

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

Lesson IX. Aug. 26, 1917.

The Captivity of Judah.—2 Kings 25: 1-21.

Commentary.—I. Jerusalem taken (vs. 1-4). Ninth year..... tenth month—It was in December, B. C. 588, that the siege commenced. The day of the month was the tenth, hence the last of December, since the tenth month of the Jewish year corresponds to the latter part of December and to the first part of January of our year. Nebuchadnezzar—He was the son of Nabopolassar, who, as viceroy of Babylonia, a province of Assyria, revolted against Assyria, and, forming an alliance with Cyaxares, the ruler of Media, captured and destroyed Nineveh, thus making Babylon the greatest empire of western Asia. Nebuchadnezzar succeeded his father on the throne of Babylon and reigned forty-three years. Rawlinson says: "It is scarcely too much to say that, but for Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonians would have had no place in history." All his host—the forms of expression here and in Jer. 34: 1—indicate the magnitude of the besieging army. Piteh against it—Encamped against it. R. V. Built forts—These were walls or towers from which the besiegers could effectively hurl missiles over the walls of the city to destroy its inhabitants. 2. The city was besieged—The one purpose of the Chaldeans in this siege was to gain possession of Jerusalem, and their efforts were twofold. They completely surrounded the city, so that none of its inhabitants could pass out and to supply provisions, and thus in time they would starve them into submission. In addition to this, they sought to gain an entrance into the city by battering down the walls, and by hurling missiles of various kinds to destroy those who were defending the besieged city. Into the seventh year—the siege continued one and one-half years, including the interruption occasioned by the approach of the Egyptian army, when the Chaldeans withdrew from Jerusalem for a short time. 3. The famine prevailed in the city—The long siege that resulted in this scarcity of food in the city. In the land of Judah, outside of Jerusalem, "there was no bread for the people," because the fields had been overrun by the invading army. 4. The city was broken up—A breach was made in the city. According to Josephus it was midnight when the walls gave way and were opened for the entrance of the Chaldeans. All the men of war—the army that was defending Jerusalem. Between two walls—Along the Tyropoean valley between the hills Moriah and Zion. By the king's garden—the king's garden was near the pool of Siloam, by the southeast corner of the city, outside the walls. The way the army took led down into the Kidron valley. Chaldeans were against the city round about—Nebuchadnezzar's army so completely surrounded Jerusalem as to make escape from it difficult. As the king went toward the plain—Zedekiah undertook to reach the plain of the Jordan.

II. Zedekiah punished (vs. 5-7). 5. Turned after the king. The flight of the king and his men was hindered by the besieging army and Zedekiah was overtaken "in the plains of Jericho" about twelve miles from Jerusalem. 6. Brought him.... to Riblah—King Nebuchadnezzar was at this time quartering at Riblah and had his headquarters at Riblah at the foot of Mount Lebanon, where the great highway from the East passed into two roads, one leading to Tyre and the other to the land of Israel. From this point the king of Babylon could conveniently direct both sieges, say judgment upon him Zedekiah before his trial as an criminal. Nebuchadnezzar did not look upon him as a king, although he had placed him upon the throne of Judah. Zedekiah had rebelled against him and he was treated as a traitor. 7. slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes—This was the first element in the terrible punishment inflicted upon the conquered king. The anguish of the father who sees his own sons wantonly executed is indescribable. The second element in his punishment was to see his nobles slain (Jer. 39: 5). 8. put out the eyes of Zedekiah. The third element in his punishment was the physical torture of having his eyes thrust out, probably with a spear.

III.—Jerusalem destroyed (vs. 8-10). 8. In the fifth month after the capture of Jerusalem before the destruction of the city was undertaken. Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem on a mission of destruction. 9. burnt the house of the Lord—The temple built by Solomon, the king's house—the royal palace, all the houses—the language indicates the completeness of the destruction. Not a building was spared, either because of its costliness or because of its insignificance. 10. the army.... brake down the walls of Jerusalem—The ruin of the city was complete. The buildings within the walls having been burned, the army with Nebuzaradan completely wrecked the walls. In this condition the city remained until the time of Nehemiah (Neh. 1:3; 2:17).

