to the same period, as celebrating the God who wrought the deliverance. Its theme is the Great King. It is used by the Jews at the Feast of Trumpets on their New Year's Day. It is an appropriate psalm for Ascension Day.

Psalm 48 sings of the city of the Great King. It describes Jerusalem in the days of its deliverance from the Assyrian army. It is to be interpreted spiritually of the Zion mentioned in Heb. 12:22.

Psalm 49 seems to be connected with the last verse of the preceding psalm. It deals with the thought of death, and reaches the high-water mark of Old Testament faith in a future life. For this the psalmist's hope is in God Himself (v. 15). There is a foregleam of the resurrection of the saints in the words: "The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning" (v. 14).

Psalm 50 is the first of the psalms of Asaph. It has the marks of dignity and elevation which characterize all his psalms. It begins with a description of God coming in judgment (vs. 1-6). This is followed by God's address to His people (vs. 7-15), and to the wicked (vs. 16-21). Then the lesson of

the psalm is summed up in a closing appeal (vs. 22-23).

Psalm 51 is pre-eminently the penitential psalm. It is the prayer of a broken and contrite heart. Its burden is the thought that sin is so deep-rooted and so defiling that God alone can pardon it and cleanse the soul from it. It was the expression of David's penitence after Nathan had rebuked him for his sin (2 Sam. 12).

Psalms 52-59 form a group belonging to the period of David's life when he was a fugitive from Saul. They all describe some experience of trial or peril, and seek God's help in the midst of it.

Psalms 52 and 54 both contain the statement, "for it is good", in referring to the name of the Lord. This is David's testimony as to what he found in the character of God.

Psalm 53 is another version of Psalm 14, with God as the Divine name instead of Jehovah, and a slight variation in v. 5.

Psalm 55 foreshadows the persecution of Jesus by the Jews and His betrayal by Judas. While it describes primarily some experience of David's, it helps us to understand the nature of our Lord's sufferings.

Psalm 56 is a remedy for fear. Its keynote is, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee" (v. 3). And then the psalmist adds, "In God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid" (vs. 4, 11).

Psalm 57 has a similar message. Its keynote is trust in the midst of peril. It is divided into two stanzas by the refrain in vs. 5 and 11.

Psalm 58 may be set over against the 53rd. That psalm gave us a picture of the ungodly world, full of corruption and iniquity. This psalm gives us a

vision of the God who judges in the earth. It is full of bold and striking images.

Psalm 59 is an appeal to God as the defence or "high tower" of the oppressed (vs. 9, 16, 17).

Psalms 60-67 form another group of David's psalms, all apparently relating to the time when he was king in Israel.

Psalm 60 shows how defeat was turned into victory by appealing to the promises of God.

Psalm 61 is the prayer of an exile seeking refuge in God: "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I".

Psalm 62 is an expression of faith's assurance. Its keynote is "God only". There is neither prayer nor petition in it, but just faith and trust in God alone.

Psalm 63 also has no petition. It is an expression of love for God, or the intense longing of a soul for communion with Him. This gives it special tenderness and beauty.

Psalm 64 is a prayer to be delivered from slanderers and secret foes. It ends with a triumphant assurance.

Psalm 65 is Israel's harvest hymn. It contains three scenes and presents God in three aspects: the congregation, or God in redemption (vs. 1-4); the nation, or God in history (vs. 5-8); and the harvest, or God in nature (vs. 9-13).

Psalms 66 and 67 have for their keynote, "Make his praise glorious" (66:2). They contain the praise of the congregation (66:1-12), the praise of the individual (66:13-20), and the praise of the nations (67:1-7).

Psalm 68 is a grand hymn about the entrance of God into His sanctuary in Zion. It was probably composed on the occasion of David's removal of the Ark (2 Sam. 6; 1 Chron. 15), as was Psalm 24.

This event prefigured the entrance of Christ into Heaven, and v. 18 is quoted in Eph. 4:8 as fulfilled in the Ascension. The psalm reviews what God did in redeeming His people and settling them in Canaan (v. 1-14). Then it refers to the choice of Mount Zion for His dwelling place, and goes on to describe the triumphal procession as the Ark is brought into the sanctuary (vs. 15-27). It closes with a forecast of the time when all nations shall submit themselves to God, and with a summons to all the kingdoms to praise Him (vs. 28-35).

Psalm 69, like the 22nd., contains prophetic anticipations of the Lord's passion. These two psalms are more frequently quoted and applied to Christ in the New Testament than any other except the 110th.

Psalms 70 and 71 may have been one originally. They are both made up largely of quotations from other psalms.

Psalm 72 fittingly closes this collection. Its theme is the reign of the righteous King. It is prophetic of the Messianic reign of righteousness and peace, the Kingdom of God on earth. This psalm and the 127th alone bear the name of Solomon.

### BOOK III PSALMS OF THE TEMPLE SINGERS

(Nos. 73-89)

Of these seventeen psalms, eleven are ascribed to Asaph (73-83), three to the sons of Korah (84, 85, 87), and one each to David (86), Heman (88), and Ethan (89). The keynote is darkness and light. The name God still predominates, being used 60 times, occurring in one psalm (78) fifteen times, while Jehovah occurs 45 times.

Psalms 73-76 all refer to the sanctuary. No. 73 deals with the dark problem of the prosperity of the



wicked, which oppressed the psalmist (vs. 2-3) until he went into the sanctuary and got light there (vs. 16-17). No. 74 bewails the desolation of the sanctuary by foreign foes (vs. 1-9), and appeals to God for help (vs. 10-23). No. 75 answers the cry of the preceding psalm with the assurance that God will come in judgment. No. 76 praises God for a judgment already wrought. Perhaps the reference is to the destruction of the Assyrian army of Sennacherib in Hezekiah's day.

Psalms 77-80 all refer to Israel as a flock under the care of God as their Shepherd (77:20, 78:52, 79:13, 80:1). No. 77 begins with a cry to God in which the psalmist broods over his own troubles (vs. 1-9). Then he acknowledges his infirmity and remembers God (v. 10), and in the rest of the psalm he sings of what God has done in redeeming His people and leading them through the wilderness like a flock (vs. 11-20).

Psalm 78 is the longest of the historical psalms. It reviews the history of Israel from the deliverance out of Egypt to the establishment of the kingdom under David. It magnifies the patient faithfulness of God over against the persistent failure of His people. The leading idea of the psalm is echoed in a kind of refrain: vs. 17-18, 40-41, and 56-57.

Psalm 79 is another lament over the ruin of the Temple similar to the 74th psalm.

Psalm 80 is a prayer for restoration from some national calamity. The appeal of its threefold refrain contains an ever enlarging conception of God (vs. 3, 7, 19).

Psalm 81 is full of the joy of the sacred seventh month and the consummation of the yearly feasts. "Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon, on our feast day" (v. 3). The month began

with the Feast of Trumpets at the new moon. The full moon came on the fifteenth day, and then the Feast of Tabernacles began as the crowning festival of the year. Between these two dates the Day of Atonement was observed (Lev. 23:24, 27, 34).

Psalm 82 is a solemn rebuke of unjust judges. It is quoted by our Lord in John 10:34.

Psalm 83 is an appeal to God for deliverance from an impending attack upon the people of God. It takes up the appeal with which the preceding psalm ends.

Psalm 84 is the song of a devout pilgrim on his way to worship the Lord in the Temple at one of the national feasts. Its three divisions may be regarded as three stages of the pilgrimage: The start, or longing for God (vs. 1-4). The journey, or seeking after God (vs. 5-8). The arrival, or dwelling with God (vs. 9-12).

Psalm 85 seems to have been written after the return from the Babylonian captivity. It is a song of "salvation": the word is used three times. (vs. 4, 7, 9).

Psalm 86 is the only one in this book ascribed to David. It expresses the personal devotion of a tried and faithful servant of the Lord. It appeals to Him on a great variety of pleas, the word "for" occurring again and again.

Psalm 87 celebrates the glory of Zion as the city of God, and foreshadows the glory and the joy of heavenly citizenship and spiritual fellowship (cf. Phil 3:20; Heb. 12:22-23).

Psalm 88 is the saddest in the whole Psalter. It is devoid of light, and its last word is "darkness". It may be taken as prophetically expressing the feelings of Jesus as He descended into death.

Psalm 89 is based on God's promise to David (2

Sam. 7:12-16; 1 Chron. 17:11-14) and may be called the psalm of "the covenant". The word is used four times (vs. 3, 28, 34, 39). Two attributes of God are named in v. 1 as the theme, and these are extolled throughout the psalm. His lovingkindness prompted Him to make the covenant, and His faithfulness prompts Him to keep it.

#### BOOK IV ANONYMOUS PSALMS

(Nos. 90-106)

Of these seventeen psalms, one is ascribed to Moses (90) and two to David (101, 103). All the rest are anonymous. The keynote of the collection is peril and deliverance. The name Jehovah now predominates, being used 116 times. In five of these psalms it occurs eleven times. The name God occurs only 18 times, and is absent altogether from five psalms.

Psalm 90 is entitled, "a Prayer of Moses the man of God". There is no reason to doubt this note of authorship. The psalm is a sublime composition on the eternity of God, and it bears the stamp of Moses' lonely and stately character.

Psalm 91 develops the theme of trust in the protecting care of God and rest in fellowship with Him (vs. 1-13), and closes with the Lord's response to His people's trust (vs. 14-16).

Psalm 92 is entitled "a Song for the sabbath day", and it indicates by its contents that the best and noblest use of the day is joyous thanksgiving to God and devout meditation on His works.

Psalms 93-99 form a group connected by the general idea of the Lord's righteous reign. Their keynote is, "Jehovah reigneth": with these words three of them begin. They look forward to the advent of

the Lord and His righteous rule over all the earth. He is not only King (Psa. 93), but also Judge of the world as well (Psa. 94). He is to be praised for His greatness as God and King (Psa. 95-96). Special praise is given Him for His righteousness and justice (Psa. 97), for the salvation He has wrought (Psa. 98), and for His holiness (Psa. 99).

Psalms 100 is a grand doxology, closing the strain of the preceding group. It stands pre-eminent among the psalms for its simple grandeur as an expression of triumphant joy and praise.

Psalms 101 expresses David's resolution when he came to the throne to conduct himself and his kingdom aright—"in a perfect way" and "with a perfect heart" (v. 2).

Psalms 102 is the prayer of a soul in distress, who realizes that he is suffering on account of his sin. He begins by looking at his own affliction (vs. 1-11). Then he turns to God—"But thou, O Jehovah" (v. 12); and in the contemplation of the eternity of God he rests his hope for Zion in her affliction (vs. 13-22), and for himself (vs. 23-28).

Psalms 103 is the grandest song of pure praise in the book. It is a song of grace, and extols the God of redemption. It begins and ends with the same words: "Bless Jehovah, O my soul". It is progressive in the development of its theme. The "my" of personal experience in the beginning (vs. 1-5) passes into the "our" of social fellowship in the middle (vs. 6-18), and culminates in the "all" of universal blessing at the end (vs. 19-22).

Psalms 104 is a song of nature, and extols the God of creation. It begins and ends in the same way as the preceding psalm. In its main outline it follows the story of creation in the first chapter of Genesis. The Creator is represented as ever at work in His

creation. He who made the earth renews the face of the ground continually.

Psalms 105 and 106 are companion historical psalms. They magnify the faithfulness of God in the history of Israel, and bring out two different aspects of His faithfulness. Each begins with a call to give thanks to the Lord and each ends with a "Hallelujah". Psalm 105 sings of the faithfulness and power of the Lord from the time of the patriarchs until He established Israel in Canaan, and it closes with obedience as the condition of their possessing the land (vs. 44-45). Psalm 106 sings of the patience of God through all the backslidings and rebellions of Israel until they were scattered among the nations, and it closes with a prayer that suggests repentance as the condition of their restoration (v. 47). There is not a word or sentiment in these historical psalms that would tend to feed the national pride or vanity. All the glory of Israel's history is due to God alone.

BOOK V ANONYMOUS PSALMS AND PSALMS OF DAVID  
(Nos. 107-150)

Of the forty-four psalms in this section, one is ascribed to Solomon (127), fifteen are ascribed to David, and twenty-eight are anonymous. The dominant name throughout is Jehovah, which occurs 268 times. The general name God is used only 28 times and is absent altogether from twenty-four psalms.

This closing book of the Psalter has for its keynote exultant praise and thanksgiving. It may be divided into seven subordinate groups as follows: Nos. 107-110 are songs of redemption. Nos. 111-

118 are mainly Hallelujah psalms. No. 119 is the great psalm of the Law of the Lord. Nos. 120-134 are pilgrim songs. Nos. 135-137 are songs of Zion. Nos. 138-145 form the last group of David's psalms. Nos. 146-150 are all triumphant Hallelujah psalms.

Psalm 107 has for its keynote, "Let the redeemed of Jehovah say so" (v. 2). It gives four pictures of the perils that befall men in the world and of the goodness of God in delivering them; and after each one comes the glad refrain: "Oh that men would praise Jehovah for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men" (vs. 8, 15, 21, 31).

Psalm 108 is a song of triumph, composed of the joyful and triumphal portions of Psalms 57 and 60.

Psalm 109 is the last of the Psalms of Vengeance. It contains curses upon one wicked man specially. Peter's application of v. 8 to Judas Iscariot in Acts 1:20 shows that it foreshadows the Lord's betrayal and passion.

Psalm 110 is a sequel to the preceding, its theme being the exaltation and triumph of the Messiah. There Christ is emptied of His glory; here He is given the highest place in Heaven. The psalm records the decree of God investing Him with the twofold dignity of kingship (vs. 1-2) and priesthood (v. 4). No other Old Testament passage is so frequently quoted in the New Testament as referring to Christ.

Psalms 111 and 112 are twin songs, closely connected. Both are acrostics in the original. The second begins where the first ends, with the reverential fear of the Lord. The first celebrates the works of the Lord, and the second the ways of the upright.

Psalm 113 begins the Hallel (Nos. 113-118) with

a pure burst of praise. It begins and ends with a Hallelujah, but it is probable that the Hallelujah at the end should belong to Psalm 114. This is the way the Septuagint has it.

Psalm 114 sings of the presence and power of God as manifested in the miraculous events of the Exodus. It is the most graphic of all the psalms that deal with the early history of Israel.

Psalm 115 exalts the Lord as the supreme Ruler in contrast with the idols of the nations (vs. 1-8), and calls upon Israel to put their trust in Him (vs. 9-18). Its theme is the glory of His Name.

Psalm 116 is intensely individualistic. The first personal pronoun occurs in every verse but two. It is the utterance of one who has been near the gates of death and comes to pay his vows to the Lord.

Psalm 117 is the shortest in the book but by no means the least important. It is used in Rom. 15:11 to show that God intended His salvation for all nations.

Psalm 118, the last of the Hallel group, gives full utterance to the spirit of jubilant thanksgiving. It is a processional song and was evidently intended for use in the Temple worship. It may be analysed as follows: An introductory call to all Israel to join in praising the Lord (vs. 1-4). The procession on the way up to the Temple recounting the gracious acts of the Lord (vs. 5-18). The procession approaching the gates and entering into the Temple (vs. 19-24). Prayers and praises within the Temple (vs. 25-29). The psalm may have been composed for the dedication of the Second Temple (Ezra 6: 15-18). Verse 22 is mentioned repeatedly in the New Testament as Messianic (Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:7).

Psalm 119 has no title and its author is unknown.

That he was a young man may be inferred from vs. 9, 99, 100. Verse 141 in the Septuagint reads, "I was young and despised". The theme is the blessedness of walking in the Law of the Lord, or the will of God as the way of life. This is stated in the first three verses, which form the introduction. After that the whole psalm is a direct address to God. This gives it an eminently devotional character. There is a direct reference to the Law or the will of God in almost every verse.

The alphabetic structure of the psalm is indicated in our English Version. There are as many stanzas as there are letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Every verse in each stanza begins in the original with the letter named at the head of the stanza. Throughout the psalm eight different terms are used to designate the Law of the Lord, and each one occurs usually once in every stanza. In the eighth stanza (vs. 57-64) all these terms are found, one in every verse.

Psalms 120-134, the Pilgrim Psalms, form a manual of devotion for the pilgrimage of the soul in this world. Their separate themes may be suggested as follows: 120, the start; 121, the road; 122, the arrival; 123, supplication; 124, deliverance; 125, trust; 126, restoration; 127, labour; 128, the home; 129, the farm; 130, penitence; 131, humility; 132, the Ark of God, or the sanctuary; 133, brotherly love, or spiritual unity; 134, the farewell and the parting benediction.

Psalm 135 sings of the beginnings of Israel's national history, and calls upon all the people to praise the Lord for having chosen Israel for His own possession.

Psalm 136 has been called the national anthem of Israel. It was known among the Jews as "the great Hallel". It was probably sung antiphonally by the



Levite choirs in the Temple, one choir taking the first clause of each verse, and another answering: "For his lovingkindness endureth for ever".

Psalm 137 is the song of the exiles, and is a plaintive memory of the Babylonian captivity.

Psalm 138 is a song of exalted praise and devotion. David magnifies God and declares: "Jehovah will perfect that which concerneth me" (v. 8, cf. Phil. 1:6).

Psalm 139 stands pre-eminent in the Psalter for its loftiness of thought about God and for its overwhelming sense of His omnipresence and omniscience. All this is expressed in language of great beauty and suggestiveness. It begins and ends with the thought of God as the searcher of hearts.

Psalms 140-143 deal with the need and helplessness of man. No. 140 is a prayer for defence against evil without. No. 141 is a prayer for grace to overcome evil within. No. 142 is the cry of a lonely heart. No. 143, the last of the Penitential Psalms, is the prayer of a soul in desolation and darkness.

Psalm 144 is a song of triumphant assurance. Here the sufficiency of God is seen encompassing the helplessness of man. The psalm is made up largely of passages from other psalms (vs. 1-11), and a concluding passage describing the happy condition of the people under God's protecting care (vs. 12-15).

Psalm 145 is the last psalm ascribed to David, and serves to introduce the last five psalms of the book, which constitute the final anthem of praise. It is characterized by a sense of majesty and universality which makes it stand apart.

Psalms 146-150, the last group of Hallelujah psalms, bring the whole Psalter to a magnificent and splendid close. All themes of praise are here pealed forth. No. 146 praises the Lord as the Helper of

His people. No. 147 praises Him as the Ruler of His people. No. 148 is the praise of the whole creation. No. 149 is the praise of His redeemed people. No. 150 is a final burst of universal praise.

### THE MESSAGE OF THE PSALMS

There is one distinctive message which belongs to the Book of Psalms as to no other book of the Bible. It may be expressed in the language of the Westminster divines in their Shorter Catechism: "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever."

1. Glorifying God. The Psalms are full of God's praise and glory. His name is sounded out in every psalm, and in some psalms in almost every line. There is no praise of any man. If any one is mentioned, it is never to signalize the man but always to glorify God. Israel is not eulogized, nor are the doings of the nation celebrated. It is always "the mighty deeds" of God. The same is true of the nature songs. When the beauty and majesty of nature are described, it is because they reveal the glory and power of God.

2. Enjoying God. The Psalms are also full of the soul's experience of God. How often the possessive pronoun is used, "my God", "our God"! The soul finds its satisfaction in God in a great variety of ways. The Psalms are full of human longings and emotions and experiences which have their end in God. In this book all eyes are looking up to God, all hands are stretched out toward Him.

## THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

THIS book contains instruction given in the form of proverbs. A proverb is a short sentence conveying some moral truth or practical lesson in a concise and pointed form. It is the wisdom of experience condensed into a brief and pithy saying.

The book is ascribed to Solomon in the sense that he was the originator of the collection (1:1). He wrote many proverbs himself and gathered many others (Eccl. 12:9-10). He was especially fitted to be the writer of proverbs because of his great wisdom, his varied gifts, and his wide knowledge (1 Kings 4:29-34). His wisdom was of the intuitive kind that penetrates at once to the heart of a matter. The collection of proverbs contained in the book was not completed till long after Solomon's time (25:1).

The purpose of the book is explained in the opening verses (1:1-6). The object is "to know wisdom", the wisdom needed for life and conduct. Wisdom in Proverbs has always a moral and practical end in view. The keynote is contained in v. 7: "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom". All the instruction given in the book rests on a religious basis. It is the Law of the Lord applied to the daily life and conduct of His redeemed people. It is significant that the Divine name used throughout is the covenant name Jehovah. The proper use of the book is not to teach men how to live in order to be saved, but to teach men already saved how to live.

The book is arranged on a simple plan and is composed of four main parts:

- I. The Praise of Wisdom—Chs. 1-9
- II. The First Collection of Proverbs—Chs. 10-24
- III. The Second Collection of Proverbs—  
Chs. 25-29
- IV. Supplementary Proverbs—Chs. 30-31.

There are many minor collections and independent passages. Besides the opening words which give a title to the book as a whole (1:1), the following headings of separate sections occur: "The proverbs of Solomon" (10:1); "Hear the words of the wise" (22:17); "These also are sayings of the wise" (24:23); "These are the proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out" (25:1); "The words of Agur the son of Jakeh" (30:1); and "The words of king Lemuel" (31:1).

#### THE PRAISE OF WISDOM (Chs. 1-9)

This is a connected discourse on "wisdom" in the form of instructions from a father to a son or a teacher to a pupil. The hearer is usually addressed as "my son". Occasionally the plural, "my sons", is used.

1. Introduction (1:1-7). The purpose of the book is set forth in vs. 1-6, and its fundamental principle in v. 7. The beginning of wisdom is a right relation with God; self-will is folly.

2. The Appeal and Warning of Wisdom (1:8-33). Receive instruction and shun enticements to evil (vs. 8-19). Wisdom is personified, and warns men of the consequences of refusing her counsel (vs. 20-33). This passage foreshadows the call and warning of the Gospel.

3. The Search for Wisdom (Ch. 2). There must be willingness and eagerness in seeking wisdom (vs. 1-8). Then its value will be realized in the

paths of life. It enables one to avoid the way of evil men and evil women, and to choose the way of good men (vs. 9-22).

4. The Cultivation of Wisdom (Ch. 3). Trust in the Lord and devotion to Him is the secret of prosperity (vs. 1-12). It also brings happiness and peace (vs. 13-26), and leads to an inheritance of glory (vs. 27-35).

5. On Getting and Keeping Wisdom (Ch. 4). A personal testimony from the experience of a father (vs. 1-9), followed by an appeal to walk in the way of wisdom (vs. 10-19), and to keep wisdom in the heart (vs. 20-27).

6. Practical Counsels and Warnings (Chs. 5-7). A series of parental exhortations against impurity (ch. 5), against indolence (6:1-19), and against the wiles of the evil woman (6:20—7:27).

7. The Call of Wisdom (Ch. 8). Wisdom is again personified, and gives another appeal to men to attend and receive her instruction (vs. 1-11). The benefits she gives are set forth (vs. 12-21). Then wisdom's eternal relation to God is unfolded (vs. 22-31). There is a striking parallel between this passage and John 1:1-4. The Wisdom of Proverbs is the eternal Word of John. The call then ends with a final appeal (vs. 32-36).

8. The Contrast of Wisdom and Folly (Ch. 9). Each is personified as a woman calling the simple to turn in to a feast in her house. Wisdom calls to the feast of life (vs. 1-12), and Folly to the feast of death (vs. 13-18).

#### THE FIRST COLLECTION OF PROVERBS (Chs. 10-24)

We pass now from connected discourse to proverbs strictly so called. They have no common topic

except that they refer to life and conduct. Those in this collection are expressed in couplet form, and their general character is antithetical. They present sharp contrasts between wisdom and folly in practical life.

1. The upright and the wicked, the wise and the foolish, the pious and the ungodly, contrasted (chs. 10-15).

2. General observations on life and conduct, and admonitions to walk in the fear of God (16:1—22:16).

3. Precepts and warnings from the words of the wise concerning righteousness in practical life and social relations (22:17—24:34).

### THE SECOND COLLECTION OF PROVERBS

(Chs. 25-29)

An additional group of Solomon's proverbs gathered in the reign of Hezekiah (25:1), two hundred and fifty years after Solomon's time. They may have been handed down orally, or they may have been found scattered through other collections. Their general character is more picturesque than the first group. They abound in figures, pictures, and suggestive analogies. In a general way they may be summarized as follows:

Admonitions for kings and subjects (ch. 25). Warnings against dishonourable conduct (ch. 26). Warnings against self-praise, flattery, presumption, and contention (27:1-22). An admonition for the farmer (27:23-27). Warnings against unjust dealing, unscrupulous methods, and oppression of the poor (ch. 28). Warnings against stubbornness, lawlessness, and insubordination (ch. 29).

SUPPLEMENTARY PROVERBS  
(Chs. 30-31)

The two closing chapters of the book form a kind of appendix. They contain the words of Agur (ch. 30) and the words of king Lemuel (ch. 31). Nothing is known of these men. There are some peculiar numerical proverbs in ch. 30 (vs. 18, 21, 24, 29). The last chapter contains the words which Lemuel's mother taught him (vs. 1-9), and a fine description of a worthy woman (vs. 10-31). The latter passage, which dwells upon the gracious features of a good wife's character, makes a beautiful ending for the book.

## THE MESSAGE OF PROVERBS

The fundamental message of the Book of Proverbs is this: Morality is rooted in religion and in a right relationship with God. There is no wisdom without trust in God. There can be no real righteousness without devotion to God. This recognition of God is interwoven with all the moral teaching of the book. It appears again and again. It goes deeper than outward conduct and reaches the secrets of the heart (15:11; 20:27; 21:2).

Throughout the book there runs a continuous contrast between wisdom and folly. Wisdom is rooted in the fear of the Lord, and folly in self-will. All the virtues spring from wisdom and the fear of God; all the vices from folly and the self-will of man.

Wisdom is completely exemplified and embodied in the Lord Jesus Christ, "who was made unto us wisdom from God", and "in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden" (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:3). When personified in Proverbs, Wisdom is an adumbration of the living Word, who became flesh and dwelt among men (John 1:14).

## THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

THE title of this book means the Preacher. It is the Septuagint rendering of the Hebrew title, the significance of which is obscure. The book is a kind of sermon. The word "preacher" occurs seven times: three times at the beginning (1:1, 2, 12), once in the middle (7:27), and three times at the end (12:8, 9, 10). The Preacher is described as "the son of David, king in Jerusalem" (1:1). This can be none other than Solomon. Perhaps the thoughts contained in this book were proclaimed by him to those who crowded to his court from all parts to be instructed by his wisdom (1 Kings 4:34). While the book claims to contain the words of Solomon, it nowhere claims to have been written by him. The words of the Preacher seem to end at 12:8, and the closing passage indicates another hand as the compiler of the book.

The book is pervaded with a tone of sadness and melancholy. The predominant note is one of weariness and despair. The language is marked by several characteristic expressions:

1. The word "vanity" occurs thirty-seven times in the twelve chapters. The phrases "vanity of vanities", "all is vanity", and "a striving after wind" (A.V. "vexation of spirit"), occur again and again.

2. The phrase "under the sun" occurs twenty-nine times. The similar phrases, "under the heavens" and "upon the earth", are occasionally used. The point of view is this world alone. The writer never gets above the sun.

3. The only name of the Divine Being found in



this book, except the title "Creator", is the common name for God, "Elohim", which is used forty times. The covenant name "Jehovah" is not found once. The covenant relationship of the redeemed to the Lord is not in the mind of the writer.

4. Another characteristic feature, which cannot be shown in the English Version, is the name most frequently used for man. It is the generic name "Adam", indicating mankind or man in general. It occurs forty-seven times. The name for man as an individual is used only seven times. It is the state of man by nature that is being considered by the writer.

It is evident from these features that Ecclesiastes is the book of the natural man. It is not the will of God, but the will of man, that is developed. The sentiments of the book are not inspired by the Holy Spirit, but the Spirit uses the book to show the workings of man's own wisdom and to reveal the vanity of man's life apart from God. It is a mirror in which man may see himself.

Taking the book as a sermon, we find in it the following general plan:

- I. The Theme—Ch. 1:1-11
- II. Proof from Experience—Chs. 1:12—2:26
- III. Proof from Observation—Chs. 3:1—8:15
- IV. The Application—Chs. 8:16—12:8
- V. The Conclusion—Ch. 12:9-14.

I. The Preacher's Theme (1:1-11). This is stated in v. 2 as "vanity of vanities, all is vanity". It is then explained and illustrated. Even nature itself is found to be a reflex of man's endless toil (vs. 5-7). There is weariness and dissatisfaction with everything under the sun.

The word "vanity" means not so much that which

is sinful as that which is unsubstantial and transitory. It is the emptiness and futility of man's life rather than its sinfulness that is the theme. The Preacher then goes on to prove his theme, first from his experience of life and next from his observation.

II. The Preacher's Experience (1:12—2:26). He proceeds to prove his theme that man's life is all vanity by first reviewing his own varied experiences of life.

1. The vanity of wisdom and knowledge (1:12-18). This was Solomon's experience of the first of the two great gifts bestowed upon him (1 Kings 3:12-13).

2. The vanity of pleasure and riches (2:1-11). This was his experience of the second of the two gifts. The three elements of the world as defined in 1 John 2:16 are noticeable in this experience: the lust of the flesh (vs. 1-3), the lust of the eyes (vs. 4-6), and the pride or vainglory of life (vs. 7-10).

3. The result of his experience (2:12-26). Death comes to all alike (vs. 12-17). Sorrow comes to all alike (vs. 18-23). The solution of these things is with God alone (vs. 24-26).

III. The Preacher's Observation (3:1—8:15). He goes on with the proof of his theme by reviewing his wide observations of life in the world.

1. The limitations of life (ch. 3). Its times and seasons only emphasize its monotony and ceaseless routine (vs. 1-8). Twenty-eight "times" are enumerated here, the world number "four" multiplied by the number of completeness. Man is unable to explain the meaning of these things or make out God's purpose in them (vs. 9-11). In v. 11 the Preacher makes one of his most profound utter-

ances: "also he hath set eternity in their heart". He means that in God's beautifully arranged world-plan, in which everything has its appointed place, man is a creature limited by time, but in his innermost nature he is related to eternity.

As man cannot solve the problems of life, the best he can do is to enjoy life and get what he can out of it (vs. 12-15). After all, man seems no better than the beasts that perish, and he gets no more profit out of life (vs. 16-22).

2. The disappointments of life (ch. 4). Death seems better than life, for life is marked by tears (vs. 1-3), by envy (vs. 4-6), by loneliness (vs. 7-12), and by disappointed hopes (vs. 13-16).

3. The maxims of religion (5:1-9). It is still the natural man that is speaking. His observation of religious life brings no true satisfaction. There is no contempt for religion here, but the Preacher manifests no joy in it. His recognition of God is irksome.

4. The sorrows of the rich (5:10-6:12). Riches do not satisfy. On the contrary, they often bring pain and injury, and he that gets them cannot take them with him from the world (5:10-20). They provide no capacity for enjoyment, and life without enjoyment is worse than having no life at all (6:1-6). Present enjoyment is better than counting on enjoyment in the unknown future (6:7-12).

5. The results of the Preacher's observation (7:1-8:15). The section begins with a number of proverbs (7:1-14), in an apparent attempt to answer the question with which the preceding chapter ends: "Who knoweth what is good for man in his life?" Then the Preacher relapses into a gloomy indifference to all the facts of life (7:15-29), and goes on to

point out what he has seen of the inequalities of life (8:1-15).

IV. The Preacher's Application (8:16—12:8). He now proceeds to apply the results of his experience and observation. Here we have the worldly wisdom of the natural man. It may be summed up as follows:

1. Take life as it comes and make the best of life while it lasts (8:16-9:10).

2. Yet nothing is sure in this world: even wisdom does not get its reward (9:11-18).

3. Follow the advice of the wise (ch. 10). This chapter contains a series of brief sayings which are somewhat like proverbs. There is an element of truth in them all, but they are all inspired by self-interest. They are the essence of worldly wisdom. They are for men who have no sense of the spiritual.

4. Rejoice in the opportunities and activities of life (ch. 11). There is much good advice here, for worldly wisdom inculcates diligence and industry.

5. Remember the Creator when life is young (12:1-8). Acquire the habit of gratitude to God before old age comes on. Old age is set forth here in the figure of a house falling into decay.

V. The Conclusion of the Book (12:9-14). The words of the Preacher end with the restatement of his theme in v. 8. The next verse may be rendered: "And the wiser the Preacher became, the more did he teach the people knowledge". The writer of the book then sums up his teaching. The final lesson to be drawn from his experience and observation is stated in v. 13: "Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man". This is the highest wisdom the natural man can

reach, the best advice he can give. But it is not salvation, for judgment still awaits man (v. 14).

#### THE MESSAGE OF ECCLESIASTES

Ecclesiastes illustrates the truth of our Lord's words in John 4:13: "Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again"; and of Paul's in 2 Cor. 4:18: "The things which are seen are temporal"; they belong to time, and time is always slipping away. This world cannot satisfy the heart of man. This is proved by the deepest experience and the widest observation of life in the world. All history and all biography since this book was written have only confirmed its truth. The greatest of the Church Fathers learned it from his own experience, and put it in these oft quoted words: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee".

## THE SONG OF SOLOMON

THIS book is sometimes called Canticles (little songs). The title as given in the book itself is "The Song of Songs" (1:1). This means the best of all songs or the song of the highest excellence. Solomon, who is named as the author, was a writer of songs: "his songs were a thousand and five" (1 Kings 4:32). The poem reflects the time of Solomon and the surroundings of his court. The mind of the writer as revealed in the song agrees with all that we know about Solomon.

It is a song of love in oriental language and imagery. It is dramatic in character, the speaker and the scene changing frequently. The characters who speak are (1) the King, who is Solomon, (2) the Bride, who is called the Shulammitte in 6:13 and was probably the Shunammite of 1 Kings 1:3, and (3) the Daughters of Jerusalem, who form the chorus and are the friends of both. The scenes are set in the country and in Jerusalem, in a garden and in the palace.

Under the symbol of human love, the poem sets forth the spiritual union between the Lord and His people. It is in accordance with the analogy of Scripture. The Old Testament represents the relation between the Lord and Israel as a marriage covenant (Psa. 45; Isa. 54:5; 62:5; Jer. 2:2). The New Testament represents the relation between Christ and the Church as that of the Bride and the Bridegroom (John 3:29; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 19:7; 21:9; 22:17). To interpret the book in this way is not to deny that there was a literal

basis for the song; but only a spiritual significance can account for its inclusion in the sacred Canon.

It is practically impossible to make a strict analysis of the book. The scene changes continually. The speakers are not indicated, and their speeches can be distinguished from one another only by the sentiments expressed and the nature of the words used. The story which lies as a background behind the song seems to have two movements. These divide the book into two parts and may be stated as follows:

Part I. The Bride's Marriage with the King (Chs. 1-4). A humble country maiden in northern Palestine is chosen by Solomon for his bride, and is raised to a place of honour and bliss by marriage with him in Jerusalem.

Part II. The Bride as the King's Wife (Chs. 5-8). The once lowly Shulammite, now sharing the king's royal state, invites him to return with her and revisit her old home; and the book closes with the bride and the king among her former friends.

Each of these two movements can be divided into three scenes, and the six scenes of the book may be drawn out as follows:

I. The Bride in the King's Pavilion (1:2—2:7). The scene is laid in the north of Palestine, where Solomon for the time being is dwelling in tents near the country home of the bride.

1. A dialogue between the Bride and the Daughters of Jerusalem (1:2-8). The poem begins with two stanzas, spoken by the chorus in praise of the King, each ending with, "they love thee" (vs. 2-4). Then the Bride addresses the chorus (vs. 5-6), and invokes the absent King (v. 7), and the chorus replies (v. 8).

2. The entrance of the King (1:9-14). He commends the beauty of the Bride (vs. 9-10), and receives from her words of love and praise (vs. 12-14). The intervening words (v. 11) are spoken by the chorus.

3. A dialogue between the King and the Bride (1:15-2:7). The King addresses the Bride throughout the poem as "my love", and she addresses him as "my beloved". The reference in v. 17 is to the forest trees of Lebanon under which they are sitting. In 2:1 the Bride compares herself to a humble wild flower, and the King replies: "As a lily excels the thorny shrubs in beauty, so my love—".

II. Memories of the Wooing (2:8—3:5). Reminiscences related by the Bride to the Daughters of Jerusalem, taking us back to a former period and affording a glimpse of her previous relation to the King. She describes how the Beloved visited her one spring morning, and how she afterwards dreamed of him at night.

1. The visit of the Beloved (2:8-17). She describes how he came to her home in Lebanon (vs. 8-9), and tells of the invitation he addressed to her to come out into the happy spring time from the seclusion of her rock-girt home (vs. 10-14), and of her reply, dismissing him until the cool of the day (vs. 15-17).

2. The dream of the Bride (3:1-5). She relates an imaginary occurrence transacted in a dream, revealing her love for the King.

III. The Marriage Day (3:6—4:16). The scene now changes to Jerusalem. The Bride is brought into the city in royal state to be united in marriage to the King.



1. The bridal procession and royal entry (3:6-11). The chorus describes the magnificent appearance of the Bride, borne in a royal litter, and then that of the King, wearing a nuptial crown in the festive joy of the Bridegroom. "Like pillars of smoke" (v. 6): because of the frankincense and other perfumes burned in such abundance round the royal equipage as to give it this appearance. The "daughters of Zion" (v. 11) were the women of the city as distinguished from the Bride's companions.

2. The King's commendation of the Bride (4:1-6). In a lyric song he commends her beauty by images taken from scenes and objects in different parts of the kingdom. She replies in a few brief words (v. 6), modestly interrupting the flow of the King's commendation by saying she would fain withdraw to some quiet spot till eventide.

3. The King's invitation to the Bride (4:7-15). Expressing his love and admiration in the tenderest terms and figures, he calls her to forsake her mother's home and become entirely his henceforth. The similes no longer refer to graces of bodily form, but to those of adornment, speech, and gesture, as expressions of inward character. She is likened to a lovely garden, barred against intruders and watered with abundant streams.

The two verses, 4:16 and 5:1, form a kind of link between the two parts of the poem. The Bride accepts the King's invitation in a few words of entire devotion; and he expresses his supreme satisfaction, and invites the guests to the marriage supper. The last words in v. 1 should be taken as in the margin—"of love".

IV. Fellowship with the King (5:2—6:10). The scene is still in Jerusalem. The Bride relates

another dream to the Daughters of Jerusalem, and they offer to aid her in seeking the Bridegroom, when suddenly he appears and addresses a noble commendation to his Bride.

1. The Bride's second dream (5:2-8). Some time has elapsed since the marriage. A transient cloud of doubt is passing over her soul and is expressed in this dream which she relates to her friends. She has lost the society of her Beloved but not his affection, and she seeks reunion with him.

2. The Bride's commendation of the King (5:9—6:3). The scene is introduced by a question of the chorus (v. 9). Then the Bride gives a glorious description of her Beloved as altogether lovely (vs. 10-16). This is her response to his praise of her on the bridal day. The chorus asks a further question about him (v. 1), and she replies with a further expression of her devotion to him (vs. 2-3).

3. The King's commendation of the Bride (6:4-10). He now appears and pours out an enraptured description of the beauty of the Bride. Tirzah and Jerusalem are named together as the two fairest cities in the land at the time. Vs. 5-7 are a repetition of 4:1-3, marking the continuance of the King's affection as unchanged. The Bride is the same to him still as on the day of their espousals. The scene ends with another description of the glorious beauty of the Bride from the chorus (v. 10).

V. Homeward Thoughts (6:11—8:4). The scene is the palace garden. The Bride tells the Daughters of Jerusalem how she first met the King, and they ask her to dance before them. The King himself appears and expresses his love and admiration of her. She responds by inviting him to return with her to visit her mother's home.

1. The Bride and the Daughters of Jerusalem (6:11-13). She recalls the occasion when she met the King in a garden of nuts in her own country (vs. 11-12). As she is about to withdraw, they call her back, desiring to look a little longer on her grace and beauty (v. 13). She wonders at their request: "Why will ye look upon the Shulammite?" They reply: "As upon the dance of Mahanaim", which was probably a sacred dance which took its name from the locality.

2. The King's admiration of his Bride (7:1-9). The Bride complies with the request of the Daughters of Jerusalem, and, as she glides before them in the dance, they sing in further commendation of her beauty of form and grace of movement, beginning with her sandalled feet and ending with her head and its wealth of nature's ornament (vs. 1-5). Their last words announce the King's approach, and he continues the commendation of the Bride (vs. 6-9).

3. The Bride's invitation to the King (7:10—8:4). She now desires to revisit with her Beloved the lowly scenes of pastoral life out of which his grace has raised her (vs. 10-13). She recalls the feelings that she had for him before the obstacles to their union were removed (vs. 1-4).

VI. The Return Home (8:5-14). The scene now returns to northern Palestine. There the Bride has arrived with the King, and her former companions see her sharing his honour as the object of his love. She commends them to his favour; and the song ends with a few final words of fellowship and love between the King and his Bride.

1. The arrival of the Bride and her Beloved (vs. 5-7). The scene begins with the wonder of the Bride's former companions when they see her com-

ing up from the open country toward her mother's home as the King's wife. Their words are similar to those in 3:6. But there the scene is all splendour and exaltation; here it is condescension and humility. The King calls the Bride's attention to a fruit tree as the trysting place of their earliest vows, and then they go on pouring out expressions of true love.

2. The Bride's intercession for her friends (vs. 8-12). The friends or brothers of the Bride show themselves mindful of a younger sister in the family and ask how they shall provide for her when she is asked in marriage (v. 8). The Bride replies by telling them how she "found peace" in the eyes of the peaceful one (vs. 9-10). Then she turns to the King and commends her brothers to him by a parable. Solomon had a vineyard which he rented out to keepers (v. 11). She, too, has a vineyard which her brothers kept (1:6), and which now belongs to Solomon. He is to have all the fruit of it, but the faithful keepers should have their due (v. 12).

3. The fellowship between the King and his Bride (vs. 13-14). The poem ends by compressing into two short verses all that has been related in it of the wooing and wedding of the King and the Bride.

#### THE MESSAGE OF THE SONG OF SOLOMON

Following immediately after Ecclesiastes, the message of which may be summed up in the words of John 4:13, the Song of Solomon has for its message the truth of John 4:14: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst".

The central feature in the union between Christ and His Church is the fellowship of love. The essential element in the spiritual life of the Christian is

love for the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the meaning of the book in New Testament light.

The experiences of the Bride suggest stages of spiritual growth. Three steps can be traced in the development and refining of the Bride's love for the King:—"My beloved is mine, and I am his" (2:16). There is still self-interest in her love; her possession of him comes first in her thought. "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine" (6:3). Self-interest is dying away; his possession of her comes first in her thought. "I am my beloved's; and his desire is toward me" (7:10). Self-interest is now gone; there is no dwelling upon what she possesses, nor is she taken up with her fellowship with him for her own sake. She is absorbed in him and is thinking only of his desire.

## THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS

THE name "lamentation" means an elegy, or a song of grief and mourning. David's lamentation over Saul and Jonathan in 2 Sam. 1:17-27 is a good example. This book is a series of elegies over the fall and desolation of Jerusalem at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. This event occurred in 586 B.C. and marked the beginning of the captivity and exile of Judah. It is recorded in 2 Kings 25 and Jer. 52.

Uniform Jewish tradition ascribes the book to Jeremiah. Its place in the Canon follows immediately after his prophecies. His name does not appear in the Hebrew text, but the Septuagint begins the book with the following preface: "And it came to pass after Israel was taken captive and Jerusalem was destroyed, Jeremiah sat down weeping and lamented with this lamentation over Jerusalem, and said—".

This agrees with what is known of Jeremiah. He composed a lamentation over king Josiah (2 Chron. 35:25). He felt keenly the disaster which he saw coming upon his people. He lived through the siege of Jerusalem and saw the desolation which the fall of the city brought. The Spirit of God used the broken heart of the prophet in the composition of the book. It reflects God's own sorrow in the judgment which He had to inflict upon His people. There is no sign of any exultation on Jeremiah's part over the fulfilment of his predictions.

