

PART FOUR

Judah's History after Israel's Fall

This period, highlighted by the reigns of two godly kings (Hezekiah and Josiah), will be otherwise plagued by wicked and weak kings, resulting in Judah's "Babylonian Captivity".

111. Sennacherib Attacks Judah's Fortified Cities

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 18:13; II Chron. 32:1; Isa. 36:1.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. Sennacherib is the powerful king of Assyria.
 - b. He comes against Hezekiah's fortified cities (and will ultimately take them).

COMMENTS

Because the prophet Isaiah is personally connected with this stretch of history in the reign of Hezekiah, we not only have the II Kings and II Chron. coverages but also an Isa. coverage.

It is now the fourteenth year of Hezekiah. He is nearly midway through his twenty-nine-year reign. It was in his sixth year that Samaria fell to the Assyrians (II Kings 18:10). According to archaeology it was Sargon II who brought the final destruction to the Northern Kingdom. Sennacherib, who is now ruling in Assyria, is Sargon II's son. A visit to the Ancient Assyria display in the British Museum in London will convince anybody that Sennacherib was indeed one of Assyria's powerful kings. In coming against Judah he hopes to do to the Southern Kingdom what his father did to the Northern. Before attacking the capital (Jerusalem) he attacks Hezekiah's defense cities (Lachish, Libnah, and others).

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. How long has it been since the Northern Kingdom fell to Assyria?
3. Who is the present Assyrian king?
4. What cities is he attacking?

112. Hezekiah Becomes Deathly III

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 20:1-11; Isa. 38:1-22.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.

3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. Hezekiah is told to prepare to die.
 - b. God regards his tears and prayers and promises to add fifteen years to his life.
 - c. God also promises to deliver Jerusalem out of the hand of Sennacherib.
 - d. Hezekiah asks for and receives a special sign.

COMMENTS

It is arbitrary on the student's part just when he thinks Hezekiah's sickness takes place. Both II Kings and Isa. devote several chapters to Sennacherib's case before giving attention to the king's severe sickness. In telling of it both accounts merely says, "In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death," leaving us to decide just at what point of time during Sennacherib's invasion it takes place. (II Kings 38:6 does confirm the fact that it occurs during the Sennacherib ordeal.)

Neither of the accounts affords us any information about the purpose of the king's sickness. If it is not purposeful on God's part, then it is a natural sickness such as can occur to any of us at any time.

At thirty-nine Hezekiah is not reconciled to the thought of dying. God who answers prayer (Matt. 7:7), and especially earnest prayer (Jas. 5:16), is touched with Hezekiah's tears and petition and through His prophet Isaiah sends word that He will add fifteen years to his life. His will not be a miraculous healing (instantaneous) but providential such as God grants us (in a matter of days and by the use of means--a fig poultice). This account demonstrates that God is not against medical means but actually uses them to bring about man's cure--something to be thankful for.

In that day of open communication with God through prophets it was not uncommon for one to ask for a sign (recall Moses, Gideon, Zacharias, Mary, and others--Exo.4:1-9; Judg. 6:36-40; Luke 1:18; 1:34) such as Hezekiah does. God's sign will be that the shadow on King Ahaz's sun dial will either go forward or return backward ten degrees.

Either way will be adequate, but Hezekiah considers it an even greater sign if the shadow reverses itself. With God no work of power is impossible (Luke 1:37), for He can do more than we ask or think (Eph. 3:20), so He grants Hezekiah's request.

The thoughts about all this which Hezekiah puts in writing (Isa. 38:9-20) form a precious piece of literature. Study it carefully.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 4 memory-facts for this event.
2. How do we know Hezekiah's sickness takes place during Sennacherib's invasion of Judah?
3. What do we know about the purpose of the king's sickness?
4. How old is Hezekiah at this time?
5. What is his response to the message that he will die from this sickness?
6. What good news now comes to Hezekiah?
7. By what means does he get well?
8. What other people in the Bible asked for signs?
9. What sign does God give the king to assure him that he will get well?

113. Hezekiah Receives Visitors from Babylon

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 20:12-19; Isa. 39:1-8.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. The king of Babylon sends congratulations on Hezekiah's recovery.
 - b. Hezekiah shows them his possessions of treasure and armor.
 - c. Isaiah foretells that all these treasures will one day be carried to Babylon.

COMMENTS

Bear in mind that Babylon has not come into its great power and won't for nearly a hundred years. It, too, has to fear the present might of Assyria. It is thought that the purpose of the Babylonian embassy coming to Hezekiah is probably more political than personal endearment--that from this may come an alliance with Judah that will be to both nations' mutual benefit in resisting the aggression of Nineveh. If so, Hezekiah's showing them his possessions

and military equipment is to show them what he has to contribute to their alliance. But God has never been pleased with His kings depending on alliances rather than on Him, so He sends Isaiah to administer a rebuke and to tell Hezekiah that everything he has shown the men from Babylon will someday be carried off to Babylon. "Smith" wisely notes, "Here for the first time, it would seem, Babylon and not Assyria was identified as the true and ultimate enemy of Judah. It would be Babylon which would bring to fulfillment all the predictions of the prophets since the days of Moses concerning the deportation of the people of God and the destruction of the holy city." Hezekiah humbly accepts the rebuke and verdict. It may seem to us selfish of him to say, "Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?" yet there could be some of this in all of us as we acknowledge troubles that will probably overtake our nation sometime after we are dead and gone. From II Chron. 32:31 we see that God is watching Hezekiah's behavior during this visit and vs. 25, 26 indicate that Hezekiah is not really as grateful for his healing nor as humble before God afterwards as he should be. Therefore, He allows Sennacherib to continue his conquest in Judah and his threat to Jerusalem.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. What is the stated purpose of the Babylonians' visit?
3. What might have been another purpose of their coming?
4. What does Hezekiah show them?
5. Does God like this?
6. What prediction does Isaiah make?
7. What is Hezekiah's reaction to the prediction?

114. Jerusalem Prepares to Withstand Assyria

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Chron. 32:2-8.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. He brings the city's water supply inside its walls.
 - b. He repairs the city wall and builds an additional wall.

- c. He increases their military supplies.
- d. He assures his captains that God will be with them against Assyria.

COMMENTS

It is but natural that Hezekiah and Jerusalem do all they can to prepare for the coming invasion by Sennacherib. It is a fearful time as the invader attacks the outlying fortified cities first, Jerusalem knowing this to be in preparation for his attacking it. Jerusalem's principal water supply is the great Gihon Spring just outside its east wall in the Kidron Valley. They decide to dig a tunnel from the spring through the ridge that parallels the east wall of the city, diverting the water through the new tunnel into the Pool of Siloam in the valley west of the ridge. This will put the city's water inside the city's wall rather than leaving it outside. Archaeologists have reopened this tunnel by removing the silt that had nearly filled it through the centuries, making it possible for one to carry a light and wade from the spring to the pool, a distance of a third of a mile. The two times your writer has done this, the depth of the water was different each time. From a study of the pick-marks on the tunnel's walls it can be seen that Hezekiah's men started at both ends and tunneled toward each other. At the completion of the job they chiseled information about the tunnel's digging on the tunnel's wall near the Siloam end. The inscription has been removed and is in the museum at Istanbul. In addition to the water supply, Hezekiah makes other preparations: walls, equipment, and appointing captains.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 4 memory-facts for this event.
2. The water of what spring does Hezekiah bring inside the city wall?
3. The tunnel ends at the Pool of _____.
4. How long is the water tunnel?
5. What other war preparations does Hezekiah make at Jerusalem?

