Synopsis of the Books of the Bible

Jeremiah

John Nelson Darby (1800-1882)

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Introduction

The spirit of the book:

The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah has a different character from that of Isaiah. It does not contain the same development of the counsels of God respecting this earth that Isaiah does. It is we, that we are told many things in it concerning the nations; but it is principally composed of testimony addressed immediately to the conscience of the people, on the subject of their moral condition at the time the prophet speaks, and with an eye to the judgment with which they were threatened. Judah had forsaken Jehovah; for their repentance under Josiah was but a fair appearance, and under the kings that succeeded him their degradation was complete. The prophet's heart was overwhelmed with grief, because of his love for the people; at the same time that he was filled with a deep sense of their relationship with the Lord. The sense of this produced a continual conflict in his soul between the thought of the value of the people as the people of God, and a holy jealousy for the glory of God and His rights over His people — rights which they were trampling under foot. This was an incurable wound to his heart. He had pleaded for the people, he had stood in the breach for them before Jehovah; but he saw that it was all in vain: the people rejected God and the testimony that He sent them. God Himself would no longer hearken to prayer made for Israel. Jeremiah prophesies under this impression: a sorrowful task, indeed, and one which made the prophet truly a man of sorrow. And although he could always say that, if the people repented, they would be received in grace, he well knew that the people had even no thought of repenting. Two things sustained him in this painful service: (for what could be more painful than to announce judgment for their iniquities, to a people beloved of God?) first of all, the energy of the Spirit of God, which filled his heart and compelled him to announce the judgment of God, in spite of contradiction and persecution; and then the revelation of the people's final blessing according to the unchangeable counsels of God. After this brief notice of the spirit of the Book of Jeremiah, the proofs and details of which we shall find in going through his prophecies, let us now examine these in succession.

The order of the prophecies in the Septuagint and Hebrew Bible

It is well known that the order of the prophecies in the Septuagint is different from that in the Hebrew Bible. But I see no reason for not receiving the latter. There is no doubt that it does not preserve the chronological order. The names of the kings* in the successive chapters clearly prove this. But it appears to me that, where there is chronological confusion, the subjects are classed, and that according to the mind of the Spirit. {* In Jer. 27 "Jehoiakim" should be "Zedekiah" (see verse 12 and Jer. 28:1)}

The general contents of the Book

The first twenty-four chapters have rather a different character from those that follow. To the end of chapter 24 it is a reasoning, a moral pleading with the people. In chapter 25 there is a formal prophecy of judgment on divers nations by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. And afterwards we find prophecies much more distinct from each other, and connected with historical details. Chapters 30-33 contain

promises of assured blessing for the last days. From chapter 39 it is the history of that which followed the taking of Jerusalem, and the judgment of Egypt and Babylon.

The different prophecies

We will now state the different distinct prophecies; chapter 1, chapters 2-6, chapters 7-10, chapters 11-13, chapters 14, 15, chapters 16, 17, chapters 18-20, chapters 21-24, chapter 25, chapter 26, chapter 27 (v. 1, read Zedekiah instead of "Jehoiakim"), chapter 28, chapter 29, chapters 30, 31, chapter 32, chapter 33 (this last, however, is connected with the preceding one), chapter 34, chapter 35, chapter 36, chapters 37, 38, chapter 39, chapters 40-44, chapter 45, chapter 46, chapter 47, chapter 48, chapter 49, verses 1-6, 7-22, 23-27, 28, 29, 30-33, 34-39; chapters 50,51. Chapter 52 was not written by Jeremiah.