The book is composed of five lamentations, each occupying a single chapter. It is constructed on an

elaborate and systematic plan. Each chapter has twenty-two verses, except the third which has sixty-six, or three times twenty-two. All the chapters except the last are acrostics in the original, following the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The middle chapter is arranged alphabetically in twenty-two groups of three verses each, and each verse in the group begins with the same letter. The chapters all set forth different aspects of the main theme. The first verse in each chapter gives the keynote of the particular lamentation.

I. The Solitary City (Ch. 1). The book begins with a description of the desolation of Jerusalem, "the daughter of Zion". She is likened to a widow sitting in solitude and sorrow. Her people are gone into exile; her sanctuary is deserted; her glory is departed; her adversaries rejoice over her (vs. 1-11). Then Zion herself speaks. She bewails the calamity that has fallen upon her, and acknowledges that it is the righteous judgment of God (vs. 12-22). The sense of sin as the cause of the disaster pervades this part of the chapter.

II. The Anger of the Lord (Ch. 2). This is the essence of the calamity. The words "anger" and "wrath" occur frequently in the chapter. The prophet describes the judgment of the Lord's anger (vs. 1-10). He laments the miseries of Jerusalem, and calls upon her to cry to the Lord for comfort and help (vs. 11-19). Then comes the appeal which the city was commanded to make (vs. 20-22).

III. The Sorrow of the Prophet (Ch. 3). The prophet now identifies himself with his people, taking their affliction to heart and making their misery his own. This is the most elaborate and sublime of the poems that compose the book. Here sorrow

passes into prayer. It is an ideal illustration of godly sorrow which "worketh repentance unto salvation" (2 Cor. 7:10).

The prophet first describes his grievous suffering (vs. 1-18). He recognizes that every stroke is from the hand of the Lord, thus acknowledging the connection of suffering with sin. Then he goes on to express his hope in the compassion and lovingkindness of the Lord (vs. 19-39). In the midst of this passage are some verses of rich comfort and consolation. Next he confesses the justice of God in sending the punishment, which has been intensified, however, by what their enemies have done to them (vs. 40-54). Lastly, he appeals to God for deliverance and for His righteous vengeance upon their enemies (vs. 55-66). A notable feature of this chapter is the nearness of God to the mind of the prophet: he does not think it necessary to mention the Divine name till he has got well on into the midst of the chapter.

IV. The Fall of Zion (Ch. 4). The prophet describes the misery of the siege of the city and the disaster that has fallen upon Zion (vs. 1-10). This has come upon her because of the sins of her prophets and priests (vs. 11-16), and because of the people's vain trust in the help of man (vs. 17-20). The chapter ends with a note of hope for Zion in the punishment of Edom, her bitterest foe (vs. 21-22).

V. An Appeal to the Lord (Ch. 5). Speaking on behalf of the nation, the prophet calls upon the Lord to consider what has come upon them. He describes the calamity again, telling how all classes of the people have suffered in it (vs. 1-18). The book closes with a prayer to the Lord to turn the people unto Himself and renew their days as of old (vs. 19-22).



## THE MESSAGE OF LAMENTATIONS

Two characteristics of the Book of Lamentations should be kept in mind in drawing out its teaching: (1) It is marked by a keen sense of the righteousness of God's judgments. There is profound loyalty to God on the part of the prophet in describing His attitude toward sin. (2) It is marked also by a deep sorrow for the afflictions of the people. There is profound sympathy for Zion in the prophet's heart in describing the judgment that has fallen upon her. The mind of the Spirit, speaking through the prophet, reveals that anger against sin and sympathy for the sinner exist together in the heart of God.

The lamentations of the book should be compared with Christ's lament over Jerusalem (Matt. 23:37-39; Luke 19:41-44), and Paul's sorrow over Israel (Rom. 9:1-5). They foreshadow something of the inner nature of Christ's sufferings as including both sorrow over sin and sympathy for the sinner in the afflictions caused by sin.

The book also indicates something of the true nature of the believer's fellowship with Christ as involving love and sorrow combined, love for the world and sorrow for its sin. It manifests the spirit that should pervade the Church in her ministry of intercession for the world.

**THE OLD TESTAMENT  
PROPHETICAL BOOKS**



## THE PROPHETICAL BOOKS

THE prophets are described in the Old Testament Scriptures, as to their character and function, by several different designations. They are called occasionally by such names as these: seer (1 Sam. 9:9; 2 Sam. 24:11), watchman (Isa. 21:11-12; Ezek. 3:17), man of God (1 Sam. 9:6; 1 Kings 13:1), servant of Jehovah (2 Kings 9:7; 14:25; Isa. 20:3), and messenger of Jehovah (Isa. 44:26; Hag. 1:13; Mal. 3:1). Their special designation, however, is a term which is used in all parts of the Old Testament and is always rendered by our word "prophet". The original Hebrew word means one who is the medium of a Divine revelation and speaks under Divine impulse.

The prophets, therefore, were God's spokesmen. The relation in which Aaron stood to Moses, as described in Exod. 4:15-16 and 7:1, was analogous to the relation in which the prophets stood to God. The prophets were also preachers, for the word they received from the Lord was delivered to the people in extended addresses. The messages of the prophets often had to do with the carrying out of God's purposes in the future, and so prediction came to form part of their function.

The prophetic office was not hereditary like the offices of priest and king. The prophets were called separately and individually. Every true prophet received a personal call to his office. Along with his call he also received a special communication from God which he delivered to the people under the inspiration of the Spirit of God.

The ministry of the prophets was directed first to their own time. They were raised up primarily as reformers and revivalists, to stir up the conscience of the people and turn them from sin and apostasy back to the Lord God of Israel. They stood up against the drift of the times, and they often had to endure suffering and persecution.

Their ministry was also related to God's purpose of redemption. While they dealt with conditions and events of their own day, the prophets saw these in the light of the coming Kingdom of God. In this connection the predictive element came more and more into prophecy. The great theme of prophecy was the coming of the Messianic King and the establishment of his Kingdom in Israel and the world.

Thus it is that the goal of prophecy is Jesus Christ. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10). The prophets were moved by the Divine urge at the heart of the Old Testament dispensation (2 Pet. 1:21). Though their preaching took its rise from the particular needs of the different periods to which they belonged and the different audiences which they addressed, yet it always pointed forward to one great Divine end. It anticipated the transcendent work of the grace of God in the redemption of the world (Rom. 16:25-26). The Spirit of Christ was in the prophets, though they did not always understand the full import of the messages they were inspired to deliver (1 Pet. 1:10-11). The prophets should be read with the background of their own times in view, but the essential significance of their various messages can be understood only when the light of the New Testament is brought to bear upon them.

Old Testament prophecy began with Moses, the first and greatest of the long line of the prophets

of Israel. He was the true type of Christ, the perfect Prophet (Deut. 18:15; 34:10). From his time to the end of the Old Testament age the spirit of prophecy was never absent from Israel. It was shared at times by women; Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah were prophetesses (Exod. 15:20; Jud. 4:4; 2 Kings 22:14). Unnamed prophets appear during the time of the judges (Jud. 6:7-8; 1 Sam. 2:27). Samuel was the first prophet to be officially recognized by the nation (1 Sam. 3:19-21), and under him the prophetic order was founded and schools of the prophets were established (1 Sam. 10:10-11; 19:20). In the time of the monarchy from David onward, many prophets appear in the course of the historical narrative, the greatest of whom were Elijah and Elisha.

The age of written prophecy began with the rise of the great military empires that were used of God for the chastening and judgment of His own chosen people. It covered the last four hundred years of Old Testament history. It may be divided into three periods, corresponding with the three successive empires of the time:

1. The Assyrian Period (2 Kings 15-21; 2 Chron. 26-33). Assyria appeared upon the horizon of Israel about 800 B.C., when Jonah was sent on a mission to Nineveh its capital city. Not long after that time Assyrian kings began to threaten Northern Israel. In 721 they captured and destroyed Samaria, and the ten tribes were removed into exile. The power of the Assyrian empire began to decline about 630, and Nineveh finally fell before the rising power of Babylon in 612 B.C.

The prophets of this period were Jonah, Amos, and Hosea, who carried on their ministry in North-

ern Israel; and Joel, Isaiah, Micah, and Nahum, who belonged to Judah.

2, The Babylonian Period (2 Kings 22-25; 2 Chron. 34-36). The power of Babylon began to revive with the decline of Assyria. It became supreme with Nebuchadnezzar's defeat of Egypt at Carchemish in 605 B.C. (Jer. 46:2). In the same year began Judah's subjection to Babylon. Jerusalem was finally destroyed in 586, and the people of Judah were taken into captivity.

The prophets of this period were Jeremiah, Obadiah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, whose ministry was carried on in Jerusalem and Judah; and Ezekiel and Daniel, who belonged to the Captivity.

3. The Persian Period (Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther). With the fall of Babylon before Cyrus in 538 B.C., the power of Persia became supreme and the period of Judah's captivity came to an end. Cyrus issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their Temple. A remnant of the nation did return; Judah and Jerusalem were restored by them, and the Covenant was renewed with them. The majority of the Jews, however, remained in the Dispersion.

The prophets of this period were Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, and their ministry was carried on in Judah among the Jews who had returned to the land. These were the last in the long line of the Hebrew prophets. Both Old Testament history and Old Testament prophecy came to an end in the time of Nehemiah.

The Prophetical Books, as they occur in the Old Testament, are arranged in two groups, the four Major Prophets and the twelve Minor Prophets. The terms major and minor have reference to the

size of the books and not to the importance of the men. The Major Prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel—come in chronological order. Through them runs the general theme of the Messianic redemption in the main line of its development, which may be set forth as follows:

In Isaiah it appears as the Salvation of the Lord, in Jeremiah as the Judgment of the Lord, in Ezekiel as the Reconstruction of Israel, and in Daniel as the Advent of the Messiah.

The twelve Minor Prophets, which are counted as one book in the Hebrew Canon, are arranged in general, but not strict, chronological order. They cover a longer period of time than the Major Prophets, extending over the whole age of written prophecy from before 800 to about 400 B.C. Each of them illustrates and emphasizes some special aspect of the messages of the larger books.



## THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

ISAIAH was the greatest of all the prophets, whether we consider the character of his ministry or the scope of his message. He belonged to the kingdom of Judah and carried on his ministry in the city of Jerusalem. He was a kind of court preacher and lived on terms of intimacy with the king and the high priest. He was married and had two sons, who were given names that set forth certain aspects of his message: Shear-jashub, "a remnant shall return" (7:3), and Maher-shalal-hash-baz, "hasten to the spoil, hurry to the prey" (8:3). He gathered about himself a band of disciples, who received his messages into their hearts and preserved the prophecies which he committed to writing (8:16). They were the nucleus of the subsequent remnant (6:13).

Isaiah was called to the prophetic office in the closing year of Uzziah's reign (6:1), and continued in it throughout the next three reigns (1:1). Tradition says that he was sawn asunder in the idolatrous reaction at the beginning of Manasseh's reign. There may be an allusion to this in Heb. 11:37. His ministry extended over the latter half of the eighth century B.C. The history of the period is recorded in 2 Kings 15-20 and 2 Chron. 26-32.

Very little is known of Isaiah's personal history, but his character stands out clearly marked upon his prophecies. All the qualities that pertain to the prophetic office seem to be combined in him with perfect balance and harmony. This gives his book a majestic repose of style and a dramatic eloquence. His eyes had seen the King, the Lord of hosts (6:5),

and this vision dominated his whole life and gave a commanding character to all his preaching. A sense of the majesty and holiness of God, who sits upon the throne of the universe and rules over the affairs of men, pervades all Isaiah's prophecies.

The Book of Isaiah is composed of three parts—two prophetic sections with a short historical section between them. The first part (Chs. 1-35) contains prophecies of warning and judgment. The last part (Chs. 40-66) contains prophecies of comfort and salvation. In the first part the prophet speaks from the standpoint of his own life-time, when Assyria was invading the land of Israel and was the great foe to be feared. In the last part he speaks from a standpoint in the midst of the Babylonian exile and on the eve of the return, more than a hundred and fifty years beyond his own day.

The middle part of the book, the historical section (Chs. 36-39), forms a connecting link between the two separate prophetic sections. It contains the record of two events that occurred during Isaiah's ministry. One of these events delivered Judah from the peril of the Assyrian invasions and marked the close of the prophet's public ministry. The other event brought Babylon upon the scene and led to the prophet's prediction of the Babylonian exile and the private ministry of his later years. The one event looks backward to the first part of the book, and the other event looks forward to the last part. A single mind must have been behind this arrangement, for it gives the book of Isaiah a manifest and remarkable unity of structure. This is shown in the following general plan:

- I. Prophecies of Warning and Judgment—  
Chs. 1-35 (Historical background:—the Assyrian invasions)
  1. Concerning Judah and Jerusalem  
(Chs. 1-12)
  2. Concerning the Surrounding Nations  
(Chs. 13-27)
  3. Concerning the World (Chs. 28-35)
- II. Historical Link—Chs. 36-39
  1. The End of the Assyrian Invasions  
(Chs. 36-37)
  2. The Shadow of the Babylonian Captivity  
(Chs. 38-39)
- III. Prophecies of Comfort and Salvation—  
Chs. 40-66 (Historical background:—the Babylonian captivity)
  1. The Preparation for Redemption  
(Chs. 40-48)
  2. The Accomplishment of Redemption  
(Chs. 49-57)
  3. The Realization of Redemption  
(Chs. 58-66).

## PART I

The first of the three parts of Isaiah (Chs. 1-35) is composed of three sections of prophecy, all marked by warnings of coming judgment. Each section begins with local circumstances, branches out universally, and comes to a close with a description of Messianic blessedness. The three sections are progressive in their sweep. The circle of view expands, taking in first Judah and Jerusalem (Chs. 1-12), then the surrounding nations (Chs. 13-27), and finally the whole world (Chs. 28-35).

## CONCERNING JUDAH AND JERUSALEM

(Chs. 1-12)

This section contains two groups of prophetic messages, one dealing with the sins that were corrupting the nation from within (chs. 1-6), and the other dealing with the perils that were threatening it from without (chs. 7-12).

I. National Sins (Chs. 1-6). These chapters contain the earliest messages of the prophet. They reflect the state of Judah during the reigns of Uzziah and Jotham. The prosperity of Uzziah's long reign had brought luxury and self-indulgence, and a general decay of religious and moral life had set in. The kingdom of Assyria, pressing westward from Nineveh, began to threaten Northern Israel when Jotham was reigning in Jerusalem (755-739 B.C.). The instrument of judgment was already being prepared for the chastening of both Israel and Judah.

1. An Impeachment of the Nation (Ch. 1). The heavens and the earth are called to hear the Lord's charge against His ungrateful and unfaithful people (vs. 2-4). "They have forsaken Jehovah, they have despised the Holy One of Israel". This is Isaiah's characteristic way of describing the Lord God. He uses the title almost thirty times; it occurs only five times elsewhere in the Old Testament. Two other titles used in this chapter also reveal the prophet's sublime conception of God: "Jehovah of hosts" and "the Mighty One of Israel" (vs. 9, 24).

The desolate state of their country is an evidence of the Lord's displeasure with His people (vs. 5-9). Their religious worship is formal and empty; their social and public life is corrupt (vs. 10-17). Then the prophet utters an earnest appeal for repentance

(vs. 18-23), and a solemn warning of coming judgment which would purge the nation and purify Zion (vs. 24-31).

2. The Discipline of Judgment (Chs. 2-4). This prophecy is probably a series of connected addresses. It begins and ends with a description of the true glory God had in view for Zion. Between these two pictures lies the path of judgment by which this destiny was to be attained. Judgment was needed to chasten and purify Israel and to realize God's purpose with the nation.

(1) A vision of the latter days: Zion's place among the nations (2:2-4). The "latter days" mean the days of the Messiah, beginning with the first coming of Christ and extending to His second coming. Zion was to be the centre from which the word of the Lord should go forth and the will of the Lord should be done among the nations. The foundation of His Kingdom was to be "established on the top of the mountains" and "exalted above the hills". These phrases mean more than pre-eminence or supremacy in the earth. In the light of the New Testament, they indicate that the Kingdom would be founded in a heavenly order. They are the first intimations in the prophetic books that the Messianic Kingdom was to be, "not of this world" (John 18:36). The passage occurs in Micah 4:1-3 also. Both prophets were preaching at the same time, and one may have quoted from the other, or both from an earlier and unknown source.

(2) The course of judgment (2:5—4:1). The prophet makes an appeal to the nation to return to the Lord, and then he describes its condition as blinded and deluded by foreign fashions, by the display of wealth, and by the idolatry of self-trust and

human pride (2:5-11). A day of the Lord was coming, which should bring judgment upon the pride of man and overthrow the objects of human confidence (2:12-22). The description combines features of an earthquake and a thunder-storm. It closes with an exhortation which forms a transition to ch. 3. The sense of awe in the whole passage is deepened by the threefold occurrence of the phrase: "From before the terror of Jehovah, and from the glory of his majesty" (vs. 10, 19, 21).

The nature of God's judgment upon Jerusalem and Judah is described as the weakening of the pillars of state and the dissolution of the social order. He would put the government in the hands of incompetent men, with consequent anarchy and ruin (3:1-12). The rulers and the women should be especially involved in the judgment for they were especially guilty—the rulers guilty of oppressing the poor, and the women guilty of pride and wantonness (3:13--4:1).

(3) The issues of judgment: a purified Zion (4:2-6). A remnant of Israel, purified by the judgment, should realize God's purpose in Zion, and His presence should be manifested in their midst. This was to be accomplished "by the spirit of justice (A.V. judgment), and by the spirit of burning". In these two phrases we have foregleams of the Cross (John 12:31), and of Pentecost (Matt. 3:11). The whole passage is a prophetic description of the spiritual order of the Christian dispensation.

3. The Parable of the Vineyard (Ch. 5). This is a further prophecy of the judgment announced in the preceding address. The vineyard was a symbol of the nation. The Lord expresses His disappointment with it and His purpose to bring judgment upon it.

After He had made complete provision for His people, they had made an ungrateful return in bringing forth "wild grapes" (vs. 1-7). Then follow six "woe's", descriptive of the nation's perverseness and wrong-doing. These were the "wild grapes" of Israel (vs. 8-25). Among the "woe's" are four "therefore's", explaining that judgment must follow such sin. The judgment is then described as coming in the form of an invasion of the land by foreign foes (vs. 26-30).

This passage describes the kind of sins that were bringing the judgment of God upon the nation. The six "woe's" denounce the greed of the wealthy land-owners (v. 8), the self-indulgence and lust for pleasure of those who should have been leaders of God's people (v. 11), the defiant and mocking scepticism of the irreligious (v. 18), the confusion of moral distinctions among the people (v. 20), the self-satisfied astuteness of the politicians (v. 21), and the dissolute character and venal corruption of the judges (v. 22). All this gives us a dark picture of the moral condition of Israel at that time.

4. The Call of the Prophet (Ch. 6). This is Isaiah's account of an experience he had in the Temple at a time of special crisis in the nation, when he was quite a young man. It gave him a new revelation of God and called him to the ministry of his life. There were two features in it. (1) The vision of the Lord: "I saw" (vs. 1-7). This consisted of a revelation of His majesty and holiness (vs. 1-4), and a realization of His pardoning and purifying grace (vs. 5-7). All this was borne in upon the young prophet's soul by an overwhelming sense of heavenly realities. (2) The voice of the Lord: "I heard" (vs. 8-13). In response to the call of the Lord, Isaiah volunteered at once for service,

and was sent on a difficult and discouraging task (vs. 8-10). The terms of his commission meant that a series of desolating judgments were to fall upon the nation until only a holy remnant should be left (vs. 11-13). This remnant was to form the nucleus of a new Israel.

II. National Perils (Chs. 7-12). These chapters belong to the reign of Ahaz (739-723 B.C.), when the first great political crisis of Isaiah's time occurred. Pekah king of Israel and Rezin king of Syria formed a league to attack Jerusalem and set up another king over Judah. Ahaz, in a panic of fear and unbelief, sent to the king of Assyria for aid. This section of the book contains the messages delivered by Isaiah at this time. It was revealed to the prophet that Jerusalem should be delivered from this confederacy, but that a more severe judgment awaited her, which would come from Assyria. Trouble and anguish should continue to be the portion of Judah and Israel until the coming of the Messiah.

1. A Message for the King: the Sign of Immanuel (Ch. 7). The historical occasion is first described, and the fear which had seized the king and the people (vs. 1-2). The character of this invasion and its disastrous results for Judah are described in 2 Chron. 28. Isaiah was sent to Ahaz with his son, whose name was a reminder of the revelation about the remnant recorded at the close of the preceding chapter. The king was inspecting the water supply of Jerusalem at the time. The prophet delivered the Lord's appeal to him for courage and faith: "be quiet; fear not" (vs. 3-4). Such a plot by the two allied kingdoms should not stand, for it was an attack on David's line and throne; but



the northern kingdom itself should be overthrown (vs. 5-9). Ahaz was offered any sign he might ask of the Lord as a pledge of His protection; but he refused on the pretext that it would be tempting God. The faith of Ahaz was found wanting; he was secretly trusting in the strength of Assyria instead of the Lord God of Israel (vs. 10-12).

The prophet then rebuked the king and announced the Lord's own sign, the coming birth of a virgin's son, whom she should name "Immanuel" (vs. 13-14). No interpretation of this remarkable prophecy can be adequate which does not find in it an explicit announcement of the coming of the Messianic King. The significance of the sign meant that God would raise up in the house of David, in place of the faithless Ahaz, one who should be in very truth "God with us". The ultimate fulfilment of the prophecy, as explained in Matt. 1:22-23, may not have been present to Isaiah's mind, and the birth of his own son (8:3-4) may have been the sign intended for Ahaz; but that he had the Messiah in view is shown by his use of the name "Immanuel" in 8:8, and his subsequent prophecies in 9:6-7 and 11:1-5, which followed directly from this one.

Following up this announcement, the prophet declared that the Child should grow up to the moral and spiritual stature of true manhood under conditions of scarcity and privation. And then he went on to predict that before sufficient time elapsed for that to take place the two nations leagued against Judah should be overthrown, and that a still more formidable attack upon Judah should come from the very nation to which Ahaz was secretly looking for help (vs. 15-17).

He then gave a graphic description of the desolating Assyrian invasions which would come upon

the land "in that day". Judah was to become the theatre of war between Egypt and Assyria (vs. 18-20). The sparse population should be reduced to a poor pastoral existence, and the cultivated vineyards should be overrun with thorns and briars (vs. 21-25).

2. A Message for the People: the Comfort of Immanuel (8:1-15). Some time had passed since the prophet's message to Ahaz when this message was delivered. In the meantime, his second son was born and was given a name which was to be a sign to the people that the coming Assyrian invasion was near at hand; it meant "hasten to the spoil, hurry to the prey" (vs. 1-4). As the people had turned away from the quiet waters of Shiloah, a symbol of the spiritual rule of God in Judah, He would bring upon them the waters of the Euphrates, a symbol of the military might of Assyria. These waters should overflow Judah, Immanuel's own land, "even to the neck"; that is, they should reach Jerusalem but should not overwhelm it; the city itself would be saved (vs. 5-8).

The prophet then goes on to issue a challenge to the nations. No conspiracy of theirs against the Kingdom of Immanuel could ever succeed: "it shall not stand; for God is with us" (vs. 9-12). The Lord of hosts is the real defence of His people, the true source of comfort and assurance for those who trust Him, but a stumbling block and an offence to those who do not (vs. 13-15).

3. A Message for the Remnant: the Dawn of the New Day (8:16—9:7). At God's command the prophet deposited a written record of his testimony with his disciples, who formed an inner circle of religious fellowship while they waited on the Lord

in faith. They were the beginning of the Lord's remnant (8:16-18). During the night of spiritual darkness and distress which was about to settle down upon the land, they were to tell the blinded and infatuated people not to resort to necromancy, but to go to the Word of the Lord their God for light (8:19-22).

The prophet describes the dawn of a new day breaking first over the north of Palestine, which was most exposed to the Assyrian invasions and suffered most from them (9:1-2). It was the beginning of the Messianic age. Matthew states that this prophecy was fulfilled in the Galilean ministry of Jesus (Matt. 4:12-16). Then there follows a prophetic description of the Messianic work: "Thou hast multiplied the nation, thou hast increased their joy." Their joy was to be like that of gathering a harvest, or dividing the spoils after a great victory (9:3-5). This figure sets forth fittingly the joy that marks the new spiritual life of the present Christian age, which began with the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

This was to come to pass when the Child announced in 7:14 should reign upon the throne of David (9:6-7). These two verses contain one of the grandest Messianic prophecies. We have here: (1) Messiah's two-fold nature, human and divine: "a child born" and "a son given". (2) His four-fold character. The eight words descriptive of Him are in four pairs when the first two are taken together as in the R.V. margin. (3) His everlasting kingdom of righteousness and peace, which He would administer from "the throne of David". In the light of Luke 1:32 and Acts 2:30-35, this prophecy began to be fulfilled in the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. The prophet declared that all this

would be accomplished by God Himself: "the zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this".

4. A Message for Israel: a Warning of Doom (9:8—10:4). The kingdom of Northern Israel now comes in for denunciation. This prophecy is in four strophes, each ending with the same awe-inspiring refrain: "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still" (vs. 12, 17, 21, 4). Divine discipline in Israel had failed; now only judgment remained. Each part of the prophecy describes a specific national sin and announces a specific judgment. The four judgments are progressive and cumulative: foreign invasion, anarchy, internal strife, and captivity.

5. A Message for Assyria: a Warning of Punishment (10:5-34). God was using Assyria as the instrument of judgment upon His own people (vs. 5-6). But the Assyrian went beyond the Divine intention in his arrogant and cruel ambition, and he, too, must be dealt with (vs. 7-11). When the Lord had first dealt with His own people, He would then punish Assyria (vs. 12-19).

The prophecy was intended for the comfort and assurance of the faithful remnant in Judah, that they might not fear during the Assyrian invasions (vs. 20-27). The last verses of the chapter are a graphic description of an invading army gradually approaching Jerusalem, and then meeting sudden destruction at the hand of the Lord (vs. 28-34). The passage foreshadows the event recorded in 37: 33-36.

6. A Message for Zion: the Messianic Salvation (Chs. 11-12). The glorious issues of judgment to be realized in the Messianic age are now described. The true King and his kingdom come into view in

these chapters. He was to come of the family of David, at a time when the royal house should be broken down to the roots; and he was to be endowed with the complete fulness of the Spirit of the Lord (11:1-2). Being thus equipped, he would administer his kingdom by methods very different from those of men: not "after the sight of his eyes", neither "after the hearing of his ears". His delight being "in the fear of Jehovah", he would follow the will of God. His weapons would be "the rod of his mouth" and "the breath of his lips". That is, he would proclaim the Word of the Lord and use the power of the Spirit of God. Righteousness would be the supreme quality of his work and the abiding result of his reign (11:3-5).

The results of his work are then described. They should comprise the peace and harmony of the creation (11:6-8), the universal knowledge of the Lord (11:9), the submission of the nations to the peaceful rule of the Son of David (11:10), and the return and restoration and reunion of scattered and broken Israel (11:11-16). Finally, a song of salvation is put into the lips of the inhabitants of the new Zion, expressing the joy of the ransomed people and declaring the praise of the Lord to the nations for the salvation that He has wrought (ch. 12).

### CONCERNING THE NATIONS

(Chs. 13-27)

I. National Judgments (Chs. 13-23). In these chapters a number of prophecies on the nations surrounding Judah, uttered at different times in Isaiah's ministry, are collected together.

1. The Doom of Babylon (13:1—14:27). In Isaiah's day Babylon was included in the Assyrian

Empire. This prophecy stands first because Babylon was the world power ordained of God to complete the judgment upon His own people. It was uttered more than a century and a half before the event it describes. It reveals the principle underlying all God's national judgments: nations are used one against another to serve His purposes.

The prophecy begins by announcing that the Lord has called His "consecrated ones" to execute His indignation and wrath against Babylon (13:2-5). They were "sanctified" (A.V.), not as made inwardly holy, but as designated for His holy purposes. Their invasion is likened to a terrible storm obscuring the sky (13:6-10). It would be a manifestation of the wrath of God upon the pride and wickedness of man (13:11-16). The Medes are named as God's agents in this judgment, and the result is described as the utter desolation of Babylon (13:17-22).

The purpose of God's judgment on Babylon was the deliverance of Israel (14:1-2). In anticipation of their day of restoration, a great song of triumph over the king of Babylon is put into the lips of the redeemed people (14:3-20). In the midst of it there is a reference to the fall of Satan, the real ruler of the kingdoms of this world, of whom the king of Babylon was a type (vs. 12-14). This is followed by a repetition of God's judgment against both Babylon and Assyria (14:21-27).

2. The Doom of Philistia (14:28-32). A warning to the Philistines is followed by a statement that the Lord's purpose in judgment was to establish His kingdom in Zion. The historical background of this prophecy is found in 2 Chron. 28:18.

3. The Doom of Moab (Chs. 15-16). The prophet describes the awful devastation that was to

come suddenly upon Moab (15:1-4), and he is touched with pity at the plight of fugitives fleeing from Moab before an army coming down from the north (15:5-9). Moab is counselled to seek the help and protection of Zion in view of the coming Messianic reign of righteousness (16:1-5). But the pride of Moab was to be visited with a desolating judgment (16:6-8), and again the prophet gives vent to his sorrow at the prospect (16:9-12). This judgment was to fall within a very short time (16:13-14).

4. The Doom of Damascus (Ch. 17). The scope of this prophecy includes Northern Israel as well as Syria. It predicts the fate of the two nations that were allied against Judah. The impending overthrow of Damascus is announced (vs. 1-3); and this was to involve that of Israel, with the exception of a remnant who should turn from their idolatry to the Holy One of Israel (vs. 4-8). This judgment was to come upon Israel because the nation had forsaken the God of its salvation and the rock of its strength (vs. 9-11). The chapter closes with a graphic description of invading armies and their sudden destruction (vs. 12-14). These were the Assyrians, the oppressors of Israel and the instruments of judgment, who were themselves to be judged. The passage predicts the event recorded in 37:36.

5. Concerning Ethiopia (Ch. 18). The ambassadors from this land are bidden to return home and watch the Lord thwart Assyria's attempt to subjugate Judah (vs. 1-3). He will refrain from interfering with Assyria, and will let its power come to maturity. Then He will suddenly destroy it with an overwhelming overthrow (vs. 4-6). The vivid picture of God taking His rest in the summer heat

before the harvest indicates the calmness and deliberation of the workings of Divine judgment. As a result the Ethiopians should pay homage to the Lord on Mount Zion (v. 7).

6. The Doom of Egypt (Chs. 19-20). A time of anarchy and oppression was to come upon the Egyptians: their national industries should be ruined, and their princes and wise men should fail them (19:1-15). Yet the prophet sees hope for Egypt: judgment should result in part of the nation turning to the Lord (19:16-22). Egypt and Assyria, the two great powers then contending for the rule of the world, should be united with Israel in the worship of the Lord and become a blessing to the earth (19:23-25). This prophecy, which looks forward to the Gospel age, is followed by the warning of a judgment near at hand, the Assyrian conquest of Egypt (ch. 20).

7. A Group of Oracles (Ch. 21). The first is a vision of the fall of Babylon at the hands of the Medes (vs. 1-2). The phrase, "the wilderness of the sea", in the title of this prophecy refers to the plain of the Euphrates where Babylon was situated. The vision produced fear and agitation in the heart of the prophet (vs. 3-4). It was that of a carousal within the walls, suddenly interrupted by a call to arms, and followed by an announcement of the fall of the city (vs. 5-9). It was intended for the comfort of the prophet's own people (v. 10).

Two other oracles, which are connected with the fall of Babylon, vividly picture the consequent anxiety of Edom (vs. 11-12), and the impending failure of the glory of Arabia (vs. 13-17).

8. Concerning Jerusalem (Ch. 22). The phrase, "the valley of vision", refers to the prophet's point



of view in the valley between the two hills on which Jerusalem was built. Probably his dwelling was there. This prophecy is a denunciation of the inhabitants of the city. They were giving themselves up to revelry and self-indulgence when the enemy was at the gate and the Lord was calling for repentance (vs. 1-14). Shebna, the unfaithful steward, was to be replaced by Eliakim (vs. 15-21). The appointment of Eliakim is given a Messianic significance (vs. 22-25). The key of the house of David was to be placed in his keeping. This symbolism is used in Matt. 16:19 and Rev. 3:7 of Christ and His Kingdom.

9. The Doom of Tyre (Ch. 23). Her commercial glory and her pride were to be humbled; and the dismay of the states affected by her fall is described (vs. 1-7). The purpose of the Lord was to bring down all earthly pride, and the overthrow of Tyre was in accordance with this principle of His government (vs. 8-12). It was to be brought about by the Chaldeans (vs. 13-14). After a period of seventy years, during which Tyre should be forgotten, she was to enjoy a revival of her commercial activity, but its profits were to be dedicated to the interest of the Lord's people (vs. 15-18).

II. World-Wide Judgment (Chs. 24-27). The series of separate judgments upon individual nations announced in the preceding chapters were to issue at last in a universal judgment, which Isaiah now describes. The judgment which began with God's own people was to involve the whole world finally. Out of this deluge of Divine justice there should come at last new life for the world.

1. The Desolation of the World (Ch. 24). The point of view in this prophecy is Isaiah's own day;

but it looks forward through successive eras of judgment to complete fulfilment in the events attending the final Advent of the Lord. The prophet first announces the Lord's purpose to bring a universal judgment upon the earth which will level all classes of society (vs. 1-3). This judgment will come upon the earth because of the sin of men, their violation of God's everlasting moral order. "Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth" (vs. 4-6). This means that there is a mysterious sympathy between man and nature. Man infects the world he inhabits, and nature reacts against the sin of the human race. Then the prophet describes the desolation which the judgment will cause; the joy and gladness of life will vanish (vs. 7-12).

A remnant will be left in the earth rejoicing in the Lord in the midst of the judgment; and these redeemed are called to raise songs of praise, glorifying God throughout all the earth (vs. 13-16). But the prophet cannot share in these songs, and he returns to a further description of the judgment. It will be like a flood which none can escape, or like an earthquake overturning the structure of human society (vs. 16-20). It will extend to the hosts of wickedness in heaven (vs. 21-22), and will issue in the complete triumph of the Lord (v. 23).

2. Songs of Salvation (Chs. 25-27). The announcement of world-wide desolation is followed immediately by songs of praise to the glory of God as manifested in the judgment. They foreshadow the salvation that was to be accomplished through the work of the Messiah.

(1) The prophet's song of praise (ch. 25). The Lord is praised for His past judgments (vs. 1-5), and for His future salvation (vs. 6-8). This salva-

tion is described in terms that are foregleams of the new spiritual and heavenly order created by the Lord Jesus Christ. He would "destroy the face of the covering that covereth all peoples"; that is, He would open up the unseen spiritual world from which man has been excluded since the Fall (2 Cor. 4:17-18). He would "swallow up death in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54), and "wipe away tears from off all faces" (Rev. 7:17; 21:4); that is, He would remove all the results of the Fall. Then the prophet puts into the lips of the redeemed in that day a song of praise to God for the humiliation of Moab, which was a symbol of the overthrow of all His foes (vs. 9-12).

(2) Judah's song of praise (ch. 26). The Lord is praised for the perfect peace He gives to those who trust Him and walk in the way of the just (vs. 1-7), for the righteousness He manifests through His judgments (vs. 8-10), for the deliverance He has wrought for the nation and the enlargement He has given it (vs. 11-15), and for the new life He gives His people out of death (vs. 16-19). Here we have the hope and promise of the resurrection. Then comes the Lord's call to His people to hide themselves in Him till the storm of judgment is past (vs. 20-21) and the great world powers are punished (27:1).

(3) The song of the vineyard (ch. 27). The figure of the vineyard here, under the care of the Lord (vs. 2-6), is in striking contrast with the picture in 5:1-7, where He passes sentence upon the vineyard. It sets forth the restoration of the nation as chastened, penitent, and forgiven (vs. 7-11). What we have here is the new Israel, "the Israel of God" of the New Testament dispensation (Gal. 6:

16). "In that day" the children of Israel "shall be gathered one by one" (v. 12), that is, by the individual Gospel call. "In that day" also "a great trumpet shall be blown" to summon the lost ones home to worship the Lord (v. 13). This, too, may refer to the call of the Gospel; but it may also be interpreted in the light of such passages as Matt. 24:31, 1 Cor. 15:51-52, and 1 Thess. 4:16-17.

### CONCERNING THE WORLD

(Chs. 28-35)

Up to this point we have had the prophecies uttered during the earlier period of Isaiah's ministry. Now we pass on into the reign of Hezekiah (723-695 B.C.), when the prophet's prediction of Assyrian invasions came to pass. Early in that reign occurred the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel. The policy of Ahaz had been to make an alliance with Assyria. The policy to which Hezekiah was urged by his political advisers was to protect Judah against Assyria by an alliance with Egypt. The prophet denounced this worldly minded policy, and preached trust in the Lord God alone as the only way of salvation for Judah. This section of the book contains the prophecies dealing with this worldly alliance (chs. 28-33), and closes with a further announcement of world judgment (chs. 34-35).

I. World Alliance Denounced (Chs. 28-33). These chapters contain a series of woes pronounced upon the nations involved in these world movements, all heading up in denunciation of Judah's trust in a godless world power.

1. Woe to Samaria (Ch. 28). An announcement of the approaching downfall of Samaria, the proud

and stately capital of the northern kingdom. The prophet uttered this prediction as a warning to Jerusalem. After denouncing the drunken revellers of the northern capital, which was situated in the territory of Ephraim (vs. 1-4), and giving a promise to the faithful remnant (vs. 5-6), he turns to the priests and prophets of his own city who are also guilty of drunken debauchery (vs. 7-8). They receive his words with mockery (vs. 9-10), and he replies with stern sarcasm. If they will not heed his warning now, the Lord will compel them to listen, some day, to the rough foreign speech of the invading Assyrian (vs. 11-13).

Then he denounces the rulers of Jerusalem for their Egyptian alliance, calling it "a covenant with death". Their trust should be in the sure foundation which the Lord is laying in Zion. "He that believeth shall not be in haste": he will not cast about frantically for earthly help, but will have the calm confidence of faith in the Messianic promise (vs. 14-16). The Lord's judgment in the coming Assyrian invasion is hastening on and will involve these scoffing rulers and their futile Egyptian policy in ruin (vs. 17-20). The Lord will interpose on behalf of His people and bring deliverance Himself, as He did in the case of David's victories over the Philistines, recorded in 1 Chron. 14:8-17 (vs. 21-22).

Then by a series of illustrations from the work of the farmer in producing food, the prophet shows that God's judgments are methodical and move forward with a definite end in view (vs. 23-29).

2. Woe to Jerusalem (Ch. 29). Isaiah now announces that the Lord will bring a judgment upon His own city. Jerusalem is addressed as Ariel, which means either "the lion of God", or "the hearth of God". Probably the latter meaning is intended,

as being the place where His altar-fire burns. He will bring her very low by a siege against her (vs. 1-4). But in the very hour of their triumph, her foes shall be smitten with sudden discomfiture (vs. 5-8).

After uttering this prediction of the Assyrian army's attack on Jerusalem and its sudden destruction, the prophet rebukes the people for their unbelief. Spiritual blindness has come over them, and their leaders can see no vision (vs. 9-12). Because of their hypocrisy and formal worship, God will proceed to take startling measures with them (vs. 13-14). They foolishly think that by hiding their counsel from the Lord and working in the dark they will escape His notice (vs. 15-16). This is a reference to the Egyptian alliance.

At this point Isaiah turned toward the Messianic future and described the complete transformation and wonderful deliverance which should take place then (vs. 17-21). Both physical and spiritual features are combined in the description: it should be the renewal of both the land and the people. Israel would glorify their God when they saw what He was doing in their midst in regenerating the children of Abraham (vs. 22-24).

3. The Vanity of the Egyptian Alliance (Ch. 30). Isaiah now hurls a denunciation against the political party in the state who, without consulting the Lord, were making a league with Egypt. It consists of two "woe's", the first of which is contained in this chapter and the other in ch. 31. They had already sent an embassy on its way down to Egypt, but their trust in Egypt would be their confusion and shame (vs. 1-5). In the midst of his description of the journey of the embassy, the prophet utters an oracle about them (vs. 6-7).

Then the Lord bade the prophet write his protest and prophecy on a tablet as a perpetual memorial of Judah's rebellious disposition and refusal to listen to His word (vs. 8-14). The true policy was not alliance with Egypt but reliance on God: "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength". Because they had refused this policy, they should be left solitary in the midst of a land devastated by war (vs. 15-17).

After this judgment the Lord would wait to be gracious and would bless those who waited for Him. His purpose for Zion should be accomplished, and His people should "weep no more" when they turned to Him in true repentance (vs. 18-22). Then their true prosperity should be realized and their real glory should be manifested (vs. 23-26). All this looks forward to the redemption which the Messiah was to accomplish and to the spiritual blessings of the Christian dispensation.

The chapter closes with an announcement of God's purpose to destroy the Assyrian by His own power, thus showing how unnecessary it was for Judah to make a league with Egypt. Then, "ye shall have a song as in the night when a holy feast is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of Jehovah, to the Rock of Israel". Their joy should be that of the Feast of Tabernacles, the most joyful feast of the year (vs. 27-33).

4. The Folly of the Egyptian Alliance (Chs. 31-32). It meant trusting in chariots and horsemen instead of the Holy One of Israel, relying on the flesh and not the spirit, looking to the material world for help instead of the spiritual world (31: 1-3). The Lord meant to protect Jerusalem Himself as a mother bird protects her nest. Therefore

let Israel trust in the Lord. He would destroy the Assyrian by His own intervention without the help of man (31:4-9).

Then there follows a striking description of the new age under the coming King. It would provide a refuge from wrong and evil. It would be marked by just and beneficent rule, by spiritual and moral transformation, and by the recognition of real worth and the exposure of folly and evil in character (32:1-8).

Conscious of the great difference between the circumstances of his own time and those of the coming age, the prophet makes an appeal to the women to abandon their self-indulgent ease (32:9-12), for a time of desolation was to come upon the land until the ultimate outpouring of the Holy Spirit (32:13-15). Then the new age of righteousness should be ushered in, and peace should be the result. "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and confidence for ever" (32:16-20).

5. Woe to the Assyrian (Ch. 33). The prophet's last "woe" is directed against the treacherous foe who had been plundering the cities of Judah and laying waste the land. The occasion of this prophecy was probably the event recorded in 2 Kings 18:13-16, when Sennacherib dealt treacherously with Hezekiah's "ambassadors of peace" (v. 7). After announcing his theme (v. 1), the prophet breaks into a prayer expressing faith in the Lord's salvation and assurance of coming glory for Zion (vs. 2-6). Then he laments what the Assyrians had done to the land, and declares that the Lord would be exalted in their sudden overthrow (vs. 7-12). This act of judgment on God's part would be a solemn warning to the sinners in Zion. The Lord



God is a consuming fire to all but those who walk righteously (vs. 13-16).

Then comes a description of the time when the oppressor should be gone, and when the Lord Himself would reign in Zion, and His people should dwell in peace and security and fulness of life (vs. 17-24). This passage foreshadows the Messianic age and the Christian dispensation. The "king in his beauty" is primarily Hezekiah, no longer seen in sackcloth and ashes; but ultimately it means the Lord Jesus Christ in His glory. The "land that reacheth afar" is primarily the whole land of Israel, prosperous and peaceful when freed from the foe; but typically it represents the spiritual world of the new creation, the "better country" of Heb. 11:16, the "heavenly places" of Eph. 1:3, and also the Father's house of John 14:2.

II. World Judgment Announced (Chs. 34-35). The first part of the book, with its prophecies of warning and judgment, comes to a conclusion in these chapters. The sweep of Divine judgment, which began with Judah and Jerusalem and spread out to the nations around, takes in the whole world at last, and issues in a renewal of the world. These chapters deal with the same theme as chs. 24-27. They form a consummation to the prophecies of chs. 28-33 as those do to the prophecies of chs. 13-23.