115. Hezekiah Offers Assyria a Pay-Off

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 18:14-16.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. Fearful of Sennacherib, Hezekiah asks what it will take for peace.
 - b. Sennacherib demands three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.
 - c. Hezekiah pays by giving him all the silver in the temple and palace and by removing the gold from the doors and pillars of the temple that he had previously put there.

COMMENTS

Chronological arrangements concerning this period of Hezekiah's reign are arbitrary and not at all easy nor certain. Hezekiah's showing all his treasures to the Babylonians has to precede this event when he uses them to pay off Sennacherib. (Of course, he will soon get them back at the defeat of Sennacherib so that ultimately they can be carried to Babylon.) The visitors from Babylon do not come until Hezekiah's recovery from his sickness. So we have the sickness, then the recovery, then the visitors, and sometime later this event.

Though Hezekiah is regarded as one of Judah's best kings, he still has some faults: his response to his recovery was not altogether pleasing to God; God did not like his pride over his treasures; and now his fear of Sennacherib is more manifest than his complete trust in God. Even before Sennacherib attacked his fortified cities, he defeated Tyre, Ashkelon, and Ekron, and now he is in Hezekiah's domain. Hezekiah's, "I have offended," may refer to some tribute he has failed to pay or to entering into an alliance against him. Has Hezekiah forgotten God's power to give victory to His people over their powerful enemies in the past? Is God weak today who was strong back there? Or is Hezekiah like Peter who started out well by walking on the water by faith but whose faith failed in the face of a grave circumstance? Luke

18:1 says we should pray and not faint. This is what Hezekiah should be doing, trusting God to take care of them instead of capitulating to the wicked enemy. With such divine help available he should not faint even in this day of adversity (see Prov. 24:10). Do you think God approves Hezekiah's taking money from the temple treasury and the gold from the temple's doors and pillars as well as his own treasure with which God has blessed him, and giving them to this foreign monarch? Of course, He doesn't. And will Sennacherib be satisfied with this payment? We shall see.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. What cities has Sennacherib subdued before coming against Judah?
3. Really Hezekiah should be trusting _____ rather than fearing _____.

116. Sennacherib Wants a Full Surrender

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 18:17-27; II Chron. 32:9-16,26; Isa. 36:2-22.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. Sennacherib dispatches three military leaders and soldiers to intimidate Hezekiah and Jerusalem.
 - b. From the valley floor they speak of the futility of thinking Jerusalem can resist Sennacherib, of trusting in Egyptian help, or of trusting in their God.
 - c. When Hezekiah's officers ask them not to speak in the language of the Jews, they deliberately speak so the common people can hear them and be fearful.
 - d. The people remain quiet, obeying Hezekiah's orders.

COMMENTS

Sennacherib is not content with the pay-off sent him by Hezekiah but sends a preliminary force to Jerusalem, hopefully to affect its surrender without a battle. To accomplish this the three leaders of the military

regiment loudly call to Hezekiah from the valley floor outside Jerusalem's wall. Hezekiah sends three of his own officials to see what they are saying. Their message to Hezekiah is three-fold: (1) don't trust in your own military strength; (2) don't trust in any help from weak Egypt; and (3) don't trust in God to deliver you out of my hand. They are correct in the first two—Hezekiah is not militarily strong enough to resist the great power of Assyria, and Egypt is not strong enough either. But they are wrong in bringing Hezekiah's God into the matter, especially in comparing Him with the pagan gods of other cities conquered by Sennacherib. When Hezekiah's officials try to get Rabshakeh to speak in Syrian instead of Jewish so the people cannot understand their conversation, he refuses, saying he wants them to hear what he is saying—so they will fear and be more willing to surrender than fight. So he continues his tirade, and the people do not say a word back to him, for Hezekiah has ordered them not to.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 4 memory-facts for this event.
2. Does Sennacherib settle for Hezekiah's payoff?
3. Whom does Sennacherib dispatch to Jerusalem?
4. What three-fold message does he send to Hezekiah?
5. Why does he not respect the request not to speak in the Jewish language?
6. What do the people answer him?

117. The Prophet's Comforting Message

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 19:1-7; Isa. 37:1-7.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. Hezekiah goes into the temple and sends messengers to the prophet Isaiah, asking him to pray about their grave situation.
 - b. Through Isaiah God assures Hezekiah of the destruction of Sennacherib.

COMMENTS

It is a fearful time for Hezekiah and Judah. Sennacherib has been crushing

all opposition in his way, Judah's outlying defense cities are falling to him, and Jerusalem is next on his list. Hezekiah has been a good king but should have trusted in God instead of sending Sennacherib the temple and palace treasures. But now that the pay-off is not working, what can he do but cast himself on the mercies of God even as he did when he was deathly sick? The one hope on which he stands is that Sennacherib has blasphemed God. Notice the four things in Hezekiah's message to Isaiah: (1) it is a day of "trouble"—that is apparent; (2) a day of "rebuke"—in their trouble he admits God is displeased with them; (3) "it is a day of blasphemy"—Sennacherib's statements; and (4) "the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth"—likely a proverb expressing human helplessness in a life-and-death situation. The king not only goes to the temple but calls on God's great prophet to pray who had earlier brought him a merciful message during his sickness-prayer. Immediately his messengers are sent back from Isaiah with the assurance God is going to take care of the blaspheming Sennacherib. What a comforting message to receive from God in such a dark hour!

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Where does Hezekiah himself go at this time?
3. How does he describe the gravity of their situation to Isaiah?
4. What urgent request does he make to Isaiah?
5. What message does God send to Hezekiah?

118. Another Threatening Message to Jerusalem

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 19:8-37; II Chron. 32:17-22; Isa. 37:8-38.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. Sennacherib is now warring against Libnah in Judah.
 - b. When Rabshakeh hears that the king of Ethiopia is coming against them, he sends a quick letter to Hezekiah, hoping for his surrender.

- c. Hezekiah spreads the letter out before the Lord in the temple and prays a great prayer.
- d. Isaiah again sends word to the king of the coming destruction of Sennacherib, of Jerusalem's deliverance, and of Judah's prospective future.
- e. Sennacherib's mighty army is smitten with death during the night, and he returns to his land where he is later assassinated by his own sons while worshipping in the temple of his god Nisroch.