The prophet's expression of the anguish of the remnant

There can be nothing more striking in the way of deep affliction than that of the prophet. He is distressed; his heart is broken. One sees too that God has made choice of a naturally feeble heart, easily cast down and discouraged (even while filling it with His own strength), in order that the anguish, the complaints, the distress of soul, the indignation of a weak heart that resents oppression while unable to throw it off or overcome it, being all poured out before Him, should bear testimony against the people whose inveterate wickedness called for His vengeance. The affliction of Christ, whose Spirit wrought that of Jeremiah, was infinitely deeper; but His perfect communion with His Father caused all the anguish, that in Jeremiah's case broke out into complaints, to be in secret between Jesus and His Father. It is very rarely expressed in the Gospels. He is entirely for others in grace.* In the Psalms we see more of His feelings. In Jeremiah's case, it was proper that the anguish of the faithful remnant should be expressed before God. The absolute perfection of the Lord Jesus, and the calmness which, through the presence of God, accompanies His perfection in all His ways, allowed of no complaint, whatever might be the inward anguish of His heart. He thanks in the same hour that He can justly upbraid. Sympathy for others became the position of Jesus. We see that our precious Lord never failed in this. {* Compare Matthew 26 where this is brought out in the most striking way. It is very precious to see both this perfect result in Christ and at the same time all that He felt in His heart as man, both as sensible to circumstances without and so deeply exercised within. Perfect exercises within produce perfect quietness in walk without, for in both God is fully brought in. If we avoid the full dealing with the matter with God, the heart cannot act for Him as if all were disposed of: and that is peace in action. Yet how precious to see the reality of Christ's human nature in all the intimate exercises of His spirit.}

But it was equally becoming that the outpouring of heart of the faithful, who needed this sympathy, should be expressed by the Holy Ghost. It is not that there was no weakness in the heart that poured itself out; but if the Spirit lays it open, it is evident that He must express it as it is; otherwise it were useless and false. Consequently Jeremiah enters much more personally into his prophecies than any other prophet.* He represents the people in their true position before God — such as God could recognise, as being before Him in this character — in order to see whether, receiving from God that which applied to this position, and expressing the sentiments inspired by such a position, it was possible to reach the conscience and win the heart of the people; always remembering that these

sentiments were expressed according to the Spirit, and accompanied by the most direct and positive prophecies of that which God would bring upon the people. It is to be observed also, that a great part of that which was written was not addressed in the first instance to the people, but to God. This position of Jeremiah's, as the representative before God of the true interests of the people, or of the remnant, causes him to be looked at sometimes as though he were Jerusalem itself, and, at other times, as a remnant separated from it and set apart for God. {* There is something analogous in Jonah. But there the circumstances of the prophet are an episode, and are not connected with the testimony he bore, unless by the single principle of grace.}

The period of Jeremiah's prophecies

But these points will be better understood by examining the passages which bring them into notice. The period during which Jeremiah prophesied was of considerable length, and embraced the whole time of Israel's decline, from the year after that in which Josiah began to cleanse Jerusalem and all the land, until the final destruction of Jerusalem by the army of the Chaldeans; and even a little while after in Egypt, a period of more than forty years — a period throughout of distress and anguish. For although Josiah was a godly king, the reformation of the people was only an outward one, as we shall see. So that the anguish of one who saw with God was so much the greater on account of this appearance of piety. "And Jehovah was not turned away from his fierce anger, because of the sins of Manasseh." Nevertheless the prophet distinguishes between the two periods, that is, the reign of Josiah, and that of his successors.

Excepting in chapters 21-24 there are no dates for the first twenty-four chapters. It is probable that they were mostly given under Josiah's reign. They contain moral arguments, the expression of the prophet's sorrow of heart, and solemn warnings of the coming invasion from the north. The four chapters I have specified have no chronological order, and are probably composed of prophecies given at different periods. They contain the judgment of the different branches of the house of David successively, as well as that of the false prophets who deceived the people. They end by declaring the fate of the captives in Babylon, and of those that remained with Zedekiah in Jerusalem — the two very different from each other.

Chapter 1

The appointment of Jeremiah to the prophet's office

In Jeremiah 1 the prophet is established in his office, to which he had been appointed by Jehovah, even before his birth, that he should carry His word unto the nations. But Jeremiah's fears are immediately manifested. The Lord encourages him by the assurance of His presence. He puts His words into his mouth, and appoints him as prophet over the nations to root out and to plant. Two visions are shewn him, which contain the summary of the prophetic charge communicated to him, and announce that Jerusalem shall soon be stricken by the kingdoms of the north. Under these circumstances Jeremiah is set before a rebellious people, who will strive against him. Nevertheless he must declare everything;

and as the Lord had before encouraged the prophet, He now adds to the encouragement, in order to enforce it, a threat in case of disobedience; namely, that, if through fear he drew back from his commission, the Lord would become a greater cause of fear, and would break him to pieces before those of whom he was afraid. But if he fulfilled his appointed task, Jehovah would be with him. Verses 6-8, 17, 18, shew the great fearfulness of the prophet's spirit, which needed to be thus strengthened by Jehovah.