1. The Desolation of the World (Ch. 34). As the heavens and the earth were called to bear witness to God's charge against Israel in the opening chapter of the book, so now all the peoples of the earth are summoned to hear His judgment upon the nations of the world (vs. 1-4). The universality of this judgment is marked by the frequent repetition of the word "all" in these verses. When warnings and

signs hitherto local and national become universal in their scope, then the final day of the Lord is at hand. Edom is singled out for special notice in its hostility to God, because it was the one nation that bore perpetual hatred to God's chosen people (vs. 5-7).

The principle of the Lord's action in this judgment is stated in v. 8: "Jehovah hath a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion". It is a part of His procedure of redemption. It vindicates His purpose concerning Zion, and clears the way in the world for the attainment of her true destiny, that destiny which has been foretold by the prophet already in 2:2-4 and 4:2-6. This is followed by a predictive description of the desolation of Edom, as a type and illustration of the desolation of the world when the Lord's vengeance falls upon it (vs. 9-15), and an assurance of the ultimate and complete fulfilment of every word of the Lord regarding the nations (vs. 16-17).

2. The Restoration of the World (Ch. 35). The world's renewal would be brought about by the coming of the Lord Himself: "Behold, your God will come; He will come and save you" (vs. 1-4). He came in the Incarnation, and with that transcendent event the new creation began. A beautiful description is given of the salvation that should be realized as the result of His coming (vs. 5-10). Two significant features mark its fundamental spiritual character: a new source of life, "streams in the desert", and a new way of life, "the way of holiness". The figure is that of a pleasant road made through desert regions on which a journey is made in safety.

The whole picture is symbolical of the new order of the present Christian age. The closing feature

of the picture is that of the Lord's ransomed people coming home to Zion in the enjoyment of complete and perfect bliss. It was to this description of the Messianic age that Jesus referred John the Baptist in describing His own ministry (Matt. 11:2-6). The conditions to be realized in the redeemed and restored world of the new creation as described in this passage, may be drawn out more fully as follows: the removal of physical infirmity (vs. 5-6); the transformation of nature (vs. 6-7); holiness of life and freedom from defilement (v. 8); security of life and freedom from peril (v. 9); fulness of joy and freedom from sorrow (v. 10).

## PART II

This historical section (Chs. 36-39) forms the connecting link between the two main divisions of Isaiah's prophetic ministry. These chapters are parallel with 2 Kings 18:13—20:19, and 2 Chron. 32:1-26. They contain the record of two events of great political importance. One of these events brought to an end the threat of an impending judgment from Assyria and closed the prophet's public ministry. The other event provided the occasion for his prediction of the more remote judgment from Babylon and led to the private ministry of his last days.

I. The End of the Assyrian Invasions (Chs. 36-37). This is the event toward which all the foregoing prophecies converge. A great Assyrian host, under the most cruel of the Assyrian kings, devastated the cities of Judah and came up against Jerusalem (701 B.C.). It was suddenly smitten by the hand of God, and Assyria never invaded Judah again. The story gathers around three men. The

date mentioned in 36:1 belongs to the narrative of Hezekiah's sickness in ch. 38, which occurred before Sennacherib's invasion.

1. Rabshakeh the Assyrian (36:1-22). This was the title of the officer sent by Sennacherib to demand the surrender of Jerusalem. He represented the might and arrogance of Assyria. Met by Judah's officers of state (vs. 1-3), he taunted them with their weakness and defied their trust in the Lord (vs. 4-10). Alarmed at the effect his words might have on the people, the Jewish deputation urged him to speak in the Syrian tongue (vs. 11-12). Instead of complying with this request he immediately addressed the people on the wall in their own language, warning them against trust in Hezekiah, declaring that their God could not deliver them, and promising them plenty in another land (vs. 13-20). The people in obedience to the king remained silent, while his officers reported to him the Assyrian demand (vs. 21-22).

2. Hezekiah the King (37:1-20). Hezekiah immediately went into the Temple with marks of penitence and humiliation upon him, and sent messengers with the same marks upon them to Isaiah. The prophet bade them carry back to the king a message of encouragement (vs. 1-7). In the meantime the king of Assyria, when Rabshakeh returned to him, sent Hezekiah a letter of further defiance and arrogance (vs. 8-13). Hezekiah spread this letter before the Lord and appealed to Him for deliverance in a prayer of great simplicity and faith (vs. 14-20).

3. Isaiah the Prophet (37:21-38). Isaiah now sent a second and fuller message to Hezekiah, marked by sublime scorn and majestic faith. He sternly denounced Sennacherib for his blasphemy

against the Holy One of Israel, declaring that his boasting was vain and his judgment imminent (vs. 21-29). He encouraged Hezekiah with the assurance that, beyond the brief period of hardship that would follow this invasion, there should be a new age of revival for the remnant of Judah, and declared that in the meantime the Lord Himself would defend Jerusalem (vs. 30-35). The chapter ends with an account of the destruction of the Assyrian army by the direct act of God, and the subsequent death of Sennacherib at the hands of his sons (vs. 36-38).

II. The Shadow of the Babylonian Captivity (Chs. 38-39). The first announcement of this judgment, which then lay in the remote future, was contained in a message which the prophet delivered to Hezekiah in connection with the visit of a deputation from the king of Babylon to congratulate him on his recovery from sickness.

1. Hezekiah's Sickness and Recovery (Ch. 38). In the course of the Assyrian invasions a serious illness fell upon Hezekiah, and Isaiah warned him to prepare for death. Hezekiah turned to the Lord in penitence and prayer, and Isaiah was sent to him with the promise that the Lord would prolong his life and deliver the city out of the hand of the king of Assyria (vs. 1-8). Then follows Hezekiah's psalm of thanksgiving and praise (vs. 9-20). It reveals the feelings of an Old Testament saint in the prospect of death, and breathes the new sense of solemn joy with which Hezekiah consecrated the remainder of his life to the Lord. The chapter closes by stating how he recovered (vs. 21-22).

2. Hezekiah's Folly and Warning (Ch. 39). An embassy came from Babylon to congratulate Heze-

kiah on his recovery. Flattered by their visit, he foolishly showed them the treasures of his kingdom (vs. 1-2). Isaiah rebuked him and foretold the ultimate issue. The days were coming when all that he had shown them should be carried to Babylon and the princes of Judah should be servants in the palace of the king of Babylon (vs. 3-7). Hezekiah received this message with meek submission (v. 8). Thus the way is prepared for the series of prophecies which begins with the next chapter.

### PART III

The last part of the book (Chs. 40-66) consists of one unbroken series of prophecies, marked by the keynote of comfort and conveying an assurance of coming salvation. The theme of the whole is the redemption of Israel in one complete view. It includes the deliverance of the exiles from Babylon, the Messianic redemption from sin, and the final glory of the people of God, in one connected picture. The viewpoint of the prophet is in the Babylonian captivity on the eve of the return.

The fact that the historical background of this part of the book is so far beyond the life-time of our prophet has given rise to the theory of a "second Isaiah", which regards these chapters as the work of an unknown writer who lived during the Exile. While this theory seems to solve one problem, it also creates another one. If it were true it would mean that the greatest genius among the Hebrew prophets, the one who was endowed with the highest quality of prophetic inspiration and made the richest contribution to Messianic prophecy, has disappeared from history without leaving a trace of his personality behind. There is no other case in the

literature of Old Testament prophecy where the name and identity of the prophet has not been preserved along with his writings.

That being the case, the most reasonable way to deal with the problem is to take the book as it has come to us from the Jews themselves and as we find it in the Bible. Jewish tradition is not to be discarded as worthless. There must be some explanation of the fact that Isaiah, the friend and adviser of Hezekiah, was regarded as the source of all the prophecies in this book. The New Testament knows of no other author. In John 12:38-40 a quotation from the last part of Isaiah (53:1) and a quotation from the first part (6:10) are both referred to one and the same man.

The chief difficulty felt by many consists in the actual naming of Cyrus, the future deliverer of Israel (44:28; 45:1). While this is peculiar and exceptional, it is not unprecedented. It had occurred before in the case of king Josiah (1 Kgs. 13:2). For those who believe that the prophetic gift is a supernatural power to enter into the mind of God, a prediction of this kind is not incredible. No one knows enough about the peculiar experiences of the Hebrew prophets under the Divine urge of prophetic inspiration to qualify him to pronounce Isaiah incapable of writing the last twenty-seven chapters of this book. Before the supreme miracle of the revelation of God in Jesus of Nazareth, every other miracle of any kind whatever loses its supernatural wonder and pales into insignificance.

This section of the book, then, may be regarded as the work of Isaiah's old age, several years after his more active ministry had closed. In anticipation of the Babylonian captivity, which he had already foretold, he wrote down his visions of the return

from that captivity for the comfort of the exiles, and for the consolation and comfort of God's people in all ages. As he saw that return, he became a participant in its scenes, and passed in rapt contemplation to the still brighter and grander events which that deliverance typified.

There are three stages in the progressive development of redemption as we see it unfolded through this part of the book. Each stage occupies nine chapters. The first is a prophecy of the restoration from captivity in Babylon as the preparation for redemption (Chs. 40-48). The next is a prophecy of the redemption of Israel from sin by the suffering of the righteous Servant of the Lord (Chs. 49-57). And the last is a prophecy of the final glory of the redeemed people of God (Chs. 58-66). Each of the three divisions begins with a chapter which is a key to the whole and ends with a brief reference to the punishment of the wicked. Redemption is thus announced against a background of judgment.

#### THE PREPARATION FOR REDEMPTION (Chs. 40-48)

The central idea in this section is assurance of deliverance for the exiles of Israel in the midst of their captivity and suffering. Their God would raise up a deliverer and call him to a career of conquest. His name is mentioned. He should accomplish the fall of Babylon and set the captives free. This was to be the first stage in the Lord's redemption of Israel.

I. The God of Redemption (Chs. 40-42). The Lord's purpose to deliver His people out of their affliction is first brought into view, and then the



prophet goes on to show that He has the power and the sovereignty to carry out this purpose, and that He will raise up an agent to accomplish it.

1. His Purpose to Redeem (40:1-11). This passage forms an introduction to the rest of the book. It begins with the Lord's call to the prophets to convey a comforting assurance of pardon to His people (vs. 1-2). Then comes an imaginary description of the way His purpose of redemption is to be accomplished. The voice of a herald is heard announcing that His glory is to be revealed and calling for the preparation of a highway for Him through the wilderness (vs. 3-5). This "voice" was taken by John the Baptist as a prophecy of his own ministry in preparing the way for the Messiah (Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4-6; John 1:23).

Another "voice" contrasts the frailty of man with the power of God as He moves forward on the highway of His purpose in fulfilment of His word (vs. 6-8). Then comes the announcement of His advent as the Ruler and Shepherd of His people (vs. 9-11). The call, "Behold, your God!" points forward to the advent of the Lord in the Incarnation. It has been foretold already in 35:4.

2. His Power to Deliver (40:12-31). The prophet now describes the majestic greatness of God, to show that He is able to fulfil His purpose of redemption. A survey of the created world reveals God's almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite greatness. Before Him the nations are as nothing (vs. 12-17). Can the gods which men manufacture be compared to Him who rules over the earth and the heavens and brings the rulers of the world to nothing (vs. 18-24)? This passage contains the first of several satirical descriptions which the

prophet gives of an idol factory (41:5-7; 44:9-20; 46:6-7).

Then he goes on to declare that the Creator of the starry hosts, who marshals them all in their courses, will not fail His people or forget them. He is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, and He never wearies. Let His people only wait in faith for His salvation. He is the unfailing source of strength, and He renews the lives of those who put their trust in Him (vs. 25-31).

3. His Sovereignty in the World (Ch. 41). The Lord now summons the nations before Him and issues a challenge. He adduces the victorious career of one whom He has raised up from the east as a proof that He is the sovereign Ruler of the world (vs. 1-7). This is the first reference to Cyrus, God's instrument in the overthrow of Babylon and the deliverance of Israel. The passage describes his meteoric appearance on the eastern horizon of the world of the time (about the middle of the sixth century B.C.), and the alarm it caused among the states of western Asia who sought help against him from their idols.

This is followed by a comforting assurance of the Lord's help and deliverance to Israel, the chosen seed of Abraham (vs. 8-16). The message of this passage may be summed up in the following words: "I have chosen thee. Fear thou not. I will help thee. Thou shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel". Then the help which God would give to His poor and needy people is set forth under the figure of miraculous provision for travellers in the desert (vs. 17-20).

Next comes a challenge to the idols to prove their divinity by foretelling the future or explaining the past (vs. 21-24), and another reference to the rais-

ing up of Cyrus for the deliverance of Zion, which they were utterly unable to foresee or explain (vs. 25-29).

4. His Agent in Redemption (Ch. 42). The great Servant of the Lord is now introduced, who was to accomplish the work of redemption. His character and methods are first described (vs. 1-4). This passage foreshadows the lowly ministry of the Son of Man (Matt. 20:28). Then, in a solemn address to His Servant, the Lord God sets forth the task to which He has called him, and promises to uphold him in it. He was to bring salvation to the whole world, to the Gentiles as well as to Israel (vs. 5-9). Then the prophet breaks into praise for the redemption which God was going to accomplish (vs. 10-13).

This is followed by the Lord's own comment upon it. For a long time He had refrained from interposing on behalf of His people, but now He was proceeding to lead them out of their captivity and to overthrow their heathen foes (vs. 14-17). Israel had failed as the Lord's servant. Their blindness and disobedience to the Law, which He had made great and glorious for their sake, had brought them into captivity and destitution (vs. 18-22). This was His judgment upon them for their sin, and yet they had not laid it to heart (vs. 23-25).

II. The Manifesto of Redemption (Chs. 43-45). The Lord now announces Himself as the Redeemer of Israel and makes proclamation of His purpose and procedure. He does this in a series of messages to His redeemed people in which the name "Redeemer" is made prominent (43:14; 44:6, 24).

1. The Redeemer's Promise (43:1-13). This may be summed up as follows: "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee . . . Fear not, for I am with thee". What God hath done for Israel in the past should

assure them of what He would do for them in the future (vs. 1-7). When His people were redeemed, they were to be His witnesses among the nations, bearing testimony to the fact that the Lord had saved them, and that He is the one true God (vs. 8-13).

2. The Redeemer's Work (43:14-44:5). The overthrow of Babylon is now explicitly announced as the beginning of the work of redemption. Thus the Lord, the King of Israel, would prepare the way for their deliverance, which should be like another exodus from Egypt (43:14-17). Then the Lord declares: "Behold, I will do a new thing". And this new thing should eclipse all "the former things" in Israel's history and thus set forth His praise (43:18-21). It was not due to Israel's devotion to the worship of the Lord, for they had only burdened Him with their sins (43:22-24).

The passage goes on to indicate the nature of the "new thing"; it looks forward down the ages to the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. It was to deal with the sins of Israel and result in blotting them out. God would do this for His own sake (43:25-28). Then Israel should be brought into a new relation with Him, and He would pour out His Holy Spirit upon them (44:1-5). Here we have foregleams of the Cross and of Pentecost.

3. The Redeemer's Power (44:6-28). There is no God besides the King of Israel, Jehovah of hosts (vs. 6-8). In His light the utter folly of idolatry is exposed. The prophet pours scorn upon it as he describes the process of manufacturing idols (vs. 9-17). Idolaters are blind to the folly and futility of their own actions (vs. 18-20). The Lord now calls upon Israel to return to Him because He has undertaken to redeem them (vs. 21-23).

In support of His appeal as their Redeemer, He points to the tokens of His power as the God of creation and of prophecy. He is the Maker of all things, and He fulfils the words of His messengers. In this connection Cyrus is mentioned by name as the one whom He was to use for the restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple. This was to be the first step in His procedure of redemption (vs. 24-28).

4. The Redeemer's Procedure (Ch. 45). The figure of Cyrus is now brought upon the scene, and he is addressed directly. The Lord has raised him up as a great conqueror for Israel's sake and for His own glory among the nations of the world, though he has not known the Lord (vs. 1-7). God's ultimate purpose in this mission of Cyrus is to bring forth salvation for the whole world (v. 8).

In answer to those among the exiles who may object to this procedure of His in using a foreign agent as His servant, God declares His sovereignty over the world He has created, and announces that He has raised up Cyrus for His own righteous purpose (vs. 9-13). His primary purpose is the deliverance and salvation of Israel, so that the nations may acknowledge the presence and power of the God of Israel (vs. 14-17). His ultimate purpose is the salvation and blessing of the whole world, and He calls all the ends of the earth to look unto Him and be saved (vs. 18-25).

III. The Deliverance from Babylon (Chs. 46-48). The overthrow of Babylon by Cyrus in 538 B.C., which opened the way for Israel's deliverance from exile, was the first event in the prophet's view as he looked into the future and beheld the progressive unfolding of God's redemptive work. These chapters deal prophetically with that event.

1. The Overthrow of the Idols of Babylon (Ch. 46). Here the prophet pictures the ignominious flight of the gods of Babylon from the fallen city, and points the contrast between their helplessness and the sovereign might of the Lord God of Israel. The Lord undertakes to carry His people: they have to be carried out themselves on beasts of burden (vs. 1-7). Then comes a challenge to the transgressors in Israel who were lapsing into idolatry (vs. 8-13).

2. The Fall of the City of Babylon (Ch. 47). Her degradation is likened to that of a queen suddenly reduced to the shameful and humiliating condition of a slave. She was to lose her proud title of mistress of the nations, because she had shown no mercy to the Lord's people when He put them into her hands (vs. 1-7). In the midst of her careless security, sudden and complete desolation should come upon her because of her pride and wickedness, and her magicians and star-gazers should be unable to help her (vs. 8-15).

3. The Call of Israel out of Babylon (Ch. 48). The Lord describes the methods He has been using with His people because of their obstinacy. As to "the former things", they were predicted in advance, that Israel might not attribute them to false gods (vs. 1-5). From now on He will show them "new things", things they had not known nor heard of. He has tried them in the furnace of affliction; and now, for His own sake, He means to deliver them (vs. 6-11).

In accordance with His glory and power in the world, He has raised up one to perform His pleasure on Babylon (vs. 12-16). He expresses His disappointment over Israel's failure to obey Him in the past, when His purpose was to secure their peace and righteousness (vs. 17-19). Now He calls them

to go forth out of Babylon with rejoicing and to declare the wonders of His salvation (vs. 20-21). Then the section closes with the declaration: "There is no peace, saith Jehovah, to the wicked". While His purpose is to bring peace to His people, they are solemnly warned that it cannot be realized if they continue in wickedness (v. 22).

After this there is no further reference to Cyrus or to Pabylon in the book. The rest of the prophecy is concerned entirely with the Messianic Servant and His redemptive work.

### THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF REDEMPTION (Chs. 49-57)

The central idea in this section is Israel's deliverance from sin and restoration to God. This work was to be accomplished by the Servant of the Lord, whose figure is now presented with such fulness of prophetic detail that there is no mistaking the portrait. It is none other than Jesus Christ, the Messiah of Israel, the Saviour of the world. In the course of these chapters He appears in His three offices: as Prophet (49:1-52:12), as Priest (52:13-53:12), and as King (54:1-57:21).

I. The Call of the Servant (Chs. 49-50). The voice of the Servant of the Lord is heard in these chapters as he prepares to accomplish his task.

1. The Servant's Commission from the Lord (49:1-13). In an address to the nations, the Servant declares his consciousness of being called by the Lord to a mission for Israel, and expresses his faith in it notwithstanding Israel's failure in the past (vs. 1-4). Then he describes the task given him to accomplish. It comprises not only the restoration of Israel unto the Lord, but also the salvation of the

whole world (vs. 5-7). Then the passage goes on to describe the Servant's mission in terms of the emancipation and return of the exiles (vs. 8-13).

2. The Lord's Message to Zion (49:14-50:3). The Lord answers Zion's complaint that He had forgotten her, by assuring her of His unchanging love (49:14-16), and foretelling the return of her children to her (49:17-18). Then comes a prediction of the enlargement of her land and the increase of her children (49:19-21). It is prophetic of the spiritual Israel of the Christian dispensation (Rom. 2:28-29; 4:13-16; Gal. 6:16).

The passage goes on to carry out this idea more fully and to foreshadow the triumphs of the Gospel. At a signal from the Lord, the nations would bring home the scattered children of Zion (49:22-23). No power could prevent the Lord from interposing and acting as the Saviour of His people (49:24-26). He had not forgotten His covenant with them; He had not put them away. It was because of their sins they were put away; and He had still power to deliver them (50:1-3).

3. The Servant's Consecration to His Task (50:4-11). This is the Servant's response to the call of the Lord. He consecrates himself to a life of obedience and suffering, and acknowledges his reliance upon the help of the Lord. Here is foreshadowed the lowly character of Christ's earthly ministry. In v. 10 there is an anticipation of the experience of the Cross (Matt. 27:46; Luke 23:46), and in v. 11 a warning to all who would go after any human substitute for the divine Word.

II. The Suffering of the Servant (Chs. 51-53). Now we are to see the Servant accomplishing the work of salvation through suffering.

1. A Message of Encouragement (51:1-8). This



passage contains a thrice repeated call, each time beginning with an appeal to listen. It is a message of encouragement to the faithful in Israel who are seeking the Lord. They are called to look backward to their origin in Abraham: when he was only one, God called him and made him many (vs. 1-3). They are called to look forward: God will establish His righteousness and His salvation for ever (vs. 4-6). They are called to look around: in the knowledge of this everlasting salvation they need not fear the reproach of men (vs. 7-8). Throughout the passage righteousness and salvation are linked together. The salvation of Israel was to be secured by the righteousness of God (Rom. 1:16-17).

2. An Assurance of Triumph (51:9-52:12). Here are three trumpet-calls heralding the salvation that is coming to Zion, each beginning with, "Awake, awake", and each followed by a message of comfort. First, the Lord is invoked to reveal the strength of His arm for the deliverance of His people as in former times (51:9-11). He replies in words of comfort and assurance for His captive people (51:12-14), and for His Servant (51:15-16). Then Jerusalem is called to stand up out of the double calamity that has befallen her, the desolation of her land and the suffering of her people (51:17-20), for the Lord has taken the cup of His wrath out of her hand and will give it to her foes (51:21-23).

Finally, Zion is summoned to arise out of the dust, loose herself from her bonds, and put on her beautiful garments (52:1-2), for the Lord who delivered His people from former oppressions will Himself redeem them now (52:3-6). The passage goes on to picture the joy that breaks forth when heralds and watchmen announce the Lord's return to Zion to accomplish her salvation (52:7-10). In view of this

the people are summoned to prepare for their departure from Babylon by cleansing themselves and putting themselves under the protecting care of God (52:11-12).

3. The Servant as the Saviour (52:13-53:12). This is the greatest passage in the Old Testament and the climax of Messianic prophecy. It takes us to the heart of redemption and to the foot of the Cross. It shows us the Servant being exalted through his suffering to become the Saviour of the world. Nearly all the New Testament writers identify the suffering Servant of this prophecy with the Lord Jesus Christ. The whole passage falls into five distinct sections of three verses each. Each section is occupied with a special aspect of the Saviour's ministry. They may be summarized as follows:

(1) His strange career and high destiny (52:13-15). This is a summary of his whole ministry. He was to pass through suffering to exaltation. "So shall he sprinkle many nations"—cleansing them, though himself counted unclean. "Kings shall shut their mouths at him"—in silent wonder at the great change from suffering to exaltation (Rom. 15:21).

(2) His rejected ministry (53:1-3). This depicts the impression he made upon his contemporaries and their attitude toward him. He was not recognized by the spiritually blind and was judged only by his outward appearance. Yet in him, "the arm of Jehovah was revealed"; the power of God was at work through him (John 12:38; Rom. 10:16).

(3) His vicarious sufferings (53:4-6). It was thus that he appeared to those whose eyes were opened and who realized the true significance of his sufferings. Note the use of the pronouns here. He

was suffering as their substitute (Matt. 8:17; 1 Pet. 2:24-25).

(4) His voluntary death (53:7-9). Here is depicted the way of the Cross. In meek submission and self-surrender he went to his death in a sacrificial act. The essential nature of Christ's death—the fact that He consented to it—is more clearly foreshadowed in v. 7 than in any other Old Testament statement. "He was taken from prison and from judgment" (A.V.), or "By oppression and judgment he was taken away" (R.V.): both renderings describe the perversion of justice in the trial that preceded his death. The next words read thus: "As for his generation (his contemporaries), who among them considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due." The fact was not considered that he was smitten, not for his own sins, but for theirs (Acts 8:32-33).

(5) His ultimate triumph (53:10-12). There was a Divine purpose in the Servant's sufferings, and they had a glorious issue. In him God provided a sin offering for the world, and then highly exalted him. "He shall see his seed"—the new seed of Israel, the redeemed people. "He shall prolong his days"—through the Resurrection and Ascension (Rev. 1:18). "The pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand"—through his mediatorial work (Heb. 9:24-28). "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied"—in the enjoyment of his high-priestly ministry. "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many" (A.V. and R.V. marg.)—either by their knowledge of him (John 17:3), or by his knowledge of God (John 17:25-26). "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great"—by exalting him to the throne in Heaven

(Phil. 2:9-11; Matt. 28:18). Then the prophecy of the Servant closes with a further emphasis upon the voluntary nature of his humiliation (Mark 15:28; Luke 22:37).

III. The Triumph of the Servant (Chs. 54-57). These chapters bring into view the blessed results of the Servant's redeeming work.

1. The New Israel (Ch. 54). Zion is called to rejoice in the multitude of her children and to enlarge her tent so as to receive them (vs. 1-3). Paul finds this prophecy being fulfilled through the Gospel (Gal. 4:21-31). The barren one is the spiritual Israel of the New Covenant, while the married wife is Israel after the flesh. The shame and reproach of Zion are to be forgotten when she is reconciled to the Lord, for her Maker is her Husband (vs. 4-6). Her rejection was but a brief withdrawal of His favour: her restoration will be final and everlasting (vs. 7-10).

Then the glory of Zion's restoration appears in the new city which the Lord declares He will make of her. He describes her outward splendour (vs. 11-12), her inward peace (vs. 13-14), and her perfect security (vs. 15-17). The two figures used in this chapter to represent redeemed Zion appear again in the beatific vision of the glorified church in Revelation 21, where the holy city, new Jerusalem (v. 2), is also called the bride, the Lamb's wife (vs. 9-10).

2. Salvation Free for All (Ch. 55). An invitation is now given to all who realize their need to come and enjoy the spiritual blessings of salvation which are now offered freely (vs. 1-2). The Lord promises to extend to them the blessings of the covenant made with David. These blessings, it is implied, have been secured by the work of the Serv-

ant, and other nations are called to share them with Israel (vs. 3-5). The only requirement is that they turn from their wicked ways and seek the Lord, who will abundantly pardon (vs. 6-7). His way of accomplishing redemption transcends all the ideas of men (vs. 8-9). His promise of salvation is declared in His word, which has power to fulfil itself (vs. 10-11). The result will be a new life for men, the removal of the curse from the earth, and everlasting glory to God (vs. 12-13).

Throughout this chapter there is a combination of spiritual and material blessings. The work of the Servant creates a new spiritual order as a basis for a new material order. The new spiritual creation which Christ introduced by His first coming awaits the triumphant consummation of salvation at His second coming (Rom. 8:18-23). The whole passage is pervaded with a sense of joy and peace.

3. The Conditions of Blessing (Chs. 56-57). The prophet now applies to his own time the lessons of the preceding visions. There was a very great contrast between the state of Israel then and the new Israel of the future. In view of the salvation that was "near to come" and the righteousness that was "to be revealed" (56:1), the nation was called upon to fulfil certain conditions in the meantime.

(1) Its true religious attitude was to be manifested in the keeping of the Sabbath. Special blessing was promised to those who observed the Sabbath and thus showed their loyalty to the Covenant (56:1-8). The Sabbath was the distinctive sign to the world of Israel's special relation to God (Lev. 19:3, 30; 26:2). Profaning the Sabbath obscured Israel's witness to the nations, and was one of the reasons for the judgment of the Exile (2 Chron. 36:21; Ezek. 20:12-13, 19-20).

(2) Prophets who were blind to the signs of the times and gave no warning to the people, and rulers who indulged themselves and neglected their duty to the people, were to be visited with judgment and punishment (56:9-12). There were many false prophets in Israel and rulers who thought only of their own interests. Under such leaders the righteous were perishing and none were concerned about it (57:1-2).

(3) Apostates and idolaters were to be punished and removed from among the people. It was the evil of idolatry, shamelessly carried on, that led to the judgment of the captivity (57:3-10). Because of the fear of man, Judah had given up the fear of the Lord; and yet the Lord had refrained for a long time from inflicting the judgment (57:11-13).

(4) All stumbling blocks were to be removed out of the way of God's people. The Holy One Himself would come and dwell with the contrite and humble, and would give them new life (57:14-15). He would remove His judgment from them, and heal them and give them peace (57:16-19). Then the section is brought to a close with another solemn warning to the wicked (57:20-21).

### THE REALIZATION OF REDEMPTION

(Chs. 58-66)

The preceding section, which brought into view the great Servant of the Lord, "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ". The present section, which closes the book, describes "the glories that should follow them" (1 Pet. 1:11). It deals with the blessedness of the redeemed people in the Messianic kingdom, and brings into view the new heavens and the new earth in which redemption culminates.

I. The Divine Intervention (Chs. 58-59). These chapters continue to deal with the condition of Israel in the prophet's day. They show that nothing could save the nation but the intervention of the Lord Himself.

1. The Failure of Israel (58:1-59:15). God summons the prophet to declare unto His people their utter moral and spiritual failure, and to denounce their formality of worship and wickedness of life (58:1-5). True religion is showing compassion to the poor and needy and kindness to one's neighbour (58:6-12), and honouring God's holy day and giving Him due worship. If they do these things the Lord will reward them with spiritual blessing and earthly prosperity, the heritage of Jacob their father (58:13-14).

The prophet then takes up the message and declares that their sufferings had come upon them, not because the Lord could not help, but because of their moral corruption (59:1-8), which had separated them from Him and brought darkness and misery upon them (59:9-15). These last verses of the passage take the form of a confession of sin put into the mouth of the people, thus marking their repentance.

2. The Advent of the Lord (59:15-21). A new section begins in the middle of v. 15: "And Jehovah saw it"—the repentance of His people—, and it displeased Him that the penitents were still under oppression. When there was no one to help them, God undertook to save them Himself and to deliver them from their oppression (vs. 15-18). A Redeemer would come to Zion for those who should turn from their sin. He would make His covenant with them, and His Spirit should abide upon them for ever (vs. 19-21). This prophecy has been fulfilled by the

Lord Jesus Christ in the transactions of the Cross and Pentecost.

II. The Divine Kingdom (Chs. 60-61). These chapters contain a glorious picture of the ultimate realization of God's purpose in the redemption of Zion.

1. The New Jerusalem (Ch. 60). With the coming of the Redeemer to Zion (59:20), a new age dawns upon her and she is called to arise. The light of the glory of the Lord should shine upon her, and all the nations should be blessed thereby (vs. 1-3). Then there follows a description of her great enlargement and her manifold blessedness. Her sons and daughters should gather to her, bringing the wealth of the nations (vs. 4-9). Her walls should be built up by foreigners, and in through her open gates should come the treasure and the glory of the nations to beautify the sanctuary of God. The sons of her former foes should pay her homage, and recognize her to be "The city of Jehovah, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel" (vs. 10-14).

Instead of being shunned and hated, she should be abundantly provided with the wealth of the nations, and peace and righteousness should rule in her (vs. 15-18). The presence of the Lord in her midst should be her light and her glory for ever, and all her people should be righteous. The Lord Himself would bring this to pass in due time (vs. 19-21). This chapter is to be interpreted in the light of Heb. 12:22-24 and Rev. 21:9-27. It is the spiritual and heavenly city that is foreshadowed here. The description is given in terms of the old Zion, but it manifestly transcends everything earthly.

2. The New Blessedness (Ch. 61). Here the Servant speaks again. He begins by announcing his mission of salvation (vs. 1-3). Jesus took His text



from this passage in the sermon at Nazareth, and declared that it was being fulfilled in His day (Luke 4:17-21). It foretold the Christian age of grace and salvation, which was then beginning. The Servant goes on to describe the new order resulting from his work in terms of the old order. The desolated land should be restored and become fruitful again, and the people should be recognized as priests of God among the nations. He would make an everlasting covenant with them, and they should exercise a ministry of blessing among the nations (vs. 4-9).

Then the Servant utters a song of joy and praise to the Lord because of the salvation which he has been enabled to accomplish. It would be like the renewal of nature in spring time—a new life of righteousness and praise for all the world (vs. 10-11). Here again, as in chap. 35, spiritual and material blessings are combined.

III. A Summary of Redemption (Chs. 62-66). These chapters review the Lord's redemptive work in a comprehensive survey. They show that redemption is accomplished in answer to the prayer of His people.

1. The Lord's Purpose (62:1-63:6). Here the Lord speaks, taking up the Servant's last statement in ch. 61. He begins by declaring that He will not rest till He has made the righteousness and salvation of Zion manifest to the world. Then addressing her directly, He promises to give her a new name, to restore her to Himself, and to rejoice over her (62:1-5). He has set prophets as watchmen upon her walls to keep reminding Him of His purpose till it is accomplished, and He gives her an assurance that He will no longer let her be despoiled by her foes (62:6-9). This encourages the prophet to renew the call uttered before (40:9-11), and to urge

the exiles to depart from captivity and prepare the way for the coming salvation (62:10-12).

In order to accomplish the salvation of Zion, the Lord will bring vengeance upon her foes (63:1-6). The vision described here is a vivid and dramatic picture of a warrior in blood-stained garments returning victorious from a conflict with Edom, the inveterate foe of Israel. It should be interpreted in the light of such New Testament passages as John 12:31 and Col. 2:14-15. It is a pictorial representation of the Redeemer triumphing through the Cross over Satan and the principalities and powers of the spiritual world. It has had its fulfilment in the glorious ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ as seen from the heavenly side and as described in Rev. 5:6-14.

2. Israel's Prayer (63:7-64:12). The prophet now puts a prayer into the mouth of captive and exiled Israel, which includes thanksgiving for the Lord's mercy in redeeming them from Egypt and taking care of them in the wilderness (63:7-9), confession of their rebellion which turned the Lord against them so that they longed for the deliverances of the days of Moses (63:10-14), an earnest supplication to the Lord to "look down from heaven" upon His people in their present affliction (63:15-19), and a passionate cry that He would "rend the heavens and come down" for their deliverance from the pitiful and helpless condition which their iniquities have brought upon them (64:1-7). Then comes a humble, contrite, and plaintive appeal that the Lord would not withhold His mercy from them any longer (64:8-12).

3. The Lord's Answer (Ch. 65). In answer to the prayer of Israel, the Lord declares that those who have rejected His gracious invitation and pro-

voked Him by persisting in their abominable idolatries are to be punished and destined to destruction (vs. 1-7). Those who have been faithful to Him—"my servants"—are to be saved. As the true seed of Jacob, the chosen remnant of Judah, they are to inherit the restored land of blessing (vs. 8-10). But those who have forsaken the Lord for false gods and do not respond to His call are to be given over to destruction (vs. 11-12). A final separation is to be made between the two classes, and their diverse fate is drawn out in five striking contrasts (vs. 13-16).

Then the Lord announces His creation of new heavens and a new earth, in which there will be a new Jerusalem for His people, where He and they will rejoice together and there shall be no sound of mourning (vs. 17-19). An idealized description is given of the conditions to be realized in the new Jerusalem—length of days and fulness of life (v. 20), enjoyment of the fruits of their own work (vs. 21-23), immediate answer to prayer, indicating complete agreement with the will of God (v. 24), and peace and harmony in the whole creation (v. 25).

The ideal here foretold appears in many forms in the New Testament—"the times of restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21), the deliverance of creation from its bondage at "the revealing of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19-21), and the "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13). This prophecy is the Old Testament background of the vision the Apostle John describes in Rev. 21:1-7.

4. The Final Message (Ch. 66). The book closes with another description of the final issues of redemption. Addressing first those who thought of

building a temple to the Lord, He declares that He will be worshipped in spirit and in truth. It is not the formal act but the contrite spirit of the worshipper that is pleasing in His sight. Sacrifices without that are an abomination to Him, and He rejects them (vs. 1-4).

Then a word of comfort is addressed to the believing remnant in Israel—"ye that tremble at his word". Their brethren who had persecuted them should be put to shame and their enemies should be discomfited (vs. 5-6). Out of Zion's travail and sorrow the Lord would bring a new Israel into being (vs. 7-9). The prophet then calls upon all who love Jerusalem and sympathize with her in her present suffering to rejoice with her in her glorious future, because of the peace the Lord would give her in her inward life and the enlargement that should come to her from the nations of the world (vs. 10-14).

The judgment by which the Lord was to prepare the way for Zion's redemption is now more fully described (vs. 15-17). The course which Israel's history was to take is foreshadowed. The Lord would save a remnant from the judgment and send them out to declare His glory to the nations of the world that had not heard of Him, so that they might come and worship Him together with Israel in His holy mountain (vs. 18-21). Here we have a prophetic anticipation of Christ's commission to His apostles to evangelize the world, and of the breaking down of the middle wall of partition between the Jews and the Gentiles.

In the midst of the new heavens and the new earth which God was to create, the new Israel should occupy an eternal place as the centre of worship to be offered to the Lord continually (vs. 22-23). Then His warning to the wicked, which has been uttered

twice before (48:22; 57:21), is given for the last time, with an added intensity, to end the prophecy and to emphasize the fact that the redemption which it foretells implies a background of eternal judgment for the impenitent transgressors (v. 24).

### THE MESSAGE OF ISAIAH

The key-note of Isaiah's message is found in the account of his call (ch. 6). He was given then a majestic vision of the holiness of God, and this feature stands out in the book as the supreme attribute in the Divine character. To Isaiah, the Lord is "the Holy One of Israel". He uses the title thirty times, and it is spread equally over all parts of the book. It occurs three times in the Psalms (71:22; 78:41; 89:18) and twice in Jeremiah (50:29; 51:5), and nowhere else in all the Scriptures.

The Holy One is the "Redeemer" of His people. This name is applied to the Lord thirteen times (41:14; 43:14; 44:6, 24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7, 26; 54: 5, 8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16), and the name "Saviour" seven times (43:3, 11; 45:15, 21; 49:26; 60:16; 63:8). Again and again the announcement is made to Israel that God will come and "save" them. This promise is given in the first part of the book (35:4), and it is more fully drawn out in the last part (40:9-10; 59:20). It has been literally fulfilled in the Incarnation and earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Isaiah has more to say about the person and work of the promised Redeemer than all the other prophets put together. In the first part of the book, there are Messianic passages in which divine and human features are blended together. The most notable of these is the picture of the King in 9:6-7,

who was to be raised up and reign upon the throne of David. In the last part of the book, the figure of the Servant of the Lord appears. He is seen most fully in ch. 53, where the prophecies regarding him come to a head as he reaches his triumph through suffering. This is the special and peculiar contribution which Isaiah makes to the prophetic development of the plan of redemption.

The word "servant" occurs twenty times in chs. 40-53, and always in the singular number. After that it occurs eleven times, and always in the plural. When the word is used the first time, it means the whole nation of Israel (41:8-9). Afterwards, it is the chosen remnant of Israel, or Israel redeemed (44:1-5, 21-22). Finally, it becomes an individual who rises out of Israel and represents the redeemed people in his own person, and, by himself secures their salvation (52:13; 53:11).

Thus the idea of the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah is like a pyramid in three sections. In the light of the New Testament, it is seen to be as follows. The basis is the nation as a whole, or Israel after the flesh (Rom. 9:6-8). The middle section is the redeemed remnant of Israel, or spiritual Israel (Rom. 2:28-29; 4:11-12), "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16). The summit is the Person of the Redeemer Himself, "the Servant", who now proceeds to gather other "servants" around Him to form the new Israel. In this figure lies the principle on which the redemption described in Isaiah is wrought out, the identification of the Redeemer with the redeemed people. It foreshadows the fundamental spiritual principle of New Testament Christianity, the union of Christ with His Church.

## THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

JEREMIAH stands next to Isaiah as one of the two greatest prophets. He belonged to a priestly family in Anathoth, about three miles north east of Jerusalem. He was called to the prophetic office when quite young in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign (626 B.C.). He carried on his ministry in Judah through the remaining eighteen years of that reign, and through the reigns of Jehoiakim (608-597) and Zedekiah (597-586), until the fall of Jerusalem and the captivity of the nation, a period of at least forty years (1:1-3).

These were the last decades of the Jewish monarchy. The history of the time is recorded in 2 Kings 22-25 and 2 Chron. 34-36. Josiah made an earnest attempt at reformation, but the corruption of the nation, due largely to the wicked reign of Manasseh (15:4) which had extended over more than half a century (695-640) had become so deep and widespread that the efforts of its last good king could not save it from destruction. The Babylonian conquest and captivity, foretold already by Isaiah, were fast hastening on.

Jeremiah was called to warn the nation of the impending judgment and to prepare the people for it. He saw it coming; he realized its nature; and he lived through it. He saw the city and the Temple destroyed and the nation taken away into exile. His lot was a lonely one, and his life was one of peculiar sorrow and suffering. Although a man of affectionate nature, he was forbidden to marry, and was charged to take no share in the social life of the

community (16:2, 5, 8). He was to be a sign to the nation, and his mode of life was to reinforce his message. Though of a timid and shrinking spirit, he had unusual strength of character and power of endurance. He had to bear the reproaches of priests and prophets, and harsh treatment at the hands of the people, the princes, and the king. His sensitive and sympathetic nature felt keenly the sadness of the message he had to deliver.

Jeremiah lived a kind of Messianic life, and foreshadowed, in his own person, the suffering Servant of the Lord of whom Isaiah had spoken. After the fall of Jerusalem he was taken down to Egypt by the Jews who fled thither, and to them he delivered his last message. Tradition says that they stoned him to death.

The Book of Jeremiah, which is the longest of the prophetic books, contains considerable history, and the story of the prophet's experiences is also interwoven in it. Its main theme is the judgment of the Lord in the downfall of the kingdom of Judah. The central event upon which its prophecies converge is the capture and destruction of Jerusalem. It falls into three main divisions. The first division (Chs. 1-33) contains the bulk of Jeremiah's messages, which are prophecies of Judah's downfall. The second division (Chs. 34-45) is mainly autobiographic and historical, and contains the story of Judah's downfall. The third division (Chs. 46-52) deals with the nations of the world around. Thus we get the following outline of the book:

- I. Prophecies of Judah's Downfall—Chs. 1-33
  1. Judah's Downfall Approaching (Chs. 1-6)
  2. Judah's Downfall Inevitable (Chs. 7-20)
  3. Judah's Downfall Imminent (Chs. 21-33)



- II. The Story of Judah's Downfall—Chs. 34-45
  - 1. The Siege and Fall of the City (Chs. 34-39)
  - 2. After the Fall of the City (Chs. 40-45)
- III. Prophecies Concerning the Nations—  
Chs. 46-52

## PART I

The first division of the book (Chs. 1-33) contains the greater part of Jeremiah's prophecies and covers almost the whole of his ministry. It takes us from his call in the reign of Josiah, through the reign of Jehoiakim, and up to the eve of the fall of Jerusalem at the end of Zedekiah's reign. The prophet's messages during this period fall into three progressive groups, corresponding to these three reigns. The first group of prophecies (Chs. 1-6) belongs to the reign of Josiah, and contains appeals for Judah's repentance with warnings of her approaching downfall. The second group (Chs. 7-20) contains prophecies delivered in the reign of Jehoiakim, in which Jeremiah warned the nation that her persistent sin made her downfall inevitable. The third group (Chs. 21-33) belongs mainly to the reign of Zedekiah, and contains the prophecies delivered during the siege of the city, in which Jeremiah declared that Judah's downfall was imminent and that the only way of salvation now was to yield to Nebuchadnezzar.