COMMENTS

When Sennacherib's officials return to him from Jerusalem, they find he has left Lachish (having defeated this great stronghold) and is now attacking Libnah (another important stronghold not far from Lachish). But he cannot bring to Sennacherib that Hezekiah has surrendered to his intimidation. Hearing the king of Ethiopia has marched against him, Sennacherib has to march against him before going against Jerusalem. But he sends a letter to Jerusalem urging its surrender while going against the Ethiopians whom he routs. The letter contains the same type of message as Rabshakeh delivered on his previous trip to Jerusalem. Even though Isaiah had assured Hezekiah God was going to take care of the blasphemous Sennacherib, the king still regards the threatening letter enough that he takes it to the temple where he spreads it out before the Lord as he prays about it. God is pleased that the king talks his problems over with Him, and He sends a very elaborate message to him through the prophet Isaiah concerning the overthrow of Sennacherib and the complete deliverance of his kingdom from him. "He will not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it," and he doesn't, for on that very night his total army is smitten with death—one hundred eighty five thousand soldiers—and he goes back to Assyria without either his army or his pride. When it says, "He dwelt at

Nineveh," it means he discontinued his aggressiveness, and ultimately gets slain by two of his own sons. So the second time in Hezekiah's reign God has providentially rescued him, first from death and now from the invader.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 5 memory-facts for this event.
2. Where is Sennacherib warring when Rabshakeh returns to him?
3. What king comes against Sennacherib?
4. What are the contents of Sennacherib's letter to Jerusalem?
5. What does Hezekiah do about the letter?
6. What message does God send to Hezekiah through Isaiah?
7. What happens to Sennacherib's army?
8. What does Sennacherib do afterwards?
9. What ultimately happens to him in his own land?

119. Hezekiah's Fifteen Years of Prosperity

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Chron. 32:23,27-29,32,33; II Kings 20:20,21.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. God prospers Hezekiah after his deliverance from Sennacherib.
 - b. Hezekiah is greatly honored at his death.

COMMENTS

Special mention is made of Hezekiah's growing wealth following Judah's deliverance from the Assyrians. First of all, we would judge he retrieved the pay-off treasures of the temple and his palace he had earlier sent to Sennacherib. So happy are the surrounding nations that the Assyrian invasion is over that they send Hezekiah many presents, and he is well known among many nations. Then God blesses Judah with abundant harvests of grain and grapes and olives as well as abundance of livestock. He is truly one of Judah's greatest kings. Have you noticed how much Biblical material is devoted to his reign? This is because, as II Kings 18:5 says, "He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that

were before him." While Josiah, according to II Kings 23:25, excelled all other kings before and after him in other ways, Hezekiah excelled them all in his prayerful trust in God. And those whom God greatly blesses, and He does Hezekiah, will likewise be honored by his fellowmen, so at his death after fifteen years of great prosperity he is buried with the greatest of the kings. He was twenty-five when he began to reign, and he has reigned twenty-nine years (II Kings 18:1,2), so he is fifty-four when he dies.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. What were some of the sources of Hezekiah's wealth after the destruction of the Assyrian army?
3. How long does he live after this event?
4. In what special way does he distinguish himself above all kings of Judah?
5. How is he honored in his burial?

120. The Exceeding Wickedness of Manasseh

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 21:1-16; II Chron. 33:1-9.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. The twelve-year-old Manasseh begins his fifty-five-year reign in Jerusalem.
 - b. He is completely idolatrous, being more wicked than the pagan nations that inhabited the land before Israel.
 - c. He does not listen to the prophets God sends to rebuke him but kills them.

COMMENTS

Since he is only twelve when he becomes king, and since he reverts to the idolatry his father Hezekiah destroyed, it is a reasonable assumption that the element that secretly did not go along with Hezekiah's reformation now surfaces and influences his son in their direction. From the various types of idolatry in which he is involved, he has to be the most wicked king Judah has ever had. He worships Baal (the Phoenician deity of Ahab and Jezebel), the host of heaven (sun, moon, and stars), and

Moloch of the Ammorites ("he caused his children to pass through the fire"). He also engages in witchcraft and sorcery. And he even desecrates God's temple by brazenly setting up some of this idolatry in that place where God has recorded His name. In fact, the abominable religious practices he follows in Jerusalem make him and Judah more corrupt even than those pagan nations God had driven out when He gave this land to Israel. His father Hezekiah would "turn over in his grave" if he knew what his son is doing. But God who sees all that goes on will not be blind to what Manasseh is doing. He sends prophets to speak His displeasure, telling them that such wickedness nullifies God's promise to sustain them in the land He has given them and actually foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem to befall it because of their sins. The Jewish historian Josephus states that King Manasseh put to death the righteous and even killed the prophets. Jewish tradition has it that the prophet Isaiah was placed inside a hollow log which Manasseh commanded to be sawed through. This could be what Heb. 11:34 refers to when it speaks of some being "sawn asunder". These deaths, then, would be the "innocent blood" which he sheds. It takes courage to rebuke, for you are dealing with the honesty of the human ego. Will the person accept the rebuke? This is the worthy purpose behind a proper rebuke. A rebuke not accepted can result in the loss of friendship or in being villified or even in being killed. John the Baptist's rebuke resulted in imprisonment and finally death.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. Why might a son of the righteous Hezekiah turn back to idolatry?
3. What are some of the pagan gods Manasseh worships?
4. How does his corruption compare with the heathen nations God drove out before Joshua?
5. What does such wickedness do to God's promises concerning the promised land?
6. What does God do at this time about Manasseh's wickedness?
7. How far does Manasseh go in rejecting the prophets of God?

121. A Chastened Manasseh Repents

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Chron. 33:10-13.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. Because Manasseh will not listen to the prophets, God chastens him with personal captivity in Babylon.
 - b. He humbles himself, recognizes Jehovah as God, and is mercifully restored to his rule in Jerusalem.

COMMENTS

Manasseh is probably a combination of being deceived as to who is Deity and who aren't and of kingly pride. God will later deal with the proud Babylonian monarch Nebuchadnezzar in much the same way He here deals with the king of Judah who will not listen to God's prophets. The few verses here do not give us much elaboration about an Assyrian invasion, the deportation of Manasseh to far-away Babylon, in what year of Manasseh's reign it occurs, how long he is there, who rules while he is gone, nor of the process of Manasseh's thinking in Babylon that finally gets him restored. This captivity must have come during the Assyrian king Essarhaddon who mentions Manasseh among his tributaries, and "Barnes" mentions that he is the only king of Assyria who from time to time held his court at Babylon. We know it takes a powerful God to deal with a stubborn king like Manasseh, but the king who will not listen to God's rebuke delivered through prophets is completely humbled by His powerful hand of chastening. Upon being restored to his throne he knows now that Jehovah is God. How his father Hezekiah would rejoice if he knew this!

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Besides probably being deceived as to who Deity is, what is another problem of Manasseh's?

3. Is God able to humble a powerful king who will not listen to His prophets?
4. What Assyrian king appears to be the one who deported Manasseh to Babylon?
5. Why is Manasseh restored to his throne in Jerusalem?

122. Manasseh's Prosperous Years in Jerusalem

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Chron. 33:14-17.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. He fortifies Jerusalem and Judah's defense cities.
 - b. He destroys the idolatry he formerly worshiped.
 - c. He restores Jehovah worship he formerly stopped.