Chapter 2

Jehovah's touching appeal to Jerusalem: the people's responsibility

Jeremiah 2 contains a most touching appeal to the people at Jerusalem. It requires no explanation, but deserves the heart's serious attention. It testifies in the most striking manner to the kindness and tender love of the Lord. Only that we have here only the comparison of what they had originally been as planted by the Lord, and His ways of love, not any reference to the coming of the Lord. Christ is not in view nor the counsels of God as in Isaiah, though we shall find it further on; but their responsibility under God's touching ways of grace with them is much more fully brought out, and final blessing is spoken of in the following chapter.

Chapter 3

Israel's restoration by soverign goodness

Jeremiah 3 has the same character; indeed it is the continuation of the same address; but it contains details of Israel's and Judah's behaviour, and proclaims the restoration of Israel by sovereign goodness, and the blessing of the last days on their return to God. Remark only that, before the pleading with Israel for their folly, what the Lord first notices is that there was no seeking Himself, no longing after Him: no people nor priests said, "Where is Jehovah?" For judgment being executed on Israel, God can allow His heart to flow out in the testimony of grace. This necessarily gives a place also to Judah, as the two are to be united. The end of the chapter enlarges, in a very affecting manner, on the spirit that grace will produce in Israel when they are brought back, and on the manner in which the Lord will receive them. In verses 23-25 the prophet confesses the people's condition at the time in which he spoke. It is in this chapter that we have the solemn revelation, that as far as the people were concerned, the reformation under Josiah was but hypocrisy. These two chapters form a kind of general introduction, shewing the ways and judgment of Israel and Judah, and their restoration by grace. The first chapter had been the appointment of Jeremiah to the prophet's office.

Chapters 4 to 6

Repentance called for: the certain judgment of God

Jeremiah 4 resumes the subject of chapters 2, 3, and, applying it at that time to the people, tells them that, if they return, it must be unto the Lord Himself — that neither forms nor half-measures would be of any use. After verse 4 the prophet announces the certain judgment of God, which should come from the north, and fall upon Jerusalem in destruction.

Universal sin: Jeremiah's position

In Jeremiah 5 the sin and iniquity are shewn to be universal: rich and poor, all are alike. And "Shall not I visit for these things? saith Jehovah." Nevertheless He will not destroy entirely. The source of evil, or, at least, that which maintains it, is pointed out. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means. Jeremiah 6 continues the testimony, but gives also the position of Jeremiah in the midst of all this evil. In verses 11-26 the judgment is plainly announced. The conduct of the false prophets is again marked. In both these chapters the coming of Nebuchadnezzar in judgment is evidently declared.

Chapters 7 to 9

The temple a witness against iniquity; the prophet's grief; God's righteous judgments

Jeremiah 7 begins a new prophecy, contemplating especially the temple, which, instead of being a protection (as the people, without conscience, would have it), was become a further demonstration of their iniquity. They were to remember Shiloh; for the house of God should likewise be overthrown. Judah should be cast off, as Ephraim had been, and God would hear no intercession for His people. He required obedience and not sacrifice, and if the people came into His house while they were practising idolatry, they did but defile it. But Israel had less understanding than the birds of the heaven, which at least knew their appointed times, while Israel knew not the judgment of Jehovah (Jer. 8). From verse 18 to verse 2 of chapter 9 the prophet lays open the depth of his grief. From verse 3 of Jeremiah 9 he proclaims judgment — a judgment which shall also visit the nations around. And in view of these judgments he exhorts every man not to glory in man, but in the knowledge of Jehovah (v. 23, 24).