### JUDAH'S DOWNFALL APPROACHING (Chs. 1-6)

These chapters contain a summary of the earliest messages of Jeremiah. They were delivered during the latter part of the reign of Josiah (639-608 B.C.)

when the prophet was probably assisting the king in his efforts at reform. His call came in the year after the reformation began (2 Chron. 34:3), and the discovery of the Book of the Law in the course of repairing the Temple would give special force to his preaching (2 Chron. 34:14; 2 Kings 22:8).

1. The Call of the Prophet (Ch. 1). After an introduction to the book as a whole (vs. 1-3), Jeremiah tells how he was called to the office of prophet and how he shrank from it at first because of his youth (vs. 4-6), and how the Lord encouraged him and empowered him for his task, which was to be concerned mainly with judgment and destruction—"to pluck up, and to break down, and to destroy, and to overthrow"—, and in a lesser degree with mercy and restoration—"to build and to plant" (vs. 7-10). Jeremiah's prophetic task was different from that of Isaiah. He was appointed "a prophet unto the nations". He lived in an age of crisis and transition in the Divine government of mankind, and he was called to expound its spiritual significance for the covenant people of God.

Two confirmatory signs were given him. One was a vision of mercy and grace. The almond-tree was the first to blossom out in the spring, and so it gave promise of the brighter days that lay beyond the winter of the nation's present state (vs. 11-12). The name of the tree provides a play on words in the original, which may be shown in this way: "I see the rod of a wake-tree". "Thou hast well seen: for I am awake over my word to perform it."

The other sign was a vision of judgment and punishment. The boiling caldron, tilted "from the north", not "toward the north" (A.V.), indicated that an invasion should come pouring down from the north over all the land and should attack Jerusalem

and the cities of Judah for their wickedness in forsaking the Lord (vs. 13-16). Because of this, the Lord now commanded Jeremiah to arise and declare His message to them and not to be dismayed. Though all classes should oppose him—the kings, the princes, the priests, and the people—, yet the Lord would make him strong to withstand them and would be with him through his task (vs. 17-19).

The great truth impressed upon the young priest when he was thus called to become a prophet was the sovereignty of God in his life. Before his birth he had been fore-ordained and predestined for this office. For the fulfilment of his task he would be guided and directed, protected and empowered, by the Lord. The almighty power of the sovereign God, for whom Jeremiah himself declared at a later time in his life that there was nothing too hard (32:17), made out of this hesitating, trembling man “a fortified city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls”, among His rebellious people (1:18; 6:27; 15:20).

2. An Impeachment of Judah (2:1-3:5). The nation is charged with the sin of turning away from the redeeming love of God. Her early devotion to the Lord is contrasted with her subsequent ingratitude and unfaithfulness (2:1-8). The people have been doubly guilty: they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living water, and they have turned to other gods and hewed out for themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water (2:9-13). Punishment has already fallen upon them, for it is an evil and bitter thing that they have forsaken the Lord their God for an alliance with Egypt or Assyria (2:14-19). The prophet then enlarges upon the stubborn waywardness and the impenitent idolatries of the nation and her refusal to receive correction. Shame and confusion should follow her alliance with

Egypt as it followed her alliance with Assyria (2:20-37). Judah's guilt was like that of an unfaithful wife (3:1-5).

3. An Appeal to Return (3:6-4:2). Judah did not take warning from the punishment which God had meted out to the northern kingdom, "backsliding Israel". Judah is called Israel's "treacherous sister", because her reformation under Josiah was not sincere. She did not return unto the Lord "with her whole heart, but feignedly" (3:6-10). Israel had been in exile for a century since the overthrow of the northern kingdom by Assyria in 721 B.C.

And now the prophet was commanded to utter a tender appeal to the backsliding children of Northern Israel to return to the Lord, for He was merciful and would not keep anger for ever. He would take them, "one of a city, and two of a family", and bring them to Zion (3:11-15). This is Jeremiah's first reference to "the remnant", which has already appeared in Isaiah, and to the individualizing method by which the new Israel was to be gathered. Then comes a description of the blessings that should follow their return to the Lord (3:16-18). It foreshadows the spiritual worship of the Christian dispensation.

The Lord reverts again to Israel's ingratitude in turning away from Him, and makes another appeal to them to return (3:19-22). The prophet puts a prayer of confession upon their lips (3:22-25), and the Lord answers that if the conditions of true repentance are fulfilled by Israel, then the nations of the world shall own Him and be blessed by Him (4:1-2). The whole section containing the appeal to Israel to return is a revelation of the compassionate heart of God. He is wounded by the apostasy of His covenant people.

4. Announcement of Coming Judgment (4:3-6:23). The prophet was now compelled to announce that a judgment was fast coming upon the guilty and impenitent nation.

(1) The judgment determined (4:3-31). After a warning to Judah and Jerusalem to repent (vs. 3-4), a destructive invasion is announced which the Lord would bring from the north. A destroyer of nations was on his way to desolate the land, and all the leaders should be dismayed—the king, the princes, the priests, and the prophets (vs. 5-9). Jeremiah interposes with a sigh of protest to the Lord because He had allowed the people to be deceived by the false prophets (v. 10; cf. 14:13; 23:16-17). Then he goes on with a further description of the character of the coming evil, which the wickedness of Jerusalem was bringing upon herself (vs. 11-18). The passage is a prediction of the Babylonian invasions under Nebuchadnezzar.

A cry of anguish breaks out from the tender and compassionate heart of the prophet as he sees the calamity that was coming upon his people (vs. 19-22), and he goes on to liken the desolation it should cause to the chaos at the time of the creation of the world (vs. 23-26). This devastation of Judah had been purposed by the Lord, and it could not be averted by her intrigues with foreign allies (vs. 27-31). But the judgment would be tempered with mercy, for a remnant should be left: "yet will I not make a full end" (v. 27).

(2) The judgment justified (ch. 5). The moral condition of the people made it necessary. God would pardon if one good and true man could be found in Jerusalem. But the search failed, both among the common people (vs. 1-3) and among the great (vs. 4-6). The Lord could not pardon, for

there was universal moral corruption in the nation (vs. 7-9). A summons is given to the enemy to attack and destroy her for her treachery to the Lord. He would make His words in the prophet's mouth come to pass as a devouring judgment (vs. 10-18). When they should enquire the cause of this, they were to be told that their punishment corresponded with their sin (v. 19).

Their sin consisted in having no heart to worship the Lord. They had no consciousness of God, whose power set bounds to the mighty waves of the sea. They did not fear the Lord, who gave them the rains in their season (vs. 20-24). Among them were wicked men who practised iniquity and deceit; the result was the aggrandisement of the rich and the oppression of the poor. The Lord must be avenged on such a nation as this (vs. 25-29). All classes were equally guilty, and were running into a destructive judgment which they would have no power to avert (vs. 30-31). And still the note of mercy continues to be sounded in the midst of the announcement of judgment: "I will not make a full end with you" (v. 18).

(3 The judgment described (ch. 6). This chapter begins with a renewed description in vivid terms of the enemy's approach to Jerusalem and the siege of the city (vs. 1-6). And again her wickedness is declared to be the reason for the judgment that is to break over her (vs. 7-8). It should fall upon her people unsparingly, because they listened to no warning, but suffered themselves to be confirmed in their covetousness and shamelessness by false prophets and wicked priests who deceived them by saying, "Peace, peace;" when there was no peace (vs. 9-15).

The Lord's kindly appeal was disobeyed and His

solemn warning disregarded (vs. 16-17). Therefore He would bring evil upon this people, and the formal offerings which they brought Him should not avert the judgment (vs. 18-21). It should be executed by a distant people coming from the north who were cruel and had no mercy. The prophet gives a vivid picture of the terror they should cause (vs. 22-26). The chapter closes with a statement of the object and the result of the prophet's discourses. The Lord had set him as "a trier" among the people—a tester of metals—to try their ways, and he had found them all to be dross (vs. 27-30).

#### JUDAH'S DOWNFALL INEVITABLE

(Chs. 7-20)

These chapters belong to the wicked reign of Jehoiakim, a selfish, godless, and perverse character (608-597 B.C.). Josiah had been defeated and slain by the Egyptians at the battle of Megiddo (2 Chron. 35:20-24), and his son Jehoahaz or Shallum, after reigning for three months, was taken to Egypt, where he died. Jehoiakim, another son, was then placed upon the throne, and under him the apostasy of the nation became deeper than ever. Judgment now came hurrying on. In the third year of his reign Nebuchadnezzar succeeded to the throne of Babylon after overthrowing Egypt at Carchemish, and made his first attack upon Jerusalem (Dan. 1:1). Jeremiah's messages during this period may be gathered around four themes: the Temple, the Covenant, the drought, and the potter.

1. False Trust in the Temple (Chs. 7-10). This seems to be one continuous address. It was delivered in the gate of the Temple, probably when the people of Judah and Jerusalem were flocking into

it during the time of grave public anxiety that followed the tragic death of Josiah (cf. 7:1-2 and 26:1-2).

(1) Sins of worship (7:1-20). The people were rebuked for putting their trust in the formal services of the Temple while they went on in ways of injustice, oppression, and wickedness. It was only by amending their ways that they could escape being cast out of the land (vs. 1-11). Let them remember what the Lord did to the tabernacle at Shiloh. He would do the same to the present house because they had refused to repent of their wickedness (vs. 12-15). The inward conflict in the prophet's soul is reflected in the prohibition which the Lord proceeds to lay upon him, in forbidding him to intercede for the people, for His wrath was to be poured out upon them (vs. 16-20; cf. 11:14, 14:11).

(2) Apostasy and idolatry (7:21—8:3). The system of worship which the Lord gave Israel after redeeming them from Egypt was not intended to be an end in itself, but to set them apart as His people: the keeping of His commandments was the end in view (7:21-23). But they had gone on in their stubborn way and had ignored the words of the prophets whom He kept sending them, "rising up early and sending them" (7:24-26). This is Jeremiah's characteristic description of God's activity through the prophets. The expression is used only by him. It is another revelation of the deep concern in the heart of God for His wayward people. They had even brought their idolatrous abominations into His house and offered human sacrifices in Topheth in the valley of the son of Hinnom. Therefore it should be called "The valley of Slaughter" (7:27-34). Then the Lord would make the joys of life to cease and death should be chosen rather than life (8:1-3).



(3) Backsliding perpetual (8:4-17). The prophet mourns the fact that the sin of the people was incurable and the judgment inevitable: they have "slidden back by a perpetual backsliding" (vs. 4-7). Their religious leaders, the prophets and the priests, had dealt falsely with them: "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (vs. 8-12). Then comes a further description of the coming judgment (vs. 13-17).

(4) Judgment necessary (8:18-9:22). Jeremiah pours out his heart in lamentation for the desperate state of Zion and the sins that have made the judgment necessary (8:18-9:6). The Lord replies to his lament, declaring that He has no choice but to punish them, and expressing His own grief at the judgment He was bringing upon the land (9:7-11). There was a moral necessity for the judgment in the fact that the people had forsaken the Lord and followed Baalim (9:12-16). Then the Lord called for a lamentation on the part of the people in Zion (9:17-22).

(5) The majesty of Jehovah (9:23-10:25). The prophecy of judgment having reached its climax, the prophet now sets forth the glory and majesty of the Lord. In Him the people should have put their trust, and in Him they would have found their salvation. He exercises lovingkindness and righteousness in the earth. He is impartial in judgment. He will visit the same punishment upon Israel as upon the uncircumcised nations, "for all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart" (9:23-26).

In the light of the greatness of the Lord, the God of Israel, the folly of idolatry is exposed (10:1-5). There is none like unto Him. He is the King of

the nations. He is the true God, the living God (10:6-10). His almighty power is shown in that it was He who made the heavens and the earth, not the gods of the nations. The Creator of the universe is the God of Israel (10:11-16). Then Jeremiah bewails the inevitable desolation that the Lord is bringing on the land and the cities of Judah (10:17-22), and ends with a humble appeal to Him in behalf of the people to turn His wrath upon their foes (10:23-25).

2. The Broken Covenant (Chs. 11-13). The prophet was commissioned to proclaim throughout Judah the conditions of the Covenant. This would have special significance because of the discovery of the Book of the Law when the Temple was being repaired in the days of Josiah. The frequent use of the expression "this covenant" emphasizes the message (2 Kings 23:3; 2 Chron. 34:30).

(1) Judah's faithlessness (11:1-17). The men of Judah were reminded of the curse attached to the covenant which the Lord made with their fathers when He redeemed them from Egypt (vs. 1-5). Their fathers had been false to this covenant, and now the people of Judah had broken it and gone back to the old idolatries (vs. 6-10). Therefore the Lord would bring evil upon them, and the gods whom they worshipped should not save them in the time of their trouble (vs. 11-13). At this point the prophet was again forbidden to pray for the people, for punishment must follow such wickedness (vs. 14-17).

(2) A judgment on Anathoth (11:18-23). Jeremiah discovered that the men of his native town had laid a plot against his life. He appealed to the Lord about it, and a special judgment was pronounced upon the inhabitants of Anathoth. They should have

no share in the remnant left after the judgment upon the nation.

(3) The prophet's perplexity (ch. 12). Thinking of the treachery of his fellow-townsmen, Jeremiah made an earnest appeal to God in wonder at the prosperity of the wicked, and was told that greater trials still awaited him (vs. 1-6). The Lord went on to declare that He had forsaken His heritage and given it over to the destroyers (vs. 7-13). The neighbouring nations who had corrupted and despoiled Judah were to go into captivity and exile with her, and if they learned of the Lord from her, they should share with her the blessing of the restoration (vs. 14-17).

(4) Symbols of judgment (ch. 13). The Lord now gave Jeremiah two signs. One was for himself, the emblem of the girdle, marred and destroyed by being buried at the Euphrates, illustrating the ruin and humiliation of the nation as God's covenant people (vs. 1-11). The other was for the people, the parable of the broken wine bottles, setting forth the confusion and dismay of the inhabitants of the land when the Lord's judgment should fall upon them (vs. 12-14). The prophet follows this with another appeal to Judah to repent of her pride (vs. 15-19). But her wickedness was inveterate and her humiliation was surely coming (vs. 20-27).

3. The Meaning of the Drought (Chs. 14-17). A drought had fallen upon the land of Judah at that time. According to the threatenings of the Mosaic Law, this was a Divine judgment upon apostasy (Deut. 28:23-24).

(1) A controversy with the Lord (chs. 14-15). After a graphic description of the effects of the drought (14:1-6), there is recorded a remarkable controversy between the prophet and the Lord.

Jeremiah makes appeal after appeal to God not to cast off and destroy His people, and the Lord answers with a solemn and reiterated refusal.

The prophet first pleads that, though they have sinned, the Lord should not reject them because they are called by His name (14:7-9); and the Lord answers that, on account of their persistent apostasy, He cannot accept them (14:10-12). Then Jeremiah points out that the prophets had misled the people, and the Lord replies that the prophets had spoken lies in His name and should perish in the very calamities which they declared would never come (14:13-16), and goes on to put a lament into the mouth of Jeremiah, which seems like the germ of the Book of Lamentations (14:17-18).

Finally the prophet makes a contrite confession on behalf of the people and appeals to God on the ground of His own glory (14:19-22). The Lord answers that even Moses and Samuel could not turn Him from His purpose with His people. "I will cause them to be tossed to and fro among all the kingdoms of the earth." They had gone so far in sin that the judgment must be thorough. God was "weary with repenting" (15:1-9).

This controversy had a profound effect upon Jeremiah. He broke out in a personal lamentation of deep anguish, and the Lord reassured him that the trial and suffering through which he was going should be for his good (15:10-14). The prophet continued his complaint, and the Lord again assured him that He would protect him and deliver him from his foes (15:15-21).

(2) A new charge to the prophet (ch. 16). Jeremiah was now called to a life of peculiar asceticism and special separation in view of the coming judgment. He was commanded not to marry, for chil-

dren should die grievous deaths (vs. 1-4). He was to stand aloof from the lives of the people. He was forbidden to take part with them in mourning, for God had taken away His grace and mercy, and they should die, great and small alike, without lamentation. He was also to take no part in their mirth, for God would cause the voice of joy and gladness to cease (vs. 5-9).

When they should enquire why the Lord had pronounced all this evil upon them, he was to declare that they had sinned more than their fathers, and He would show them no favour (vs. 10-13). In days to come the Egyptian bondage would seem to be a light thing compared with that which they should suffer in "the land of the north", that is, in the Babylonian captivity, for in it God would "recompense their iniquity and their sin double" (vs. 14-18; cf. Isa. 40:2). In the midst of this passage is a gleam of hope in the promise, "I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers." At last the prophet expresses his confidence in the Lord in view of the judgment, and the Lord replies that it will result in His own glory (vs. 19-21).

(3) The sin of Judah (17:1-18). The special sin that is denounced here is that of idolatry. It had become rooted deep in the heart of the nation and was indelible. Hence severe chastisement was necessary (vs. 1-4). Trust in man leads to desolation and destruction: trust in God leads to prosperity and security (vs. 5-8). "The heart is deceitful above all things; and it is exceedingly corrupt; who can know it?" But God searches the heart, and will punish all wicked devices (vs. 9-11). Then the prophet utters a prayer to God as the hope of Israel, affirming his faith, and appealing for the vindication of

his prophetic ministry and the destruction of those who oppose him (vs. 12-18).

(4) A warning about the Sabbath (17:19-27). The prophet was commanded to stand in the gate of Jerusalem and utter God's warning about the Sabbath. Upon its observance depended the prosperity and continuance of the nation. It was a sign and witness of the Covenant (Deut. 5:15; Ezek. 20:12, 20).

4. Lessons From the Potter (Chs. 18-20). These chapters contain incidents which illustrate one of the methods used by the prophets to enforce their messages, the use of symbolic actions.

(1) The potter's clay (ch. 18). Jeremiah was sent down to the potter's house, and watched him working in the clay and remaking a vessel that had broken under his hands (vs. 1-4). Out of this incident came a message to Israel about the Lord's sovereignty among the nations. When a nation hinders God's purpose by resistance to His will, it may have another chance of being moulded by His hand if it repents (vs. 5-10). On this ground the prophet is bidden to make another appeal to the people of Judah and Jerusalem; but they reply with defiance, and the Lord renews His announcement of desolating judgment (vs. 11-17). The delivery of this message stirred up new opposition to the prophet, and he appealed to the Lord against his persecutors (vs. 18-23).

(2) The potter's bottle (chs. 19-20). Jeremiah was commissioned to buy a potter's earthen bottle and take a deputation of the elders to the valley of the son of Hinnom, which was on the south of Jerusalem, and proclaim the judgment that God would bring upon them because they had been offering human sacrifices there—they had "filled this place

with the blood of innocents". The day should come when the valley's name would be changed to "The valley of Slaughter" (19:1-9; cf. 7:31-34). Then the prophet was to break the bottle as a sign that the nation should be broken to pieces so that it could not be made whole again (19:10-13).

When Jeremiah returned to the city he repeated this prophecy of the coming judgment in the court of the Temple (19:14-15), and he was smitten and arrested by Pashur, the warden of the Temple, and put in the stocks (20:1-2). When released the next day, he uttered a special prediction of judgment upon Pashur and his house (20:3-6). Then he poured out his heart to God in an agonized lamentation, which passes from complaint about his lot (20:7-10) to confidence in God (20:11-13), and ends with an outburst of passionate grief (20:14-18). This prayer is a revelation of the conflict of feelings that went on continually in Jeremiah's heart.

#### JUDAH'S DOWNFALL IMMINENT (Chs. 21-33)

This section belongs to the reign of Zedekiah (597-586 B.C.). Jehoiakim had lost his life in Nebuchadnezzar's second attack upon Jerusalem and was succeeded by his son Coniah or Jehoiachin, who after a reign of three months was taken to Babylon with ten thousand of the best classes of the people. He was succeeded by his uncle Zedekiah, the youngest son of Josiah, a weak, vacillating, and faithless ruler. He exhausted the patience of Nebuchadnezzar by joining Egypt in a coalition against Babylon, and brought the Chaldean monarch against Jerusalem for the third time. He came now in fierce

wrath, and the judgment of the Babylonian captivity finally fell upon the guilty nation.

1. The Shadow of the Judgment (Chs. 21-24). There is a considerable gap at this point in the collection of Jeremiah's prophecies. These chapters contain announcements which the prophet uttered during the final siege of Jerusalem. They were occasioned by an enquiry which Zedekiah sent to Jeremiah when Nebuchadnezzar's attack began. His reply announced the nation's doom, and he followed it with denunciations of the wicked kings and false prophets whose evil-doing had brought it on. In the midst of these announcements comes a gleam of Messianic hope.

(1) The coming disaster (ch. 21). When Nebuchadnezzar began the final siege of Jerusalem, Zedekiah sent a deputation asking Jeremiah to enquire of the Lord for them (vs. 1-2). He replied that the Lord Himself would fight against Jerusalem and deliver it into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar (vs. 3-7). The only hope of salvation was for the people to surrender to the Chaldeans (vs. 8-10), and for the king to execute justice (vs. 11-14).

(2) The wicked kings (ch. 22). The prophet was commanded to go to the palace and pronounce God's judgment upon the royal house of Judah for forsaking the Covenant of the Lord (vs. 1-9). Then he declared the doom of the successors of Josiah, all of whom had done evil: Shallum (vs. 10-12), Jehoiakim (vs. 13-19), and Coniah (vs. 20-30).

(3) The righteous King (23:1-8). After a denunciation of the false shepherds who had scattered the flock, meaning the rulers of the state as a whole (vs. 1-4), Jeremiah pronounced one of the few direct predictions of the Messiah to be found in the book (vs. 5-8). The Lord would raise up one of



David's line who should be a righteous King, and under him the remnant of the flock should be gathered and Judah and Israel should be saved. His name, "Jehovah our righteousness", implies that through the agency of the Messiah the Lord Himself would bestow righteousness upon His people. It is significant that this prophecy was uttered during the reign of the faithless Zedekiah, whose name means, "the righteousness of Jehovah."

(4) The false prophets (23:9-40). With a broken heart Jeremiah now denounced the prophets for their wicked practices (vs. 9-15) and their lying messages (vs. 16-22). They had deceived the people into a false security. They dreamed their own dreams and spoke out of their own heart instead of delivering the word of the Lord, and the Lord was now against them (vs. 23-32). As for those who mocked the Lord's prophet by asking Jeremiah derisively, "what is the burden (or oracle) of Jehovah?" they were to be told this burden: Jehovah would cast them off and bring everlasting shame upon them (vs. 33-40).

(5) The fate of the people (ch. 24). Two baskets of figs were shown to Jeremiah as a symbol of the fate of the nation. One basket had good figs, and represented the exiles taken to Babylon with Jeconiah, whom the Lord would regard for good (vs. 1-7). The other had bad figs, and represented the people remaining in Judah with Zedekiah, whom the Lord would give up to judgment (vs. 8-10).

2. The Program of the Judgment (Chs. 25-26). These chapters go back into the reign of Jehioakim. They take us to the first year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, when Babylon reached the place of supremacy among the nations (604 B.C.). It was then that

Jeremiah foretold the specific character of the judgment.

(1) Seventy years' captivity (25:1-14). Ever since his call more than twenty years before, Jeremiah had been proclaiming the word of the Lord to the people of Judah, but they had not hearkened (vs. 1-3). They had treated all the prophets of the Lord in the same way; they had refused to hear their appeals to return from their evil ways, and had provoked Him to anger (vs. 4-7). Therefore the Lord would bring His servant Nebuchadnezzar upon them and upon all the nations round about, and they should be subjected to Babylon for seventy years (vs. 8-11). After that the Lord would punish Babylon and make it desolate for ever (vs. 12-14).

(2) The judgment of the nations (25:15-38). Jeremiah was commanded to take the cup of the wrath of God, and compel all the nations to drink of it until they should become drunken, "because of the sword that I will send among them" (vs. 15-26). The frequent repetition of the word "all" in this striking passage makes it a picture of universal war. It culminates in a judgment on Sheshach, a name which occurs only here and in 51:41. It probably stands for Babylon in some cryptic sense, as Babylon stands for the godless world system. The prophet goes on to declare that, having begun with His own people, God must punish all the world (vs. 27-31). The judgment which was to begin with Jerusalem would become a great tempest sweeping from nation to nation (vs. 32-38).

(3) The persecution of the prophet (ch. 26). On the occasion of Jeremiah's address in the Temple in the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign (vs. 1-7; cf. 7:1-2), his life was threatened (vs. 8-9). Accused by the priests and the prophets (vs. 10-15), he was

acquitted by the princes and the people (vs. 16-19). The hostile attitude of the king is shown by the way he persecuted and murdered the prophet Uriah, whose message was the same as Jeremiah's (vs. 20-24).

3. Submission to the Judgment (Chs. 27-29). These chapters return to the reign of Zedekiah. The name "Jehoiakim" in 27:1 is obviously a mistake in copying for "Zedekiah", which occurs in the rest of the chapter (vs. 3, 12). It was now declared that the Lord had given the supremacy among the nations and over Judah to Babylon.

(1) The yoke of Babylon (27:1-11). Jeremiah was commanded to make yokes as symbols of submission to Babylon. One of these he was to wear himself. The others he was to send to the neighbouring nations, informing them that the sovereign God had given the supremacy in the world for the present to the king of Babylon, and warning them to submit to him and not to listen to their diviners and sorcerers. Compare vs. 5-6 and Dan. 2:37-38, which are probably contemporaneous announcements.

(2) A warning to Judah (27:12-22). The prophet followed up this warning to the adjoining nations with a warning to Judah. He first appealed to the king not to heed the false prophets, and declared that the only hope of saving Jerusalem from destruction was to submit to the king of Babylon (vs. 12-15). Then he went on to warn the priests and the people to the same effect, and uttered a prediction that the sacred vessels of the Temple should be carried to Babylon (vs. 16-22).

(3) The fate of a false prophet (ch. 28). Hananiah having uttered a prediction contradicting Jeremiah's message (vs. 1-4), Jeremiah committed

the issue to the Lord (vs. 5-11), and foretold Hananiah's death within a year (vs. 12-16). And so it happened (v. 17). Nothing in Jeremiah's troubled life tried him more than the opposition of the false prophets.

(4) A message to the exiles (ch. 29). Jeremiah sent a letter to the exiles in Babylon, advising them not to listen to the false prophets that were among them but to settle down there in peace in the meantime (vs. 1-9), and promising that after seventy years God would visit them and hearken to their prayer and restore them to the land (vs. 10-14). He went on to tell them that the words of the false prophets in Babylon should be disproved by the disastrous fate of the people left in Jerusalem (vs. 15-20). Then he denounced certain false prophets, mentioning them by name, who had been deceiving the exiles, and foretold the judgment and punishment that should fall upon them (vs. 21-32).

4. Restoration after the Judgment (Chs. 30-33). This section contains the positive and constructive message of the book. It records Jeremiah's prophecy of the Messianic age and of the redemption and restoration of Israel after the captivity.

(1) The promise of restoration (ch. 30). The Lord commanded Jeremiah to write all the words that He had spoken through him in a book, because He now promised to restore the nation to the land (vs. 1-3), to save them out of their time of trouble and fulfil the promise he gave to David (vs. 4-11), and to punish all the nations that had oppressed them (vs. 12-17). He would raise up a Ruler from among themselves who should have access to Himself, being Priest as well as King, and they should become His own people (vs. 18-22). In the meantime the tempest of judgment should sweep on till

His purpose was accomplished (vs. 23-24). In v. 21 we have a foregleam of the Incarnation and the Ascension.

(2) The gathering of Israel (31:1-26). The Lord assures Israel of His everlasting love, and promises to gather the remnant of Israel from the uttermost parts of the earth, and turn their sorrow into joy. The reference is first to all the twelve tribes of Israel (v. 1). Then the restoration of Ephraim or the northern kingdom is dealt with (vs. 2-22), and afterwards the restoration of Judah or the southern kingdom (vs. 23-26).

The voice heard in Ramah of "Rachel weeping for her children" (v. 15) may refer to some atrocity inflicted upon that town by the Assyrians (Isa. 10:29). Rachel, as the mother of Joseph and therefore of Ephraim, represents the northern kingdom in its suffering and sorrow. Matthew uses the passage as a forecast of the sorrow of the mothers of Bethlehem over their slaughtered babes because Rachel's tomb was in the neighbourhood (Matt. 2:17-18; Gen. 35:16-20; 48:7).

(3) The new covenant (31:27-40). Israel and Judah are now taken together, and the conditions of the restoration are explained. It was to take place on the basis of a new covenant which the Lord promises to make with them. He would provide for a personal and individual relationship with Himself, so that they should no longer be condemned for their fathers' sins, but each for his own (vs. 27-30). The proverb recorded in v. 29 seems to have been in common use at this time, for it is quoted in Ezek. 18:2 also.

The new covenant would be no longer outward and legal, but inward and spiritual, giving everyone access to the Lord and putting away sin and

iniquity once for all (vs. 31-34). It would be eternal in its duration and unfathomable in its reach (vs. 35-37). The New Testament interpretation of this promise is to be found in Heb. 8:6-12; 10:15-18. The idea of the New Covenant is carried on through the next two chapters as the ground and method of the restoration (32:37-41; 33:20-21). The present chapter closes by taking us back from the Gospel age into the state of Jerusalem in the prophet's own day (vs. 38-40).

(4) A sign of the restoration (ch. 32). During the siege of Jerusalem Jeremiah was imprisoned by Zedekiah for his declaration that the city should fall (vs. 1-5). At the Lord's command he purchased an ancestral field in his native town Anathoth, occupied at the time by the Chaldean army (vs. 6-15). Then he made an earnest appeal to the Lord to know the reason for this (vs. 16-25), and received the comforting assurance that it was a token of the coming restoration. Though the Lord was bringing all this evil upon the people because of their sin (vs. 26-35), yet He would also bring upon them all the good He had promised (vs. 36-44).

(5) A pledge of the restoration (ch. 33). While Jeremiah was still imprisoned, the word of the Lord came to him a second time, calling him to pray unto God and He would make known to him great and hidden things (vs. 1-3). Then the Lord went on with a renewed assurance of His purpose to restore Judah and Israel and cause peace and joy to return to Jerusalem (vs. 4-13). After that He explained how He would accomplish this.

He would cause a Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David, and under him Jerusalem should be called "Jehovah our righteousness" (vs. 14-16). Here we have a repetition of the Messianic prophecy

of 23:5-6 with a remarkable difference. The name given to the Messiah in the earlier passage is given to the city itself in this passage, thus indicating that the righteousness bestowed upon his people by the Messiah is reflected in them and becomes their righteousness too. Following this comes a statement that David should never want a man to sit upon his throne, and the priests and Levites should never want a man to continue their priestly service (vs. 17-18). This means that the two offices of king and priest were to be united in the Messiah for ever. The first part of the prophecy is fulfilled in the exaltation of Christ to the right hand of God (Acts 2:30-33), and the second part in the heavenly priesthood of Christ (Heb. 6:17-20). This double promise is then confirmed by the Lord's solemn pledge that His covenant with David could no more be broken than His covenant of the day and of the night (vs. 19-26).

## PART II

The second division of the book (Chs. 34-45) is mainly narrative. It contains a record of events that took place during the invasions of the land by the Babylonians, and tells of the final siege and fall of the city (Chs. 34-39). Then it goes on with a narrative of the fate of the people that were left in the land and went down to Egypt after the fall of the city (Chs. 40-45).

### THE SIEGE AND FALL OF THE CITY (Chs. 34-39)

1. Messages During the Final Siege (Ch. 34). When Nebuchadnezzar and his huge army were carrying on the final siege of Jerusalem, Jeremiah was sent to Zedekiah with the announcement that

the Lord would give the city into his hand and he should burn it, and that the king himself should be taken captive to Babylon and die there in peace (vs. 1-7). Then he denounced the people for their breach of faith in not giving liberty to their Hebrew servants (vs. 8-11). This was a violation of the law of the Sabbatic year (Lev. 25:1-7), and a sin against the Covenant which the Lord had made with Israel when He redeemed the nation from Egypt (vs. 12-16), and they should be punished for it by being given into the hand of their enemies (vs. 17-22).

2. Incidents During the First Invasion (Chs. 35-36). Two incidents are recorded here which took place during the first invasion, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign (604 B.C.).

(1) The devotion of the Rechabites (ch. 35). They had taken refuge in Jerusalem, but remained faithful to the instructions of their forefather in refusing wine when it was set before them (vs. 1-11). Jeremiah contrasted their continued loyalty to Jonadab with Judah's persistent disloyalty to the Lord (vs. 12-15). Therefore would Judah be punished, while a special promise was given to the Rechabites (vs. 16-19).

(2) The burning of Jeremiah's roll (ch. 36). At the command of the Lord, Jeremiah had his secretary Baruch write in a book all the prophecies which he had uttered up to that time and read them to the people in the Temple (vs. 1-10). The princes, hearing of it, had Baruch read the roll to them also. It had such an effect upon them that "they turned in fear one toward another", each man reading his own thoughts in his neighbour's face, and decided to inform the king (vs. 11-19). When they reported the matter to Jehoiakim, he sent for the roll, and



while it was being read to him he cut it up and threw it into the fire burning in a brazier before him (vs. 20-26). Then Jeremiah was instructed of the Lord to rewrite what Jehoiakim had burned and to pronounce a special sentence of doom and humiliation upon him. Baruch then wrote in another roll all the words of the former book, "and there were added besides unto them many like words" (vs. 27-32).

3. Incidents During the Last Invasion (Chs. 37-38). When Nebuchadnezzar began his final siege of Jerusalem, Zedekiah sent a deputation to Jeremiah asking him to enquire of the Lord for them (21:1-2). Later in the siege an Egyptian army attempted to relieve the city, and the Chaldeans withdrew. Then Zedekiah sent another deputation to Jeremiah asking him to pray to the Lord for them (37:1-5). The prophet sent back a message of warning. The army of Pharaoh should return to Egypt, and the army of the Chaldeans should come back and capture the city and burn it (37:6-10).

During the interval when the Chaldean army was drawn away from the city, Jeremiah attempted to go out into the land of Benjamin on a matter of private business. He was arrested as a deserter and handed over to the princes, who imprisoned him in a dungeon (37:11-15). Zedekiah sent for him secretly and asked if he had any message from the Lord. The prophet protested against the treatment he had received, and the king had him removed to the court of the guard and provided with food (37:16-21).

By continuing to foretell the victory of the Chaldeans, Jeremiah aroused the anger of the princes, who moved the king against him and had him thrown into a pit with deep mire at the bottom (38:1-6). An Ethiopian eunuch in the palace heard of

this evil deed and appealed to the king on behalf of the prophet. At the king's command, he rescued Jeremiah from the pit and restored him to the court of the guard (38:7-13).

Then the king sent for Jeremiah again and implored him to hide nothing from him, promising to spare his life and protect him from his foes (38:14-16). The prophet replied that submission to the king of Babylon was the only way to save the city (38:17-23). He was commanded by Zedekiah not to tell the princes of the advice he had given, and was kept in the court of the guard until the city fell (38:24-28).

4. The Final Catastrophe (Ch. 39). After a siege lasting a year and a half, the city was taken and destroyed. Zedekiah fled, but was captured and had his eyes put out. The people were carried away to Babylon, only the poorest being left in the land (vs. 1-10). Nebuchadnezzar charged his captain of the guard to afford protection to Jeremiah, and the prophet was released (vs. 11-14). The chapter closes with the promise which Jeremiah had been instructed to give to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, who had delivered him from the miry pit. His life was to be saved because he had put his trust in the Lord God of Israel (vs. 15-18).

#### AFTER THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

(Chs. 40-45)

1. The Remnant Left in the Land (Chs. 40-41). Jeremiah was given his liberty and chose to remain with Gedaliah, whom Nebuchadnezzar had made governor of Judah (40:1-6). Gedaliah began a wise and beneficent rule with Mizpah as his capital (40:7-12). He showed his guileless character when he

was warned of a plot against his life and refused to believe it (40:13-16). The plot was carried out, and Gedaliah was treacherously murdered at Mizpah, and all his associates with him, by Ishmael, one of the princes (41:1-3). Ishmael committed further massacres, and then fled to Ammon, taking captive the people of Mizpah (41:4-10). He was pursued by Johanan who had warned Gedaliah against him, and the captives were recovered. Then in fear of the Chaldeans they all prepared to go down to Egypt (41:11-18).

2. The Flight into Egypt (Chs. 42-43). In their distress the people asked Jeremiah to seek the guidance of the Lord for them, promising to obey whatever it might be (42:1-6). After ten days the prophet gave them his reply: If they remained in the land the mercy of the Lord would be upon them, but if they went down to Egypt the sword and famine and pestilence would destroy them (42:7-17). Knowing that they were set on going down to Egypt, for it was the refuge to which the worldly minded and unbelieving in Judah had always looked, Jeremiah went on to give them a solemn warning of what would happen to them there (42:18-22).

In the face of this warning, the leaders of the people charged Jeremiah with speaking under the influence of Baruch; and they all went down to Egypt, taking Jeremiah and Baruch with them (43:1-7). When they settled at Tahpanhes, Jeremiah announced, with an accompanying symbolic action, that Nebuchadnezzar would set up his royal pavilion in that very place and would smite the land of Egypt (42:8-13), thus showing them the folly of fleeing to Egypt to escape from Babylon.

3. Jeremiah's Last Message (Ch. 44). This was a warning delivered to a large gathering of the

Jews at Pathros (v. 15), probably some considerable time after their arrival in Egypt. The prophet denounced them for their wickedness in forgetting the Lord God of Israel and worshipping other gods in the land of Egypt (vs. 1-10), and declared that they should all be destroyed by the judgment of God (vs. 11-14). The women seem to have been especially addicted to the idolatrous practice of burning incense to the moon. Their husbands acquiesced in the practice and perversely attributed the evils that had fallen on their land to their formerly giving up idolatry there. Both the men and the women declared they would not hearken to Jeremiah (vs. 15-19).

The prophet renewed his warning, reminding them of what had happened in the land of Judah (vs. 20-23), and declaring that the Lord would not have them profane His great name in the land of Egypt but would make an end of them (vs. 24-28). He added, as a sign of this coming judgment, that the reigning king of Egypt, who had been an ally of Judah against Nebuchadnezzar, should meet the same fate as Zedekiah king of Judah (vs. 29-30). This prophecy is the last recorded event in Jeremiah's life. The fall of Pharaoh Hophra took place in 570 B.C.

4. A Promise to Baruch (Ch. 45). In chronological order this chapter follows the story of Jeremiah's roll (ch. 36). The prophet's faithful secretary, who was depressed by the troubles of the time and the failure of his hopes, was warned against having any personal ambition when God was bringing judgments on the world. He was given a special promise that his life should be preserved through them all.

## PART III

PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE NATIONS  
(Chs. 46-52)

The last division of the book contains a collection of the prophecies uttered by Jeremiah regarding the Gentile nations at different times during his ministry (46:1). It is a prophetic survey of the world of his day, as he looked out upon it from Jerusalem. It begins with Egypt in the west, takes in the nations immediately around Judah, and passes on to Babylon on the east. In the course of this survey, the prophet reveals the principles of God's action when His judgments are in the earth. The last chapter is an appendix to the book, giving a fuller account of its central event, and forming a link with the Book of Lamentations.

1. Egypt (Ch. 46). The chapter contains two prophetic utterances about Egypt, foretelling two events that occurred in the struggle for supremacy between Egypt and Babylon.

(1) The defeat of Egypt at Carchemish (vs. 2-12). This is a graphic description of the army of Egypt in its preparation and its advance to the Euphrates, where it was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar (605 B.C.). In predicting this event the prophet declared that it would be the day of the Lord's vengeance upon Egypt (v. 10).

(2) Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Egypt (vs. 13-28). A graphic description of the coming of Nebuchadnezzar into Egypt as the Lord's instrument for punishing that land (vs. 13-26), is followed by a message of comfort to Israel not to fear in the midst of these judgments which He was bringing upon the nations (vs. 27-28).

2. The Nations Around Judah (Chs. 47-49). Seven of the smaller states between Egypt and Babylon now came into view in the sweep of Divine judgment. In the midst of these judgments are promises of mercy (48:47; 49:6, 39).

(1) The Philistines (ch. 47). The sword of the Lord had been given a charge to destroy them.

(2) Moab (ch. 48). Moab was to be punished and laid waste because of his pride and haughtiness of spirit. He had "magnified himself against Jehovah" (v. 42).

(3) Ammon (49:1-6). The Lord would bring a fear upon Ammon and drive them out of their land.

(4) Edom (49:7-22). Edom should not go unpunished, for the Lord had decreed that it should become an astonishment, and all its cities perpetual wastes.

(5) Damascus and Syria (49:23-27). Damascus is named as the capital of Syria. That land was to be swept by the devouring fire of judgment.

(6) Kedar or Arabia (49:28-33). This nation "that dwelleth without care" was to be subjected to "fear that is on every side". Both Edom and Kedar were told to "dwell in the depths" (vs. 8, 30), that is, to retire as far as possible into the solitude of the desert in order to escape the invader.

(7) Elam (49:34-39). The Lord would scatter Elam to the four winds of heaven.

3. Babylon (Chs. 50-51). Throughout this book Babylon has been the instrument of God's judgment. But Babylon's time should come, for she, too, had provoked God's anger; and in this powerful prophecy Jeremiah utters the Divine judgment upon her. In these chapters her judgment is related to the deliverance of Israel.

(1) Babylon's fall as the means of Israel's

deliverance (ch. 50). Babylon should fall and Israel return to the Lord (vs. 1-10). Babylon should be punished and Israel pardoned (vs. 11-20). Babylon should be destroyed and Israel liberated (vs. 21-28). Babylon's pride should be humbled by the Lord God of hosts (vs. 29-32). The Redeemer of Israel would call for judgment upon Babylon (vs. 33-40). A great nation from the north should execute His purpose against Babylon (vs. 41-46).

(2) Babylon doomed and Israel called to come out of her (ch. 51). The Lord would stir up a destroying wind against Babylon, and His people are called to come out of her because He had established their righteousness (vs. 1-10). The Medes are named as the agents whom He has stirred up to inflict His judgment upon Babylon (vs. 11-14). Then comes a repetition of 10:12-16 to set forth the majesty of the God of Israel, who decrees the destruction of Babylon (vs. 15-19). This is followed by a striking passage in which the Lord explains how He has used Babylon as His instrument of judgment upon the nations: "Thou art my battle-axe". Then the words, "With thee will I break in pieces", are repeated nine times with impressive effect, like the strokes of doom (vs. 20-23).

But now the Lord is against her, because of the evil she has done to Zion, and He summons the nations to set themselves against her (vs. 24-32). He will avenge the cause of Zion and execute judgment upon Babylon (vs. 33-44). He summons His people to come out of her, because her destruction is certain and she cannot escape it (vs. 45-58).

This prophecy against Babylon was to be taken by Seraiah, who was a brother of Baruch (32:12), when he went to Babylon in the service of Zedekiah, and was to be read there and then sunk in the

Euphrates as a sign that Babylon should rise no more (vs. 59-64).

4. The End of the Kingdom of Judah (Ch. 52). This chapter is a historical appendix to the book, and is almost identical with 2 Kings 24:18-25:30. It begins with a brief statement about the reign of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, leading up to his rebellion against Babylon (vs. 1-3). Then it gives an account of the siege and capture of Jerusalem and the fate of the king (vs. 4-11), and of the destruction of the city and the exile of the people (vs. 12-16). Then comes a list of the treasures of the Temple that were taken to Babylon (vs. 17-23), and a record of the arrest and execution of the chief officers of the Temple and the city (vs. 24-27).

After giving a summary of the various deportations of people whom Nebuchadnezzar took to Babylon (vs. 28-30), the book closes with an account of the liberation of Jehoiachin from prison in Babylon and of the favour shown him by a later Babylonian king (vs. 31-34). This is the fourth account of the fall of Jerusalem in the Old Testament, the other three being in 2 Kings 25, 2 Chron. 36, and Jer. 39. To the Jews of that time it was as if their world had come to an end.

### THE MESSAGE OF JEREMIAH

In this book God is longsuffering and patient with His sinful people, yearning over them to save them, and going to the utmost to draw them back to Himself. The characteristic expression that Jeremiah uses of God to describe this attitude of His is, "rising up early". This bold figure takes the highest form of activity by which human interest in anything is expressed and uses it to represent God's



interest in man. It occurs eleven times in the book (7:13, 25; 11:7; 25:3, 4; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:14, 15; 44:4).

