

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

(Lesson for September 8)
BARUCH,
FAITHFUL SECRETARY
 Jeremiah 36
THE LESSON AS A WHOLE
 James Hogg, known affectionately in Scotland's border country as the Etrick Shepherd, was one of the lesser Scottish bards. Had he lived at some other time he might have been regarded as one of the great. But he was a contemporary and companion of the Wizard of the North, Sir Walter Scott, and in the shadow of the giant could not but take a subordinate place.

So Baruch is generally classified as one of the lesser characters of the Bible, yet this view of him can be justified only because he is seen alongside the towering figure of Jeremiah. His greatness is seen in his very loyalty to the prophet. He might have been state recorder, as his brother Seraiah became king's gentleman-in-waiting (Jer. 51:59, A.S.V.), but he preferred to share the dangers and the hardships of the prophet and be the amanuensis of the Word of God at the prophet's lips. His contemporaries seem to have regarded him as a stronger personality than even Jeremiah himself, so much so that they accused the prophet of being swayed by the influence of Baruch (Jer. 43:3).

The degree to which Baruch captured the imagination of the Jewish people is seen in the fact that seven books, written in later centuries, bear his name, including the apocryphal Book of Baruch, which some Roman Catholic scholars still contend was written by the secretary of the great prophet. There are scattered traditions about his later life, but we know nothing beyond the fact that he accompanied Jeremiah into Egypt after the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 586 B.C.

Verse 2—Therefore go thou, and read in the roll . . . in the Lord's house upon the fasting day . . . Baruch was thus to represent the prophet before the public. The fast day would bring great crowds to Jerusalem and the Temple, so the message would be widely heard. The time of the reading is given us in verse 9. Comparing verses 1 and 9, we see the lapse of about a year between God's command to write and the reading of the roll in the Temple. The dictating and the writing would take considerable time, and then the roll was held for a suitable occasion.

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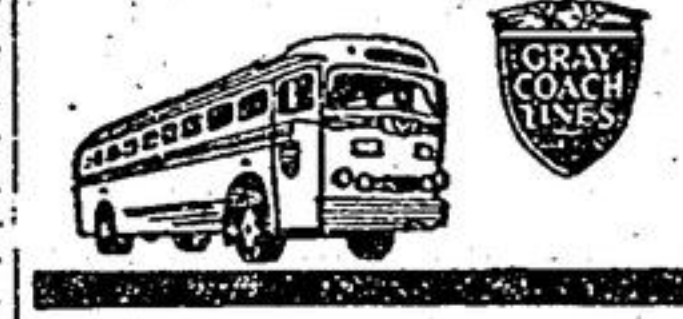
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12, who were opposed to this folly and wickedness, but their reproach had no weight with the angry king.

Verse 26—"But the king commanded . . . to take Baruch . . . and Jeremiah . . . but the Lord hid them." The revised versions read, Jerahmeel the king's son. The king was determined to get rid of the prophet and his secretary as well as the roll. Their escape from their would-be arresters is summed up in the simple phrase, "the Lord hid them."

Verse 32—" . . . another roll . . . all the words . . . which Jehoiakim . . . had burned, and there were added . . . many like words." The Spirit of inspiration recalled to Jeremiah's mind what had been given on the first occasion, so that nothing was

NEW 5c STAMP HONOURS MINING

September 5 is the date of issue of the next special stamp due in Canada. It will be a 5-cent black stamp honouring Canada's mining industry and commemorating the Sixth Commonwealth Mining and Metallurgical Congress, convening then in Vancouver, with delegates attending from 70 countries.

Postmaster George Walker has Aurora's order for the issue, on file in Ottawa. The new stamp will be commemorative, which is to say that there will be just one printing. It is impossible to guess at its popularity, for curiously enough stamps do have popularity ratings. Popularity Varies

One of the most popular stamps issued was the colourful Red Cross five-center of some years ago. The issue sold quickly, and collectors were scouring the smaller post offices to round out their collections. Aurora post office was visited by collectors from as far away as London.

As impossible to guess as their popularity, is the market value of stamps. Around 1950, a 17-cent airmail was called in by the postmaster general, and within three months of its recall date, was selling for 75 cents. The old ten-cent special delivery stamp, recalled in 1953, was worth 20 cents within one week.

lost, but more added.

The Heart of the Lesson

There are times when the message of God must be brought to sharp focus. Such a time had arrived in Judah.

Nebuchadnezzar had made his first raid on Jerusalem, carrying away booty and captives, and leaving Jehoiakim in the place of a puppet king. These were the beginnings of the judgments which God, through His servant Jeremiah, had been pronouncing against Judah. The time had come, therefore, to present these events in the light of God's pronouncements, to give the people opportunity to repent before it was too late, and to warn them that, unless they repented, what had now begun before their eyes would certainly come to its full measure in judgment and ruin.

To make the message more definitive, God commanded Jeremiah to write it down, beginning with the oracles uttered in the days of Josiah. It is valueless to

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discuss whether all the messages were to be recorded verbatim or whether the sum of them was to be written. The Spirit of inspiration would certainly bring to remembrance what had been given before and what was necessary to be preserved. For the purpose, Jeremiah secured the services of his friend, Baruch, who was a ready scribe. It was not the work of a day, but of many days.

The roll being completed, it was now a question of presenting the message. For some reason unexplained, Jeremiah was at this time barred from the Temple, so Baruch was given the further task of reading the message to the people in the Temple. The prophet suggested a fast day, when great throngs would be present, both from Jerusalem and the provinces. The fast chosen was not one of the Mosaic holy days; for there was no Mosaic fast (nor feast) in the ninth month. It may have been a special fast called by the king to stir national rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar, the Chaldean overlord.

Baruch was an effective reader. After reading to the people, he was invited to read before the princes of the nation. They felt that the proceedings ought to be reported to the king, but they advised Jeremiah and Baruch to hide, for they knew the temper of the king. A courtier, Jehudi, was therefore appointed to read for the king. The message of divine judgment so angered the king that he seized the roll, cut it in pieces, and burned it in the fire.

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