Their number must have been large, for Cyrus restored to the exiles on their return to Jerusalem five thousand and four hundred vessels of gold and silver 18-21. Nebuzaradan took seventy-two prominent men of Jerusalem, including priests and civil and military officers, to the King of Babylon, at Riblah, and they were all executed. Questions—What army besieged Jerusalem? Who was king of Judah at the time? How long did the siege continue? Why did the Lord permit the kingdom of Judah to be overthrown? What course did the king of Judah take when he saw that the city was taken? Where was he captured, and where was he taken for trial? What punishment was inflicted upon him and his family? What was done to the city of Jerusalem? What was done with the people?

PRACTICAL SURVEY.

I. Followed national transgression. II. Succeeded unparalleled forbearance.

I. Followed national transgression. For a long time Assyria had been the "rod of God's anger" over a disloyal people. As the appointed time for Assyria's fall approached, Babylon emerged into the undisputed possession of imperial power. It had been predicted that the final overthrow of Judah would come through the Chaldeans. The "beginning of the end" for Judah dated from the first invasion of Nebuchadnezzar against Jehoiakim. Only nineteen years intervened between the first intimation which the Jews received of danger impending from their new enemy until the entire destruction by that enemy of their temple, city and nation, when Jerusalem, the centre of Judah's nationality, was destroyed and the inhabitants taken into captivity. Sin had taken deep root in Judah. From generation to generation the wickedness of the Jewish people seemed incurable, either by the mercies or the judgments of God. Idolatry was firmly established in the holy city and within the temple. The writings of Jeremiah give a vivid picture of the city during that period. For a nation whose God was Jehovah, the Jews were strangely prone to idolatry. The people were just as corrupt as their rulers. Back of the bad financial policy, when the kings wasted the national resources, lay the moral weakness of the people. God's commands were ignored and his prophets ill-treated. The invasion of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar was tyranny, an outrage on every principle of humanity and justice. He was the master and terror of the age in which he lived. There was little honor in being king of Judah when Zedekiah came to the throne as the last king. There was no Isaiah at that time to assure the intruding king of his complete discomfiture and no king like Hezekiah to lay the message of an invader before the Lord and entreat his interposition. It was a very different message which Jeremiah, the prophet, had to bear to king and people. The day for mercy was past. The day of reckoning had come to Judah. The outstanding features in Zedekiah's character were weakness of the people, and strength of will. His faithless, unstable nature revealed itself at every turn. His weakness and vacillation, his unfaithfulness to his own best convictions, his sinful yielding to others in what he knew was wrong were his ruin.

II. Succeeded unparalleled forbearance. The days which mark the difference between the terrible siege of Nebuchadnezzar are minutely recorded and carefully remembered. Indirectly they testify to the intensity of misery which was endured. They were observed afterward as regular days of fasting. The open rebellion of Zedekiah was followed almost immediately by the advance into Jerusalem of the Babylonian army under Nebuchadnezzar, which robbed the city of every element of its prosperity. All the work to which David consecrated his energies with rare affection and devotion, to which Solomon brought all his wisdom, was brought to desolation by the ruthless hand of the heathen. By command of Nebuchadnezzar the wall and the palaces of the city, once the "joy of the whole earth," were leveled to the ground. The temple, where in happier days the shining cloud of God's presence had rested upon the mercy-seat, was turned into a charred and dilapidated ruin. From the throne on which Israel's greatest king had reigned, Zedekiah, the last occupant, passed a blind and childless man to the horrors of Babylonian captivity. Nebuchadnezzar plundered the country of its property and inflicted untold misery on thousands. The ruthless despot, becoming a scourge in God's hands, desecrated the most holy things in the city of Jerusalem, which millions of people had venerated. An end having been made of the city, the next step was to complete the conquest by deporting to Babylon the remnant of the population and carrying away the spoil. All classes were represented and each his share in the exploitation of the common gully which rested upon Judah for her folly and sin. All were made to suffer the just displeasure and necessary punishment of Jehovah upon a people who had forsaken him in their prosperity.—T. R. A.