Jeremiah makes few direct references to the coming Messiah; but in these he adds to the picture given by Isaiah. He declares that a righteous Branch would be raised up in the house of David, who should become the source of righteousness for His people (23:5-6; 33:15-16). The prophet himself was a type of Christ in his solitary suffering, and in his persecution by the religious leaders of the nation.

The special contribution which Jeremiah makes to the development of God's plan of redemption is his prophecy of the New Covenant (31:31-34). In contrast with the Old Covenant, which could not deal finally with sin and could only command obedience to the outward demands of the Law, the New Covenant would put away sin once for all and provide an impulse within the soul which would give power to fulfil the Law. The fulfilment of this great promise is recorded in Luke 22:14-20; and the significance of the New Covenant and its superiority to the Old are explained in the Epistle to the Hebrews (chs. 8-9).

## THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

LIKE Jeremiah, Ezekiel was born in a priestly family and was called to serve in the prophetic office. He was one of the captives taken to Babylon with king Jehoiachin in 597 B.C. (2 Kings 24:10-16). He lived among them on the river Chebar, one of the canals in Babylonia. His call came in the fifth year of his captivity and the thirtieth year of his age (1:1-3). This was the age when the Levites entered upon their duties (Num. 4:23). He was married and had a house of his own, where the elders among the exiles of Judah used to meet with him (8:1). His wife died in the ninth year of his exile, on the day when the final siege of Jerusalem began (24:1-2, 18).

Jeremiah had been preaching in Judah and Jerusalem for more than thirty years when Ezekiel's ministry began among the exiles in Babylonia. Many of Ezekiel's prophecies are dated, though the dates do not all come in chronological order. Notes of time are found in 1:2, 8:1, 20:1, 24:1, 26:1, 29:1, 17, 30:20, 31:1, 32:1, 17, 33:21, 40:1. The latest date is in the twenty-seventh year of the prophet's captivity (29:17), so that he must have continued his ministry for at least twenty-two years. It was intended to comfort and strengthen the exiles of Israel amidst the idolatries and temptations with which they were surrounded while judgment was falling upon Judah and Jerusalem, and also to turn their eyes to the new Israel which was to arise upon the ruins of the old. The greatest of his prophecies, the vision of the new temple, is

dated fourteen years after the fall of the old Temple (40:1).

The Book of Ezekiel abounds in visions, symbols, and allegories. Much of the imagery of the book is derived from the Temple and its services. This is due both to the fact that Ezekiel was a priest, and also to the fact that new spiritual realities were being revealed which had been already foreshadowed in the Temple ritual. These spiritual realities were clothed in forms with which Ezekiel and his countrymen were familiar. The material and earthly Temple with its symbolic ritual was only a type of the spiritual and heavenly order upon which the new Israel was to be based.

The Book of Ezekiel may be divided into two equal parts. The first part (Chs. 1-24) contains visions and prophecies of judgment and destruction; the second part (Chs. 25-48) contains prophecies and visions of reconstruction and restoration. The theme of the first part is the destruction of the old Israel; the theme of the second part is the reconstruction of the new Israel. On this basis we get the following analysis:

- I. The Destruction of the Old Israel—Chs. 1-24
  1. The Prophet's Call (Chs. 1-3)
  2. The Impending Judgment (Chs. 4-7)
  3. The Lord's Withdrawal (Chs. 8-11)
  4. The Moral Necessity of Judgment  
(Chs. 12-19)
  5. The Divine Necessity of Judgment  
(Chs. 20-24)
- II. The Reconstruction of the New Israel—  
Chs. 25-48
  1. The Doom of Hostile Nations  
(Chs. 25-32)

2. The New Nation of Israel (Chs. 33-39)
3. The New Temple of God (Chs. 40-48).

### THE PROPHET'S CALL

(Chs. 1-3)

In the thirtieth year of his age, the age when as a priest he would have begun his service in the Temple at Jerusalem, Ezekiel received a vision of the glory of God among the captives in Chaldea, and was sent to them on a prophet's mission (1:1-3).

1. The Vision (Ch. 1). It was a symbolic and majestic vision of the throne of God. The whole appearance represented not only a throne on which the Lord sat but a chariot on which He rode. Its main features were as follows: four living creatures, with the faces of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle (vs. 4-14); beside them four wheels, with rims full of eyes (vs. 15-21); over their heads a firmament (vs. 22-25); and over the firmament a throne, and One sitting thereon (vs. 26-28). These features were all symbolic representations of the holiness and majesty and sovereignty of God.

This vision appears again and again throughout the book and seems to have been always present to the mind of the prophet. It was the background of all his prophecies. It is the most detailed and comprehensive of all the appearances of the Cherubim in Scripture (Gen. 3:24; Exod. 25:18-22; Isa. 6:2; Rev. 4:6-8). It is intended to appeal to the mind rather than to the eye, for it could not be transferred to canvas. The most significant feature about it is the presence of the Spirit in the midst of it (1:12, 20-21; 2:2; 3:12, 14, 24).

2. The Voice (Chs. 2-3). The prophet, who is always addressed as "son of man", was now given

his commission. He was sent to the rebellious house of Israel as represented in the captivity (2:1-7). The word "rebellious" is used repeatedly, emphasizing the stubborn character of the people. Ezekiel was warned not to be rebellious, and was given a book to eat wherein were written "lamentations, and mourning, and woe". Thus was indicated the nature of the message he had to deliver. But it was sweet to his taste, because it was the word of God (2:8—3:3). He was commanded to speak to the house of Israel the words that God gave him, "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear" (3:4-11).

Ezekiel was then carried by the Spirit to a community of the captives at Tel-abib, where he sat in silence seven days (3:12-15). There the Lord established him as a watchman to the house of Israel, to warn the wicked man from his wicked way (3:16-21). Here the individual relation of man to God is brought out, thus preparing for the building up of the new Israel on that principle. Ezekiel's office was to include the function of the pastor as well as that of the prophet. The glory of the Lord appeared to him again, and commanded him to shut himself in his house and speak only when the Lord opened his mouth and gave him a message (3:22-27).

The Divine name used by the prophet is not "Jehovah Elohim" (Lord God), but "the Lord Jehovah" (2:4; 3:11, 27). It occurs over two hundred times in the book, thus showing Ezekiel's conception of the sovereign majesty of the God of Israel, whose spokesman he is. In contrast with the glory of God, the prophet himself is only a "son of man". This title is used of him about ninety times.

## THE IMPENDING JUDGMENT

(Chs. 4-7)

The prophet was now called upon to pronounce the judgment of the Lord against both the city of Jerusalem and the land of Israel.

1. Against the City of Jerusalem (Chs. 4-5). Four symbolic acts are described which the prophet was commanded to perform: portraying the siege of the city on a tile (4:1-3); lying on his side for two periods of time, thus symbolizing Israel and Judah bearing their iniquity (4:4-8); weighing his food and drink, thus suggesting scarcity and famine during the siege (4:9-17); using a sword as a razor upon his hair, denoting the slaughter of the inhabitants around the city on its capture and their dispersion over the world (5:1-4).

The lesson of these signs is then given (5:5-17). Jerusalem, set in the midst of the nations and favoured of God above them all, had even exceeded them in wickedness. She had defiled His sanctuary with her abominations. Therefore her chastisement would be unexampled in severity.

2. Against the Land of Israel (Chs. 6-7). The prophet was then commanded to set his face "toward the mountains of Israel", the seats of her idolatry, and declare that the Lord would bring the sword upon them with a desolating judgment of war, famine, and pestilence (6:1-7). After these awful descriptions of judgment comes a promise that there should be a remnant, scattered among the nations, who would turn to God in repentance and be saved (6:8-10). This is followed by a recapitulation of the preceding judgments (6:11-14).

The judgment of the nation would be complete and thoroughgoing: "the end is come" (7:1-13).

Then a graphic description is given of the dissolution of the state and the paralyzing terror that should seize all classes (7:14-27). The Divine purpose in the judgment is indicated in a statement repeated again and again in these chapters: "They shall know that I am Jehovah" (6:7, 10, 13, 14; 7:4, 27). It occurs about fifty times in the book.

### THE LORD'S WITHDRAWAL (Chs. 8-11)

In this series of visions the prophet was transported in a trance from his place of exile in Chaldea to Jerusalem (8:1-4). There he was shown the abominations of idolatry that were practised in the very sanctuary itself, and the consequent withdrawal from it of the symbol of the Lord's presence.

1. The Pollution of the Temple (Ch. 8). Ezekiel was shown one after another the manifold and abominable idolatries carried on in the very house of God. Such abominations made it necessary for the Lord to withdraw—to "go far off from my sanctuary". His people having so defiled His house, He could no longer dwell there.

2. Judgment Beginning at the Temple (Ch. 9). The executioners of Divine judgment were now summoned. They were commissioned to smite the guilty in the city, the faithful being first set apart by a heavenly agent, a man "clothed in linen", who set a mark upon their foreheads. They were to begin in the Temple—"at my sanctuary" (vs. 1-7). The vision appalled the prophet, and he cried out in intercession. But the sin of Israel and Judah was so great that the judgment was irrevocable (vs. 8-11). This sublime and awful chapter depicts the discriminating and deliberate procedure of the wrath of God.

3. The Lord's Withdrawal from the Temple (Ch. 10). The vision of the Cherubim appears again. A command was given to "the man clothed in linen" to take fire from between the wheels and scatter it over the guilty city (vs. 1-8). The Cherubim then prepared to depart from the Temple, and the glory of the Lord moved from the inner court to the eastern gate of the outer court (vs. 9-22).

4. The Lord's Withdrawal from the City (Ch. 11). The prophet was taken to the east gate of the Temple, and he saw there a group of rulers plotting evil. Instructed by the Spirit, he uttered a prophecy against them (vs. 1-12). As he prophesied one of the princes died, and Ezekiel appealed to God for the remnant. The appeal was answered by a promise for the scattered exiles of Israel. The Lord would be a sanctuary for them in the countries where they should come (vs. 13-16). His spiritual presence would be with them instead of the symbolical presence that dwelt in the Temple. Here is the first hint of a spiritual temple.

The Lord goes on to say that He would restore them to their land, and give them a new heart and a new spirit to enable them to walk in His ways (vs. 17-21). Here we have the principles of the new Covenant, already announced by Jeremiah (Jer. 31: 31-34), coming into operation in the new order which Ezekiel is announcing. Then the prophet was shown a vision of the glory of the Lord finally departing from the city and standing over the Mount of Olives (vs. 22-25). The successive stages of withdrawal in this series of visions emphasize the great reluctance of the Lord in departing and leaving the guilty city to its doom.



THE MORAL NECESSITY OF JUDGMENT  
(Chs. 12-19)

This section contains a series of prophetic announcements showing that the sin of the people made it necessary for the Lord to bring speedy judgment upon them.

1. The Exile of Judah Depicted (Ch. 12). The prophet was commanded to prepare "stuff for removing", and to dig through the wall of his house and carry it forth on his shoulders in the dusk of the evening (vs. 1-7). Next day he explained this action as a sign that the king and the people of Jerusalem would be removed into exile and captivity in Babylon (vs. 8-16). He was also charged to adopt another sign, that of eating and drinking with trembling and fearfulness, and so depict the nature of the desolations that were coming upon them (vs. 17-20).

Then the prophet was commanded to answer the current objections in Israel about prophecies of judgment, that such warnings had been uttered for a long time and had not come to pass, and that Ezekiel's present prophecies referred to a distant future. He was to tell them that the Lord would perform His word in their days and would delay these things no longer (vs. 21-28).

2. The False Prophets Denounced (Ch. 13). They speak out of their own heart, and say "Peace" when there is no peace, thus giving a sense of false security (vs. 1-16). The prophetesses also have been guilty of the same evil. They "hunt the souls" of God's people by their practices (vs. 17-23). False prophetesses are not mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament.

3. The Secret Idolaters Denounced (Ch. 14).

Some of the elders of Israel came to enquire of the prophet and yet had idols in their hearts. The Lord declared that these men were estranged from Him, and He would set His face against them (vs. 1-11). Then He goes on to declare that He would not spare the land for the sake of the righteous that might be therein: "though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it". He would send His "four sore judgments" upon it, the judgments described in Lev. 26: 21-26 (vs. 12-21). Yet a remnant should be left, to prove that what the Lord had done had not been in vain (vs. 22-23).

4. Judah's Ripeness for Judgment (Chs. 15-17). These chapters contain a number of symbolical and allegorical prophecies bringing out the fact that Judah was quite ready for judgment.

(1) The half-burned vine fit for nothing but the fire (ch. 15). Such is the nation that has failed to fulfil the purpose for which it was chosen.

(2) The foundling child who became a faithless wife (ch. 16). This allegory, which is wrought out at great length, sets forth the whole history of Israel in three parts, depicting her sin (vs. 1-34), her punishment (vs. 35-52), and her final restoration (vs. 53-63).

(3) The two eagles and the treacherous cedar (ch. 17). This chapter contains a "riddle" or "parable" about two eagles and a cedar plant (vs. 1-10), followed by its explanation (vs. 11-21). The eagles were Egypt and Babylon, and the treacherous plant was Zedekiah the king of Judah, who was put on the throne by Babylon but sought an alliance with Egypt. The chapter closes with the prophecy of "a goodly cedar", which was a type of the Messianic Kingdom (vs. 22-24). The "tender one" is the Messiah with reference to His lowliness. The "moun-

tain of the height of Israel" is Mount Zion, and the prophecy corresponds with Isa. 2:2-4.

5. The Principle of the Divine Kingdom (Ch. 18). This chapter explains the principle that would operate in the new order announced at the end of the preceding chapter. The people should no longer be able to complain that they were punished for their fathers' sins (Jer. 31:29). The new Israel should be based upon the moral responsibility of the individual and his personal relationship with God. No one should have to answer for the sins of another, but only for his own (vs. 1-4).

Several examples of this principle are then given: the righteous man who follows the ways of the Lord (vs. 5-9), the wicked son of a righteous man (vs. 10-13), the righteous son of a wicked man (vs. 14-20), and a moral change on the part of an individual one way or the other (vs. 21-24). Still the people complained that the Lord's ways were unjust, and He replied with another statement of the fundamental principle of His moral government: their ways were unjust and He judged them according to their ways (vs. 25-30). Then He made a tender appeal to them to return to Him, so that their iniquity should not be their ruin and that they might get a new heart and a new spirit: "for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (vs. 30-32).

6. A Lamentation for the Princes of Judah (Ch. 19). The prophet was commanded to utter this dirge over the fall of the royal family in the closing years of the kingdom. The figure of the lioness represents the monarchy as a whole. Her two whelps, captured in pits, represent Jehoahaz who was taken to Egypt (vs. 1-4), and Jehoiachin who was taken to Babylon (vs. 5-9). The figure of a

vine transplanted to a barren land represents the fate of Zedekiah (vs. 10-14).

Josiah, the last good king of Judah, fell at Megiddo in 608 B.C. Jehoahaz his son succeeded him and reigned three months. Jehoiakim, another son of Josiah, reigned till 597, when he perished in Nebuchadnezzar's second attack on the city. He is not included in this lamentation. Jehoiachin his son followed him on the throne and reigned three months. Zedekiah, the youngest son of Josiah, was the last of the kings of Judah.

### THE DIVINE NECESSITY OF JUDGMENT

(Chs. 20-24)

This section contains a series of prophecies showing that Jehovah's regard for His own honour made it necessary for Him to bring judgment on Israel.

1. The Motive of the Lord's Action (20:1-44). Certain elders of Israel having come to Ezekiel to enquire of the Lord (vs. 1-4), the prophet was commanded to declare unto them that the Lord's regard for His own name had saved Israel from destruction in the past (vs. 5-26), and that the same principle required Israel's punishment now. The result would be the ultimate restoration of Israel and the sanctification of the Lord in them in the sight of the nations (vs. 27-44).

Several significant declarations occur again and again in this chapter: "I am Jehovah your God" (vs. 5, 7, 19); "I wrought for my name's sake" (vs. 9, 14, 22); "that they might (or, that ye may) know that I am Jehovah" (vs. 12, 20, 26); "and ye shall know that I am Jehovah" (vs. 38, 42, 44).

2. The Drawn Sword of the Lord (20:45—21:32). The prophet was told to set his face against

the land of Judah (20:45-49), and against the land of Israel (21:1-7). The sword of the Lord was sharpened and furbished against His own people (21:8-17). This was further explained as the sword of the king of Babylon, who is represented as at the parting of the ways between Ammon and Jerusalem consulting the oracle and drawing his lot for Jerusalem (21:18-23).

Sentence was pronounced against the royal office in Israel (21:24-27). It should be overthrown and not restored, "until he come whose right it is"; that is, until the Messiah Himself should come, the reference being to the prophecy in Gen. 49:10, which may be read, "till he come whose it is" (R.V. marg.). The Ammonites also were to be destroyed for the sword was drawn against them too (21:28-32).

3. The Indictment of Jerusalem (Ch. 22). The prophet was commanded to act as judge of "the bloody city", and cause her to know her abominations (vs. 1-2). Sins of bloodshed, oppression, impurity, and greed did abound in her (vs. 3-12). Therefore she should be scattered among the nations (vs. 13-16). Israel had become dross unto the Lord. Therefore they must be purified as in a furnace (vs. 17-22). All classes were involved in her guilt, prophets and priests, princes and people (vs. 23-31).

4. The Allegory of the Two Sisters (Ch. 23). Under the figure of the sins of two women, Oholah and Oholibah, there is set forth here the unfaithfulness of Samaria and Jerusalem. The infidelities of Oholah represent the intrigues of Samaria with Assyria and Egypt (vs. 1-10). The infidelities of Oholibah represent the intrigues of Jerusalem with Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt (vs. 11-35). Then there follows an announcement of their punishment (vs. 36-49).

5. The Final Signs of the Judgment (Ch. 24). This prophecy is dated on the day when the siege of Jerusalem began (vs. 1-2). It announced the inevitable issue by the parable of the rusty caldron set on the fire to have its rust consumed (vs. 3-14). On the same day in the evening the death of the prophet's wife took place suddenly, and he was commanded to abstain from mourning, as a sign of the stupefaction which the news of the city's fall should occasion (vs. 15-24). He was to remain dumb and speak no more to the people until a fugitive from Jerusalem should bring news of the city's fall (vs. 25-27).

#### THE DOOM OF HOSTILE NATIONS (Chs. 25-32)

The ground is first cleared for the account of Israel's reconstruction by the announcement of judgments on the nations that have been hostile to her. With their disappearance one of the great obstacles to her restoration would be removed. The section contains a series of judgments on seven nations.

1. The Doom of Neighbouring Nations (Ch. 25). Four of the nations around Judah are mentioned, and judgment is pronounced upon each of them: Ammon (vs. 1-7) and Moab (vs. 8-11) on the east; Edom (vs. 12-14) on the south; and Philistia (vs. 15-17) on the west. The reason given in each case is the enmity the nation had shown to Israel. The result in each case is declared to be the vindication and glory of God: "They shall know that I am Jehovah".

2. The Doom of Tyre and Sidon (Chs. 26-28). These states to the north of Judah now come in for judgment.

(1) The destruction of the city of Tyre (ch. 26). This prophecy is dated in the year of the fall of Jerusalem, and Tyre is doomed because of her malicious exultation over that event (vs. 1-6). Her conquest by Nebuchadnezzar is foretold (vs. 7-14), and its effect upon all other sea-faring nations is described (vs. 15-18). Then is announced the Lord's purpose to make her utterly desolate (vs. 19-21).

(2) A lamentation over the fall of Tyre (ch. 27). She is likened to a gallant ship trafficking among the nations (vs. 1-25), and ultimately wrecked, to the consternation of them all (vs. 26-36).

(3) A denunciation of the prince of Tyre (28: 1-19). Because of the pride of his heart and his vanity he should be brought down and die a shameful death (vs. 1-10). A lamentation over him follows in which the sin and fall of Satan, whose instrument he was, seem to be depicted (vs. 11-19).

(4) A prophecy against Sidon (28:20-26). Sidon should be involved in the overthrow of Tyre (vs. 20-24). As this prophecy closes the circle of nations that had exulted in the fall of Jerusalem, it is appropriately followed by a promise of restoration to Israel when these judgments upon her enemies have been executed: "And they shall know that I am Jehovah their God" (vs. 25-26).

3. The Doom of Egypt (Chs. 29-32). These chapters contain a series of seven separate prophecies against Egypt uttered at different times. The people of Judah looked upon Egypt as the great power opposed to the Chaldeans and hoped for aid from this source. Hence the teaching of these prophecies was very necessary for them. The Lord's people were not to rely on any earthly aid. Throughout these chapters runs the refrain, "they shall know that I am Jehovah."

(1) The might of Pharaoh king of Egypt should be brought down, and Egypt should be laid waste by the sword and become the basest of kingdoms (29:1-16).

(2) Egypt should be given into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon as his wages for the service he rendered against Tyre (29:17-21).

(3) The Lord would bring a day of judgment upon Egypt and the nations around her. He would humble the pride of Egypt at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar (30:1-19).

(4) The Lord would break the power of the king of Egypt by the power of the king of Babylon (30:20-26).

(5) Pharaoh is warned by the fate of Assyria, which is likened to a lordly cedar of Lebanon brought low (ch. 31).

(6) A lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, whose fall, likened to the taking of a sea monster in a net, should amaze the world (32:1-16).

(7) A wail for the multitudes of Egypt, who should go down into the grave with the multitudes of the nations, "slain by the sword" (32:17-32).

#### THE NEW NATION OF ISRAEL

(Chs. 33-39)

The prophet's mouth had been closed regarding Israel from the time the siege of Jerusalem began until word was brought to him by one of the fugitives that the city had fallen (24:25-27; 33:21-22). Now that the judgment had actually come and the kingdom was in ruins and the Temple destroyed, the prophet began the consoling and constructive part of his ministry. A great restoration was to take place. Out of the ruins of the old nation the



Lord would build a new nation. These chapters contain a prophetic description of the new Israel to which Jesus referred when He told the rulers of the Jews that the Kingdom of God should be taken away from them and given to "a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43).

1. The True Prophet (Ch. 33). His function was to be that of a watchman; the pastoral aspect of his ministry is now in view. He was responsible for warning the wicked man to turn from his wicked way (vs. 1-9). Here we have a hint of the way the new Israel was to be built up—by the Gospel call to the individual. Past sin would be pardoned when the sinner turned to the Lord (vs. 10-20).

When the news of the fall of Jerusalem came, Ezekiel declared that a desolating judgment should overtake those that remained in the land, because they continued in the sins for which the city fell (vs. 21-29). The confirmation of the prophet's past predictions by the news of the city's fall awakened the interest of his fellow exiles in his words, but they were moved by curiosity rather than by genuine seriousness (vs. 30-33).

2. The Good Shepherd (Ch. 34). The Lord was against the unfaithful shepherds who fed themselves and not the sheep (vs. 1-10). He Himself would be the Shepherd of His people (vs. 11-16). This passage is the basis of our Lord's words about "the good shepherd" in John 10:11-16. The gathering of the sheep here is not merely the gathering of scattered Israel, but also of the other sheep, "which are not of this fold". He would judge between the sheep, too, and "set up one shepherd over them, even my servant David" (vs. 17-24). He would also make "a covenant of peace" with them

and make their land fruitful with "showers of blessing", and none should make them afraid (vs. 25-31). All this is a prophetic description of the redemption of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the blessings of the Christian dispensation.

3. The Fruitful Land (35:1-36:15). This section begins with the Lord's judgment on Edom: "Behold, I am against thee, O mount Seir." She was to be made a perpetual desolation because of her perpetual enmity to Israel (ch. 35). The prophecy continues with the Lord's announcement to Israel of His judgment upon the foe who had made the land desolate (36:1-7).

Over against this desolation of Edom is set the promise of abundant blessing for "the mountains of Israel". "Behold I am for you", declared the Lord. The land was to become luxuriantly fruitful; men were to be multiplied in it; the cities were to be built, and waste places restored (36:8-15). As Canaan was a type of the "rest" of Heb. 4:8-11, the spiritual life of the Christian dispensation, so this picture of its abundant fruitfulness is symbolical of those "spiritual blessings in the heavenly places" that Christ has provided for His people (Eph. 1:3).

4. The Purified People (36:16-38). The Lord now declared that the reason for His restoration of Israel was regard for His holy name, which they had profaned among the nations (vs. 16-23). His method of redeeming and restoring His people is also declared. It should be that of inward cleansing and spiritual renewal. He would cleanse and purify them, give them a new heart, and put His Spirit within them (vs. 24-31), and this not for their sakes but for His own glory (vs. 32-36). Here is a further enlargement of Jeremiah's prophecy of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34). Then the Lord

goes on to declare the condition of this restoration; it should depend upon their own turning to Him in faith. "For this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them" (vs. 37-38).

5. The Renewed Nation (Ch. 37). There was now given to Ezekiel the vision of a valley filled with dry bones, which came to life when he prophesied over them (vs. 1-10). The vision was explained to mean that the Lord would restore His people Israel and bring them to life again by putting His own Spirit into them (vs. 11-14). The prophet was then commanded to take two sticks and join them into one stick, as a sign that the Lord would reunite Judah and Israel and make them one people (vs. 15-23).

Thus the method of redemption by the gift of God's Spirit announced in ch. 36 is shown to be the secret of life and the principle of union in the new Israel. Then the promise was repeated that they should all have one Shepherd, "my servant David", who should be their Prince, and the Lord Himself would dwell among them for evermore (vs. 24-28).

6. The Vanquished Foe (Chs. 38-39). These chapters foretell a great invasion of Israel by Gog and his hosts, and their overthrow and destruction by the intervention of the Lord. This attack is described as coming from the outer limits of the world and occurring in the distant future, at a time when Israel would be dwelling in peace and security in the land.

The whole passage is marked by great vividness and force. Some of its features indicate that it is to be taken in a symbolical and not in a literal sense: the seven years for burning the weapons (39:9), and the seven months for burying the corpses (39: 11-12). The prophecy should be interpreted in the

light of Rev. 20:7-10. It sets forth the final attempt of Satan and his hosts to destroy the Kingdom of God in the world, and their final overthrow and destruction at His hand, an event which lies in the far off future.

### THE NEW TEMPLE OF GOD

(Chs. 40-48)

This section is the record of one continuous vision. It occurred in the fourteenth year after the fall of the city. It was the crowning experience of the prophet's life. His ministry began with a vision of the glory of God, and then proceeded to show how the Lord was obliged to depart from the midst of His people and give them up to judgment. It now culminates in a vision of the Lord returning to dwell in the midst of His people and imparting to them the blessings and glories resulting from His redemption of them.

1. The Vision of the Temple (Chs. 40-42). Ezekiel was brought in a trance into the land of Israel, and set down upon a lofty mountain on which the frame of a city was spread out. There he was commanded to behold with his eyes and declare to Israel all that he saw (40:1-4). He was shown a temple already built, with all its courts and chambers. An angel took him from point to point and gave him the measurements of its various parts: the walls and gates (40:5-16), the outer court (40:17-27), the inner court (40:28-49), the temple house (ch. 41), and the chambers surrounding the house (42:1-14). Finally the outside measurements of the whole temple were given, 500 reeds on each side (42:15-20). As the measuring reed was "six cubits long, of a cubit and a handbreadth each," which

would be about ten feet, (40:5), the temple of the prophet's vision covered nearly a square mile, and so would give the impression of great spaciousness.

No command is given anywhere in the course of the vision that the Israelites were to build this temple; nor did they ever understand it so. When they returned from the Exile, they did not attempt to rebuild the Temple on this plan. This is a temple not made with hands, for God is its architect and builder. It is exhibited to the mental eye of the prophet in an idealized form. All the objects seen by him "in the visions of God" were of this nature (1:1; 8:3; 40:2). It represents the Lord's provision for dwelling in the midst of His people in the new age, according to His promise already given in the closing verses of ch. 37. As the old Temple was an embodied representation of God's relation to Israel under the old dispensation, so the temple of this vision is a symbolic representation of His relation to the new Israel when redeemed and restored (Eph. 2:19-22; Heb. 8:1-2).

The old Temple had been defiled by the sin and idolatry of Israel. The measurements of this spacious temple were intended to set forth the complete and abundant provision that God was going to make for the separation of His people from defilement and for their fellowship with Him in holiness and righteousness.

2. The Lord's Return to the Temple (43:1-12). Ezekiel had told before of seeing the glory of the Lord departing from the old Temple (ch. 11). Here he sees the same Divine symbol returning to the new temple, and coming by the way that He had gone (vs. 1-5). Then the voice of the Lord is heard from within the house, saying that He has come to dwell in the midst of His people for ever (vs. 6-9).

Ezekiel is now commanded to show Israel the form and fashion of the house (vs. 10-12).

In the preceding description of the temple no mention is made of the Ark of the Covenant, which was the very heart and centre of the old system. The interior of the sanctuary stood empty, waiting for the entrance of the Lord Himself, that He might come and fill it with His glory. He comes now in His own Person. This vision has had its fulfilment in the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, when the Lord Himself came to dwell in the midst of His disciples and make of them His spiritual temple (Acts 2:1-4; 1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:22).

3. The Altar of Burnt Offering (43:13-27). The measurements of the altar are given (vs. 13-17), and the sacrifices by which it was to be consecrated, "in the day when they shall make it", that is, when the vision should be realized (vs. 18-27). These instructions do not mean that the old ritualistic sacrifices are to be restored, for this altar, like the temple, is not erected by man. These sacrifices are symbolic of the atoning sacrifice by which the spiritual temple of Ezekiel's vision was opened to Israel, and they were fulfilled on Calvary. The seven days through which these sin offerings were to be made mark the completeness and sufficiency of the sin offering that was offered there.

4. The Ordinances of the Temple (Chs. 44-46). These chapters contain regulations for preserving the holiness of the house. Israel is warned to keep it free from defilement (44:1-8). The duties of the priests are then set forth (44:9-27). They were to "teach my people the difference between the unclean and the clean". There is no mention of the high priest, for Christ Himself was to be the High Priest

of this temple. The priests were to have no property, for the Lord was to be their inheritance (44:28-31).

The section also describes the setting apart of what was to be "a holy portion of the land". It was to be occupied by the priests and the Levites and the prince, and in the midst of it was to be the sanctuary (45:1-8). Then follow the duties of the prince, and the offerings to be given him for the support of the sacrifices (45:9-17), the offerings for the monthly cleansing of the sanctuary (45:18-20) and for the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles (45:21-25), the offerings of the prince on the various feasts (46:1-15), and his rights and obligations regarding gifts (46:16-18). Finally Ezekiel was shown the boiling houses where the servants of the sanctuary prepared the sacrifices of which the people were to partake (46:19-24).

Here again there is no reference to literal sacrifices. All this is still part of the prophet's vision. These offerings and sacrifices were intended to set forth the spiritual conditions under which the people of the new Israel should maintain their fellowship with God in the new age. There was no other way of representing these conditions to an Old Testament saint. To take these chapters literally would do violence to other Scriptures. The restoration of the Levitical sacrifices, even as a memorial of the sacrifice of Christ, would be out of keeping with the new age.

The prophet Isaiah had already foreseen that a time would come when a material temple and actual sacrifices would not be required for the worship of God (66:1-3), and the Epistle to the Hebrews shows that it would be dishonouring the sacrifice of Christ to return to them (6:6). In Ezekiel there is no

reference to the Day of Atonement or the Feast of Weeks, for these were typical events that were to happen once for all. They were fulfilled in the Cross of Christ and the Day of Pentecost. But the redeemed people must be kept continually under the efficacy of the Cross and in the fellowship of the Spirit, and that is the significance of the sacrifices of Ezekiel's vision.

5. The River Flowing from the Temple (47:1-12). The prophet was now shown a stream of living water issuing from within the temple and flowing down toward the Dead Sea. This symbol of spiritual life and blessing is no new thing in the Old Testament. It is found in Psa. 46 and Isa. 35. Its fulfillment takes us into the New Testament age and the Christian dispensation, as is revealed by such passages as John 4:14; 7:37-39; and Rev. 22:1-2.

Here the vision shows that the river of living water was to spring from the new spiritual order which Ezekiel's temple symbolized. Its source was within the temple house, where the Lord Himself dwelt (vs. 1-2). In its course it kept deepening all the way (vs. 3-5). Its effect was healing, fertilizing, and life-giving wherever it went (vs. 6-12). It was symbolical of the spiritual blessings that began to flow with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and have been flowing ever since from the ascended Lord in the midst of the Throne.

6. The Inheritance of the Land (47:13—48:7). The inheritance of Israel is next set forth. The people were to inherit the land equally, "one as well as another", all that the Lord had promised to give them (47:13-20). They were also to share it with the strangers who became members of the new Israel (47:21-23). Here we have a symbol of "the



inheritance of the saints" (Col. 1:12; Eph. 1:14). The tribes were to be arranged in parallel strips of equal width running east and west: seven north of the city (48:1-7), and five south of the city (48:23-29).

7. The Sanctuary and the City (48:8-35). Besides the portions allotted to the various tribes, a special section of the land was to be set apart with the sanctuary in the midst of it, which is described as "the oblation that ye shall offer to Jehovah" (vs. 8-9). Portions of this were for the priests and the Levites, and none of it was to be sold, for it was most holy (vs. 10-14). Another portion was assigned to the city, including its "suburbs", which meant land for cultivation by the inhabitants of the city (vs. 15-19).

The remaining portion was to constitute the inheritance of the prince. This was in two parts, comprising territory on each side of the oblation, and the sanctuary was in the middle (vs. 21-22). This sacred portion of the land, which was to be offered as "a holy oblation," extended around the city and the sanctuary. It occupied a great square of 25,000 reeds on each side (v. 20). As the measuring reed was about ten feet long (40:5), this would mean that it was about fifty miles square. It would give the impression of great enlargement over the area occupied by the old city of Jerusalem.

Ezekiel began his account of the vision of the new temple of God by referring to "the frame of a city" which he saw on the south (40:2). Now he brings his account to a close by telling us about its gates (vs. 30-35). It was an exact square; and it had twelve gates, three on each side, named after the twelve tribes of Israel, giving every tribe an entrance into the city. The circuit of the city was

18,000 reeds, which would be nearly thirty-five miles.

Then the prophet closes his vision and his book with the name of the city: "Jehovah is there". This gives us the key to the whole vision. It is a symbolic and ideal representation of the Lord's presence in the midst of His people in the new age. Its New Testament counterpart is "the holy city, new Jerusalem," which John saw "coming down out of heaven from God", when a voice from the throne declared: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21:2-3).

#### THE MESSAGE OF EZEKIEL

This book magnifies the majesty and glory of God. The usual title given Him is, "the Lord Jehovah", and the motive of His action, both in judgment and in mercy, is His own glory: "They shall know that I am Jehovah".

Ezekiel makes very few personal references to the coming Redeemer, but he adds one important feature to the portrait which the preceding prophets have drawn. The Messiah, whom the Lord calls "my servant David", was to be the Shepherd of His people (34:23-24; 37:24-25). The promise is fulfilled in the One who called Himself "the good shepherd" (John 10:11), whom Peter calls "the chief shepherd" (1 Pet. 5:4), and the writer to the Hebrews calls "the great shepherd" (Heb. 13:20).

The special contribution which Ezekiel makes to the developing plan of Divine redemption is the idea of a spiritual world. This is not stated in so many words, but the very symbolism of the book suggests

it, and the light of the New Testament brings it out. Isaiah had told of the coming redemption, and had shown that it would be accomplished by the righteous Servant of the Lord, suffering for His people and making atonement for their sin. Jeremiah had declared that it would be secured by a New Covenant, through which God's law should be written on the hearts of His people and they should be given power to fulfil it. Ezekiel now reveals the fact that all this would result in the establishment of a new Israel and a new order of things. Salvation would be realized in a new spiritual system, of which the old Mosaic system was but a shadow and type.

## THE BOOK OF DANIEL

DANIEL was one of a group of high born youths among the captives of Judah taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 604 B.C. (1:1-4). He and his three companions were given Babylonian names, and were instructed in the language and learning of the Chaldeans and afterwards employed in the king's service. Among them Daniel became pre-eminent. He rose to a place of the highest honour and dignity among all the wise men of Babylon (2:48-49). He remained in office throughout the seventy years of the captivity (1:21).

Daniel was one of the greatest men in all Scripture history. He seems to stand apart from other men in the solitary nobility and refinement of his character. All through his career he was distinguished by two supreme qualities, piety and wisdom. The impression he made upon his own time is shown by the way Ezekiel, a contemporary prophet, linked him with Noah and Job, whose characters were already dignified by antiquity (Ezek. 14:14, 20; 28:3). What Heaven thought about him is revealed in the way the angelic messenger repeatedly addressed him as a man "greatly beloved" (9:23; 10:11, 19). The secret of his character was his profound sense of the reality and sovereignty of the Lord God, and his steadfast loyalty to Him.

Although Daniel is called a prophet in the New Testament (Matt. 24:15), he did not occupy the prophetic office in Israel. He was a seer rather than a prophet in the ordinary sense. He was also a statesman occupying a high position in the govern-

ment of a great Gentile power. There he bore faithful and continuous witness to the Lord God of Israel. By the strength of his personality and by his devotion to God, he exerted a powerful influence upon such rulers as Nebuchadnezzar and Darius. And yet, great as Daniel was in himself, the deepest impression produced by his story in this book is not the greatness of the man, but the greatness of his God.

The Book of Daniel was not included among "the Prophets" in the Hebrew Canon. It differs from the prophetic books in not being composed of prophetic utterances. It is made up of two distinct parts, a narrative of certain events in Daniel's life (Chs. 1-6), and a record of certain visions given him toward the close of his life (Chs. 7-12).

Because of its peculiar character, the book stands without a parallel in the Old Testament. It has been attacked as not genuine and as not belonging to Daniel's time. The credibility of the narrative in the first part has been denied on the ground of the historical difficulties and the stories of miracles which it contains. The visions in the second part contain such particular and detailed descriptions of the time of Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabees in the second century B.C. that the book is regarded by many as a product of that age.

This view rests mainly upon a disbelief in miracles and in predictive prophecy. It takes the book simply as one of the Jewish apocalypses that began to spring up in the age between the Testaments. But the apocalyptic literature of the Jews was largely due to a misunderstanding of Messianic prophecy. It ignored the ethical and spiritual elements in the canonical Prophets, and looked for heavenly aid only for national and secular purposes. The Book

of Daniel, on the other hand, has a distinct Messianic element and a genuine spiritual quality. The march of archæological research tends to support its historicity, and its miracles present no obstacles to reverent faith. It occupies a unique place in the Canon, and serves two important purposes in the unfolding of God's redemptive plan.

1. It vindicates the honour and glory of the Lord God of Israel among the nations of the world. When Jerusalem fell before Nebuchadnezzar and Judah was in captivity, it appeared to the world of that time that the God of Israel had been discredited and that the gods of the nations had triumphed. The fidelity of Daniel and his three companions in the midst of the proud pagan Babylonian empire proved that the Lord God of Israel was God alone, the God of all the earth.

The miracles recorded in the book are an essential part of its message. Miracles occur in the Old Testament only at long intervals, and on occasions of crisis in the development of God's purpose. The time of Daniel was such a crisis. The issue was between the Lord God of Israel and the false gods of the world. The miracles by which the Lord delivered His servants in Babylon proved that He was the living and true God, and that He was the Most High, ruling in heaven and on earth.

2. The book also gives the background of world history from the fall of Jerusalem to the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Although the Lord had put His own chosen nation aside for the time being, His purpose of redemption was still moving on. The point of view, however, has now been changed from Judah and Jerusalem to the Gentile kingdoms of the world. The times of the Gentiles have begun (Luke 21:24).

From his high position in the government of a great world empire, Daniel looked out upon a world in which his own people were exiles. He was given a series of visions which revealed the general course and character of world history from his time onward.

Thus Daniel is the seer of the times of the Gentiles. His message was intended to comfort the faithful remnant among the Jews in the midst of the sufferings through which they were to pass while waiting for the Messiah, and to assure them that God was carrying on His purpose still and that His promised Kingdom was sure to come.

The book may be analysed under its two main divisions as follows:

- I. The History of Daniel—Chs. 1-6.
  1. Daniel and His Three Friends (Ch. 1)
  2. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream (Ch. 2)
  3. Daniel's Friends in the Fire (Ch. 3)
  4. Nebuchadnezzar's Madness (Ch. 4)
  5. Daniel and Belshazzar (Ch. 5)
  6. Daniel and Darius (Ch. 6)
- II. The Visions of Daniel—Chs. 7-12
  1. The Four Beasts from the Sea (Ch. 7)
  2. The Ram and the He-Goat (Ch. 8)
  3. The Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks (Ch. 9)
  4. The Prophecy of a Great Warfare (Chs. 10-12)

#### THE HISTORY OF DANIEL

(Chs. 1-6)

It is not a connected story these chapters record, but a number of isolated events from Daniel's career. These events reveal the nature of the world

in which the Jews were exiles, its proud and cruel character, and its deep hostility to God and His people. They also bring out the high qualities of Daniel's character.

1. Daniel and His Three Friends (Ch. 1). The book opens with the event which marked the beginning of the seventy years of the Babylonian captivity (vs. 1-2). Nebuchadnezzar is called the king of Babylon by anticipation. He set out for Jerusalem in his campaign against Egypt in the third year of Jehoiakim, and fought the battle of Carchemish early in the next year (Jer. 46:2). Soon after that in the same year, he succeeded his father on the throne of Babylon (Jer. 25:1). On this occasion he took captive a number of the choicest young men among the princes and nobles of Judah, that he might train them up for service in his court. Among them were Daniel and his three companions, all of whom were given Babylonian names (vs. 3-7).

These young men remained loyal to God in the midst of heathen Babylon by refusing to take food that was forbidden by the Law. The incident recorded here shows the strength of Daniel's character, his wisdom and prudence, and his high courtesy toward those in authority over him (vs. 8-13). The result of the test that he proposed vindicated him. He and his friends were allowed to proceed with their training without being ceremonially defiled. When their training was finished and they were examined by the king, these four men were found to be far ahead of all the wise men of his kingdom (vs. 14-21).

2. Interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's Dream (Ch. 2). In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar was troubled by a dream which he could not recall. He called upon his magicians to make known to



him the dream and its interpretation, and when they failed he commanded that all the wise men of Babylon should be destroyed (vs. 1-13). While the king's decree was that of a despot, yet he had the insight to see that if the claims of these men were true they ought to be able to discover the dream as well as interpret it.

Daniel and his companions were among those condemned to death. He showed his qualities of leadership and faith by obtaining an interview with the king at once, and promised to interpret the dream if time were given him (vs. 14-16). Then all four young men waited upon God in prayer, and the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. He gave thanks to God in a prayer of adoring praise, and then requested to be brought before the king (vs. 17-24).

In the presence of the king, Daniel first ascribed to God all the glory for the revelation of the dream and its interpretation, disclaiming any credit for his own wisdom. Then he described the imposing image which Nebuchadnezzar had seen, and its overthrow and destruction by a stone "cut out without hands", which smote the image upon its feet and then "became a great mountain and filled the whole earth" (vs. 25-35).

Next he proceeded to interpret the dream (vs. 36-45). The great image represented the course of world power in its unity and historical sequence up to the time when God would set up His kingdom. The times of the Gentiles are here summed up. The head of gold represented Nebuchadnezzar himself and his kingdom (the Babylonian Empire, beginning with the defeat of Egypt in 605 B.C.). Then there should follow an inferior kingdom represented by the breast and arms of silver (the Medo-Persian

Empire, beginning with the fall of Babylon in 538 B.C.), and a third kingdom represented by the belly and thighs of brass (the Grecian Empire, beginning with the overthrow of Persia in 331 B.C.). Finally, there should arise a fourth kingdom represented by the legs of iron (the Roman Empire, beginning with the battle of Actium in 31 B.C.).