Chapter 10

The idols and vanities of the nations contrasted with Jehovah

In Jeremiah 10 the idols and the vanities of the nations are put in contrast with Jehovah. In verses 19-25 we have the affliction of the prophet, speaking of the desolation of Jerusalem as though he were himself the desolate city, and praying to God that His dealings might be only chastisement, and not excision. The reader will do well to observe that the repetition of God's pleadings with Israel (although these pleadings, while varied in their character, need little remark to make them understood) is the most touching proof of the kindness of God, who multiplies His appeals to a rebellious and perverse people, "rising up early," as He expresses it, to protest unto them.

Chapters 11 and 12

Israel addressed as responsible: Jeremiah pleads with God for them

Jeremiah 11 suggests some observations. God addresses Himself again to Israel on the ground of their responsibility, reminding them of the call to obedience, which had been addressed to them ever since their coming out of Egypt. God was about to bring on the people the evil with which He had threatened them. Jeremiah is not to intercede for them. Nevertheless He still calls Israel His "beloved"; but, being corrupted, what had she to do in His house? Whatever she might have been to Him, judgment was coming. At the end of the chapter Jeremiah takes the place of the faithful remnant who have the testimony of God. His position continually reminds us of the Psalms. We see the working of the Spirit of Christ often clearly expressed, but sometimes, it appears to me, in expressions more mingled with Jeremiah's personal position, and thereby less deep and less akin to the sentiments of Christ, although the same in principle with the Psalms. Jeremiah, on account of his faithfulness and his testimony, was exposed to the machinations of the wicked. Jehovah reveals these things to him; and, according to the righteousness which characterises the condition of the remnant, he calls for the vengeance of God.* This will be the means of deliverance for the remnant. He announces the judgment of these wicked men by the word of Jehovah. In Psalm 83 the same principles will be found, and the same wickedness in God's enemies; only there, these enemies are Gentiles, and the range of thought is wider. Israel and the knowledge of Jehovah are the object of the prayer in that Psalm. Compare also chapter 9 and Psalm 64. Here there is more intercession on Jeremiah's part; the psalm speaks of judgment. Compare also Psalm 69:6-7, and Jeremiah 15:15. The words of the psalm being from the mouth of Christ Himself, the request is for others and infinitely more touching. This comparison of passages will help in understanding the relationship between the position of Jeremiah and that of the remnant described in the Psalms. We may also compare Psalm 73 with the beginning of Jeremiah 12. This last chapter forms a part of the same prophecy as the preceding one. Jeremiah pleads with God on the subject of these judgments, but in a humble and submissive manner, which God accepts by making him feel (a painful necessity) the evil of the people more deeply. At the same time He sustains the prophet's faith by the personal interest He manifests in him. God makes him understand that He has forsaken His inheritance: the state of things was therefore no longer to be wondered at. At the same time He reveals His purposes of blessing to His people, and even to the nations among whom they will be dispersed, if these nations would learn the ways of Jehovah. {* Righteousness characterises the saint as well as love, and has its place where there are adversaries to that love and to the blessing of the loved people. It is the Spirit of prophecy, not the gospel, no doubt because prophecy is connected with the government of God, not with His present dealings in sovereign grace. Hence in the Revelation vengeance is called for by the saints. We see at the same time the unchangeable love of God for His people, and the bond of His faithfulness which cannot be broken. He calls the nations, that surround the inheritance He had given to His people, His neighbours. We see also the setting aside of all that national system of which He had made Israel the centre, and which falls when Israel, the keystone of the arch, is taken away (v. 14). Afterwards, these nations are re-established, as well as Israel, and blessed if they acknowledge the God of Israel. The Lord Christ will re-unite the two things — the universal headship of man, and the union of nations round Israel as a centre — in His Person. He will be the one Man to whom the whole

dominion is given; and Israel, as well as the various nations with their kings, shall be re-established, each in his own land and his own heritage (as before the time of Nebuchadnezzar), with the exception of Edom, Damascus, Hazor, and Babylon herself; that is to say, those nations which occupy Israel's territory, and Babylon which had absorbed and taken the place of all the others, and which must disappear by the judgment of God to give them their place again. (Compare Jer. 46 and the following chapters.)}