Grayfish as a Food.

It used to be called the dogfish and was looked upon as a worthless nuisance. Now, through the efforts of Uncle Sam's bureau of fisheries, it is called the grayfish and is in great demand as a valuable food product. The grayfish contains a little less protein and a little more fat than the salmon, but its digestibility, richness and excel many of our popular fish foods. One interesting result of the analysis thus far made by the government is that the grayfish is entirely free from uric acid, which is not true of meats, poultry or other fishes.

FALL WHEAT A GOOD DISTRIBUTOR OF FARM LABOR

Big Problem Now to Maintain Output—Increase in Wheat Good Business—By Prof. Jas. Murray.

The harvest prospect of this year's fall wheat crop is not in itself likely to induce any great expansion in next year's acreage. The amount of winter and spring injury has been very high in many sections, and were it not that excellent prices are almost sure to prevail, the returns per acre would not be very encouraging. Just how long the present high level of prices are likely to be maintained no one knows, but the probabilities are that the crop sown this fall will have been harvested and marketed long before there is any notable decrease in price. High prices for any farm commodity always tend to stimulate production, so that even under normal conditions than those prevailing here would naturally expect to see, this year, an increased acreage of winter wheat. Without entering at all into the patriotic aspect of the question, it may safely be stated that good business readily warrants an extension of the fall wheat area. The demands of patriotism on the producing facilities of Canadian farmers have been somewhat overworked and too little attention has been given to the amelioration of conditions which militate against the demanded increase in production. Rural Canada has, for the most part, contributed more than her

and of labor and hence leads to more economical production. One of the great advantages of the winter wheat crop is that it enables a better distribution of labor than where spring crops only are sown. This, when labor is short, is no mean advantage. The preparation of the land for seeding extends often from haying time until the middle of September, but most of the work may be done after harvest is well over; the harvesting of the crop is completed before the other grain crops require attention. It deserves consideration, too, on account of its yielding ability. As already stated, many fields do not promise any phenomenal return this year, but taking one season with another, winter wheat, in many districts, is one of the best paying crops. This year, with the prospect of high prices and the unprecedented demand for wheats of all kinds, more than usual attention should be given it, and even in districts where spring wheat is more commonly grown, winter varieties are worthy of a trial.

BREAKING UP GRASS LAND.

If winter killing results the land is still available for spring sown crops, and if it winters successfully the yield will probably be double that of spring wheat. In the Montreal district winter



Most of the work of preparing for winter wheat can be done after the harvest is well over, and the deficiency in labor can often be made up by the use of larger machinery, which requires less man labor and will do more rapid work.

share toward the maintenance of the country's unusual output during the past three years. This has been made possible not only in supplying men and contributing money to worthy objects, but also in the splendid work of countrywomen in Red Cross work, as well as the increase in the production of foodstuffs by the men with a seriously depleted working staff.

LABOR SHORTAGE MAY HAVE A GOOD EFFECT.