This kingdom would crush all others by its mighty and destructive power; and it would deteriorate into a condition of mingled strength and weakness represented by the feet, which were part of iron and part of clay. When this last condition should be reached in the course of world history, then God would set up a kingdom of supernatural and heavenly origin, represented by the stone which, Nebuchadnezzar saw, "was cut out of the mountain without hands" and "brake in pieces" the whole image. This kingdom, which should never be destroyed, would overthrow the kingdoms of the world and take their place.

The effect of this interpretation upon Nebuchadnezzar was overpowering. It carried conviction to his mind. He acknowledged Daniel's God to be the supreme God, "the God of gods and the Lord of kings", and advanced Daniel to the head of the government of Babylon and of all the wise men (vs. 46-49).

3. Daniel's Friends in the Fire (Ch. 3). Nebuchadnezzar set up an image of gold of great height, which he commanded all those who held any office in his kingdom to worship, or they would be cast into a furnace of fire (vs. 1-7). Here we have an example of the state assuming control of religious worship. This act, which was prompted by the king's pride, probably had some connection in his

mind with the head of gold in the image of his dream.

Daniel's three friends, who had been appointed at his request to official positions in the province of Babylon (2:49), were reported to the king as not worshipping the image. They were summoned before him, and in reply to his threat they declared that their God was able to deliver them out of his hand, and that they would not worship his gods (vs. 8-18).

In a furious rage, Nebuchadnezzar commanded the furnace to be heated seven times hotter. The men who cast in the three Jews were slain by the heat of it (vs. 19-23). Then these three men were seen walking unharmed in the midst of the fire, and another with them of divine aspect. Nebuchadnezzar in his astonishment had them brought forth, and all his officers of state saw that the fire had not even touched their bodies or their garments. Then the king issued a decree acknowledging that the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego had "delivered his servants that trusted in him", and forbidding any one to speak against Him, "because there is no other god that can deliver after this sort". Then he promoted the three Jews to higher office (vs. 24-30).

4. Nebuchadnezzar's Madness (Ch. 4). This chapter contains a proclamation published by Nebuchadnezzar himself. He begins with an ascription of praise to the Most High God (vs. 1-3). Then he goes on to tell of a dream that troubled him. When the magicians could not interpret the dream for him, he told it to Daniel (vs. 4-9). He saw a tree, towering to heaven, giving shelter to the beasts and the birds. Then an angel from heaven gave a command to cut it down, leaving only the stump in the

earth, till seven times should pass over it (vs. 10-18).

The effect upon Daniel when the meaning of the dream flashed upon him was profound, and shows his high regard for Nebuchadnezzar. The king, who had become so great, was to be driven from men and live with the beasts of the field for seven years, till he should acknowledge that "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will". Daniel followed up this interpretation with an earnest appeal to Nebuchadnezzar to turn from his sins (vs. 19-27).

All this came upon Nebuchadnezzar a year later. While he was walking in his royal palace, proudly boasting of the city he had built, a voice from heaven declared that the kingdom was departed from him. He was stricken with madness, and driven from among men to live among the beasts of the field (vs. 28-33). At the end of the time he lifted his heart to God, and his reason returned to him. He was restored to his throne and established in his kingdom again. In gratitude for his recovery he issued this edict, in which he praises and extols the Most High God, who rules in heaven and earth, and can abase those that walk in pride (vs. 34-37).

This statement about the power and character of God is a further advance on the two earlier confessions which Nebuchadnezzar had made (2:47; 3:28-29). It marks the final result of Daniel's influence upon him. It is not improbable that the great Babylonian monarch was led at last out of his heathen superstition into the knowledge of God.

5. Daniel and Belshazzar (Ch. 5). Belshazzar, whom recent archæology has identified as the son of Nabonidus the last king of Babylon, and as co-regent with his father, now comes upon the scene. During a great feast that he made to a thousand of

his lords, he defied the Lord God of Israel by having the sacred vessels of the Temple brought in for a carousal in which to praise the gods of Babylon (vs. 1-4). Then follows a graphic picture—the fingers of a man's hand seen writing upon the wall where the light was brightest, the consternation of the king, his frantic call for an interpreter, and the dismay of his court when the magicians failed (vs. 5-9).

At this juncture the queen-mother—possibly Nebuchadnezzar's widow, but more probably the wife of Nabonidus—came into the banquet hall and told the king of Daniel whom “the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians”. The wife of Nabonidus was probably the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, and the queen-mother could speak of him as the father (grandfather) of Belshazzar. Then Daniel was brought in, and Belshazzar offered him high rewards if he would interpret the writing (vs. 10-16). Daniel spurned the king's gifts, reminded him that the pride of Nebuchadnezzar had been humbled, and charged him with lifting up himself against the Most High God. The writing on the wall announced his doom and that of his kingdom (vs. 17-28).

That same night the judgment fell, and Belshazzar was slain (vs. 29-31). This story agrees with that of the Greek historian Xenophon, who tells us that Babylon fell during a night of “high festivity”, and that its “king” was overpowered and slain. Darius the Mede who “received the kingdom” is otherwise unknown to history, but it is possible to identify him with Gobryas, who commanded the army of Cyrus at the capture of Babylon and was made governor afterwards.

6. Daniel and Darius (Ch. 6). When the kingdom was organized under the rule of the Medes and Persians, Daniel was given a high position, and his pre-eminent ability was recognized by Darius (vs. 1-3). This aroused the jealousy of the other officers of state, and they planned the downfall of Daniel. Knowing that they could find no occasion against him except through his piety, they got the king to sign a decree that for thirty days no petition should be asked of God or man except of the king (vs. 4-9).

This request of theirs, which was intended to flatter the king, shows that Daniel's habit of prayer was well known. His loyalty to God never wavered. He continued his acts of prayer and praise three times a day as before, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, and the fact was reported to the king. Darius was greatly disturbed, and showed his esteem and affection for Daniel by the prolonged effort he made to deliver him. But according to the law of the Medes and Persians he could not change his own decree (vs. 10-15).

The king gave the command, and his loyal servant, the aged Daniel, who must have been nearly ninety by this time, was cast into the den of lions. Darius committed him to his God, and spent the night in fasting and mourning. Early in the morning he hurried to the den, and found to his great joy that Daniel was unharmed. In the midst of the lions he was unhurt, "because he had trusted in his God" (vs. 16-23). Then the king consigned Daniel's accusers and their families to the doom they had intended for him, and issued a decree that all people under his dominion should honour the God of Daniel, "for he is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and his dominion shall be even unto the end" (vs.

24-28). Thus Daniel's steadfast piety brought Darius into the light of the knowledge of "the living God".

### THE VISION OF THE FOUR BEASTS (Ch. 7)

The second part of the book (Chs. 7-12) contains four visions seen by Daniel in the closing years of his life. They all belong to the period stretching between Daniel's day and the consummation of God's purpose with Israel. They were intended to give light and comfort to the devout and faithful Jews during the long dark age between the cessation of prophecy and the coming of the Messiah. The vision of the four beasts in ch. 7 is parallel with Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image in ch. 2.

1. The Vision (vs. 1-14). In the first year of Belshazzar this vision came to Daniel in a dream one night. The winds of heaven stirred up a storm upon the great sea (the Mediterranean), and out of the sea came four great beasts one after another: a lion with eagle's wings, a bear with three ribs in its mouth, a leopard with four wings on its back and four heads, and a monster of mighty power and dreadful aspect with great iron teeth. This fourth beast, which was different from all the others and more destructive, had ten horns, and among them a little horn arose having eyes of a man and a mouth full of proud words (vs. 1-8).

As Daniel beheld, he saw the Ancient of days sitting upon a throne of fire in the midst of the heavenly court of judgment with the angelic hosts before Him. Because of the proud words of the little horn, the beast was slain and its body destroyed (vs. 9-12). Then out of the clouds appeared

one in human form, who was brought near before the Ancient of days. To him was given universal dominion and a kingdom that should not be destroyed (vs. 13-14). These verses recall pictures drawn in Psalms 2 and 110. In New Testament light they set forth the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ to the throne in Heaven, and His reign there (1 Cor. 15:25; Mark 16:19; Acts 1:9; Rev. 5:6). This event, in one sense, was a day of judgment for the nations.

2. The Interpretation (vs. 15-28). Daniel was troubled by the vision and asked one of the angels that stood by what it meant, and he was given the interpretation. The four beasts were four world powers that should arise in the course of history. But the saints of God should be given the kingdom and possess it for ever (vs. 15-18). As a whole, the four beasts correspond with the four parts of the great image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. There, however, world power is seen as a colossal human figure, resplendent and imposing. That is world power as man sees it. Here it is represented in the form of savage and ravenous beasts. This is world power as God sees it, in its essential character of brutalized self-interest.

Daniel wished to know more about the fourth beast, so different from the rest in its terrible destructiveness, and about the ten horns, and about the other horn before which three of them fell, "whose look was more stout than its fellows", the horn that made war with the people of God and prevailed until the Ancient of days gave the judgment to them and they possessed the kingdom (vs. 19-22). The heavenly interpreter then went on to tell more about this fourth beast, and especially about the horn that came up last. It represented a



different kind of power from the other horns. It would "speak words" against the Most High, and wear out His saints until the time of judgment arrived; and then the kingdom should be given to them (vs. 23-28).

As all these beasts are symbolical, so also are all the details in the description of them. The fourth beast represents the Roman Empire. The ten horns—a symbolical number—represent the nations that came into being from the break-up of the Empire. The little horn, which came up after them but was different from them, represents another kind of power, a religious power, which arose out of the Roman Empire in the midst of these civil powers, usurping the rule of the Most High, persecuting the people of God, and using the civil powers for its purpose.

Here the Roman Papacy is depicted. The Papal system grew to be the most subtle and powerful of all the institutions that developed out of ancient Rome. No other power in human history has "spoken words against the Most High" as the Papacy has done, by usurping the place of the Spirit of God in the Church of God. No other power has "worn out the saints of the Most High" as the Papacy has done, by its remorseless and unceasing persecution of evangelical Christianity.

In the light of Christian history, the fourth beast, taken as a whole with its ten horns and its other little horn, represents the world order of national governments, with the Papacy in the midst of them making its arrogant claims and exerting its malignant influence. This is the legacy that pagan Rome bequeathed to the world. It all developed out of the old Roman Empire.

According to the vision, this condition of things

would continue in the world "until a time and times and half a time" (v. 25), a phrase which occurs again in 12:7, where its significance is indicated. In due season "the great words which the horn spake" (v. 11) would bring down Divine judgment and destruction upon the beast. The national world order would be overthrown because civil governments allowed themselves to be used and perverted by the little horn. The vision points forward to a supernatural intervention of the Lord in human history, and to the establishment of His universal and everlasting Kingdom (v. 27; Rev. 11:15).

#### THE VISION OF THE RAM AND THE GOAT (Ch. 8)

1. The Vision (vs. 1-14). Two years later another vision appeared to Daniel, supplementary to the first. He seemed in the vision to be in Shushan, which at a later period became the capital of the Persian Empire. There he saw a ram with two horns pushing west, north, and south, which overthrew every beast in its way and became very powerful (vs. 1-4). Then a he-goat with a conspicuous horn came rushing from the west in the fury of its power, and overthrew the ram. When the he-goat was at the height of its power, the great horn was broken, and four other horns came up in its place toward the four points of the compass (vs. 5-8).

Out of one of these horns there came a little horn, which grew very powerful toward Palestine, "the glorious land." It made war against the host of Heaven (the people of the Lord), and even against the Prince of the host (the Lord Himself). It took

away the daily burnt offering and broke down His sanctuary. This desolation of the sanctuary was permitted because of the transgression of the Law, and it was announced that it should continue for 2,300 days, and then the sanctuary should be cleansed (vs. 9-14).

2. The Interpretation (vs. 15-27). As Daniel sought to understand the vision, the angel Gabriel appeared to him, and was commissioned to give him the interpretation. Daniel was at first overpowered by the majestic appearance of the angel, who began by telling him that the vision would be fulfilled at "the time of the end". This phrase means the time between the end of the Old Testament dispensation and the appearance of the Messiah, during which God's redemptive purpose with Israel would be coming to a head (vs. 15-18). The ram with the two horns was the double kingdom of Medo-Persia, the second beast of the preceding vision. The rough he-goat was the Grecian empire, the third beast of the preceding vision. The great horn was its founder, Alexander the Great; and the other four horns were the four parts into which his empire broke up after his death (vs. 19-22).

The angel then went on to explain the career of the little horn. It represented a king of fierce and crafty power, who should arise when the apostate Jews had filled up the measure of their guilt. He would exercise his power and craft against the Lord's people, and "also stand up against the Prince of princes"; but he should be overthrown by an act of God (vs. 23-25). This prediction was fulfilled in the person of Antiochus Epiphanes king of Syria, who attempted to destroy the Jewish race and blot out their religion. His terrible persecution of the Jews began about 171 B.C., and was brought to an

end by the deliverance of Jerusalem and the restoration of the Temple services under the Maccabees in 165 B.C.

It was the most subtle, malicious, and persistent attack on the chosen people of God in all the ages before Christ. Behind it was a Satanic attempt to prevent the coming of the Messiah. The vision was intended to comfort the faithful Jews in the days of their persecution, and assure them that their sufferings should last only for a limited time. The revelation was to be shut up and kept safe, for the time of its fulfilment was yet far off. The effect upon Daniel when he heard the angel's message was overpowering (vs. 26-27).

#### THE PROPHECY OF THE SEVENTY WEEKS (Ch. 9)

1. The Prophet's Prayer (vs. 1-19). In the first year of Darius, Daniel learned from the prophecies of Jeremiah (Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10) that seventy years were the allotted measure of Jerusalem's desolation at the hands of Babylon (vs. 1-2). As this period was drawing to a close, Daniel set himself to wait upon God with prayer and fasting. Making himself one with his people, he confessed their sin and rebellion against God in disregarding the words of the prophets (vs. 3-8), and acknowledged the righteousness and justice of God in all the evil that He had brought upon Israel (vs. 9-14). Then he appealed to God, whose redemption of His people from Egypt had gotten Him a great name, to turn away His wrath from them now because they had become a reproach among the nations (vs. 15-16). Daniel closed his prayer with an earnest and fervent appeal that the Lord would accomplish His redeeming work for His people (vs. 17-19).

2. The Angel's Message (vs. 20-27). While Daniel was still praying, the angel Gabriel appeared to him for the second time, being sent in answer to his prayer to instruct him and give him a further revelation (vs. 20-23). The revelation was communicated in the prophecy regarding the seventy weeks (vs. 24-27). It is a prediction of the time when Christ's advent should take place, of the work of redemption which He should accomplish, and of the further desolation that should fall on Israel because of their rejection of Him.

The message was delivered with great solemnity. Gabriel speaks in the strain of one who moves within the clear light of the purpose and plan of God. He knows what has been "decreed". He views the whole period from the Divine standpoint. The "going forth of the commandment" is its promulgation in Heaven. It is not the development of human forces that he is tracing, but the working out of the Divine purpose in the details of human history. The passage contains one of the greatest of the Messianic prophecies. Its significance is so important that it will be well to give an extended exposition of it. It is best analyzed verse by verse.

Verse 24. A general statement of the whole period still remaining for the accomplishment of God's purpose with His people. Not seventy years, but seventy weeks of years were still to pass before God's redemptive purpose should be accomplished. Six objects are stated which were to be achieved in the work of redemption. These may be grouped into three pairs. The first pair relate to the sins of Israel which Daniel had been confessing. It was God's purpose, by an act of redeeming grace, "to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins".

This He did when Jesus Christ put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb. 9:26).

The second pair indicate the means by which this should be accomplished: "to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness". Here we have the atonement of Christ on the Cross, and the righteousness of God which He wrought out, now revealed and offered in the Gospel (Rom. 1:17; 3:21).

The third pair refer to the results which should follow: "to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy." Here we have the consummation of the Old Testament dispensation and the establishment of the Christian Church. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ sealed up "vision and prophecy", by fulfilling and accomplishing their one great theme (Heb. 1:1-2; Rom. 1:1-4). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost anointed "the most holy", by bringing into being the new spiritual temple of the Church (Acts 1:4-5; 1 Cor. 3:16; 12:12-13; Heb. 10:19-20).

Verse 25. A specific prediction of the time of Christ's appearance in Israel and the intervening period. "From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the anointed one", should be a period of sixty-nine weeks or 483 years. There are three possible dates from which this period of time may be reckoned, for there are three decrees recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah by which "the going forth of the commandment" from Heaven was progressively fulfilled on earth. They are 537 (Ezra 1:1-4), 457 (Ezra 7:11-28), and 444 (Neh. 2:1-8). By trying each of these in turn, we find that from the second date to the appearance of Jesus at the Jordan in A.D. 26, when He was anointed by the Holy Spirit and publicly introduced

to Israel by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:16-17; John 1:29-34), was exactly the period mentioned.

The sixty-nine weeks are divided into two periods of "seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks." During the seven weeks (49 years) Jerusalem was to be rebuilt, and these should be times of trouble. This takes us to the close of the Old Testament age, leaving the sixty-two weeks (434 years) for the long gap between the cessation of Divine prophecy and its restoration in the person of John the Baptist at the beginning of the New Testament age.

Verse 26. A specific prediction of Christ's rejection by Israel, and of the consequent destruction of the city and the Temple by the Romans. After the sixty-two weeks—how long after is not stated—"shall the anointed one be cut off, and shall have nothing". He should appear to have achieved nothing and gained no following, and His life should seem to have ended in failure. This prediction was fulfilled in the Jews' rejection and crucifixion of Christ in A.D. 30.

"And the people of the prince that shall come"—the Prince of the preceding verse, the Messiah Himself, the only "prince" in the prophecy—"shall destroy the city and the sanctuary", and leave desolation behind. This prediction was fulfilled in the capture and destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Romans in A.D. 70. The Romans are called "the people of the prince", because they were His agents of judgment, in the same sense as Babylon was God's "battle-axe" (Jer. 51:20) and Nebuchadnezzar was His "servant" (Jer. 43:10), and the Medes were His "consecrated ones" (Isa. 13:3). Jesus speaks of them in Matt. 22:7 as "his armies".

Verse 27. A specific prediction of the seventieth week and the Messianic work that was wrought in it.

This verse now takes up the final week, in which God's purpose was to be accomplished in Israel. "He shall make a firm covenant with many": the subject is still the Messiah, for the one consistent theme of the whole passage is Christ and His work of redemption. The reference is to the New Covenant already foretold by Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31-34). The Messiah should confirm the covenant "with many", that is, with the believing remnant in Israel.

The very words of this verse were used in Christ's institution of the Supper in the upper room, when He spoke of His blood of the covenant being poured out "for many" (Mark 14:24). The completion of redemption, represented by the confirming of this covenant, was the work accomplished in the seventieth week. The words rendered "for one week" also mean "in one week", for there is no preposition in the original, and they could be so rendered here. They do not indicate a limited time during which the covenant was to last, but the period within which the covenant was to be confirmed with the remnant of Israel.

The seventieth week began with the baptism of Jesus. By His death "in the midst of the week", three and a half years afterwards, when His "hour" had come (John 17:1), Christ caused "the sacrifice and the oblation to cease". The Levitical system of sacrifices and offerings came to an end in the sacrifice of the Cross (Matt. 27:50-51). The rest of the verse describes the age-long desolation which came in with the Roman invasion, and followed the destruction of the Jewish ceremonial system, which had now lost its true character in God's sight.

Nothing is said in the prophecy about the last half of the week. The three and a half years after the death of Christ extended to the martyrdom of



Stephen, when Jewish unbelief finally hardened (Acts 7). The same group of rulers who had condemned Jesus for His Messianic claims condemned Stephen for his testimony to Jesus. After that, the Gospel was given to the Gentiles; the "seventy weeks" allotted to the Jews had come to an end.

### THE REVELATION OF A GREAT WARFARE

(Chs. 10-12)

1. The Vision (10:1-11:1). In the third year of Cyrus, two years after the exiles had returned to Judah, Daniel received his last vision. He had been giving himself to fasting and prayer for three whole weeks, when an angel of glorious aspect appeared to him (vs. 1-9). This angel told Daniel that he had been sent in answer to his prayer on the first day, but had been delayed by a conflict with the prince of Persia throughout the twenty-one days.

Here we have a glimpse of the spiritual background of world history. Behind the conflicts of the nations there is a conflict of unseen powers. The prince of Persia was one of "the world-rulers of this darkness" and belonged to "the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12). It is with this invisible world that the prayers of the saints have to do. The angel was now come to tell Daniel what should befall his people "in the latter days", that is, during the time when God's purpose with them would be coming to a head (vs. 10-17). Daniel, who had been overpowered by the vision of the angel, was now strengthened and prepared for the revelation that he was about to receive (vs. 18-19).

Then the angel went on to tell Daniel that he would continue to fight against the prince of Persia,

and after that he would meet the hostile approach of the prince of Greece. This was preparing the prophet for the troublous times which, he was to be informed, his people should pass through under the coming Grecian Empire. But the angel encouraged Daniel by assuring him that Michael would stand with him in the conflict as the champion of Israel (vs. 20-21), as he had done at the beginning of the Persian Empire when Babylon fell (11:1).

2. The Revelation (11:2—12:4). This is a prophetic view of world history in its relation to Israel from Daniel's day to the consummation of God's redeeming purpose. It tells of the warfare of the nations through which Israel was to pass. Divine revelation was about to cease, and Gentile powers were to trample Israel under foot for a long time to come.

This prophecy was given to Daniel in order that the faithful Jews might derive comfort and strength from it, by having light on their way as they passed through their time of trial. This accounts for its studied minuteness of detail. It sets forth the nature of world history as a tangled web of earthly politics, full of intrigue, ambition, selfishness, and violence. But it shows how God overrules the schemes of men for His own purposes, and how they work out the will of God in the end.

The historic fulfilment of the prophecy may be drawn out as follows: The course of kingly rule in Persia and Greece up to the death of Alexander the Great ("a mighty king") in 323 B.C., and the subsequent division of his empire (11:2-4). The rival kingdoms of Egypt ("the king of the south") and Syria ("the king of the north") contending for Palestine (11:5-19). The career of Antiochus Epiphanes ("a contemptible person") and his war

with Egypt (11:20-27). His persecution of the Jews and his attempt to destroy their religion ("the holy covenant"), and the exploits of the Maccabees ("the people that know their God") and their restoration of the Temple services in 165 B.C. (11:28-35). The career of Herod the Great ("the king"), his godless reign over the Jews, his opposition to the purposes of God and his hostility to the infant Messiah ("the desire of women"), and his ambitious intrigues with the rising power of Rome (11:36-39). The conflicts in and around Palestine during his reign in the early years of the Roman Empire, his policy of favouring both the Romans and the Jews, and his terrible end in 4 B.C. (11:40-45).

At this point a Divine intervention is announced: "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people". This brings the course of the prophecy to the time of Jesus Christ—the appearance of the Messiah in Israel. But here the detailed prediction stops. The next words foretell the great tribulation which came upon the Jews because of their rejection of Christ (12:1; cf. Matt. 24:21), and proceed with a general description of the Christian age and its final issue (12:2-3; cf. John 5:25-29). This brought the revelation to a close, and Daniel was told to have the book in which it was recorded made safe and secure, "even to the time of the end". Many would then anxiously search for the truth it contained, and the book would give them the knowledge of God's ways (12:4).

3. A Final Message to Daniel (12:5-13). After the revelation had been given, Daniel saw two other heavenly beings standing by the river Tigris where he saw the vision (10:4). One of them asked the angel who had given Daniel the revelation how long

all this should continue. The reply was uttered with great solemnity: "for a time, times, and a half; and when they have made an end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people all these things shall be finished" (vs. 5-7). When this answer is compared with the statement of Jesus in Luke 21:24, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled", it appears that this symbolic period, "a time, times, and a half", represents that portion of the times of the Gentiles that coincides with the Christian age.

Three times and a half is the same as half a week, and the expression is probably based on the second half of the seventieth week of the preceding vision (9:27). Jesus Christ accomplished His Messianic work in the first half of that week. The second half marks the period in which the New Covenant was finally established with the "many" in Israel, thus bringing to an end the Jewish dispensation, and bringing into being the Christian Church. It then takes on a symbolic significance as meaning the rest of the Messianic age, or the whole Christian dispensation. It has been used already in describing the career of the little horn (7:25); and it appears again in the Book of Revelation (11:2-3), where the same age is described symbolically as 42 months and as 1260 days. Both these periods are three years and a half, and correspond with "a time, times, and a half".

Daniel did not understand the answer of the angel, but the matter was not explained any further. He was told to be at peace, and was given a comforting assurance that the wise should understand when the time for the fulfilment arrived (vs. 8-10). Then the angel added another prediction for Daniel's comfort, which is somewhat obscure (vs. 11-12). Its

probable meaning is, that when the sacrificial system of worship would be swept away by the desolating armies of pagan Rome, the time of that tribulation should be limited, and a blessing should await those who patiently endured throughout the period and beyond it.

Our Lord refers to this passage in His prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem (Matt. 24:15-22). The mention of "the abomination that maketh desolate" being set up (cf. 9:27; 11:31) means that pagan worship would take the place of the worship of God in the Holy Land. Since the Roman destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, Palestine has been under this "abomination" in one form or another ever since. The prophecy closes with a promise to Daniel that at the end he should receive his allotted portion of the inheritance given to the people of God (v. 13). Here we have a foreshadowing of "the inheritance of the saints" (Col. 1:12; Heb. 9:15; 1 Pet. 1:4), and with this promise the Book of Daniel comes to an end.

### THE MESSAGE OF DANIEL

This book magnifies the sovereignty of God. The great truth stands out upon it that there is a God in Heaven who rules over the affairs of men. The statement that occurs three times in the fourth chapter may be taken as its key-note: "The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (vs. 17, 25, 32). Daniel looked down the ages of human history and saw the kingdoms of the world come and go. Behind them he saw another Kingdom arise of a heavenly order which should not pass away.

Through all these successive ages God was work-

ing out His purposes of redemption for His people, and would accomplish it when the fulness of the time should come. The Messianic Prince, promised by previous prophets, would come and establish the New Covenant and bring in the New Kingdom. In the meantime, God was watching over His servants and caring for His own in the midst of the tribulation through which they had to pass while waiting for the coming of the Redeemer.

Daniel is thus the prophet of the Advent. The significant feature of his visions and predictions consists in the fact that they indicated the point of time in the course of Israel's history when the Saviour would appear on the stage of world affairs.

## THE BOOK OF HOSEA

HOSEA belonged to Northern Israel, and his message was directed to that kingdom. He addressed it under various names—as Israel, Ephraim (37 times), Samaria, and Jacob. He had the southern kingdom also in view, for Judah comes in for an occasional warning. Hosea was an early contemporary of Isaiah (1:1; Isa. 1:1). His ministry began in the reign of Jeroboam II and continued for a long time after the death of that king. Jeroboam died before his contemporary Uzziah, and Hosea continued to prophesy until Hezekiah was reigning in the southern kingdom. His ministry probably extended over the last fifty years of Northern Israel.

This was the darkest period in the life of that kingdom. The story is told in 2 Kings 15-17. The reign of Jeroboam II had been one of expansion and prosperity, but it was followed by anarchy and misrule. Kings came to the throne by the murder of their predecessors. Four of the six kings who followed Jeroboam died by violence.

Through all this period the national character and conduct was very corrupt. The prosperity of Jeroboam's reign had only given increased opportunity for self-indulgence and sin. The calf-worship set up by Jeroboam I had never been stopped. Worse forms of idolatry also were practised. Northern Israel was fast hurrying on to its ruin. The nation sought to strengthen itself against the growing power of Assyria by foreign alliances, but these only brought further trouble. Assyrian invasions occurred more than once (2 Kings 15:19, 29). At last the

Assyrians laid siege to Samaria, the proud capital of the kingdom, which they finally captured and destroyed in 721 B.C. Most of the inhabitants of the land were removed into exile, and thus the northern kingdom came to a disastrous end.

During this period of rapid decline between Jeroboam II and the fall of the kingdom, the prophet Hosea was preaching the messages contained in this book. He had a sad domestic history. His wife proved unfaithful. But the very nature of her sin was the means of helping the prophet to realize the true nature of Israel's sin against God and the great strength and tenderness of God's love for Israel.

The book falls into two clearly marked but unequal parts. The first part (Chs. 1-3) deals with the training of the prophet, and shows how the Lord used the tragic history of Hosea's home to prepare him for his special mission to Israel. The second part (Chs. 4-13) contains the messages which Hosea delivered to Israel after being thus prepared and trained. Through him the Lord carried on a controversy with His people.

### THE LORD'S TRAINING OF THE PROPHET (Chs. 1-3)

Through a sorrowful domestic experience, Hosea was prepared for his special mission, and was brought to understand God's feeling toward His unfaithful people Israel.

1. The Prophet's Family (1:1—2:1). Looking back upon his life, Hosea saw that the impulse that resulted in his marrying Gomer and in bringing such sorrow upon him was part of the Divine method of preparing him for his subsequent ministry to Israel (vs. 2-3).



His family was a symbol of the nation. The names given to the children foreshadowed God's punishment and rejection of Israel (vs. 3-9). The name Jezreel, which means "God will scatter", also implied a reference to the fact that the chief crimes of the kings of Israel since Ahab's time had been committed at the city, or in the valley, of Jezreel. Lo-ruhamah ("not pitied") meant that Israel had forfeited the mercy of God. Lo-ammi ("not my people") meant that Israel was now rejected.

Immediately after this announcement of God's judgment, there comes a promise of the ultimate restoration of Israel. Judah and Israel should be reunited under one head with their numbers greatly increased (vs. 10-11). The nation should yet be recognized as God's people and should yet obtain His mercy. This is indicated by the change in the names (2:1). This verse is closely connected with the latter part of v. 11: "Great shall be the day of Jezreel". The name of the first son does not need to be changed, but is used in another sense: "God will sow".

2. The Unfaithful Wife (2:2-23). The shameful sin of the mother of the family was a revelation of the sin of Israel as God saw it. Israel's apostasy from God was like Gomer's unfaithfulness to her husband. God would visit it with judgment by removing the blessings of the land and bringing desolation upon it, and putting the nation to shame in the eyes of the world (vs. 2-13).

Out of the wilderness of her discipline and suffering the Lord would draw her back to Himself. There should be a national conversion and restoration of Israel, and she should return to the Lord as her Husband (vs. 14-20). He would renew the bless-

ings of the land and take her back into fellowship with Himself (vs. 21-23).

3. The Faithful Husband (Ch. 3). In obedience to an impulse from the Lord, the prophet bought back his erring wife for the price of a slave (vs. 1-2). For a time after that he kept her in seclusion and suspended fellowship (v. 3). This action on the part of Hosea was symbolic of the unfailing love of God in the redemption of Israel, and of His tender patience in chastening His wayward people. The isolation of Gomer foreshadowed a condition into which Israel should be brought when they should be neither in fellowship with God nor worshipping idols (v. 4).

This prophecy had a primary fulfilment in the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles, but has been fulfilled completely in Israel's long history since their rejection of Christ and the subsequent destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. They are "without king, and without prince"; that is, they have no civil government, neither one central head nor lower officers of state. They are "without sacrifice, and without pillar"; that is, they have neither their old sacrificial system of religious worship nor any idolatrous system. They are "without ephod or teraphim"; that is, they have neither their old means of receiving divine communications nor any false means.

The ultimate issue of this discipline, the prophet declared, would be the national repentance and conversion of Israel. They "shall return and seek Jehovah their God, and David their king"—not the David of the past, but the promised son of David, the Messiah himself (v. 5). This is the prophetic event to which Paul refers in Rom. 11:25-26.

## THE LORD'S CONTROVERSY WITH ISRAEL

(Chs. 4-14)

These chapters contain the substance of the messages that the prophet delivered to Israel throughout his long ministry, after being trained and equipped by the experiences through which he had passed. In them are set forth the shameful nature of Israel's sin and the infinite tenderness of God's love. The first verse of ch. 4 contains the key-note of the whole: "Jehovah hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land".

1. The Essence of Sin (Chs. 4-5). Hosea sees the heart of sin as unfaithfulness to love, and brands the sin and apostasy of Israel in terms taken from the sin of Gomer.

In ch. 4 the address is directed to the people as a whole: "Ye children of Israel". There is first a denunciation of the nation because of the breakdown of all morality, in which both priests and prophets were involved (vs. 1-5). The cause of their sin is declared to be the failure of the priests to teach the people the Law and their rejection of the knowledge of God (vs. 6-10). Then comes an account of the terrible apostasy of the people (vs. 11-14), followed by a warning to Judah to shun the sin of Israel (vs. 15-19). The prophet contemptuously calls Bethel ("house of God"), which was the centre of the calf-worship, Beth-aven ("house of vanity," cf. 10:5, 8). For this idolatry there was no cure but the storm-wind of judgment.

In ch. 5 Hosea addresses the priests and the rulers. They are responsible for the corrupt state of the nation, for the people have followed their lead (vs. 1-7). The prophet then summons the trumpet to be blown in the central places of the

land, for God's judgment is coming upon Israel (vs. 8-11). His processes of judgment are depicted in three forms: moth and rottenness, as emblems of slow destruction; a young lion, as a symbol of devouring judgment; and finally, the withdrawal of God from the midst of His people till they seek His face (vs. 12-15).

2. The Need of Repentance (Chs. 6-7). The prophet now associates himself with the people and utters a plaintive appeal for repentance (6:1-3). Whatever local application these words may have had, there is an evident Messianic reference in them, for they have their ultimate fulfilment in the resurrection and ascension of Christ and in the subsequent outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

But there was no evidence of repentance in Israel in those days, and the Lord's disappointment over them is declared in the next verses (6:4-11). In the statement, "I desire goodness and not sacrifice", there is no repudiation of the sacrificial system, but an indication of God's purpose in it all. Jesus quoted this passage on two occasions against the hypocrisy and religious formalism of the Pharisees (Matt. 9:13; 12:7). The Lord desired to produce in Israel the character of goodness and trust in Himself. But instead of this there had been persistent and treacherous transgression of their covenant with Him. "But they like Adam have transgressed the covenant" (v. 7 cf. Job 31:33). The sin of Israel was like that of the first man, a transgression of the known will of God in the face of His great goodness. Let Judah also take warning: "There is a harvest appointed for thee" (v. 11).

The prophet then goes on to declare that the Lord's desire to heal Israel is being frustrated by the widespread corruption of the people. They are all

alike involved in it—the kings, the princes, and the judges (7:1-7). The folly of the nation is shown in its sinful alliances and idolatrous intercourse with other nations, and in its utter ignorance of the decay and ruin coming upon it (7:8-12). There is no sign of repentance, no return to Him when He chastens them, but only a hypocritical pretence of religious zeal (7:13-16).

3. The Nature of Judgment (Chs. 8-10). The prophet begins his pronouncement of judgment with the statement, "Set the trumpet to thy mouth", and follows it with the announcement of an eagle coming against the house of the Lord. This is a reference to the threatening Assyrian invasion. Judgment is the necessary and inevitable sequel of sin. Having sown the wind, Israel should reap the whirlwind (8:1-7). Because of their alliances with the nations, they should be scattered among the nations; and because of the multiplied idolatries of their cities, their cities should be destroyed (8:8-14).

The character of the judgment is set forth in ch. 9. Israel is bidden to rejoice not, for the elements of joy should fail her. The people should be removed from the land and from the fellowship of the Lord, and prophecy should cease to give them any divine light (vs. 1-9). Israel should become abominable and degenerate, and should be cast away by God to wander among the nations (vs. 10-17).

The case against Israel is summed up in ch. 10. The passage is full of difficulties, but its general sense may be drawn out as follows: The land of Northern Israel was luxuriantly fruitful, and the people were using its very fruitfulness to minister to their idolatry. They were multiplying altars, but God would find them guilty and destroy their altars.

They had no king worthy of the name; and because they had no reverence for the Lord, the king they did have could do nothing for them. Their false swearing in making covenants should yield a bitter harvest of judgment (vs. 1-4).

The citizens of Samaria should be in abject fear for the safety of their gods—the calves of their empty idol worship. The golden calf of Bethel was helpless to save them and should be carried off itself as a present to the fighting king of Assyria. Their own king should be cut off as worthless, like foam upon the water. The high places where their vain idolatrous worship was carried on should be grown over with thorns and thistles to cover the sin and shame of Israel (vs. 5-8). The language Hosea uses throughout is strongly sarcastic. He even scoffs at the military might of the Assyrian monarch by applying a nickname to him—"king Jareb"—which may be rendered, "king Combat," (cf. 5:13).

The sin of Israel went far back: they had sinned since the affair at Gibeah (Jud. 19-20). Therefore the Lord would chastise them and bring the nations against them, now that "they are bound to their two transgressions" (vs. 9-10). The reference here is either to the two golden calves (1 Kgs. 12:28-29), or to the double apostasy of the ten tribes—from the worship of the Lord and from the royal house of David. The nation should have a yoke put upon her fair neck and be compelled to toil for another (v. 11).

The prophet goes on to make an earnest appeal to Israel to break up their fallow ground and seek the Lord "till he come and rain righteousness" upon them (v. 12). In these words there is a foregleam of Christ as the righteousness of God sent down

from Heaven. But in the meantime, the wickedness of Israel was to be punished by an overwhelming judgment which should ruin the nation (vs. 13-15). Here we have the prophet's forecast of the final Assyrian invasion.

4. The Triumph of Love (Chs. 11-14). The last section of the book reveals the very heart of God and expresses the deep tenderness of His love for Israel.

(1) The Lord's unfailing love for Israel (11: 1-11). He reminds the people of His tender love for them when He brought them out of Egypt and trained them in the early days of their national history (vs. 1-4). He is obliged to punish them now and deliver them over to the power of Assyria, because they are bent on backsliding (vs. 5-7).

Then He makes a tender appeal, revealing the yearning compassion of His heart over His wayward people. He would not destroy them completely as He destroyed the cities of the Plain (Deut. 29:23): "for I am God, and not man: the Holy One in the midst of thee". In Him justice and mercy were blended. His purpose was that they should ultimately return unto Him in humble repentance from all quarters of the world (vs. 8-11). At this point the prophecy foreshadows the gathering of spiritual Israel by means of the Gospel.

(2) Israel's base return for the Lord's love (11: 12—12:14). After a reference to Judah's faithfulness (11:12), the prophecy goes on to contrast the faithlessness of Israel, in making alliances with Assyria and Egypt, with the example of their forefather Jacob and his devotion to the Lord (12:1-6). Israel's deceitful and iniquitous method of getting rich is contrasted with Jacob's long and patient service for his wife (12:7-12). Having redeemed

Israel out of Egypt, the Lord must bring home to them their guilt (12:13-14).

(3) Israel's deep fall and ruin (ch. 13). This chapter contains the prophet's final review of Israel's sins and announces their consequences in the fall of the nation. The sin that brought destruction upon them was their turning to the worship of Baal (vs. 1-3). They had forgotten the Lord their God who had redeemed them from Egypt. Therefore He would destroy them in His wrath like a wild beast (vs. 4-8). Their kings were unable to save them, but only proved a curse and brought the doom of death (vs. 9-14). Israel's national existence was to be utterly dried up and Samaria was doomed to a terrible overthrow (vs. 15-16).

(4) A final appeal and promise (ch. 14). The chapter opens with the prophet's last appeal to Israel to return to the Lord their God, and he puts a humble prayer of penitence into the mouth of the people (vs. 1-3). Then comes the Lord's promise of final restoration, in words that are full of love and grace (vs. 4-8). The book closes with a solemn proclamation calling attention to the message which it contains (v. 9). The ways of the Lord are right, and the destiny of men is determined by their relation thereto.

#### THE MESSAGE OF HOSEA

The lovingkindness of God is revealed more clearly in this book than in any other book in the Old Testament. It brings out the tenderness of His love towards His sinning people. This is His sovereign attribute. The word for lovingkindness or mercy is used sixteen times; its New Testament equivalent is "grace". Herein consists the real and fundamental



difference between God and man. It is not a difference between His greatness and our littleness, but between His love and our lovelessness.

Hosea points out that the essence of true religion consists in knowing God: "Let us follow on to know Jehovah". He uses the expression frequently (2:20; 4:1, 6; 6:3, 6; 8:2; 13:4; 14:9). The New Testament aspect of this truth was stated by Jesus in His last prayer: "This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (John 17:3).

## THE BOOK OF JOEL

NOTHING is known of this prophet but his father's name (1:1). His own name was borne by many others in the Old Testament. He seems to have belonged to the southern kingdom, for his prophecy has Judah and Jerusalem in view and he makes no allusion to Northern Israel. As there is no reference in the book to Assyria or Babylon, it may be inferred that it dates from before the time when those military powers began to threaten Israel. This inference is supported by the mention of other foes who fit the earlier period of the kingdom (3:4, 19). The place which the book occupies among the Minor Prophets also points to an early date. There is some evidence that the prophecy was uttered before that of Amos. See the note on Amos 1:1-2. This would place it as early as 800 B.C. and make Joel the first of the prophets of Judah.

The occasion of Joel's prophecy was a severe plague of locusts which had devastated the land. This calamity was used by him as a type and warning of a more awful judgment that was to come. It was a sign of "the day of Jehovah". This phrase occurs five times in the book (1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14). Any time when God's judgments are in the earth is "a day of the Lord". In its full sense, however, and in the light of the New Testament, it looks forward to the judgments attending the coming of Christ, when the Lord will intervene to punish the wicked and deliver the righteous (2 Thess. 1: 6-10).

The Book of Joel is in two parts, which are separated by the statement in 2:18. In the first part

(1:1—2:17) the prophet speaks and utters a summons to repentance. In the second part (2:18—3:21) the Lord speaks and promises deliverance to His people.

### A SUMMONS TO REPENTANCE

(1:1—2:17)

The prophet himself speaks throughout this section and utters three separate calls, each more urgent than the one before.

1. A Call for Humiliation and Repentance (Ch. 1). In view of a destructive plague of locusts which has fallen on the land, the prophet calls upon the people to cry to God in prayer and penitence. He first describes the effects of the plague. These appear as he addresses the different classes affected by it: the old men, whose memory goes back farthest (vs. 2-4); the drunkards, who use the fruits of the land for their own self-indulgence (vs. 5-7); the worshippers and the priests, who use the produce of the earth in the offerings of the Temple (vs. 8-10); the husbandmen and the vinedressers, who have lost their harvests (vs. 11-12).

The four different names in v. 4 represent successive swarms of locusts, and so mark the cumulative nature of the destruction they caused. In v. 8 Judah is likened to a young wife who has lost her husband, because the locusts have destroyed her means of offering worship to the Lord.

Then comes the prophet's appeal. The priests are summoned to appoint a solemn fast and gather all the people to the Temple (vs. 13-14). The destruction caused by the plague foreshadows the judgment of the day of the Lord (vs. 15-18), and Joel utters a prayer voicing the cry of the people (vs. 19-20).

2. A Second Call for Humiliation and Repentance (2:1-14). In view of a greater disaster impending, of which the locust-plague was a symbol and warning, the prophet calls upon the people again to turn to God. The call begins with a trumpet-blast, and the judgment is announced as the coming of the day of the Lord (v. 1). It is then described, in terms taken from the locust-plague, as the invasion of a great army.

A plague of locusts was a dreadful and appalling disaster. They came in huge clouds, darkening the sky and making a great noise with their wings. They stripped every green thing from the land as they passed over it. They entered the houses in the villages on their way, for nothing could stop them. They caused a vague feeling of terror and utter helplessness. Their first appearance is described as they roll up from the horizon (vs. 2-3), then their nearer approach (vs. 4-6), and finally their actual onset (vs. 7-9). The plague was a significant sign of the day of the Lord, and the description now passes from the type to the antitype (vs. 10-11).

Yet the threatened judgment may be averted if the people show real contrition. And so Joel appeals to them to turn to the Lord their God in true humiliation, rending their hearts and not their garments, "for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in lovingkindness". It may be that He will turn from His purpose of judgment and leave a blessing behind Him (vs. 12-14).

3. A Third Call for Humiliation and Repentance (2:15-17). The two preceding calls are now gathered up in a universal summons, introduced with another trumpet-blast. The prophet calls all the people, from the oldest to the youngest, to be gathered for a solemn assembly and fast. Let the priests lead

them in a lamentation and in a humble prayer for deliverance.