COMMENTS

Manasseh's case gives us hope concerning people who are not right at the present. Maybe their present pattern will not be permanent. God's dealings may yet change their course as it has Manasseh's. Remember Saul of Tarsus also. When Manasseh comes back to power, he is a different person: "old things" (idolatry) have passed away with something "new" to him (Jehovah worship) taking its place. It is good to know that the God who can chasten a sinning person can also bless that person when he gets right—as He does in Manasseh's case. We are especially glad to see him take away the idols he formerly worshiped and renew temple-worship. The road of repentance is the same for us all: we must react against our former sins and begin doing God's will. Anything other than this is not really repentance. "Barnes" places v. 14 quite a ways along in Manasseh's reign when he comments, "We may gather from this verse that late in his reign Manasseh revolted from the Assyrians and made preparations to resist them if they should attack him." And when that verse opens, "Now after this," it allows for such a passage of time. While Manasseh does all he can to correct the evil he has instituted, it still does not eradicate it all, for when

Nebuchadnezzar will later invade Judah, II Kings 24:3,4 says, "Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did: and also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; which the Lord would not pardon." God had to punish Judah for what happened to His people and prophets. Manasseh's story reminds your writer of a man from Bandon, Ireland who gave Bandon, Oregon its name. He brought here a hedge plant called "Gorse" that he liked in Ireland but which spread all out of control in Oregon and clear down into California and which because of its resin makes forest fires worse. In his will the man left his money to fight the plague of gorse!

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. What actions show Manasseh is a totally different person now?
3. Why does "Barnes" think he is building up his military fortifications?

123. Summarizing Words about Manasseh

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 21:17,18; II Chron. 33:18-20.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. Special mention is made of the prophets who spoke to him, his being humbled, and the prayer he prayed.
 - b. He is buried in his own garden.

COMMENTS

Yes, Manasseh did sin (and how!), he was humbled (ditto), and he must have prayed some prayer to have it mentioned as it is here. The praying example of his father Hezekiah probably came before his mind in his predicament in Babylon, and God heard his prayer as he had his father's. Why is he buried in his own garden? "Barnes" observes, "The catacomb of David was

probably full, and the later kings (from Ahaz downwards) had to find sepulchres elsewhere. Ahaz was buried in Jerusalem, but not in the sepulchres of the kings (II Chron. 28:27). Hezekiah found a restingplace on the way that led up to David's catacomb (II Chron. 32:33). Manasseh and Amon were interred in 'the garden of Uzza,' a portion apparently of the royal palace-garden; perhaps so called after the name of the previous owner. Josiah was buried in 'his own sepulchre' (II Kings 23:30)." His fifty-five-year reign is the longest in either Judah or Israel.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Whose great example of earnest prayer under extreme distress does Manasseh imitate?
3. Why is he probably buried in his own garden?
4. How many years has he reigned?

124. The New King Reverts to Idolatry

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 21:19-22; II Chron. 33:21-23.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. The new king Amon is Manasseh's son, is twenty-two at the beginning of his reign, and he will have a short rule of two years.
 - b. He restores some of the idolatry once practiced by his father.

COMMENTS

Judah is getting worse. Hezekiah was a good king. Manasseh was bad and later good. Amon is never good. Things getting back into a bad condition will call for the revival under Amon's son Josiah, the last revival Judah will experience before its ruin and captivity. Again we are made to marvel at another reversion to idolatry. Won't children ever learn? But don't we often see the same thing today—young people not taking warning from their previous generation? When it mentions he did not humble himself as Manasseh did, he must surely

have been rebuked by prophets but refused their rebuke.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Do young people always listen to the warnings of a previous generation concerning their ways?
3. What seems to be implied when it says he does not humble himself before God?

125. Amon is Assassinated by His Servants

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 21:23-26; II Chron. 33:24,25.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. His servants slay him in his own house.
 - b. The people slay them and make his son Josiah king.

COMMENTS

We are not told why his servants slay him. It is probably a judgment from God. It does account for the shortness of his reign (two years). What they do does not set well with the people of the land, for they kill the assassins, and they crown Amon's son Josiah to replace him. Thus comes the king the young prophet of I Kings 13 predicted by name around three hundred and fifty years beforehand. He will prove to be one of Judah's best kings and its last good king.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Why does Amon rule only two years?
3. What indicates the people of the land do not go along with the assassination?
4. What kind of king will Josiah prove to be?

126. A Boy-King for Judah

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 22:1,2; II Chron. 34:1,2.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. Josiah is only eight when he begins to reign.
 - b. He will reign thirty-one years.

c. He is good like King David.

COMMENTS

Judah has had two other boy-kings: Joash was seven (II Chron. 24:1) and Manasseh twelve (II Chron. 33:1). His righteous reign probably contributes toward its length of thirty-one years. It is good to have ruling in the city of David a good king like David. How is it that Josiah is a good king? Some see in those who assassinated Amon an intention to overthrow the line of David on the throne, accounting for the people of the land bringing them to justice and putting them to death. If so, those who bring up the young king to his maturity impress upon his young mind the right way to go—to be a good king like David. He will be.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. Who were the other two boy-kings of Judah?
3. How might we account for Josiah being a good king when coming to power so young?

127. Josiah Reacts against Idolatry in His Eighth Year

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Chron. 34:3-7.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. In the eighth year of his reign he personally began to seek Jehovah.
 - b. In the twelfth year of his reign he began to purge Judah and surrounding areas of idols.

COMMENTS

The eighth year of his reign finds Josiah twenty years old at which time he personally begins to seek the God of his father David. He is now mature enough that he wants his reign to be as righteous before God as was David's. Worshiping the true God involves rejection of false gods, so when he is twenty-four he conducts his first campaign against idolatry, not only in Jerusalem and Judah but also in Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon, and

Naphtali of the old Northern Kingdom area. His scattering the dust of their destroyed images on the graves of those who once sacrificed to them and burning the bones of the idolatrous priests on their altars further demonstrate his utter contempt for every aspect of idolatry. How such a king must have pleased God even as our all-out service to Him today does!

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this lesson.
2. How old is Josiah when he begins to seek the God of his father David?
3. How old is he when he begins his first campaign against idolatry?
4. To what extremes does he go in showing his contempt for idolatry?

128. Josiah Orders the Temple Repaired

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 22:3-7; II Chron. 34:8-13.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. In preparation for repairing the temple the Levites gather money from the remnant of Israel and all of Judah.
 - b. This money is given to the workmen to repair the damage done to the temple by former idolatrous kings.

COMMENTS

The once-beautiful temple of Solomon, now several hundred year old, has been abused during the reigns of various idolatrous kings before Josiah. He wants to see the temple put into a good state of repair, so he sends Levites throughout Judah and Benjamin as well as among the remnant up in Manasseh and Ephraim to take up money for this worthy project. In the eighteenth year of his reign, (when he was twenty-six) he places three capable men (Shaphan, a scribe; Maaseiah, governor over Jerusalem; and Joah, recorder) over the project. They give the Levite-gathered offering into the hands of various foremen who give it to the men doing the actual work. It is interesting to notice that no accounting is called for concerning the

workers' expenditure of the money, for they are all counted very true and faithful men. The same was true when former King Joash repaired the temple (II Kings 12:15).

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. Why is the temple in need of repair?
3. How old is Josiah when he orders this project?
4. Who are the three men Josiah puts in charge of it?
5. Who does not have to give account of the expenditure of the money, and why don't they?

129. The Book of the Law is Found

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 22:8—23:20,24-27; II Chron. 34:14-33.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. The book of the law is found in the temple.
 - b. Shaphan reads it to Josiah, who sends men to inquire of the Lord concerning its warnings.
 - c. Huldah, the prophetess, says Judah will be severely punished for its sins but not in Josiah's day.
 - d. The king has the book read to the people after which he makes a covenant with God to be obedient to the law, and he has the people also pledge their obedience.
 - e. Josiah inaugurates a new campaign against idolatry throughout Judah and even at Bethel where he fulfills the ancient prediction about himself.