The big problem now to be met is how to maintain the output with an unprecedented shortage of labor. The labor from cities has in many cases been over estimated. In our towns and cities there are many men trained on farms, who can spend a few weeks at farm work during the summer months, but who in most cases fall short in muscle and endurance. The city bred man going to a farm for the first time is about as useful as the average farmer in a machine shop or a printer's office. It may have a willing spirit, but he is often about as useful as an unbroken two-year-old colt. It is much easier to be backslighted than foresighted, but if fewer good farm hands had been induced to enter city factories during the past few years, the country would be now much further ahead. Regrettable as the present labor shortage is, it may have a good effect, if it tends to promote improvement in practice. In some districts it is having this tendency. It is exemplified by the adoption of larger working units, enabling one man and two horses to do the work formerly done by two men and four horses. The furrow gang plow was invented and introduced at the time of the American Civil War to help overcome a labor shortage. While it has been extensively used in the western parts of the continent for many years it is now being used for the first time by many farmers in the east, where a much greater war has produced labor conditions that demand the adoption of all labor saving devices. Wide harrows and large cultivators can be used to equally good advantage. They not only do more work, but they do it better and more cheaply. Farm tractors are also being used more largely this year than ever before, they are not yet by any means an unqualified success, but they will become perfected only as their weaknesses are brought out by actual trial. We may hope in a short time to see them more generally used. The use of tractors and large machinery of removal of many unproductive farm fences to make fields large enough for the handling of such machinery. This is a consummation greatly to be desired, as it effects a saving of land

on account of the grasses used in seeding down, but mainly on account of the weather, so that there is no great loss of feed in parting with a piece of old sod. Conditions in England and Scotland, where there has been so much talk of breaking up grass land, are widely different from ours. The pastures are made at considerable expense and with infinite care, they are well fertilized, and under the influence of a climate favorable for grass growing, produce abundant pasture for from six to nine months of the year. There may well be objections raised to breaking up such pastures. Our best grazing usually is secured in either one or two years from seeding if the ordinary grasses and clovers are used in seed-

Her Compliment.

"Does your wife ever pay you any compliments?" asked Frederick Jimson of his friend Banderley. "Never," replied Banderley. "Well, mine does; she flatters me." "Oh, yes, frequently—particularly in winter," replied Frederick. "Whenever the coal fire needs replenishing she points to the fireplace and says, 'Frederick, the grate.'"—London Mail.

Pinapple Rice.

Let cool this and it's ready for the pinapple. Cut each circle of pinapple in half and put a half on each plate. Garnish with a cherry and pour over the pinapple syrup, which has been bit boiled down.

Grayfish as a Food.

It used to be called the dogfish and was looked upon as a worthless nuisance. Now, through the efforts of Uncle Sam's bureau of fisheries, it is called the grayfish and is in great demand as a valuable food product. The grayfish contains a little less protein and a little more fat than the salmon, but its digestibility, richness and excel many of our popular fish foods. One interesting result of the analysis thus far made by the government is that the grayfish is entirely free from uric acid, which is not true of meats, poultry or other fishes.

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COOKING POTATOES.

Waste That Comes With Paring and Soaking Before Boiling.

Paring and cooking is the most wasteful method, and added to this some cooks soak the potatoes in water after they are pared. Starting to cook them in cold water also adds to the amount of waste. Twice as much nutritive matter is lost if paring is done before boiling, as there is if it is done after boiling, not figuring the waste in cutting away the potato. The juices of the potato contain 95 per cent. of the protein and 95 per cent. of the ash, and

COOKING POTATOES.

these substances are easily extracted when the protection of the skin has been removed. A pared potato soaked from three to five hours loses about three times as much of its mineral matter and seven times as much of its protein as one that is pared and immediately cooked. In the most wasteful method of cooking, paring, soaking and starting to cook in cold water the loss of protein is 51 per cent. and 39 per cent. of ash. When cooked with skins on potatoes not soaked and dropped into boiling water lose only 1.6 per cent. of protein and only 4.9 per cent. of ash. Baking and steaming are the most economical methods of cooking potatoes when fuel is considered. Potatoes cannot be baked well in a slow oven.—New York Sun.

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MARKET REPORTS

TORONTO MARKET

FARMERS MARKET.	
Dairy Products—	
Butter, choice dairy	20 00
Eggs, new-laid	12 00
Cheese, cheddar	10 00
Do., Swiss	12 00
Do., Gouda	10 00
Do., Casu Marzu	12 00
Do., Brie	10 00
Do., Camembert	10 00
Do., Roquefort	12 00
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