### A PROMISE OF BLESSING

(2:18—3:21)

Verse 18 is rendered correctly in the R.V.: "Then was Jehovah jealous for his land, and had pity on his people." It implies that the summons to repentance uttered by the prophet had been heeded. The fast day had been held. The people had turned to the Lord, and He had heard their cry. The rest of the book contains His reply to them: "And Jehovah answered and said unto his people" (v. 19). Then the passage goes on to describe the blessings that were to follow their repentance.

1. Earthly Blessing to be Restored (2:19-27). The Lord promises to remove the effects of the locust-plague and to restore the grain and the fruits of the land. He will drive out the locusts into the desert and into the seas—"the eastern sea" means the Dead Sea, and "the western sea" the Mediterranean, (vs. 19-20). The locusts are called "the northern army", probably as a prophetic allusion to the Assyrians, who always invaded the land from the north, and whose subsequent attack on Israel constituted the impending judgment of which the locust-plague was a type and warning.

Then Joel takes up the Lord's promise and calls upon the land and the people to rejoice. The rains shall be given again in their season, and fertility and prosperity shall be restored (vs. 21-25). The people shall come to know that the Lord their God is in their midst and has dealt wondrously with them (vs. 26-27). This part of the promise was doubtless fulfilled in the prophet's own day, in the restor-

ation of the blessings of the earth after the ravages of the locusts.

2. Spiritual Blessing to be Bestowed (2:28-32). The prophet now passes from the nearer blessing to the more remote, from that which is outward and earthly to that which is inward and spiritual. The one was the symbol of the other: compare, "he causeth to come down for you the rain" (v. 23), and, "I will pour out my Spirit" (v. 28). This part of the promise is a prophecy of the age of the Holy Spirit, and its fulfilment began at Pentecost. So Peter interprets it in Acts 2:16-21. Looking down the future from the judgment of his own day, which was a warning of the day of the Lord, the prophet saw the nature of the period that was to intervene before the final day of the Lord should come. It was to be an age of grace, giving men an opportunity of salvation. Paul quotes v. 32 in Rom. 10:13 as referring to the present dispensation of the Gospel.

3. The Nations to be Judged (3:1-13). In the day when the Lord restores Israel, He will execute His judgment upon the nations for the wrongs they have done to His people. The Phoenicians of Tyre and Sidon and the Philistines were singled out for special retribution, because they had sold the children of Judah and Jerusalem into slavery among the Greeks (vs. 1-8). The reference is probably to the pillaging of Judah and Jerusalem by the Philistines and Arabians in the time of Jehoram (2 Chron. 21:16-17).

The judgment is represented as taking place in "the valley of Jehoshaphat". The name means "the judgment of Jehovah", and the play on words indicates the symbolical nature of the prophecy. It was probably based on the event recorded in 2 Chron.

20, which occurred in the reign of king Jehoshaphat. Judah was then threatened by an imposing confederacy of hostile nations. A call is addressed to all the nations round about to equip themselves for battle and march into the valley of Jehoshaphat, to war against the people of God, but in reality to be judged by the Lord through His "mighty ones", whom He sends down for the purpose (vs. 9-11). The judgment is represented under the double figure of reaping the fields and treading out the grapes (vs. 12-13). The passage should be interpreted in the light of Matt. 25:31-33 and Rev. 14:14-20. It is a prophecy of the final judgment of the world.

4. Zion to be Renewed (3:14-21). The prophecy goes on to picture the great multitudes gathered "in the valley of decision", and to describe the issues of the judgment of the day of the Lord. It would shake the heavens and the earth, but in the midst of it the Lord would be a refuge for His people (vs. 14-17). The activity of the Lord in judgment is represented as going forth from Zion and Jerusalem. Zion, the earthly dwelling place of the Lord in the Old Testament dispensation, was but a type of His heavenly dwelling place. It stands for the seat and centre of power in the spiritual world (Heb. 12:22-23).

The prophecy closes with a beautiful description of the land, once desolated by the locust-plague, abounding with fertility and blessing, and enriched by streams from the house of the Lord (vs. 18-21). The descriptive terms used here signify a combination of material and spiritual blessing. Judah and Jerusalem should abide in perpetual peace and purity. The closing sentence, "Jehovah dwelleth in Zion", is to be compared with the closing words of Ezekiel, "Jehovah is there". God's final purpose in

His plan of redemption for the world is to make a dwelling place for Himself in the midst of men (Rev. 21:3).

#### THE MESSAGE OF JOEL

Although the theme of this book is the coming of the day of the Lord, yet its central message is one of grace. It is the announcement of the day of salvation, which was to precede the day of judgment. There was to be an age of grace, and it would be ushered in by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The promise is fulfilled in the present Christian dispensation.



## THE BOOK OF AMOS

AMOS was originally a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees at Tekoa, about six miles south of Bethlehem (1:1). He had no training in the schools of the prophets, but was called directly from his work in the fields to carry God's message to Israel (7:14-15). Although a man of Judah, his ministry was exercised in the northern kingdom.

He dates his prophecy "two years before the earthquake", in the days when Uzziah was reigning in Judah and Jeroboam II in Israel (1:1). This would be shortly after 800 B.C. The memory of this earthquake lingered long in the mind of the nation. It is mentioned by Zechariah more than two centuries afterwards (Zech. 14:5). Amos seems to have foretold this earthquake, for there are two predictions of such an event in the course of the book (8:8; 9:5).

The period of the prophet's ministry was marked by the greatest material prosperity in Northern Israel. But the calf-worship established by Jeroboam I was still going on, and ungodliness and wickedness were increasing. Amos appeared at Bethel, one of the centres of that worship, and spoke against the sins of the king and the upper classes especially with great boldness and freedom. He was charged by Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, with conspiracy against the king and was warned to flee (7:10-13). Amos persisted in his ministry and predicted the fall and captivity of Israel. The burden of his message is national accountability and Divine judgment.

The book falls naturally into three parts. The first part (Chs. 1-2) contains judgments upon the nations, heading up in judgment upon Israel. The second part (Chs. 3-6) contains discourses concerning Israel, and the third part (Chs. 7-9) visions concerning Israel.

### JUDGMENTS UPON THE NATIONS

(Chs. 1-2)

These chapters contain a series of predictions of Divine judgment upon the nations, beginning with the heathen nations round about, then taking in Judah, and finally Israel.

1. Introduction and Theme (1:1-2). "Jehovah will roar from Zion"; that is, He will declare Himself in judgment. The words occur in Joel 3:16, and Amos probably took his text from that prophet.

2. Judgments on the Heathen Nations (1:3—2:3). Each judgment is introduced with the statement, "Thus saith Jehovah". Amos is sure of the Divine origin and authority of his message. The expression occurs more than thirty times in the book. The sweep of judgment includes Syria and Damascus (1: 3-5), Gaza and the Philistines (1: 6-8), Tyre (1:9-10), Edom (1:11-12), Ammon (1:13-15), and Moab (2:1-3).

The judgment is announced in each case with the same expression: "For three transgressions, yea for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof". This implies both the cumulative guilt of the nation and the long-suffering patience of God, as though He had hitherto been interposing in His mercy to keep judgment back. The sins denounced in every case are national and social sins, such as slavery, cruelty in war, perversion of justice, violation of

covenants and national dishonesty. The judgment in each case is described as a fire that "shall devour the palaces". The palace was the mark of human pride and self-indulgence. The word occurs eleven times in the book.

3. Judgment upon Judah (2:4-5). The sin denounced in Judah's case is rejection of the Law of the Lord. The nation is held accountable for the light it has. Judgment will be according to privilege and opportunity.

4. Judgment upon Israel (2:6-16). This is the real theme to which the rest of the book is devoted, and the prophet has tactfully approached it. All the foregoing has prepared for this. The sins of Israel's national life are described (vs. 6-8). There are four counts in the indictment: maladministration of justice, oppression of the poor, immorality, and inordinate self-indulgence practised in the name of religion. Their guilt has been aggravated by the privileges which God has bestowed upon them as His own redeemed people (vs. 9-12). The "I's" in this paragraph are emphatic. Their judgment will be an oppression from which there will be no escape (vs. 13-16).

#### DISCOURSES CONCERNING ISRAEL

(Chs. 3-6)

These chapters contain three addresses, each beginning with "Hear this word", and each drawing to its conclusion with a "Therefore".

1. The Guilt of Israel (Ch. 3). "Hear this word" (v. 1)—"Therefore" (v. 11)—. The Lord's verdict is first pronounced against the people whom He redeemed from Egypt. He has chosen them as His own, and therefore He will visit their sin with

special punishment (vs. 1-2). Then by a series of picturesque figures in the form of questions, Amos establishes his right to prophesy. His utterances originate with the Lord Jehovah, who "will do nothing, except he reveal his secret unto his servants the prophets" (vs. 3-8).

The heathen are called to witness the wickedness of the nation and the justice of its doom (vs. 9-10). An adversary shall overrun the land and reduce the city of Samaria to ruins, where the people now sit in careless and luxurious ease (vs. 11-12). In that day a judgment of destruction shall descend upon the false religious system at Bethel and upon the grand houses of the rich and the great (vs. 13-15).

2. The Impenitence of Israel (Ch. 4). "Hear this word" (v. 1)—"Therefore" (v. 12)—". The address begins with a denunciation of the self-indulgent women of Samaria—"ye kine of Bashan" (vs. 1-3). The last clause of v. 3 is very obscure. The R.V. rendering—"ye shall cast yourselves into Harmon"—is a conjecture, which treats the doubtful word rendered "palace" in the A.V. as a proper name, probably meaning Armenia. Whatever interpretation is adopted, the drift of the prophet's words is plain. The nobles of the capital should be cast out of it with dishonour, to minister to the luxury of their conqueror in his palace (cf. 2 Kings 20:18), or to spend their days as exiles in some remote region. Amos then goes on to pour ridicule upon the false religious zeal of their idolatrous worship, which was only adding to their sin (vs. 4-5).

All chastisement hitherto has been in vain. The prophet describes five warning judgments which God has already sent upon the land, and follows each with the solemn statement: "Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah" (vs. 6-11). These

chastening judgments were famine, drought, blight, pestilence, and earthquake. Finally comes the startling and arresting summons: "Therefore—prepare to meet thy God, O Israel" (vs. 12-13).

3. The Overthrow of Israel (Chs. 5-6). "Hear this word" (5:1)—"Therefore" (5:16)—". This is a lamentation for Israel, a kind of funeral dirge. It announces the approaching fall of Israel in a decimating judgment of war (5:1-3). The people of Israel have not heeded the Lord's repeated appeals and warnings to seek Him and not to go enquiring at pagan shrines (5:4-6). All the places mentioned had evidently become centres of idolatrous worship. They have been called to turn from their injustice and unrighteousness and seek the Lord their God, whose power is omnipotent in the universe both for blessing and for judgment (5:7-9). It is He who "turneth the shadow of death into the morning", and also "bringeth sudden destruction upon the strong".

They hate the prophet who rebukes them, and go on in their manifold transgressions. And so the prudent man will be compelled to keep silence and leave them to their doom (5:10-13). At this point Amos utters a word for the remnant of Israel, those that will be left after the judgment, and points out the way of deliverance for them (5:14-15). Then comes the "therefore" of doom pronounced by the Lord (5:16-17), and this introduces two "woes," each of which has its own "therefore".

(1) Woe to the hypocrites (5:18-27). These were they "that desire the day of Jehovah", and deceive themselves with false hopes. While hoping to avoid one calamity, they will only fall into a worse (vs. 18-20). The Lord despises their worship, rejects their offerings, and refuses to hear their songs.

It is justice and righteousness that He requires (vs. 21-24). He declares that His people have been addicted to idolatry ever since they practised it in the wilderness. The pagan rites He mentions were of Egyptian origin (vs. 25-26). "Therefore" He will drive them into captivity "beyond Damascus" (v. 27). Here the Assyrian overthrow and captivity is foreshadowed.

(2) Woe to the indifferent (ch. 6). These were they "that are at ease in Zion" and put off the evil day. Let them take warning from the heathen states around them that have fallen, for the same fate awaits Israel (vs. 1-3). They abandon themselves to luxurious living and inordinate self-indulgence, with no thought for the future (vs. 4-6). "Therefore" they shall be the first captives when the Lord delivers up the city to its besiegers (vs. 7-8). Then the prophet describes a scene in the besieged city, when deaths occur by famine and pestilence, and the judgment of God falls on rich and poor alike (vs. 9-11). Their foolish and boastful trust in their own power will by no means avert the judgment, for the Lord God of hosts is raising up a nation against them, which shall overrun the whole land (vs. 12-14). The questions in v. 12 represent what is absurd and futile. The nation referred to in v. 14 is Assyria, but Amos nowhere mentions it by name.

### VISIONS CONCERNING ISRAEL

(Chs. 7-9)

These chapters record a series of visions enforcing the discourses. In the midst of them occurred an attempt on the part of the priest of Bethel to stop the prophet's preaching. The visions are progres-

sive, indicating the approach, the imminence, and finally the execution of the judgment. The last vision closes with a prediction of Israel's restoration.

1. The Approach of Judgment (7:1-9). A vision of locusts (vs. 1-3), and a vision of devouring fire (vs. 4-6). In these two visions the judgment is averted at the prayer of the prophet. A third vision follows, that of a plumbline testing a wall (vs. 7-9). This time the prophet makes no intercession, for he sees what the plumbline has revealed. The judgment must now fall.

These three visions may have been designed to represent the three Assyrian invasions of the land recorded in the history of Israel; the invasions of Pul (2 Kings 15:19), Tiglath-pileser (2 Kings 16:7-9), and Shalmaneser (2 Kings 17:3-6). The last of these ended in the fall of the kingdom.

2. The Prophet and the Priest (7:10-17). This incident arose out of the last vision, which contained a warning against the house of Jeroboam. Amaziah, the high priest of the calf-worship at Bethel, denounced the prophet to the king, and then bade him go back to his own land and earn his living there—"there eat bread, and prophesy there" (vs. 10-13). Amos calmly refuted Amaziah's insinuations by declaring that he was not a prophet by profession, but was simply obeying a call that God gave him. Then he foretold the shame and doom of the house of Amaziah (vs. 14-17).

3. The Imminence of Judgment (Ch. 8). The next vision was a basket of summer fruit, that is, fruit over-ripe and ready to spoil (vs. 1-3). There is a play on words here which cannot be reproduced in English. The words for "summer" and "end" sound alike in Hebrew, and this gives point to the

Lord's verdict upon His people. The tragic end of Israel is pictured in a few strong touches.

The prophet followed up this vision with an impassioned address to the money-makers, denouncing their lust for gain and their dishonest practices in business (vs. 4-7). He declared that the land should "tremble for this", and went on to foretell the earthquake and describe its phenomena and the tragic nature of the catastrophe (vs. 8-10). The final issue of judgment would be a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. They that had rejected the word of God should fail to find it when they sought for it. They that had gone after other gods and refused the water of life should perish with an unsatisfied thirst (vs. 11-14).

4. The Execution of Judgment (Ch. 9). This is a graphic vision of the Lord smiting the sanctuary of the calf-worship at Bethel and slaying the worshippers there. The judgment is described as overwhelming and irresistible: all attempts to escape from it would be futile (vs. 1-4). Then the prophet enforces his warning with another reference to the earthquake, which he had predicted, as a manifestation of the omnipotent power of God (vs. 5-6). Israel's election will not save the nation. The fact that God brought them out of Egypt avails no more than His bringing the Philistines and the Assyrians from their former dwelling places (v. 7). Though God will destroy the sinful nation, yet the judgment will result in the sifting of Israel, and no grain of wheat, no true Israelite, will be lost (vs. 8-10). Here we have an indication of the method of calling out the new Israel by means of the individual call of the Gospel.

The book closes with the final issues of the judgment, and the prophecy now brings us into the



Christian age. God promises to restore the house of David, that all nations may gather round it (vs. 11-12). This promise was quoted by James at the council in Jerusalem (Acts 15: 13-18). He saw its fulfilment in the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ as the Son of David and used it as a prophecy of the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles. James quoted the passage freely from the Septuagint, which reads "the rest of men" instead of "the remnant of Edom". The final promise is that of the renewal and great enrichment of the land which God had given His people to dwell in (vs. 13-15). This prophecy has its spiritual fulfilment in "the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:3), of which the land of Canaan was a type; but it also foreshadows the restoration of the whole material creation (Rom. 8:19-21).

#### THE MESSAGE OF AMOS

A passion for righteousness pervades this book. Amos represents the Lord as a God of absolute justice. He is the impartial Judge of the nations of the earth, and they are all accountable to Him. He judges them according to the light and privileges they have enjoyed, and according to the use they have made of their gifts and opportunities. This is the prophet's one theme, and only at the end of the book does he point out that, although God's judgment is certain and unescapable, yet its purpose is to prepare for a new order of spiritual and material blessing.

## THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

NOTHING is known of this prophet but his name. It was a common name among the Jews and meant "servant of Jehovah". In this case the servant is hidden behind his message.

Obadiah's prophecy is directed against Edom. It was occasioned by Edom's exultation over Judah in a day of calamity, when Jerusalem fell into the hands of a foreign foe (vs. 10-12). There is no reference to the time when this occurred, and the date cannot be fixed with certainty. Several calamities of this kind happened during the history of Judah.

The earliest occurred in the reign of Rehoboam about 950 B.C., when Shishak king of Egypt plundered the Temple (1 Kings 14:25-26; 2 Chron. 12:9). Another took place in the reign of Jehoram about 860 B.C., when the Philistines and the Arabians broke into Jerusalem (2 Chron. 21:16-17). In the reign of Amaziah about 820 B.C., Joash king of Israel broke down the wall of Jerusalem and plundered the Temple and the palace (2 Kings 14:8-14; 2 Chron. 25:17-24). This cannot be the event referred to, for the Israelites could not be called "strangers and foreigners". The last event of the kind was the fall of Jerusalem at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., when the city and the Temple were completely destroyed (2 Kings 25:8-10; 2 Chron. 36:17-19). The place which the book occupies among the Minor Prophets would suggest one of the earlier dates, but the description of Jerusalem's calamity in vs. 12-14 best fits the last event.

Edom's conduct toward Judah at that time is reflected in such passages as Psa. 137:7, Lam. 4:21-22, and Ezek. 25:12.

The Book of Obadiah is an amplification of the judgment pronounced upon Edom in Amos 1:11-12, and that may account for its being placed where it is. The Edomites, who were descended from Esau, the twin brother of Jacob, were the most bitter and implacable foes of Israel. Edom represents in principle the world in its enmity and antagonism to the Kingdom of God. The utter desolation that reigns among the rocks where Edom once felt so secure bears ample witness to the fulfillment of Obadiah's prophecy. The prophecy may be divided into three parts.

1. The Doom of Edom Announced (vs. 1-9). The nations are summoned by the Lord to make war upon her (v. 1). Her proud and haughty spirit should be humbled (vs. 2-4). Her secret places should be ransacked and plundered (vs. 5-6). Her allies should deceive her, and her own wisdom and might should fail (vs. 7-9).

2. The Guilt of Edom Declared (vs. 10-16). This consisted in violence done to her brother nation Jacob (v. 10). The incidents mentioned in these verses imply that Edom had taken part with foreign foes in an invasion of Judah, entering the cities, casting lots for the spoil in Jerusalem itself, betraying those who sought to escape, and doing all this with a malicious delight (vs. 11-14). But the day of the Lord that was coming upon all nations should bring retribution upon Edom. What she had done should return upon her own head (vs. 15-16).

3. The Future of Zion Foretold (vs. 17-21). In the midst of the judgment which would fall upon

the nations, Mount Zion should be a refuge for the remnant of Israel, and they should be restored to their possessions (v. 17). The restored children of Israel should also have their possessions enlarged, and these should include the territory of Edom and of all the nations around (vs. 18-20).

All this means that the Kingdom of God, which was to begin with Zion, would ultimately extend to all the nations of the world. The book closes with a statement that the rule of God should be exercised from Mount Zion, and His Kingdom should be established in the world (v. 21). The word "saviours" in this verse is an allusion to the times of the judges, who were in a sense types and foreshadowings of the Messianic King.

#### THE MESSAGE OF OBADIAH

This is the shortest book in the Old Testament, but it has an important message. It foretells the ultimate triumph of Zion over Edom, of Christ over Antichrist, of the Kingdom of God over the kingdoms of the world. The prophecy is a warning of the Spirit of God to taunting and arrogant unbelief. The opposition of Edom to Israel culminated in the attempt of the Edomite Herod to destroy the infant Child in Bethlehem.

The book also states the principle of Divine retribution. Nations will have their own sins visited upon themselves (v. 15). National pride will be humbled by the judgment of God. Edom disappeared from history soon after the Christian era began.

## THE BOOK OF JONAH

THIS book differs from the rest of the Minor Prophets in being a narrative about Jonah and not a collection of his prophecies. It is a prophetic story rather than a prophetic message, and it should be read with an imagination that is sympathetic and spiritually quickened. The interest centres in the prophet himself and not in his preaching. Jonah was a native of Gath-hepher in the northern kingdom. He is mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25 as having foretold the restoration of the land of Israel to its original boundaries under Jeroboam II. This would make his date somewhere about 800 B.C., or even earlier.

The Book of Jonah is not an allegory. Jonah himself was a historical person, and the whole story gives the impression of having been written as historical fact. The author would have condemned a guiltless prophet to lasting ignominy if there had been no historical foundation for his story. Our Lord used incidents related in the book (Matt. 12:39-41 and Luke 11:29-32), and His words would have had no force if He were referring only to imaginary events. Solemn and serious conclusions are not based upon fictitious premises.

The only reasons urged against the historicity of the book are based upon the unusual nature of the narrative and the miraculous incidents it contains. But subjective considerations alone cannot prove these incidents untrue without other evidence. There is no positive evidence of any kind that would go to show that the narrative is imaginary or was written for an allegorical purpose.

The story is consistent and harmonious. It deals with a commission which the Lord gave to Jonah to go and preach to Nineveh, and tells how the prophet first renounced it and finally fulfilled it.

### JONAH'S COMMISSION RENOUNCED (Chs. 1-2)

1. His Disobedience (1:1-3). The charge to deliver a message to Nineveh was repellent to Jonah, and he refused it. His motive was not fear, but uncharitableness. He was unwilling to extend the Lord's mercy outside Israel. This is his own explanation of his action (4:2). He proceeded to renounce his commission and his prophetic function, and to flee from the land of Israel and from the presence of the Lord.

2. His Punishment (1:4-17). Jonah did not escape from the Divine government by his flight. The Lord sent out a great wind upon the sea, presided over the casting of the lots so that they fell upon Jonah, and had a great fish ready to receive him when he was cast out of the ship. The incidents that occurred during the storm are described with great vividness, and bring out the character of the heathen sailors. A significant feature is their kindly and compassionate attempt to save the life of Jonah.

3. His Prayer (2:1-9). Jonah's prayer is made up mainly of quotations from the Psalms, and expresses mingled penitence and confidence in God. It is not said that the prayer was arranged in this orderly form in the belly of the fish. It was composed afterwards, and expresses the penitent appeal he made in the belly of the fish, and his thanksgiving for the deliverance that followed. It ends with a renewal of his consecration to the Lord: "I will

sacrifice unto thee—I will pay that which I have vowed”.

4. His Deliverance (2:10). “Jehovah spake unto the fish”, that is, He impelled it to do His will. The dry land was probably the coast of Palestine, from which the ship had started.

### JONAH'S COMMISSION FULFILLED

(Chs. 3-4)

1. The Prophet's Preaching (3:1-4). The patient grace of God is manifested in His renewal of the command to Jonah to go to Nineveh. This time it is accompanied with a suggestion of Divine authority which the prophet would now appreciate: “the preaching that I bid thee”. Nineveh was a city of vast extent—“of three days' journey”, that is, it would take three days to walk around it. Beyond the city proper were suburbs with a circumference of sixty miles. “Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey”, not in a direct line, but moving about in the more frequented places.

2. Nineveh's Repentance (3:5-10). Before Jonah could finish one day's journey, the impression made by his words and his appearance was so great that he had no need to go farther. The people of Nineveh were profoundly moved, proclaimed a fast, and put on signs of humiliation. This penitential movement spread till it “reached the king”. He manifested his own penitential sorrow, and issued a proclamation to make it universal. The repentance on the part of Nineveh was met by the repentance of God, and the threatened doom of the city was averted.

This astonishing result is to be accounted for by the explanation provided by Jesus Himself, who said

that Jonah was "a sign unto the Ninevites" (Luke 11:30). News of the prophet's experience would have preceded or accompanied his arrival in Nineveh, and his very appearance doubtless bore marks which confirmed the report. He preached as one who was believed to have come back from the dead.

3. The Prophet's Displeasure (4:1-5). Jonah resented the sparing of Nineveh after he had pronounced judgment upon it, and his uncharitable spirit was manifested in the sullen complaint he made to the Lord, and in his waiting to see what would happen to the city. In this he represented the ancient people of God in their wrong attitude toward the nations around them.

4. The Lord's Rebuke (4:6-11). Again the overruling providence of God appears in His use of the gourd and the worm and the sultry east wind, in order to reveal Jonah's wrong spirit. The book closes abruptly with the picture of the uncharitable prophet, angry because the gourd was destroyed and because Nineveh was spared, set over against the character of God, full of pity and compassion for the great wicked heathen city with its innocent children and harmless beasts, and willing to spare it when it turned in penitence to Him. Thus the book shows how ancient Israel, as represented in the prophet Jonah, missed the deepest thing in the character of their God, and failed in their witness to the nations of the world.

#### THE MESSAGE OF JONAH

While the chief purpose of the story of Jonah is to reveal the tender compassion of God's nature and the universal sweep of His mercy, it also illustrates the conditional character of prophecy. When the



Lord sent warnings and threatenings through His prophets, and the nation repented to whom they were sent, then He did not carry out His threatened judgment (Jer. 18:7-8). On the other hand, also, the promises of blessing which He gave to His people would be fulfilled only when they asked for them (Ezek. 36:37). The prophecies of Israel's national restoration are conditioned on Israel's national return to the Lord.

Our Lord gave the story of Jonah a typical significance by applying it to Himself on two occasions (Matt. 12:38-40; 16:1-4). He spoke of "the sign of Jonah the prophet", and regarded Jonah's experience in the belly of the great fish as a symbolical prophecy of His own death and resurrection.

## THE BOOK OF MICAH

MICAH belonged to the village of Morasheth, about twenty miles south-west of Jerusalem, near the Philistine border. He was a younger contemporary of Isaiah, carrying on his ministry in the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (1:1; Isa. 1:1). While Isaiah was preaching in the capital and among the ruling classes in Jerusalem, Micah was preaching in the country districts and among the villages of Judah. Although he was a man of Judah, his prophecies concerned the northern as well as the southern kingdom. He is referred to in Jer. 26: 17-19 as having predicted the overthrow of Jerusalem.

The book consists of three parts, each containing an address beginning with "Hear ye". The first part (Chs. 1-2) is addressed to the Gentile nations, and concerns the sin and judgment of Israel. The second part (Chs. 3-5) is addressed to the rulers, and concerns the coming Ruler. The third part (Chs. 6-7) is addressed to the people, and concerns the way of salvation. Each address threatens judgment and ends with a promise.

### THE JUDGMENT OF ISRAEL (Chs. 1-2)

1. The Coming Judgment Announced (Ch. 1). The prophet begins with an appeal to all the nations to observe the coming of the Lord in judgment (vs. 2-4). The reason for this judgment is declared to be the apostasy of the whole nation as manifested in the sins of the two capitals, Samaria and Jeru-

salem (v. 5). Then comes the Divine announcement of the doom and destruction of Samaria (vs. 6-7). This is followed by the prophet's lamentation as he sees the invading army reach Judah and threaten Jerusalem (vs. 8-9).

The lament continues with a wailing description of the judgment as it rolls over the towns and villages of Judah (vs. 10-16). It takes up the strain of David's lamentation over Saul and Jonathan, "Tell it not in Gath" (2 Sam. 2:20), and goes on to mention ten places, indicating the completeness of the overthrow. It is a graphic description of the results of Sennacherib's invasion as they were felt in one city after another. Micah's own city was one of them. The fulfilment of this prophecy is not to be restricted to the time of Sennacherib, but extends over all the judgments that fell upon Judah from the Assyrian invasion in 701 B.C. to the Roman catastrophe in A.D. 70.

2. The Cause of the Judgment Declared (Ch. 2). The sins denounced are those of injustice and oppression in the national life. A woe is uttered upon those who "devise iniquity" (forming their plans) upon their beds, and "practise it" (executing their plans) when the morning comes (vs. 1-2). Therefore, the Lord declares, He will "devise an evil" against them, punishing oppression by oppression. They shall receive no further part in the inheritance of the Lord (vs. 3-5).

This prophesying on Micah's part meets with violent contradiction from those guilty of oppression and from the false prophets, who base their protests upon the goodness of God (vs. 6-7). Micah replies by showing that the people have been abusing the goodness and mercy of God by oppressing the poor (vs. 8-9). Then he bids them depart from

the land for it would be no resting place for them because they have polluted it, and utters an ironical description of the kind of man they choose as their prophet (vs. 10-11).

Then comes a promise for the remnant. Led by "the breaker" (the coming Messiah), they should break through their bondage and pass on out into life and liberty (vs. 12-13). The verbs used here in the original describe in a pictorial way progress that cannot be stopped by any human power. They look forward to the triumph of the Lord Jesus over death and the grave.

### THE COMING RULER

(Chs. 3-5)

1. The Failure of the Rulers (Ch. 3). Addressing himself to the rulers of the people, the prophet denounces the unjust conduct of the princes, whose cruel outrages he likens to cannibal feasting (vs. 1-4). Then he turns to the prophets, who preach peace to those who pay them well, and proclaim war against those who pay them nothing. They should lose all power of vision and be brought to shame and contempt (vs. 5-7). In contrast with them, Micah declares that his own prophetic ministry is animated by the Spirit of the Lord (v. 8). Then he sums up the sins of all the ruling classes together—princes, priests, and prophets. All alike pursue worldly gain and yet profess to worship the Lord and trust in Him. For their sake Jerusalem and the Temple should be destroyed and the kingdom come to an end (vs. 9-12).

2. The New Kingdom (4:1—5:1). The promise of another kingdom is now introduced immediately after the destruction described at the end of ch. 3.

The old earthly Zion should give place to a new spiritual Zion, which would be established "in the latter days"—the time of the Messiah. It should be a centre of righteousness, justice, and peace for all nations (4:1-3). This passage is almost identical with Isa. 2:2-4. One prophet may have been quoting the other, or both may have quoted from an older oracle. The prophecy is to be interpreted in the light of Heb. 12:22. There should be plenty and security for all in the new kingdom, and they should walk in fellowship with the Lord for ever. He would gather into it the scattered and afflicted remnant of Israel, and the throne of David should be restored (4:4-8). The phrase, "tower of the flock", is probably an allusion to the fact that David was a shepherd.

In the meantime Zion should pass through a time of trial and suffering before the promised restoration took place. She should lose her king and her government and wander to Babylon in captivity. But the Lord would deliver her out of the hand of her enemies (4:9-10). After that another period of trouble for Zion looms up in the prophet's view of the future. The nations should come against her, but the Lord would give her strength to win a great victory over them (4:11—5:1). This strength was manifested in the exploits of the Maccabees in the second century B.C., but the prophecy has a still wider and deeper application.

3. The New King (5:2-15). The lowly origin of the coming ruler is now announced. It was given to Micah, the village prophet, to foretell that the Messiah should come out of the village of Bethlehem. With this humble earthly origin is contrasted his eternal heavenly pre-existence: "whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." (v. 2). In the

meantime Israel should be given up to the power of the nations until the time that his virgin mother gave him birth, and then the remnant of Israel should return (v. 3). In this verse Micah refers to two prophecies of his contemporary Isaiah and gives an interpretation of them (7:14 and 11:12).

The results of the new king's rule are then described (vs. 4-6). He would combine the strong tender care of a shepherd with the dignity and majesty of a king, and his rule should extend to the ends of the earth. Under him his people should enjoy peace, and be given victory over all their foes. The numbers in the expression, "seven shepherds and eight principal men", are used proverbially, to indicate the sufficiency of the leaders that should be raised up in his cause. In him also Israel's mission to the world should be fulfilled, for he himself would be "the remnant of Jacob" (vs. 7-9). He would be "as dew from Jehovah", bringing grace and blessing, and "as a lion", executing judgment. In accordance with this prophecy Christ is represented as both "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29, 36) and "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev. 5:5).

Micah then goes on to announce the Lord's final purification of Israel in the days of the new king. The process is described as that of destroying all instruments of war and everything that pertains to idolatry (vs. 10-14). Then He would visit His wrath upon all nations that resist His will, so that nothing should be able to disturb the peace of His people again (v. 15).

## THE WAY OF SALVATION

(Chs. 6-7)

1. The Lord's Controversy with His People (Ch.

6). Israel is now summoned to a lawsuit in the presence of the mountains to hear the Lord's controversy with His people (vs. 1-2). The Lord opens the controversy with His complaint—"O my people". He reminds them of what He has done for them in redeeming them from Egypt (vs. 3-5). The phrase, "from Shittim unto Gilgal", stands by itself. The sense is, "remember what happened between Shittim and Gilgal". Shittim was the last camping place of the Israelites on the other side of the Jordan, Gilgal the first in the land of Canaan.

Then the anxious enquiry of the people is heard, asking how they can come before the Lord (vs. 6-7). The prophet replies by telling them that what He required of them was righteous conduct, a kind heart, and a humble walk with God (v. 8). The controversy continues with the voice of the Lord crying to the city of Jerusalem, describing its sins (vs. 9-12) and telling it why His judgments were visited upon it (vs. 13-16).

2. Israel's Prayer of Repentance (Ch. 7). The prophet, in the name of his people, now confesses and laments the sins of the nation (vs. 1-6). Then he turns to God, representing the true attitude of the believer in Israel, looking to the Lord for salvation and waiting upon Him, confident that in His own good time God will interpose for his deliverance (vs. 7-10). Then he addresses Israel, assuring her of the ultimate restoration of Zion and the great extension of her borders (vs. 11-12). The meaning of "the decree" in v. 11 is obscure. Most probably it refers to the Divine law of Israel's separation from the nations. This makes the prophecy foreshadow the breaking down of "the middle wall of partition" between Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2: 14-15), and leads naturally to the next verse. The

prophet reminds Israel, however, that before their restoration takes place the land is to be desolate (v. 13).

Next comes the prophet's prayer for the accomplishment of salvation (vs. 14-17), and finally his description of the character of God as a God of mercy (vs. 18-20). The sin of the people is met and overcome by the Lord Himself, who would find a way of pardoning their iniquity, and would fulfil His promise to their fathers. This is the prophet's epilogue, ending the controversy and closing the book with one of the finest accounts of the redeeming grace of God in the Old Testament.

#### THE MESSAGE OF MICAH

Micah gives the best Old Testament definition of true religion in 6:8, which may be compared with the New Testament definition in Jas. 1:27. The three elements in this definition—justice, kindness, and humility—are closely related to one another. A man can do justly only as he loves kindness; and he will love kindness only as he walks humbly with God.

Micah foretold the birth of Christ in Bethlehem (5:2; Matt. 2:4-6). The significance of this prophecy lay in the fact that the Messiah was to come, not from among the ruling classes in Jerusalem, but from among the humblest classes in the land.

Micah has also something to say about the character of the coming Saviour. He would be "the breaker" (2:13), breaking the way open before His people: the New Testament parallel is "the captain of their salvation" (Heb. 2:10 A.V.). He would combine the majesty of a king with the tenderness of



a shepherd (5:4), and He would secure peace for them (5:5; John 14:27; 16:33).

The supreme contribution which this book makes to the Old Testament message of redemption is this, that the ground of redemption lies in the character of God Himself. "Who is a God like unto thee?" (7:18). The Lord is gracious: man's part is to look unto Him, to wait for Him, and to trust Him as the God of his salvation.

## THE BOOK OF NAHUM

NOTHING is known of this prophet beyond what is told in the first verse. The epithet, "the Elkoshite", probably means "an inhabitant of Elkosh", but the location of the place is not known. There are several traditions, but none of them helps.

The prophecy is entitled "the burden of Nineveh" (1:1), and it foretells the overthrow of that great city. Nahum refers to the fall of No-amon, the capital of Egypt, as having occurred recently (3:8-10). This city, the ancient Thebes of the hundred gates, was captured by the Assyrians in 663 B.C. Nineveh was captured by the Medes and Babylonians in 612 B.C. The prophecy therefore falls between these two dates, probably about the middle of the century.

At that time the power of Nineveh was at its height. The Assyrian empire, of which it was the capital, stretched from the Persian Gulf to the Nile, and included Western Asia and Egypt. Nineveh's armies had destroyed the kingdom of Israel, and had frequently overrun the territory of Judah. The Assyrians were a sensual and arrogant race. Their wars were conducted with brutal ferocity. Nahum announces God's vengeance upon them. When Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, God showed mercy to her. When she returned to her sin and cruelty, He must punish her.

The key-note of the book lies in the statement, twice repeated, "Behold I am against thee, saith Jehovah of hosts" (2:13; 3:5). While the main theme is God's vengeance upon violence and wrong-

doing, the book also conveys a message of comfort to His people. The prophet's name is in keeping with this, for it means "consolation" or "consoler". The Lord is a refuge for those that trust Him, and because He is the God of vengeance He will surely avenge His elect. Each chapter may be taken separately, and the book analysed as follows:

### NINEVEH'S DOOM DECREED: THE LORD GOD AVENGES (Ch. 1)

1. The Lord as a God of Vengeance (vs. 2-8). The doom of Nineveh is based upon the very character of God. He exercises a moral government over the world, and He avenges (Deut. 32:35; Rom. 12:19). Although He is slow to anger, yet He will not clear the guilty (vs. 2-3). Under the figure of a great storm, the prophet describes the overwhelming majesty of the wrath of God (vs. 3-6). In the midst of the storm He is a refuge for those that trust Him (vs. 7-8).

2. The Lord's Purpose in Vengeance (vs. 9-15). Addressing himself to Nineveh, the prophet asks, "What do ye devise against Jehovah?" Then he passes on to describe the irresistible nature of the judgment that was to fall upon her. Her kings have devised mischief against the Lord and against His people, and the Lord has determined the destruction of Nineveh and the deliverance of His people. The reference in v. 11 may be to Sennacherib, who through his representative had defied and blasphemed the Lord God (Isa. 36:13-20). Vs. 12, 13, and 15 are comforting messages addressed to Judah.

NINEVEH'S DOOM DESCRIBED: HOW THE  
LORD AVENGES  
(Ch. 2)

1. The Assault and Capture of the City (vs. 1-7). A very graphic picture of the attack on the city—the steady and deliberate approach of the besieging army without, and the wild terror and disorder of the defending host within. “The gates of the rivers are opened” (v.6). Nineveh was situated on the Tigris, and the ancient story of the siege states that the river became an enemy to the city and was swollen by violent rains, and that a great inundation took place, breaking down part of the massive walls.

The meaning of v. 7 is obscure because of a peculiar expression in the original. The A.V. takes it as a proper name—“Huzzab”. Then it would be either a reference to the queen or a symbolical name for the city itself. The R.V. attempts to interpret it—“it is decreed”. Then it would refer to the certainty of Nineveh’s fall and emphasize it.

2. The Sack and Desolation of the City (vs. 8-13). The complete collapse of her people’s resistance is described, and the utter dismay that has taken possession of them (vs. 8-10). The description in v. 10 consists of a series of vivid exclamations. The words rendered, “she is empty, and void, and waste”, are marked by alliteration, a figure of speech which the prophets were fond of using. They might be put this way: “Sack, sacking, and ransacking”, or, “A wild and weary waste”.

Then the prophet breaks out into exultation over the doomed city. The Lord is against her, and when His judgment falls upon her, the den of lions will be gone, and the cruelty of Nineveh will have come

to an end (vs. 11-13). Lions appear frequently on Assyrian monuments, and it is evident that the people compared themselves to this powerful animal. This fact gives special point to the prophet's sarcasm.

NINEVEH'S DOOM JUSTIFIED: WHY THE  
LORD AVENGES  
(Ch. 3)

1. Her Cruelty and Crimes (vs. 1-7). The Assyrians were characterized by barbarous cruelty in their wars and by gross sensuality in their religion. The prophet declares this to be the reason for the destruction of "the bloody city". She should be brought down in humiliation and shame, and be exposed as a gazing-stock to the nations.

2. The Certainty of Her Fall (vs. 8-19). No-amon was not so corrupt and was as strongly defended as Nineveh, yet she fell and her nobles were taken captive (vs. 8-10). Nineveh, too, should fall (vs. 11-13). All precautions taken for the siege would be of no avail (vs. 14-15). Her merchants would leave her and her warriors would fail her (vs. 16-17). The reference is to the fact that Nineveh was a great commercial centre as well as a great military power. Her rulers would slumber in death, her inhabitants would be scattered, her wound would be incurable, and all people would rejoice over her fall (vs. 18-19).

Throughout the prophecy Nahum had addressed the city of Nineveh, and at the end he turned to the king. As Nineveh was the image of the godless world in its brutal power and wickedness, so its king was the image of the prince of this world. So fully was Nahum's prophecy fulfilled, and so utterly

was Nineveh destroyed, that the very site of the city remained for centuries unknown.

#### THE MESSAGE OF NAHUM

There is a stern but majestic sublimity about this book. It is aflame with the moral indignation of the sovereign God. The prophet has but one theme, and he treats it with tremendous force. God's face is set against the brutal power of the godless world. There is such a thing as the vengeance of God: "Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:19). This truth runs right through the Bible (Deut. 32:35, 41, 43; Psa. 94:1; Isa. 34:8; 35:4; 61:2; 63:4; Luke 18:7-8; Heb. 10:30; Rev. 6:9-10).

## THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK

NOTHING is known about this prophet but his name. From the liturgical terms used at the beginning and end of ch. 3, it may be inferred that Habakkuk was a member of the Levite choir. His designation, "the prophet" (1:1, 3:1), implies a public ministry in that capacity. It is not used elsewhere in the supercriptions of the Prophetical Books except of Haggai and Zechariah (Hag. 1:1; Zech. 1:1).

The prophecy of Habakkuk foretold God's judgment upon the Chaldeans, and was intended to comfort the righteous in Judah during a time of injustice and violence in the kingdom. It probably dates from the early years of Jehoiakim's reign, which began in 608 B.C. This king is charged with the commission of such crimes as those denounced in the opening verses of the book (Jer. 22:13-19). At that time the Chaldeans were appearing on the scene as the rising world power and the coming enemies of Judah. They had obtained the throne of Babylon under Nebopolassar in 625 B.C. After the fall of Nineveh in 612, they began to push their conquests westward. They brought Judah under their power when Nebuchadnezzar became king, and they destroyed Jerusalem and took the Jews into captivity in 586 B.C.

The book deals with the problem which faith has to face in view of the perplexing fact that wickedness seems to triumph over righteousness in the world. It may be taken in three parts according to the three chapters.

THE PROPHET'S COMPLAINT: THE PROBLEM OF FAITH  
(Ch. 1)

The book opens with a dramatic dialogue between the prophet and the Lord about the apparent triumph of wrong and violence to which the Lord seems to pay no heed.

1. The First Complaint (vs. 2-4). Habakkuk gives utterance to his problem: "O Jehovah, how long shall I cry?" Why does God not hear? Why is evil allowed to go unchecked in the land? Why is the Law of the Lord ignored?

2. The First Answer (vs. 5-11). "Behold—I am working a work in your days". The Lord points to the Chaldeans, "that bitter and hasty nation", whom He is raising up to execute judgment on the wicked, and describes the irresistible power of their armies and the sweep of their conquests (vs. 5-10). The Chaldean was the instrument of God's judgment, but he would transgress God's purpose and offend and become guilty, because he made his might his god (v. 11).

3. The Second Complaint (vs. 12-17). In the light of God's holiness, the prophet's problem has now become deeper still. How can He who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil" use such a treacherous and rapacious people? Are not the Chaldeans more wicked than those upon whom they execute the Lord's judgment? Are they to go unchecked?