COMMENTS

Immediately the king summons the leaders and the people of Judah to the temple so they can hear all the words of the law of God. The king publicly promises God he will abide by His law, and he calls on the people to do the same. As a consequence every form of idolatry is destroyed, and the idolatrous priests are killed. Some of this traces all the way back to the idolatry of Solomon. And in his rampage he goes to Bethel to destroy that idolatrous altar set up by Jeroboam that ultimately caused the Northern

Kingdom to be destroyed. While there to break down that altar he notices the sepulchres of the idolatrous priests who one time officiated at that altar, and he brings out their bones and burns them on that altar, thus fulfilling to the letter the prophecy in I Kings 13:2: "O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee." According to Ussher's date-system the prophecy was uttered 351 years prior to this fulfillment. But when Josiah notices the sepulchre of the young prophet who faithfully uttered this prophecy, he respectfully commands not to disturb his sepulchre.

While Hezekiah was Judah's greatest king in his trusting God (II Kings 18:5), Josiah is its greatest king in his opposition to idolatry and his zeal for Jehovah-worship.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 5 memory-facts for this event.
2. Why was the law of God kept in the temple?
3. What emotion is aroused in the king as he hears the reading of the Scriptures?
4. What does he send messengers to find out?
5. What good and what bad news does the prophetess give his messengers?
6. Why is Judah less excusable for its ways than even Israel had been?
7. What covenant with God does Josiah make and ask the people to make also?
8. After this Josiah destroys every form of _____ and even kills the idolatrous _____.
9. At Bethel what altar does he break down, and whose bones does he burn?
10. How long ago had this been predicted?
11. Whose sepulchre at Bethel does he not disturb?
12. In what sense is he the greatest king Judah ever had?

130. Josiah Observes a Great Passover

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 23:21-23; II Chron. 35:1-19.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. In Josiah's eighteenth year of reign he calls the greatest Passover observance that has been since Samuel's day.

- b. The II Chron. account contains many of the strict details of its observance.

COMMENTS

Now it is the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, and he is twenty-six years old. He has not only reacted against idolatry, but he now wishes to carry out his covenant to be obedient to God. During Hezekiah's reign, you may recall from II Chron. 30, he too called a great Passover—the greatest Passover that had been held since the time of Solomon (v. 26). But now Josiah calls an even greater. You should notice in the details of Josiah's Passover as covered in II Chron. how careful he is to see that everything is done according to the will of God. And we who carry out the will of God today need to be equally as careful that we do everything according to God's revealed will. Heb. 12:28 says, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear," assuring us that even in the New Testament times that our God of love and mercy is also a "consuming fire" (v. 29) for deliberate disobedience to His plan.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. How old is king Josiah at this time?
3. How great is this Passover said to be?
4. Can you name at least two details that are mentioned in its observance?
5. Why should we who serve today also be careful about doing everything according to God's plan?

131. Josiah Meets an Untimely End

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Chron. 35:20-27; II Kings 23:28-30.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. Pharaoh-Necho is passing by to war at Carchemish.
 - b. Somehow Josiah goes out against him.

- c. After Pharaoh-Necho fails to dissuade him, a battle ensues in which Josiah is mortally wounded.
- d. He dies (probably on the trip back to Jerusalem), and Jeremiah leads the nation in lamentation over him.

COMMENTS

With the death of Josiah we move into the end-years of Judah before its Babylonian Captivity. In summary of these years "Smith" says, "The twenty-three years following the death of Josiah were the 'dying time' of the kingdom of Judah. These were tragic days when petty politicians repeated foolish mistakes which drug the nation down to oblivion. In spite of the heroic preaching of Jeremiah, the nation sank ever deeper into apostasy and rebellion. The final scenes unfold like those in a Shakespearian tragedy: (1) the death and burial of Josiah...; (2) the reign and removal of Jehoahaz...; (3) the reign and rebellion of Jehoiakim...; (4) the reign and deportation of Jehoiachin...; (5) the revolt and punishment of Zedekiah...; (6) the aftermath of the fall of Jerusalem...."

Josiah is thirty-eight, and the thirty-one-year reign of this good king of Judah is about to come to an unexpected, abrupt end. A glance at what is happening in history will help us see what happens.

In very recent times the rising Babylon has overthrown Nineveh and taken over the Assyrian-held territories. Nabopolassar, its conqueror, even considered himself to be "king of Assyria". It is against this king of Assyria that the Egyptian Pharaoh-Necho is marching, attempting to halt the further build-up of Babylon. As he is on his way to do battle at Carchemish up north, he is passing along Judah. But Josiah opposes Necho's passage, maybe wanting to ally himself with the rising Babylon, for civil treatment down the line. The Egyptian tries to discourage Josiah's attempt to keep him from proceeding, and a battle breaks out near the important mountain-pass city Megiddo in which Josiah is

mortally wounded. He is put into his "second chariot", a lighter chariot for the hurried trip back to Jerusalem. But it is all to no avail as he dies (probably on the way home). Oh, it is a sad time for Judah, for it has held Josiah in the highest respect. And the good people themselves grieve. God's prophet Jeremiah is in the beginning of his many years as a prophet in the Jerusalem area, and he leads the nation in a national lamentation. And well might Judah mourn, for it will not have another good king, and well might the prophet mourn, for he will never get to work with another good king of Judah. Josiah's son Jehoahaz is his successor.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 4 memory-facts for this event.
2. How old is Josiah when Pharaoh-Necho is passing by?
3. How long has he reigned?
4. Where is Necho going and why?
5. Does Necho want to engage Josiah in a battle?
6. When Josiah foolishly persists, what happens?
7. Where does the skirmish take place?
8. Who leads the nation in a lamentation?
9. What about the future for Judah and for Jeremiah?

132. Jehoahaz is King for Only Three Months

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 23:31-34; II Chron. 36:1-4; Jer. 22:1-12.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. Jehoahaz (called "Shallum" in Jer. 22) is twenty-three.
 - b. God makes a great promise to him through His prophet Jeremiah concerning the possible future of Jerusalem.
 - c. But Jehoahaz does not listen, choosing rather to be idolatrous.
 - d. He is on the throne only three months when Pharaoh-Necho summons him, deposes him, replaces him with his brother, and puts Judah to tribute.
 - e. Jehoahaz is taken to Egypt where he lives the rest of his days.

COMMENTS

Jehoahaz is twenty-three, meaning his father Josiah was sixteen when

Jehoahaz was born. Immediately does the prophet Jeremiah enter the scene, promising him if he will be a godly king, following the good example of his father, Jerusalem will be blessed with good kings occupying the famous throne of David. But that is not the way the new king wishes to go even though Jeremiah has told him of the coming desolation of Jerusalem if he goes the ungodly route. It is likely because of his refusal to hearken to God's message that the tide turns against him, and he is summoned before Pharaoh-Necho at Riblah, two hundred miles north of Jerusalem. It is likely at this time that Jeremiah utters the rest of his prophecy in Jer. 22: "Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him: but weep sore for him that goeth away; for he shall return no more, nor see his native country...He shall not return thither any more; but he shall die in the place whither they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more" (vs. 10-12). At Riblah he is removed from being king, his brother Eliakim will be made king instead, he is bound with chains to be taken to Egypt, and Judah is assessed with a tribute of silver and gold. And as Jeremiah prophesied, he did not return to Jerusalem but died in Egypt. When the Kings' account says Necho makes Eliakim king in the place of his father Josiah, it shows that Necho never really recognizes Jehoahaz as king.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 5 memory-facts for this event.
2. What promise does Jeremiah make to Jehoahaz?
3. What does he predict if Jehoahaz is not a godly king?
4. Which route does Jehoahaz take?
5. What does God bring on him as a result?
6. What special prediction does Jeremiah make about Jehoahaz?
7. Who becomes king instead of Jehoahaz?
8. What further sign of Egypt's supremacy over Judah takes place?
9. Eliakim's name is changed to what?

