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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

Lesson for June 22
Golden Text.—Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.—Prov. 14:34
The Lesson as a Whole
Though judgment may be long

deferred, it comes at last upon all who reject the Word of the Lord. God had manifested His long-suffering toward Judah for nearly a century and a half after the northern kingdom had been destroyed and the ten tribes carried into captivity. But in spite of repeated warnings and entreaties the con-

dition of Judah became so vile at last that He who had chosen them to be a peculiar people unto Himself could no longer tolerate their wicked ways, and so the day came when Jerusalem was destroyed, the Temple burned, and the people slain or carried into captivity, except for a small remnant, as predicted by Jeremiah (chap. 13:19). God used Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldean armies to this end, and in due time He dealt with them also in judgment when His purpose in regard to the punishment of Judah was accomplished.

During the reign of the last four kings the course of the southern kingdom was one of ever-increasing apostasy. Yet God in His long-suffering mercy sent one prophet after another to plead with the people to return to Himself. Jeremiah was the most notable of these men of God. He besought them, with tears, to judge their sins and to turn again to the Lord, but they refused to heed his messages and treated him with contempt and contumely, even charging him with being a traitor to his own nation, because he proclaimed the unwelcome truth that if they persisted in their idolatry Jehovah would give them over to be defeated in battle and to be carried as captives into Chaldea. When it was evident that there was no remedy, He permitted Nebuchadnezzar to destroy the city, and the Temple, in fulfillment of Jeremiah's words.

Verse by Verse
2 Kings 25:1.—“Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem and they built forts round about.” The siege began in Zedekiah's ninth year and the tenth month. God had warned the foolish king that it was useless trying to defend the city for He Himself was about to give His people into the hands of the Chaldeans because of their willfulness and idolatry.

Verse 2—“The city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah.” For almost two years the siege was continued, with the people of Jerusalem shut up and unable to maintain any commerce with the rest of the land or with the countries near by; hence no supplies could be brought in.

Verse 3—“There was no bread for the people of the land.” At last all food was gone and famine within combined with the foe outside the walls to force the unhappy people to submission to the Babylonian army.

Verse 4—“The city was broken up, and the king went the way toward the plain.” Realizing, at last, that further resistance was impossible, the soldiers and their wretched king sought to save themselves by fleeing from the doomed city, only to find that all avenues of escape were cut off.

Verse 5—“The army of the Chaldees pursued after the king and overtook him.” The royal fugitive was apprehended as he reached the plains of Jordan, probably near the site of Jericho. His retainers all fled and left him alone.

Verse 6—“They took the king, and they gave judgment upon him.” Zedekiah was taken in chains to Riblah; where the king of Babylon sat in judgment upon him because of his having treacherously violated the treaty, whereby he had promised to rule as a satellite of Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 7—“They slew the sons, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah.” It was a sad fate indeed to which the guilty monarch was exposed. The last sight he looked upon was the execution of his own sons. Then he was blinded so that the prophecy might be fulfilled which had declared he would go to Babylon, but should not see it (Ezek. 12:13).

Verse 8—“The nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar.” That is, Jerusalem was taken in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar's sole reign. He seems to have reigned in conjunction with his father for some four years. Then upon Nabo-polassar's death he became ruler over all of Babylonia and the conquered nations, most of which he had subdued before.

Verse 9—“He burnt the house of the Lord.” The beautiful sanctuary built by Solomon was burned with fire as well as the royal palace and all the other houses in Jerusalem. Thus God's Word had been fulfilled literally, and His Temple

destroyed because of the iniquity of those called by His name.

Verse 10—“The army of the Chaldees brake down the walls of Jerusalem.” Supposedly impregnable, the walls of Jerusalem were of no avail to save the city from destruction when God temporarily forsook the nation that had forsaken Him.

Verse 11—“The rest of the people did Nebuzar-adan carry away.” Those who had spurred the Word of the Lord and refused to serve their God were destined to serve their enemies in the land of idols, for Babylon was the fountain-head of that very idolatry which had ruined Judah and Israel.

Verse 12—“The captain of the guard left of the poor of the land to be vinedressers and husbandmen.” A remnant were permitted to remain in the land. These were the poorer people of the country, who were powerless to wage war and so were left to till the land for the conqueror. Their subsequent history is given in Jeremiah 40 to 44. They proved to be as disobedient as the rest of the nation had been and most of them went on in idolatry and left Judah to settle in Egypt, contrary to the command of the Lord.

The Heart of the Lesson
We are told in Ecclesiastes 8:11, “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” It was so in Judah's case. For centuries God had pleaded with His people to turn from their idolatry and had sent warning after warning of the judgments that would come upon them if they persisted in their wayward course. But they refused to hearken and went on in their sins until there was no remedy. God then gave them into the hands of their worst enemies. In all this there are solemn lessons for us, both individually and nationally.

PORT PERRY BULL ON THE LOOSE, NOT LIKE ONE IN CHINA STORE

Unlike the bull in a china store, a masterful young animal got loose in Port Perry a few days ago, ambled about town, and seeing the door of Gordon McKee's store open, the critter walked in. Next door was the butcher shop and there it didn't go.

Cool and not excited the beef did not cause any harm and aroused very little excitement, before it was placed in captivity. The Port Perry Star doesn't report the presence of the town constable on the scene, and not even the seed king Ira Aldred who is something of a cattle man.

L. E. O'NEILL

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