THE LORD'S REPLY: THE ANSWER OF FAITH  
(Ch. 2)

1. The Prophet on the Watch Tower (vs. 1-4). He now takes the place of a watchman upon his tower of observation, looking out for the answer to his complaint. This figure indicates the spiritual



seclusion of the prophet in a place of private meditation, and on a height from which he may look out over the far distance and hear the voice of God. The Lord's answer comes, and the prophet is commanded to write it so plainly that the reader may run his eye quickly through it and get its import at once. The vision was to be committed to writing, because its realization lay at a point of time in the future determined by God. It would be sure to come in its own time, and it would not disappoint those that waited for it (vs. 1-3).

Then the answer is stated in v. 4: "Behold, his soul is puffed up, it is not upright in him; but the righteous shall live by his faith". The two great principles of the Lord's government of men in the world are set forth in this verse. They are pride or self-dependence, and faith or dependence on the Lord. Pride is the principle by which the wicked are destroyed. Faith is the principle by which the righteous are saved. Thus the destiny of the two classes of men is determined, not by an arbitrary act or judgment of God, but by the inward and distinguishing attitude of their own lives. The last clause is quoted three times in the New Testament in connection with the Gospel (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38). The meaning of "faith" here is not faithfulness as a quality of character, but trust as an attitude of the heart toward God.

2. Woes Against the Chaldeans (vs. 5-20). The prophet goes on to tell of "a parable and a taunting proverb" taken up by the nations against the Chaldeans (vs. 5-6). This takes the form of five woes, each denouncing some characteristic sin of theirs as the cause of their doom. These are, their rapacity and lust of conquest (vs. 6-8), their greed and covetousness (vs. 9-11), their violence and cruel

ambition (vs. 12-14), their insolence and base treatment of other people (vs. 15-17), and their gross idolatry (vs. 18-19). In contrast with the idolatry of the Chaldeans, the prophet states the fundamental truth of the reality of the Lord, and calls all the earth to worship Him (v. 20; cf. Zeph. 1:7; Zech. 2:13).

### THE PROPHET'S VISION: THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH (Ch. 3)

This chapter takes the form of a psalm, which has three parts. The word "Shigionoth" in its title occurs only once elsewhere (Psa. 7). It probably signifies an irregular poem expressing intense feeling.

1. A Prayer (v. 2). The prophet beseeches the Lord to carry out the work that He has just revealed to him, a work in which both wrath and mercy should be manifested.

2. The Vision (vs. 3-15). This is the account of a great tempest in the heavens, coming up from the south, the region of Sinai and the Law. In the midst of it God is present, advancing in terrifying splendour. It is a symbolic prediction of the coming of God in power and majesty to judge the nations and redeem His people. The descriptions are drawn from events in the days of Moses and Joshua. The approach of the Lord is first described (vs. 2-7), and then His operations in judgment as related to nature (vs. 8-11), and to the nations (vs. 12-15). All this activity of His had the salvation of His people in view.

3. Its Effect (vs. 16-19). The prophet now describes the feeling aroused in him by this manifestation of God. There was first fear and trembling, because of the desolation that was coming (vs. 16-

17), and yet joyful trust in the Lord God, because He was working out the salvation of His people (vs. 18-19). The last words of the poem are reminiscent of Psalm 18:33, and are prophetic of the heights of salvation to which God was to bring His people.

### THE MESSAGE OF HABAKKUK

This book opens with perplexity and doubt, and closes with certainty and joy. The perplexity and doubt were caused by the apparent triumph of wickedness and God's apparent indifference to it all. The assurance and joy sprang from the revelation that was given the prophet. God is at work in the world in the midst of wrong and violence. He is acting in wisdom and righteousness notwithstanding all appearances to the contrary. He has an end in view, and ultimately "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea" (2:14).

In the meantime the righteous find their place in God's plan through faith. Trust in God is the true principle of life in a world in which God is at work. Those who are centred in Him and rely upon Him will be upheld by Him. "The righteous shall live by his faith" (2:4); he shall be carried through life triumphantly.

## THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH

THIS prophet was one of the princes of Judah: his descent is traced from King Hezekiah (1:1). The words "this place", used of Jerusalem in 1:4, indicate that he lived in the capital. His ministry was carried on in the reign of Josiah (638-608 B.C.), but it is not associated with any historic event.

During the early years of Josiah's reign hordes of Scythians from the region of the Caspian Sea poured down over Western Asia, but there is no evidence that they came as far as Judah. Rumours of this invasion, however, may have reached Jerusalem and given Zephaniah the occasion for his prophecy. In the light of that "scourge of God" he foretold "the day of Jehovah's wrath". This phrase, or the idea it expresses, occurs several times in the course of the book (1:7, 14-15, 18; 2:2-3; 3:8).

The book is not composed of a series of addresses, but contains one continuous prophecy. This is arranged in three sections by a kind of refrain. The thought expressed in 1:18, "the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy", is repeated in 3:8, "all the earth shall be devoured by the fire of my jealousy". This gives the book a threefold division.

### THE NATURE OF THE DAY OF WRATH (Ch. 1)

Its coming is first announced in general terms and then described more particularly. After that the prophet goes on to set forth its dreadful and appalling aspect. It will be universal in its scope, and complete and final in its character.

1. A Universal Judgment (vs. 2-13). It will fall upon all creatures in the whole world, but especially upon man as the object of the Divine anger (vs. 2-3). It is to begin with the idolaters and apostates in Judah and Jerusalem (vs. 4-6). Several forms of false worship are mentioned. The Chemarim, who were the black robed priests of Baal, are linked together with the Levitical priests in the judgment. Those "that swear to Jehovah and swear by Malcam", which means "their king", divided their worship between the true God and some false god.

Then with a call for silence at the presence of the Lord because of the imminence of the judgment (v. 7), the prophet goes on to describe it more particularly and to show that it will involve all classes of men. He pictures the different classes in Jerusalem as being overtaken by the wrath of the Lord: the princes and governing classes, who assumed foreign fashions and perverted justice for purposes of gain (vs. 8-9); the merchants, who made themselves rich by avarice and fraud (vs. 10-11); and the people of Jerusalem generally, who were sunk in apathy, religious indifference, and self-indulgence (vs. 12-13).

2. A Final Judgment (vs. 14-18). It will be a sudden, swift, and terrible act of God. A graphic description is given of the helplessness of man when God proceeds to judge and punish human sin. There will be a completeness and finality about it: "He will make an end, yea a terrible end" (v. 18).

#### A WARNING IN VIEW OF ITS COMING

(2:1—3:8)

The prophet now summons the nation to repent, and enforces the call by describing the sweep of the

judgment as it falls upon the nations around Judah and upon Jerusalem itself.

1. A Call to Repentance (2:1-3). These verses contain an appeal to God's own people to seek the Lord and escape from the coming wrath. The nation as a whole had lost all sense of shame; but if the meek would seek the Lord they should be hid in the day of His anger.

2. The Punishment of the Wicked (2:4-15). This section depicts the crash of the surrounding nations. It is a picture of world-wide judgment. Representative nations from the world immediately around Judah are mentioned. Looking out from his own viewpoint in Jerusalem, the prophet sees the wrath of God falling first upon the nations on the west (vs. 4-7), then upon those on the east (vs. 8-11), next upon the south (v. 12), and finally upon the north (vs. 13-15). The desolation of Nineveh is described here in language similar to that of Nahum, who prophesied shortly before Zephaniah. There are references through this chapter to the remnant, who were to be saved in that day (vs. 3, 7, 9).

3. A Denunciation of Jerusalem (3:1-8). Zephaniah now turns with startling suddenness to Jerusalem without even mentioning her name, and describes again the sins that were rampant within her, especially the sins of her ruling classes—princes, judges, prophets, and priests (vs. 1-4). Then he denounces her for not receiving correction and not taking warning from God's judgments upon the nations around her (vs. 5-7). Finally he calls upon the "meek of the earth", whom he had addressed in 2:3, to wait until God accomplishes His purpose through judgment: "until the day that I rise up to the prey" (v. 8).

A PROMISE CONCERNING ITS ISSUES  
(3:9-20)

The prophet now deals with the issues of the judgment. The manifestation of God's wrath would lead to the conversion of the nations to Him, the redemption and purification of the remnant of Israel, and the renewal of Jerusalem to be His dwelling place among His people.

1. The Conversion of the Nations (vs. 9-10). This follows from the statement in v. 8, and the warning there given to the nations. Through His judgments upon them, God would obtain from the nations those that should confess His name and thus fall to Him as "the prey". Then He would turn to them "a pure language"; that is, He would work such a change in them that their sinful lives should be purified for the worship and service of the Lord.

2. The Cleansing of the Remnant (vs. 11-13). The remnant of Israel would repent of their transgression, and be redeemed and purified. God would remove from among them the proud who trusted in themselves, and would leave in their midst "an afflicted and poor people", who should trust in the Lord. They should be redeemed from all iniquity, and delivered from all fear. They should live in security and peace. Here we have a prophetic description of the inner character of the Christian dispensation.

3. The Blessedness of Jerusalem (vs. 14-20). Zion is now bidden to sing and rejoice in prospect of her future glory and bliss. She will be delivered from all her foes, and the Lord will dwell in her midst. He will gather His people into her and make her a name and a praise among all the nations. He will rejoice over her Himself. The book closes with this

exquisite picture of God resting in His love, and singing for very joy over His redeemed people.

### THE MESSAGE OF ZEPHANIAH

This book looks forward from the standpoint of Judah and Jerusalem to the consummation of world history. All local and temporary manifestations of judgment are but preparatory signs of the coming day of the wrath of the Lord. God's righteousness and justice require Him to deal with the accumulated sin of the world. There is a "day" in which this will be done. The New Testament refers to it again and again (Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:5; Jas. 5:9; 1 Pet. 4:7; 2 Pet. 3:10-12; Rev. 6:17).

The motive of God's wrath is love; it is the attitude of His own nature toward sin. He could not manifest His love to the world, in which sin exists, without revealing His wrath also. Love without wrath would be indifference. Zephaniah shows that God's purpose in wrath is the final deliverance and purification of His redeemed people so that He may dwell among them.



## THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

HAGGAI is the first of the prophets of the Restoration, or the post-exilic period. The history of the Restoration is contained in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Babylon had passed off the scene, and Persia was the great world empire under which the Jews were living. Cyrus, the conqueror of Babylon, had issued a decree giving them permission to return to Judah and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. Only a small part of the nation responded, about 50,000 in all. But this was "the remnant", gathered back from exile and restored to the Holy Land, through whom God was to carry on His purpose, and from whom He was to bring the Redeemer of the world (Isa. 6:11-13).

Nothing is known of Haggai's personal history. His prophecy is dated in the second year of Darius king of Persia (520 B.C.). Before this, Hebrew prophecies have been dated in the reigns of Hebrew kings, marking the independence of the nation; but now Israel was under Gentile power. The prophet's ministry was carried on among the Jews who had returned to the land, and was intended to encourage them in the rebuilding of the Temple. It may be inferred from 2:3 that Haggai had seen the Temple of Solomon. If so, he must have been a comparatively old man, for that Temple was destroyed sixty-six years before.

The return of the Jews under Zerubbabel had taken place in 537 B.C., and the foundation of the new Temple had been laid in the next year. But opposition arose from the Samaritans, who suc-

ceeded in getting the work stopped, and nothing more was done for sixteen years. In 520 the two prophets Haggai and Zechariah appeared upon the scene and summoned the people to arise and proceed with the work. As a result of their preaching, the building of the Temple was resumed, and four years afterwards it was completed and dedicated (Ezra 1-6).

The Book of Haggai is composed of four addresses, each dated by the day of the month, and all delivered within a period of less than four months, corresponding with the last four months of our year.

I. A Message of Rebuke (Ch. 1). The first address was delivered on the first day of the sixth month of the Jewish year, which was in the late summer or early fall. It was directed to the two leaders of the people, Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest (v. 1).

1. The Burden of the Message (vs. 2-11). Haggai reproached the people for their indifference in leaving the Lord's house lying waste while they built comfortable houses for themselves to dwell in (vs. 2-4). Let them consider their ways. They had been getting poor harvests. They had a small return for their toil, and they did not enjoy what they did have (vs. 5-6). Then he summoned them to consider the work they had left unfinished. Let them resume the building of the Temple. Then the Lord would take pleasure in His house and He would be glorified (vs. 7-8). It was because of their neglect of His house that the Lord had withheld the blessing of the harvest and had brought a drought upon the land (vs. 9-11).

2. The Result of the Message (vs. 12-15). A new spirit now took possession of the leaders and the people. They "obeyed the voice of Jehovah their God", and they "did fear before Jehovah". Then Haggai encouraged them with the assurance that the Lord was with them. The spirit of Zerubbabel and Joshua was stirred up, and the work of rebuilding the Temple was resumed in the twenty-fourth day of the same month. The intervening time was probably spent in preparation.

II. A Message of Encouragement (2:1-9). This address was delivered on the twenty-first day of the seventh month, which was the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (vs. 1-2). Some of the old men who remembered the former Temple lamented the comparative inferiority of this one. This tended to discourage the people, and the prophet now appealed to them to be strong and to work, for the Lord would be with them. He would fulfil the covenant He made with them when they came out of Egypt (vs. 3-5). As He shook the world at Sinai, so He would shake all nations, and He would fill this house with glory (vs. 6-8). In the light of Heb. 12: 26-28, this prophecy refers to the introduction of the Christian dispensation. The shaking of the nations began with the coming of Christ in the flesh and will continue till His coming in glory.

The middle clause of v. 7 is ambiguous in the original. Literally it reads thus: "the desire of all nations, they shall come." The subject is in the singular and the verb in the plural. The A.V. takes the subject to mean the central longing of all nations, the One whom they desire. The R.V. takes it, in the light of the next verse, to mean the desirable things of all nations, their precious treasures (cf. Rev. 21:26). Then comes the promise that the lat-

ter glory of this house should be greater than the former, and there God would "give peace" (v. 9). This prophecy was fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ, who came to that Temple in His earthly ministry, and there accomplished His redeeming work of making peace between God and man (John 14:27; 16:33).

III. A Message of Instruction (2:10-19). This address was delivered about two months later, on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. By putting two questions to the priests, Haggai drew out the principles of the Mosaic ritual regarding holiness and uncleanness (vs. 10-13). Flesh that had been offered in sacrifice hallowed only what it touched: it did not communicate its holiness any further (Lev. 6:27). That is, holiness is not communicated by holy things. On the other hand, what was unclean defiled what it touched (Num. 19:22). That is, defilement is communicated by unclean things. Then the prophet made the application to the people (v. 14). Their disobedience defiled all their sacrificial service. The altar which they had raised on their return (Ezra 3:2-3), so far from hallowing them, was itself defiled by them.

Haggai went on to draw out the application more particularly. Let them take a backward view (vs. 15-17). Before the work of building the Temple was resumed (three months ago), there was no blessing on the harvests: they were smitten with a curse. Then let them take another backward view—from today to the time when they began to build the Temple (vs. 18-19). Although at present there is nothing to indicate a harvest, yet God promises blessing because the people have set themselves earnestly to the work. The prophet regards the resumption of the building operations as really lay-

ing the foundation, and he so describes it—"the day that the foundation of Jehovah's temple was laid".

IV. A Message of Hope (2:20-23). This is a special message to Zerubbabel the governor, delivered on the same day as the last address. The heavens and the earth should be shaken, and the kingdoms of the world should be overthrown by the nations fighting one another. On the background of this universal shaking of the nations, the book closes with a Messianic promise to Zerubbabel: "In that day I will make thee as a signet; for I have chosen thee, saith Jehovah of hosts". Thus the promise to establish David's throne in the world is handed on through David's heir Zerubbabel to David's greater Son.

#### THE MESSAGE OF HAGGAI

Haggai's prophecy was the first message of God to the Jews who had returned from the Exile. It was a call to a work of faith in the face of adversity. They were a very small remnant compared with the rest of the nation, who were prospering in the Dispersion, and they had been discouraged since they returned. But it was through them alone that God's redemptive purpose was being carried forward; therefore they were to be strong and work. Their work was to be directed towards the building of the Temple; and though its former earthly glory had passed away, yet a greater glory was coming to it, the glory of the spiritual.

## THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

ZECHARIAH was a priest as well as a prophet. His grandfather Iddo was one of the priests who returned with Zerubbabel in 537 B.C. (Neh. 12:4, 16). Zechariah, therefore, must have been comparatively young when his prophetic ministry began. This inference is confirmed by the way he is referred to in 2:4 as "this young man".

Zechariah began to prophesy in the same year as Haggai (520 B.C.), in connection with the building of the Temple, and he continued his ministry for some time after its completion. His message was intended to encourage the little colony of Jews by the glorious prospect of the future of Israel and Zion, and to give them hope in the midst of discouragement.

The Book of Zechariah is in two parts. The first part (Chs. 1-8) contains addresses delivered during the building of the Temple, and is composed mainly of visions concerning the future of Israel. The second part (Chs. 9-14) contains addresses delivered after the completion of the Temple, and is composed mainly of prophecies concerning the advent of the Messiah.

### CONCERNING THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL

(Chs. 1-8)

These prophecies are dated like Haggai's, and belong to the time when the rebuilding of the Temple was going on.

1. A Call to Repentance (1:1-6). This is an introductory message, opening the prophet's minis-

try and giving the key-note of the whole book. Zechariah began his prophetic ministry in the month after Haggai had delivered his second message. He enforced the Lord's call to repentance, by a warning from the experience of the fathers, and by an emphatic repetition of the Divine name, "Jehovah of hosts". This title of God occurs with great frequency throughout the book, nearly forty times.

2. The Visions of the Night (1:7—6:8). This prophecy is dated on the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, two months after Haggai's last message, and five months after the building of the Temple had been resumed. In the space of one night this whole series of eight symbolic visions passed before the prophet's inner eye. They were intended to strengthen the Jews and to encourage them with hope in regard to their future. That future, as foreshadowed in these visions, is realized in the new Israel—"the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16)—of the Christian dispensation.

The prophet first describes what he saw in each vision, and then a heavenly being—"the angel that talked with me"—gives an explanation or interpretation in each case. The nature and significance of the several visions may be set forth as follows:

(1) The horsemen among the myrtle-trees (1:7-17). These were the Lord's scouts, who had come back from patrolling the earth bringing their reports. The myrtle-trees probably represented Israel in her lowly and depressed condition. Though as yet there might be little sign that God was overthrowing the kingdoms of the nations as Haggai had foretold (2:22), yet He was watching over Jerusalem and Zion, and He was preparing to fulfil His word and bring in the Messianic age.

(2) The four horns and the four smiths (1:

18-21). Each of the four horns, which represented Israel's foes, had a smith (not a carpenter as in the A.V.) to break it down. Every hostile power should meet its judgment. The nations that had scattered Israel were finally to be overthrown and destroyed.

(3) The man with a measuring line (ch. 2). Jerusalem was to be greatly enlarged and become very populous. The Lord would be unto her a wall of fire round about her, and "the glory in the midst of her" (vs. 1-6). Then the prophet uttered a call to all the children of Zion who had not yet come out of the exile in Babylon to hasten to return to her, for the Lord was about to display His glory in the judgment of the nations that had plundered her (vs. 7-9). Let Zion sing and rejoice, for the Lord would come and dwell in the midst of her, and many of the Gentiles should join themselves to Him and become His people in that day (vs. 10-13). This vision has its fulfilment in "the heavenly Jerusalem" of Heb. 12:22.

(4) The reclothing of Joshua (ch. 3). Joshua the high priest, clad in filthy garments, is accused by Satan before the angel of the Lord. But the Divine judge rebukes the adversary and has Joshua re clothed in rich and clean priestly garments (vs. 1-5). Joshua here represents the nation, which had been "plucked out of the fire" of the Babylonian captivity; and the vision means that she was to be cleansed from her iniquity and restored to her priestly function.

A solemn declaration is now made to Joshua, promising him, if he will be faithful, "a place of access among them that stand by", that is, fellowship with God's immediate servants in the courts of Heaven (vs. 6-7). Then Joshua and his fellow-priests are given a special Messianic promise: "Be-



hold, I will bring forth my servant the Branch" (v. 8). Here two Messianic titles taken from earlier prophets are combined (Isa. 42:1; 49:6; Jer. 23:5; 33:15). The promise goes on to describe the priestly work that should be accomplished by the Messiah and its blessed results (vs. 9-10). "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day"—the day of the Cross, the day to which all the yearly Days of Atonement pointed forward.

(5) The candlestick and the two olive-trees (ch. 4). The prophet saw a golden candlestick, with seven lamps which were fed by seven pipes from a bowl or reservoir of oil above it, and two olive-trees standing beside the candlestick, one on each side, which supplied oil to the reservoir (vs. 1-3). He asked the meaning of the vision, and was told that it was a Divine message for Zerubbabel: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts". All obstacles were to be removed from before him; he should bring forth the top stone of the Temple in triumph, and the grace of God should rest upon it for ever (vs. 4-7). The work which Zerubbabel had begun by laying the foundation of the Temple should be carried to completion, not by earthly means or by human power, but by the power of the Spirit of God running to and fro throughout the whole earth (vs. 8-10).

All this meant that the material temple, which the Jews were building then, was but a shadow and type of the real temple. The material would ultimately pass, like a dissolving view, into the spiritual: the type would give place to the antitype. Here is foreshadowed the truth contained in such New Testament passages as John 2:19 and Eph. 2:21-22. The prophet then asked about the two olive-trees, and was told that they were "the two anointed ones"

—the kingly and priestly offices represented by Zerubbabel and Joshua—through whom the Lord would cause His Spirit to be given to His people (vs. 11-14). These two types are combined and fulfilled in Christ, who, as the heavenly Priest and King, communicates the Holy Spirit to His Church.

(6) The flying roll (5:1-4). The character of the visions now changes. Those that preceded were encouraging and comforting: those in this chapter are concerned with wickedness. This one was a scroll floating in the air and represented the curse of the Law going out against evil doers, searching them out and cutting them off. The dimensions of the roll were the same as those of the Holy-place, and were probably intended to indicate that the standard of conduct for judging sin was that set by the Lord Himself (Lev. 11:44). The two sins mentioned—perjury and theft—represent the two tables of the Law.

(7) The woman in the ephah (5:5-11). The ephah held about one bushel and was the standard dry measure among the Jews. The prophet saw “the ephah that goeth forth”, that is, coming into the realm of the visible in the vision. The angel added the comment, referring to the individual sinners of the preceding vision: “This is their appearance in all the land”. Then lifting up the disk of lead which covered the ephah, he disclosed a woman sitting in the midst of it, and said, “This is Wickedness”, and closed it again (vs. 5-8).

As the former vision represented judgment upon the sin of individuals, this vision represented judgment upon corporate sin—the sin of the nation or of any organized system. The prophet then saw the ephah, with the woman in it, being lifted up and removed to “her own place” in the land of Shinar

(vs. 9-11). The significance of this lies in the fact that the first manifestation of corporate sin, the first organized rebellion against God, took place in the land of Shinar (Gen. 11:2).

(8) The four chariots (6:1-8). These were the agents that God used for His administration of justice and judgment in the world going forth from His heavenly presence—"from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass," symbols of impregnable strength. The adjective "strong", describing the horses of the last chariot, properly belongs to the horses of all the chariots, for in the Hebrew it comes at the end of the sentence, summarizing them all (vs. 1-3).

The prophet was told that they represented "the four winds of heaven", which themselves were symbols of the invisible but mighty agencies of God (Psa. 104:3; 148:8; Dan. 7:2). They were commanded to "walk to and fro through the earth", thus counteracting Satan's "going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it" (Job 1:7). Then the angel announced that those that went toward the north country—the region of the Babylonian exile—"have quieted my spirit in the north country". They had caused God's anger toward that region to rest. In Zechariah's time Babylon alone of the four great world powers had been finally punished (vs. 4-8).

3. The Crowning of Joshua (6:9-15). A deputation from the Jews remaining in Babylon had arrived in Jerusalem with gifts, which were probably intended as a contribution toward the building of the Temple. Zechariah was commanded to take from these gifts enough silver and gold to make a composite crown, which he was to place upon the head of Joshua the high priest, and thus set him

forth as a type of "the man whose name is the Branch". Then he was to announce: "even he shall build the temple of Jehovah; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."

This coronation scene is the most composite and complete type of Christ and His mediatorial work in the Old Testament. It is a symbolic prophecy, foreshadowing the exaltation of the Saviour to the throne in Heaven after accomplishing His priestly work on earth. It is fulfilled in the Melchizedek priesthood of Jesus as explained in the Epistle to the Hebrews. There the inspired writer brings his explanation to a head in these words: "Now in the things which we are saying the chief point is this: We have such a high priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (8:1). From His position there He is going on with the building of the spiritual temple during the present Christian age, as foretold in this passage of Zechariah.

4. Messages Concerning the Fasts (Chs. 7-8). Two years after Zechariah had begun his ministry, a deputation from Bethel came enquiring as to whether they should keep the fast of the fifth month (7:1-3). Since the fall of Jerusalem in 586, the Jews had been accustomed to fast on the anniversaries of the four outstanding events connected with their captivity, namely, when Jerusalem was taken in the fourth month (Jer. 52:6), when the Temple was destroyed in the fifth month (Jer. 52:12), when Gedaliah the governor was murdered in the seventh month (Jer. 41:1-2), and when the siege of Jerusalem was begun in the tenth month (2 Kings 25:1). The four messages which follow, each introduced

with the phrase, "the word of Jehovah of hosts", contain the prophet's reply to this deputation.

(1) The first message (7:4-7). God disowns self-appointed fasts and feasts. Rather should the people give heed to the word of the Lord. It is a spiritual service that He demands, the worship of the heart.

(2) The second message (7:8-14). It is the execution of justice and the manifestation of mercy that the Lord requires. Disobedience to the words of His prophets was the cause of their former misery.

(3) The third message (8:1-17). The prophet emphasized this message by a sevenfold repetition of the statement, "Thus saith Jehovah of hosts". The Lord declares His affection for Zion and His purpose to restore His favour to her and dwell in her midst, and promises her people a future of great peace and happiness (vs. 1-5). This may seem incredible to them at the time, but it is not marvellous to the Lord. He will gather His people from all countries to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem (vs. 6-8). He bids them be strong and work with good courage in view of the future, for instead of being a curse among the nations, as in the past, they shall be a blessing (vs. 9-13). As the Lord's threatenings of judgment upon them in the past did not fail, so now He purposes to do them good. Let them obey Him and turn from the things that He hates (vs. 14-17).

(4) The fourth message (8:18-23). Here there is a threefold repetition of the expression, "Thus saith Jehovah of hosts". Fasts shall be turned into cheerful feasts (vs. 18-19). People and nations shall come seeking the favour of the Lord in Jerusalem (vs. 20-22). "In those days"—the days of

the new dispensation—men of all the languages of the world shall become followers “of him that is a Jew”, Jesus of Nazareth, when they find God revealed in Him (v. 23).

CONCERNING THE ADVENT OF THE MESSIAH  
(Chs. 9-14)

These prophecies bear no date. They belong apparently to the period of the prophet's ministry that followed the completion and dedication of the Temple. They are in two groups with similar headings (9:1; 12:1). “The burden of the word of Jehovah” means a Divine utterance involving judgment. The two groups together deal with the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom, and show how it was to be accomplished notwithstanding the rejection of the Messiah Himself. The whole section contains a symbolic account of the Messianic transactions that were to be accomplished at Jerusalem and of the salvation they were to secure for all the nations.

I. The Coming King Rejected (Chs. 9-11). These chapters contain a prophetic view of the history of Palestine, with special reference to the city of Jerusalem, looking down from the prophet's day toward the time of Christ. The word “Hadrach” (9:1), which occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament, was the name of a district north of Palestine near Damascus. Three great events stand out in the prophecy like mountain peaks. Each event is merged into, or connected with, the Messianic hope. They are all related in the prophet's view with the city of Jerusalem and the Messianic King, and they head up in His rejection. These events are as follows: The invasion of Alexander the Great and the protection of the city in 332 B.C. compared with the

coming of Zion's true King (9:1-10), the Maccabean wars and the deliverance of the city in 165 B.C. compared with the Messianic deliverance (9:11—10:12), the Roman invasion and the destruction of the city in A.D. 70 following His rejected ministry (Ch. 11).

1. The King's Coming (9:1-10). Here we have the first movement, the preparation for His coming in the judgment upon the nations in Syria. It is a prophetic view of the advance of Alexander's invasion through Palestine (vs. 1-7), and the protection of the city of Jerusalem at that time (v. 8). This is followed by a description of the manner in which Zion's true King would come, and of the character of His reign (vs. 9-10). Matthew declares this prophecy to have been fulfilled in the way Christ made His final entry into Jerusalem (Matt. 21:4-5).

2. The King's Program (9:11—10:12). This passage begins with the wars of the Maccabees and the deliverance wrought by them in the time of the Greek supremacy (9:11-17), and leads on to the spiritual deliverance wrought by Christ Himself, which is described in terms of the overthrow of idolatry and the punishment of false leaders (10:1-7), and the final redemption of the people of God, which is described in terms of the gathering home of the exiles of Israel (10:8-12). In the midst of the passage is a prediction that the Messianic King should come out of Judah (10:4). "From him shall come forth the corner-stone, from him the nail". This is an allusion to two prophecies of Isaiah (28:16 and 22:23).

3. The King's Rejection (Ch. 11). This chapter begins with the desolating judgment of the Roman invasion (vs. 1-3). The cause of this judgment is

then set forth symbolically in the rest of the chapter. The Lord commanded the prophet to assume the office of shepherd over His people, called "the flock of slaughter" because doomed to slaughter (vs. 4-6). In this the prophet represented the Messiah, and his two staves, Beauty and Bands, represented blessings which his ministry would bring to the people. He cut off the three false shepherds by whom Israel was ruled, probably representing the three official classes, princes, priests, and prophets. But his own ministry was rejected (vs. 7-8).

Then the flock were left to the fatal consequences of their rejection of the shepherd (vs. 9-11). He asked for his hire and was given thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave. As a token of the rejection of these wages the Lord bade him, "Cast it unto the potter", which was probably a proverbial expression for throwing it in the scrap-heap. The breaking of the staves, Beauty and Bands, represented the loss of what they stood for (vs. 12-14). All this foreshadowed the rejection of Christ by the Jews (Matt. 27:11-26).

Then the prophet was commanded to enact another symbolical prophecy, and take "the instruments of a foolish shepherd". Having rejected the Good Shepherd, Israel was to be given over to the rule of a shepherd who would destroy the sheep—a foreshadowing of the tragic history of the Jews ever since that time (vs. 15-17).

II. The Rejected King Enthroned (Chs. 12-14). This section has to do with the Messianic hope of Israel, and with the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon the earth. It contains a prophetic view of events as the prophet looked down from his own day toward that consummation. These events are described in two movements. In the first movement



they are viewed from the standpoint of Israel, as she is purified and restored through her repentance and conversion. In the second movement they are viewed from the standpoint of the King, who has been rejected, but now comes in triumphant power to reign.

The whole section looks forward to the consummation of the work of Christ. It describes in Old Testament terms, and from the standpoint of Judah and Jerusalem, the accomplishment of that Messianic work of which the building of the Temple was but a type. The book closes with a picture of the nations of the world coming up to Jerusalem to worship the King in the true house of the Lord.

To interpret these chapters aright, we need to keep in mind the special characteristic which has already appeared in Zechariah's prophecies. They occupy the border land, as it were, between the material and the spiritual, between the visible and the invisible world. Through the symbolism of the material we have been given intimations of the reality of the spiritual. The one merged into the other. Political happenings that belong to this world are linked with Messianic transactions that affect the other world. In the light of the New Testament, Zechariah's prophecies are seen to teach that, while the work of the Messiah would be accomplished in this present visible and material world, its result would be the opening of another world, a spiritual and heavenly order of things.

1. The Final Triumph of Jerusalem, or the City of the Great King (12:1—13:6).

(1) Its siege and deliverance (12:1-9). The city of Jerusalem stands here for the whole nation. Its siege is described in such a way as to indicate the kind of treatment Israel would receive among the

nations of the world after the rejection of the King. They would be perpetually hostile to Israel, and yet Israel would be a perpetual cause of trouble to them—"a cup of reeling" and "a burdensome stone". God would not allow the nation to be destroyed, but would deliver it Himself and exalt it, and would punish and destroy its foes.

(2) Its repentance and conversion (12:10-14). This passage shows how Israel's deliverance would come. It is the prediction of a great revival to take place in the nation. They would come to realize that they had rejected and crucified their Messiah. This would produce a deep and wide-spread penitential sorrow. Their repentance would be individual and personal, spreading through the whole nation, every one repenting and mourning for himself. The reference in v. 11 is to the national mourning over the death of Josiah (2 Chron. 35:22-25).

(3) Its purification and cleansing (13:1-6). The penitent people would find that God had overruled their rejection of the Messiah to provide a way for their forgiveness and cleansing from sin. By means of the Cross He had opened a fountain for the spiritual blessing and renewal of Israel (v. 1). The process of cleansing the nation is described in figures taken from the purification of the land from idolatry and false prophecy after a time of apostasy (v. 2).

So thorough would be the purification that if one of the false prophets should arise again, his own parents would put him to death (v. 3). These pretenders would all be so ashamed of their former claims that every one of them would strip off the outward tokens of his profession and say that he was a farm labourer (vs. 4-5). And if one were still suspected and were questioned about the scars on his breast, which were marks of idol worship, he

would reply that they were the result of chastisement received in the house of his relatives (v. 6).

2. The Final Triumph of the Lord, or the Glory of the Great King (13:7—14:21).

(1) The smiting of the shepherd (13:7-9). From the wounds of the false prophet in the preceding passage, we pass now to the smiting of the true Shepherd. Christ found in this passage a reference to His own rejection (Matt. 26:31). The scattering of the disciples was a partial fulfilment, the scattering of the nation a fuller one. "I will turn my hand upon the little ones"; that is, He would interpose in their favour. The "little ones" were the humble and despised followers of Christ from among the Jewish people (Matt. 10:42).

The passage goes on to say that two-thirds of the nation should perish, and one-third should survive to be brought through a trial that would refine them. Out of this they should call upon the Lord and be restored to His fellowship and favour. This prophecy foreshadows what was to befall the Jews after their rejection of the Messiah, and indicates that a minority would return to the Lord through the Gospel.

(2) The interposition of the Lord (14:1-8). In this prophecy there is a remarkable mingling of the material and the spiritual. It begins with a battle of all nations against Jerusalem, which gives an idealized picture of the world's wicked treatment of God's people. Then there comes a sudden intervention of the Lord for their deliverance (vs. 1-3). The next verses describe the nature of that intervention (vs. 4-5). "His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives". This event happened at the ascension of Christ, and we are not justified in looking for any future fulfilment of the prophecy.

From the Mount of Olives in the earthly world He passed into the presence of God in the heavenly world, and thus He opened a way into that world for His people. This is the significance of the way of escape which the Lord's intervention provided: "Ye shall flee by the valley of my mountains." (cf. 6:1)

The next verses describe the character of the age that was to be introduced by the Lord's intervention (vs. 6-8). "It shall be one day"—a unique day—"which is known unto Jehovah", that is, in its true nature known only to Him. It was to be the age of His own Holy Spirit. "At evening time there shall be light": toward the close of the twilight time of distress—the present age of tribulation—full and everlasting light should spring up. This looks forward to the final Advent of the Lord. "Living waters shall go out from Jerusalem": streams of spiritual blessing should flow from the throne of God poured out by the Holy Spirit. All this is a prophetic description of the unique character of the present Christian dispensation as seen through the windows of the old Jewish dispensation.

(3) The reign of the King (14:9-21). It is first announced that the Lord Himself is to be the King of all the earth. He is to be worshipped as God without a rival—"in that day shall Jehovah be one, and his name one" (v. 9). Jerusalem is to be elevated above all the land and become a safe dwelling place, freed from the curse (vs. 10-11). Thus is pre-figured the spiritual exaltation of the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2-4; 22:3-4).

The reign of the Lord is described in language that is unmistakably figurative. It sets forth the process of destroying all the foes of Jerusalem and putting away all the wickedness of the land, till at

last only that which is holy remains (vs. 12-15). It corresponds with Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 15:24-25 about the risen and ascended Christ, who "must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet".

This is followed by an account of all the nations that are left of those that fought against Jerusalem coming up to worship the King and keep the Feast of Tabernacles (vs. 16-19). This feast was the consummation of the yearly system of Jewish times and seasons. It was the supreme Levitical type of the blessings of redemption. The prophet is here describing, in Old Testament language, the gathering of the nations into the Kingdom of God. Then the book comes to a close with a description of the holiness of Jerusalem, when the distinction between the sacred and the secular shall have passed away (vs. 20-21). Every common thing shall be dedicated to the Lord, and no godless or profane person shall be found among His people. All who worship in the new Temple shall be righteous and holy.

#### THE MESSAGE OF ZECHARIAH

This book is the consummation of Messianic prophecy. It gathers up lines of hope and promise which were separate in previous prophets. It stands, as it were, on the border line between the old dispensation and the new, between the material order and the spiritual. From the viewpoint of the one it foreshadows the other. The prophet is not only looking into the future for the Messianic age; he is looking also into another order of things, the world of spiritual realities.

In the light of the New Testament, the outlook of this book upon the subsequent course of Israel's history and upon the development of God's redeeming purpose in the world is as follows:

1. The Messiah would combine in Himself the two offices of king and priest, and would raise up the true temple of the Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit (chs. 1-6; John 2:19; Eph. 2:19-22).

2. Jerusalem would be rebuilt and expanded into a heavenly city. It would become the city of the living God, and the habitation of all His redeemed people (chs. 7-8; Heb. 12:18-24).

3. The Messiah would come to Jerusalem as a Prince of peace, but would be rejected by Israel. As a result the Jews would be subjected to oppression at the hands of the nations of the world (chs. 9-11; Luke 21:24).

4. Whenever Israel should repent and turn in true contrition to the Messiah whom they had rejected, then He would come in heavenly power for their salvation and deliverance, and for the final establishment of His Kingdom (chs. 12-14; Acts 3:19-21; Rom. 11:13-16, 25-29).

## THE BOOK OF MALACHI

NOTHING is known of this prophet but his name (1:1). It means "my messenger". It is not the name of any other person in the Old Testament, and this has led some to think that the word is not a proper name at all, but has been taken from 3:1 as a title for the book in the absence of information about the author. However, "Malachi" has been regarded as the prophet's own name since the early Christian age, and it is convenient so to use it still. The most probable date for Malachi's prophecy is the time of Nehemiah, about eighty years after Haggai and Zechariah. He seems to have occupied the same relation to Nehemiah that they did to Zerubbabel.

Reaction had followed the restoration of Israel and the rebuilding and dedication of the Temple. The people had become indifferent to the sacredness of the Temple services and the significance of their covenant with the Lord. Malachi's efforts were directed against this moral and religious decline and against the formalism and hypocrisy that marked the period. He foretold the coming of the Messiah in a purifying judgment, and also the dawning of the new age of salvation. The book may be analysed in four parts.

1. A Message to the Nation about Religious Indifference (1:1-5). The prophet begins by setting the Lord's declared love for Israel over against Israel's scepticism about it: "I have loved you—Wherein hast thou loved us?" This question indi-

cates the nation's religious indifference. Proof of the Lord's love for them is given in the contrast between their lot and that of Edom. The prophet refers to Jacob and Esau, not as individuals, but as representatives of the nations descended from them.

2. A Message to the Priests about Spiritual Insensibility (1:6—2:9).

(1) Their sin declared (1:6-14). They were dishonouring God with polluted worship, by offering blemished and inferior animals in the sacrifices. This showed how insensible they were of the majesty of God (vs. 6-9). It were better to close the Temple altogether, for the Lord had no pleasure in such sacrifices as these. The time was coming when pure worship should be offered to the Lord throughout the whole Gentile world (cf. John 4:21-24). But the priests were profaning His name and treating the service of His sanctuary with contempt by the cheap offerings they brought (vs. 10-14).

(2) Their punishment announced (2:1-9). Their blessings should be turned into curses, and they should be made contemptible in the eyes of the people (vs. 1-4). A contrast is drawn between their conduct and the Lord's ideal of the priesthood when He established the office with Levi (vs. 5-9).

3. A Message to the People about Moral Insensibility (2:10—3:15).

(1) Their sin declared (2:10-17). They were marrying idolators and divorcing their Jewish wives. They were dealing treacherously with their brethren and hypocritically with their God. The nature of their sin is declared as "profaning the covenant of our fathers" (v. 10), that is, the special covenant which God made with their fathers (Exod.



19:5-6). The peculiar significance of Israel's sin in this case is indicated in v. 15. He made the Israelites one people and separated them from the other nations, not because He had no "residue of the Spirit", no Divine blessing left for them, but because "He sought a godly seed". Marriage with foreign women before the Messiah came would subvert this Divine purpose.

(2) Their punishment announced (3:1-6). It would be brought on by the coming of the Lord Himself. He would come to His Temple at a time when they did not expect Him, with a purifying judgment that should begin with the priests and extend to the people. This prophecy is based on the one in Isa. 40:3-5. The long line of the prophets should end in a special messenger who would introduce the Lord Himself. Malachi's own name makes him such a messenger. The Angel of the Covenant is identified here with the Lord Himself, which marks the identity of this Angel throughout the Old Testament with the Second Person of the Trinity. The phrases, "Whom ye seek" and "Whom ye desire", refer back with some irony to the people's demand in 2:17.

(3) An appeal to return to God (3:7-15). They have been robbing God in tithes and offerings. Let them bring in the whole tithe and He will pour out a blessing upon them (vs. 7-12). The practice of giving the tenth to God goes back to primitive times (Gen. 14:20; 28:22). It was embodied in the Mosaic Law (Lev. 27:30-32) as a means of supporting the priests in their service (Num. 18:26-31). They have also been complaining that their observance of the forms of religion brought them no profit, and that it was the wicked who prospered (vs. 13-15).

4. A Message to the Remnant about Coming Judgment (3:16—4:6).

(1) A promise to the faithful (3:16—4:3). These are contrasted with those addressed in v. 13, and are described as "they that feared Jehovah and thought upon his name." They should be spared in the day of His judgment (3:16-17). The figure in the phrase, "a book of remembrance", is taken from the Persian practice of keeping a record of those who had rendered service that they might be rewarded in due time (cf. Est. 6:1-3). "In the day when I make up my jewels" (A.V.); preferably, "in the day when I do this" (R.V. marg.); that is, at the time when God acts and carries out His purpose of judgment. Then they should perceive the difference between the righteous and the wicked (3:18). That day should be one of burning and destruction for the wicked but of healing and deliverance for the righteous (4:1-3).

(2) A warning to all (4:4-6). Let them remember the Law of Moses and how God gave it to him for all Israel. The Lord promises to send them Elijah the prophet before His day of judgment comes, that he may prepare the nation by turning their hearts back to God. According to the teaching of Jesus, this promise was fulfilled in the person of John the Baptist (Matt. 11:10, 14; 17:12; Mark 9:13; Luke 7:27). Thus the last voice of the Old Testament introduces the first voice of the New Testament.

#### THE MESSAGE OF MALACHI

This book contains the last message of God to Israel for four hundred years. It was a warning of judgment, as the heading of the prophecy indi-

cates. The Exile had cured the Jews of idolatry, but now, when they were back in their own land, they were giving way to another form of sin. That self-righteousness which produced the Pharisees in the age between the Testaments, and which resulted at last in Israel's rejection of their Messiah, had already begun to appear. It was against this that Malachi's prophecy was directed. Its roots lay in moral and spiritual insensibility, and this attitude on the part of the people is reflected in their question, seven times repeated in the book, "Wherein"? (1:2, 6, 7; 2:14, 17; 3:7-8).

Although Malachi announces the coming of the Lord in a purifying judgment, yet he also gives us the beautiful Messianic image of the sun of righteousness rising with healing in its beams (4:2), which has its New Testament parallel in "the day-spring from on high" (Luke 1:78).