133. Jehoiakim's Wicked Reign

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 23:35-24:7; II Chron. 36:5-8; Jer. 26:1-24; Jer. 25:1-38; Jer. 36:1-32; Jer. 22:13-19.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. Jehoiakim is twenty-five as he begins his eleven-year reign.
 - b. He raises the tribute money for Egypt.
 - c. He proves to be a very wicked king.
 - d. A temple speech by Jeremiah in the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign almost costs him his life.
 - e. Babylon's first invasion of Judah.
 - f. As early as Jehoiakim's fourth year Jeremiah predicts a seventy-year captivity for Judah as the king of Babylon subdues many nations.
 - g. Because he is locked up, Jeremiah sends Baruch to the temple with a message to be read to the people.
 - h. Jeremiah foretells Jehoiakim's sad end.

COMMENTS

For some reason there is more about Jehoiakim in the book of Jer. than in Kings and Chron. That is probably because of the various messages God gave Jeremiah during Jehoiakim's terrible reign.

Jehoiakim's first recorded act is one of necessity—exactng of his people the tribute of silver and gold demanded by Necho of Egypt. After this event it is admittedly difficult to arrange chronologically what we know about the events of his reign from the brief coverage in Kings and Chron. supplemented with longer but dated material in Jer. along with secular history's own contributions.

Jer. 26 is related to the beginning of his reign when Jeremiah is divinely sent to the temple with a message to the people coming there to worship. The message shows Solomon's beautiful temple is doomed to destruction unless Judah repents. The message does not go over well with either the princes, prophets (false prophets), or the people, for they say to Jeremiah, "Thou shalt surely die." Jeremiah warns them of the definite doom they will bring by killing him, and his life

is spared by the wisdom of those who remember that Micah prophesied the same things, and Hezekiah did not kill him. Jehoiakim does kill Urijah, a fellow-prophet of Jeremiah.

Now that Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian army have decisively defeated Pharaoh-Necho at the Battle of Carchemish, he comes south and begins subjecting countries to himself. It is 606 B.C., (the third year of Jehoiakim) when he comes against Jerusalem and subdues it, taking Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and likely others along with some of the temple-vessels to Babylon. This turns out to be an important date, and the date from which the seventy years of Judah's Babylonian Captivity will be dated. Since Jehoiakim will rule for eleven years, it is obvious he is left on the throne. In the next year of Jehoiakim's reign (his fourth) Jeremiah is sent to the temple again with a reminder of Judah's historic disobedience, and that God will again bring Nebuchadnezzar against Judah and all its neighboring countries. In the message he also tells Judah its time in Babylon will involve seventy long years! A study of Lev. 26:31-35 and II Chron. 36:20,21 indicates the seventy-year length was determined by the number of sabbatical years they had not let the land rest in obedience to God's specific commandment to do so.

In the same fourth year Jeremiah summons his scribe Baruch to take his dictated message and read it in the temple, for he says, "I am shut up; I cannot go to the house of the Lord;" which Baruch does (Jer. 36:1-8). The next year a national fast is proclaimed (Jer. 36:9), possibly brought on by what we read in II Kings 24:2—unless this verse covers various harassments God sends during Jehoiakim's reign. Anyway, during the national fast Baruch again reads in the temple Jeremiah's dictated message, which a man Michaiah tells to the princes, who think the scroll should be read to the king (Jer. 36:10-19). But when the king hears the early part of it, he takes the copy, cuts it up, and throws it into the fire, and commands both

Baruch and Jeremiah to be taken (vs. 20-26). Jeremiah replaces the burned scroll with one carrying the same message plus some personal words of punishment for the wicked king ("his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost"). It may be at this time that Jeremiah pronounces a woe on Jehoiakim for his extravagant living in such dark days for the nation (Jer. 22:13-17) for which he goes on to talk about his tragic end—nobody to lament for him and to have "the burial of an ass" (no burial at all). Though at one time he is bound in chains to be taken to Babylon (II Chron. 36:6), that is not what happens to him. Some think he is ultimately assassinated and his body left in the field to rot while Josephus has Nebuchadnezzar returning, having him killed, and throwing his dead body over the wall.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 9 memory-facts for this event.
2. Where does Jehoiakim obtain the tribute money for Pharaoh-Necho?
3. When do they tell Jeremiah, "Thou shalt surely die"?
4. What saves him from death?
5. What happens to Daniel and his three friends?
6. What is significant about the date 606 B.C.?
7. Why does God set their captivity at seventy years?
8. Tell about the scroll written by Baruch at Jeremiah's dictation?
9. What end does Jeremiah predict for Jehoiakim?

134. Another Deportation to Babylon

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 24:8-16; II Chron. 36:9,10; Jer. 22:24-30.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. Jehoiachin succeeds his dead brother Jehoiakim.
 - b. He is eighteen years old.
 - c. His wickedness causes Nebuchadnezzar to affect his surrender.
 - d. He, thousands of Judah, and more temple-vessels and treasure are taken to Babylon. Ezekiel is included among the captives.
 - e. No child of his will rule in Jerusalem.

COMMENTS

Jehoiakim's death elevates his brother Jehoiachin to power at the age of eighteen. Nebuchadnezzar continues his campaign begun under Jehoiakim. The outcome is obvious from the report of Jehoiachin's surrender after only three months on the throne. He, along with thousands of others including Ezekiel (see Eze. 1:1-3), as well as many more temple-vessels and much treasure, are deported to Babylon, just as God had foretold to Hezekiah earlier (II Kings 20:17). This second captivity comes in 597 B.C. Jehoiachin has no son to be made king after him, and being confined to a prison in Babylon for many years he likely does not marry and hence remains "childless". It is surprising to read in II Kings 25:27-30 that a later Babylonian monarch releases him after he was imprisoned for thirty-seven years and befriends him.

QUESTIONS

1. How old is Jehoiachin when he becomes king?
2. How long does he get to be king?
3. What is the date of this second deportation?
4. What all go to Babylon?
5. What man who later became a prophet is also included?
6. What about Jehoiachin's offspring?
7. How long is he imprisoned before being released by a later ruler?

135. Jeremiah Sends a Letter to the Captives

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study Jer. 29:1-32.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. He reminds them that God says the Babylonian Captivity will be seventy years.
 - b. Since it will be that long, they should settle down in Babylon and make that their home for those years.
 - c. He assures them of Judah's ultimate return if they seek God with all their heart.
 - d. A curse is pronounced on two false prophets among them in Babylon.
 - e. A curse is also pronounced on a false letter writer.

COMMENTS

The prophet Jeremiah does not want those who have gone into captivity to have any false illusions as to its length. It was going to involve seventy years, which would encompass the lifetime of all but the very youngest. So they should settle in and make Babylon their home. Nor does he want to see them diminished in number, for in time God will return them to their land—provided they seek Him with their whole heart. No wonder, then, that when the righteous Daniel later figured out in the sixty-eighth year of their captivity that they would soon be able to return to Palestine, he set his "face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth and ashes" (Dan. 9:1-3). But the captives are plagued with two false prophets who are speaking otherwise about their captivity. They are an Ahab and a Zedekiah who will ultimately be burned to death in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace. Among the captives is also a man Shemaiah who has sent letters back to Jerusalem against Jeremiah for which Jeremiah tells him all his offspring will be cut off, none getting to return when Judah comes back.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 5 memory-facts for this event.
2. What does Jeremiah instruct them to do since the captivity will be seventy years long?
3. On what basis will Judah get to return at the end of those seventy years?
4. When those seventy years are almost up, what will the prophet Daniel do?
5. What does Jeremiah say will befall their two false prophets, Ahab and Zedekiah?
6. What captive in Babylon wrote letters back to Jerusalem opposing Jeremiah?
7. What curse does Jeremiah say will befall him for this?

136. Zedekiah Becomes Judah's Last King

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study II Kings 24:17-19; II Chron. 36:11,12; Jer. 37:1,2; Jer. 52:1,2.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. Zedekiah is twenty-one as he becomes king.
 - b. He will reign eleven years.

- c. He will be Judah's last king.

COMMENTS

As we come to this last king of either the Southern or Northern kingdoms, we will see the ultimate end of Solomon's once glorious kingdom, brought down because of idolatry, the sin of which he himself was guilty and for which his kingdom was divided. We are also reminded of how foolish it was for the people in the days of Samuel to request (demand) a king so they could be like other nations. Their kings have cost them their kingdom.

As is so often the case, the new king is given a different name—Zedekiah (by which we shall know him) instead of Mattaniah. He is twenty-one and will survive for eleven years before the final captivity of his people.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. What mistake did the people make in the days of Samuel?
3. What sin did Solomon commit that caused his kingdom to be divided?
4. What sin has brought ruin to both segments?

137. Jeremiah and His Wooden Yoke

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Study Jer. 28:1-17.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. Evidently Jeremiah has just told the temple crowd again that the captivity will last seventy years and is wearing a wooden yoke on his neck to symbolize that captivity.
 - b. Hananiah, a false prophet claiming God has spoken to him, tells Jeremiah in the presence of the priests and people that the captivity will last only two more years before Judah is brought back. He then takes the yoke off Jeremiah's neck and breaks it to symbolize what he is saying.
 - c. God sends Jeremiah back to the temple with a yoke of iron (unbreakable) where he foretold Hananiah's death that very year.

COMMENTS

Jeremiah is not called to an easy life as a prophet of God. At the time of his call God said, "I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee" (Jer. 1:18,19).

In our event he is in the temple using an object (a wooden yoke) to show the long servitude of their people over in Babylon. When Peter wrote that there had been false prophets among the people (II Pet. 2:1), he must have had in mind such persons as Hananiah of the city Gibeon, for he falsely prophesies in the name of the Lord, saying, "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts...I, have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels...and...Jeconiah...with all the captives." It is probably in sarcasm that Jeremiah says, "Amen: the Lord do so." And then to symbolize what he said, Hananiah takes Jeremiah's wooden yoke and breaks it before all the people. God has Jeremiah take an iron yoke and predict his death within the current year for teaching rebellion against the Lord's word. It is the fifth month when this temple skirmish takes place (v.1), and Hananiah is dead within two months (v.17).

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. What object is Jeremiah using with which to teach his lesson?
3. What lesson is he teaching?
4. What does a false prophet do and say?
5. What is the false prophet's name?
6. What kind of yoke does Jeremiah next take?
7. What does he prophesy about the false prophet?
8. What happens to the false prophet?

138. Nebuchadnezzar Lays Siege to Jerusalem

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 25:1,2; II Chron. 36:13; Jer.21:1-12.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. Zedekiah revolts from under the Babylonians.
 - b. Consequently Nebuchadnezzar marches an army against Jerusalem in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign.
 - c. Zedekiah sends to Jeremiah to inquire of the Lord for him.
 - d. Jeremiah tells him God is going to deliver the city into Nebuchadnezzar's hand.

COMMENTS

As we continue studying the reign of Judah's last king, it is noticeable there is much material in the book of Jer.—actually more than in II Kings and II Chron. This is because the prophet Jeremiah is personally connected with so much that takes place during his reign.

Conquering kings such as Nebuchadnezzar like to put their conquered countries to tribute. The conquered pay it because they have to, but they do not like it. Occasionally they will revolt from under that financial burden, often depending on some foreign power to assist them in their rebellion (in this case, Egypt). His rebellion brings Nebuchadnezzar and his army back to Jerusalem. To "lay siege" is to surround Jerusalem so there is no coming in or going out, hoping after a few years to starve them out when existing food supplies give out. Then they can conquer at will without loss of their own soldiers. Quite a few times in the book of Jer. does Zedekiah send to Jeremiah to have him inquire of God or to have him pray. In all of them Jeremiah will give him the same message: God is going to deliver Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, urging them to surrender and at least save their lives and the destruction of their city and telling them if they don't surrender, Nebuchadnezzar will destroy their land and remove them from it. This is not good news to Zedekiah, but it is God's

message, and Jeremiah is faithfully delivering it.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 4 memory-facts for this event.
2. Why will Zedekiah rebel against Babylon?
3. In what year of Zedekiah's reign does Nebuchadnezzar and his army come against Jerusalem?
4. What is meant by "laying siege"?
5. Why does the king send messengers to Jeremiah?
6. What message does he send to the king?

139. Another Message for Zedekiah

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read Jer. 34:1-7.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. Nebuchadnezzar has soldiers attacking Judah's defense cities as well as Jerusalem.
 - b. Jeremiah repeats God's intentions to deliver Jerusalem and Zedekiah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, who will burn the city even though he will not kill Zedekiah.

COMMENTS

God has been patient with Judah and its continued wickedness for many years. He was ready to destroy it earlier, but the prayers of king Hezekiah spared it. And God promised the godly Josiah it would not happen in his lifetime. But God will be patient no longer--Jerusalem is going to be destroyed and the rest of Judah taken captive. The day will come when Zedekiah will personally be brought before the great Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. The only grain of comfort for Zedekiah in the whole message is that he will not die in the war nor as a consequence of it and will be honored when he does die.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. During the reigns of what two righteous kings did God delay Jerusalem's destruction?
3. What is the only bit of comfort for Zedekiah in God's message through Jeremiah?

140. Egypt Sends Help

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read Jer. 37:5-10.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. Babylon withdraws from Jerusalem when learning that help is coming from Egypt.
 - b. Jeremiah assures Judah it is still God's settled intention to destroy Judah, and that Egypt will have to retreat.

COMMENTS

Egypt is not the uncontested power it used to be, yet it is still stronger than the lesser countries Nebuchadnezzar holds sway over. It is the hope of Judah that Egypt's help will make the difference, and its false prophets are probably encouraging them with a false hope. But Jeremiah remains adamant: Egypt's help will not be enough, it will return into Egypt, and Jerusalem will fall and be burned. In this grave time Zedekiah is depending on the help of a man whereas Hezekiah depended on the great help of God. So the outcome will be different.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 2 memory-facts for this event.
2. How can Zedekiah get a false hope out of Egypt's coming to help?
3. Why will that not change what is going to happen?

141. Jeremiah Rebukes the People's Action

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read Jer. 34:8-22.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. Judah releases all its slaves.
 - b. Later it put them back into bondage.
 - c. Jeremiah is sent to pronounce a curse on them for doing this.

COMMENTS

You might ask why Judah would have slaves and be slave-owners.

In those days when a person got so much in debt that he was hopeless to get out, he would be sold as a slave to get the money (see Matt. 18:23-25; II Kings 4:1). Every seventh year, though, every slave was freed, and he was his own once more. Even though God had redeemed Israel from Egyptian bondage, it is evident Judah has not been freeing its slaves after six years of bondage and servitude. But during the siege of Jerusalem, the king orders it to be done, and the people comply with the order. It is probably after the Babylonian siege is lifted because of the approach of the Egyptian army that Judah's slave-owners cancel the order and regather their slaves. This but further shows Judah's disobedience to God's civil enactments, and He is highly displeased with its action and sends Jeremiah on another unwelcome job of rebuking their action and reiterating what is going to befall the sinning nation.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 3 memory-facts for this event.
2. In what way does Judah have slaves?
3. What are they supposed to do to their slaves every seventh year?
4. Have they been doing this?
5. Why do they free them now?
6. Why do they take them back?
7. With what message does God send Jeremiah to them at this time?

142. Jeremiah is Arrested and Imprisoned

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read Jer. 37:1--38:28; Jer. 39:15-18.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. Jeremiah takes the opportunity of going to his hometown Anathoth.
 - b. They suspect and accuse him of defecting to the Babylonians.
 - c. Though Jeremiah disclaims the accusation, they put him in a dungeon prison.
 - d. Zedekiah inquires of Jeremiah again and removes him to a more favorable prison.
 - e. A pressure-group causes the king to put him into a abandoned cistern.
 - f. An Ethiopian servant persuades Zedekiah to get Jeremiah out of the

cistern, and he is returned to the prison court for the duration of the war.

- g. God will take care of the good Ethiopian.

COMMENTS

The temporary withdrawal of the Babylonians from Jerusalem affords Jeremiah an opportunity to leave Jerusalem, for he too has been shut up, unable to go to his neighboring home in Anathoth (just northeast of Jerusalem). But he is interrupted at the gate where he is accused of defecting to the Babylonians. Of course, this is not true, as he explains, but it does him no good--he is a hated man and is put into a dungeon prison. In time the king takes him from there, inquires of him again and is told the same sad message, and assigns him to a more favorable prison quarter. We might wonder why he doesn't release him altogether, but a study of Zedekiah's character shows him not to be the strong ruling type but the kind who bows to pressure-groups, which he does by detaining him in prison. But this doesn't set with four leaders who remind the king of the adverse message of Jeremiah, and they get him put down into a cistern where there is no water but mire into which Jeremiah sinks a ways. "Smith" says, "The pitiless princes wished this spokesman for God to die a slow, torturous, and frightful death...This experience is without question the lowest point in the life of Jeremiah. He was now aged and perhaps infirm. The siege and famine in Jerusalem had doubtless taken its toll...Through the long bitter years of his ministry Jeremiah had learned the way of patient endurance. He had learned to cast himself upon the Lord and trust Him for deliverance." And God does not forget his faithful prophet. When an Ethiopian eunuch who serves in Zedekiah's house hears what they have done to Jeremiah, he pleads for the privilege of rescuing him out of there before he dies. And so they lower cords and old rags made into cords and pull him up out of that terrible place.

When Zedekiah asks divine information again from the prophet, Jeremiah begs him to obey what he tells him and not deliver him back into the cistern. The king actually makes an oath concerning Jeremiah's future safety, so Jeremiah tells him once more the same message as before. And the king keeps his word: Jeremiah will abide in the court of the prison until the day Jerusalem is taken. Jeremiah assures the Ethiopian that God will take care of him when Jerusalem falls.

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 7 memory-facts for this event.
2. Where is Jeremiah going when he is stopped?
3. With what do they charge him?
4. What do they do with him?
5. To where does the king move him?
6. Where does a pressure-group get Jeremiah put?
7. Who rescues him out of there?
8. What oath does the king make concerning Jeremiah?

143. Jerusalem Falls to the Babylonians

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read II Kings 25:2-22; II Chron. 36:18-20; Jer. 39:2-14; Jer. 40:1-6; Lam. 1:1-8,12.
2. Study the event until you can tell it.
3. Memorize these facts about the event:
 - a. In Zedekiah's eleventh year the Babylonians break through and take the city.
 - b. Zedekiah tries to escape, but they overtake him, kill his sons before his eyes, put out his eyes, and take him to Babylon.
 - c. The Babylonians plunder Jerusalem and burn it, including the temple and palace.
 - d. They then batter down the walls.
 - e. The people are taken to nearby Ramah in preparation for the long journey to Babylon.
 - f. Jeremiah, being released from prison, is given the choice of going to Babylon and receiving good or staying in the land with the few peasants left to till the land.
 - g. Jeremiah chooses to remain, and he writes the sorrowful words found in the book of Lam.

COMMENTS

After plaguing Jerusalem with its presence for three years the Babylonian army breaks through the guards' resistance and begins its slaughter. The day Jeremiah has been forecasting has come in contrast to what the false prophets have said. King Zedekiah and some of the leaders flee Jerusalem by night, heading east. But they are pursued and overtaken near Jericho. Zedekiah and his leaders are taken north to Riblah, where Nebuchadnezzar is, and the leaders are slain, Zedekiah sees his sons slain just before they put out his eyes, and he is put in chains to be taken to Babylon. Oh, how much better off he would be and Jerusalem if they had believed and heeded what Jeremiah had told them from God! Back at Jerusalem the Babylonians release Jeremiah, whom they have heard about, and he is treated with great kindness. He, along with the many captives, are removed to nearby Ramah north of Jerusalem where the group is readied for the long walk to Babylon. From Ramah they can see the fire and smoke arising from the burning

Jerusalem, including the temple and palace and all its buildings. And the wrecking crew also lays Jerusalem's mighty walls to the ground. All this is in the year 586 B.C.

Babylon's decision is to leave only the poor to till the land for the king of Babylon, and Jeremiah is given the privilege either of going to Babylon as a guest or remaining with the poor of his people. He chooses the latter. After all the excitement is quieted down, he looks his ruined Jerusalem over and writes, "How doth the city lie solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary! She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks: among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her: all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies. Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and because of great servitude: she dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest: all her persecutors overtook her between the straits. The ways of Zion do mourn,

because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate: her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness. Her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper; for the LORD hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions: her children are gone into captivity before the enemy. And from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed: her princes are become like harts that find no pasture, and they are gone without strength before the pursuer" (Lam. 1:1-6). And Jeremiah personifies the destroyed Jerusalem and speaks for her, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger?" (Lam. 1:12).

QUESTIONS

1. Recite the 8 memory-facts for this event.
2. Why do the Babylonians treat Jeremiah so well?
3. Recall the vivid words that open the sorrowful book of Lam.