Chapter 13

The call to repentance because of coming judgment: the prophet's grief

Jeremiah 13, bringing to mind how God had bound Israel to His heart, announces the terrible judgment with which the people shall, as it were, be drunken; and, on the ground of this judgment, calls them to repentance. He relates their hopeless evil, and the unfeigned grief of the prophet at their obstinacy. Compare Luke 19: 41. This zeal for Jehovah's glory against the evil and the people who dishonoured Him, and touching affection to them as Jehovah's people, is everywhere a striking mark of the working of the Spirit of Christ. Compare Moses (Ex. 32:27-31, and sequel); so Paul (Rom. 9; 1 Thess. 2:15-16): only here, under grace, there is no call for judgment; so even Christ Himself (compare Matt. 23:31-37).

Chapter 14

The famine: Jeremiah's intercession

Jeremiah 14 refers to a famine which took place in the land. The desolation of Jerusalem by the sword and by famine is again declared. But observe here the touching intercession of verses 7-9; and again in verses 17-22, the deep affliction of the Spirit of Christ which expresses itself in the prophet's mouth. "For in all their affliction he was afflicted." Observe also another element of their condition, pointed out by the Apostle Peter, and by the Lord Himself, with reference to the last days — namely, false prophets.

Chapter 15

God's answer in judgment on the nation

The beginning of Jeremiah 15 is an answer to the close of chapter 14; but the instruction and the principles it contains are very remarkable. Jehovah declares that if Moses and Samuel (whose love for Israel, and faith in intercession for them, were unequalled among all the servants of God who had stood before Him on their behalf) — if these two beloved leaders of the people were there, yet God would not accept Israel. Who should have pity on them? Jehovah Himself forsakes them. From verse 20 we find the true position of the remnant in such a case: a most touching instruction for ourselves

Jeremiah's sorrow: the separated position of the remnant

Poor Jeremiah complains of his lot, among a people whose sorrows he bore on his heart, while at the same time enduring their causeless hatred. We see in verses 11-13, that he represents the people before God, but yet that the faithful remnant are separated from the mass of the wicked. From verse is they present themselves in this separated position to God, bearing at the same time all the pain of the nation's wound, even while asking vengeance on the wicked, the adversaries of the truth. In reply, precise directions are given for the walk of one who is faithful in such a position. The word of God, eaten and digested in the heart, is the source of this position (v. 16). Instead of sharing the spirit of the enemies and the mockers, who rejoiced in the abominable and hypocritical state of those who bore the name of God's people, the effect of the word in the heart was no doubt to separate from this condition of the people, but to isolate the godly one, as though he were himself the object of God's indignation, as being himself the people. The word, which revealed the relationship between God and the people, and shewed them their privileges and their duties, caused the faithful to judge the state of the people, and to feel all the consequences of this state as the judgment of Jehovah — a judgment so much the more terrible to his heart from his feeling how close a band of affection and blessing from God was the normal condition of the people. " Thou hast filled me with indignation" (v. 17, 18) is the prophet's language.

God's open door: His recognition of individual faith

In verses 19-21 the precise instructions of God with respect to this condition are given. God also addresses Jeremiah as though he were the people whom he thus represented in spirit before Him, and, at the same time, according to his individual faith. He says, first of all, "If thou return, then I will bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me." This open door — open till man shuts it — is always in the ways of God, although He well knows that man will not profit by it.

Taking account of all that is good

Is this all that is to be done while it is called to-day and the door is open, to call on the rebellious people to return? No: there is something else for the faithful to do: and this is the second leading principle: "If thou separate the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth." In the midst of the ruin caused by the rebellion of God's people, this is the especial work of one who is faithful, who is imbued with the word. The desire of his soul being the reproduction of this word, and of the affections of God revealed in it, can he reject the people in a mass as wicked? That cannot be. Can he accept them in a condition of rebellion, which is so much the worse because they belong to God? This he cannot do either. He must learn to do that which God does — take account of all that is good, and, if it is too late to preserve everything, never condemn that which is of God. The penetrating eye of God never loses sight of this. The affections of the prophet are fixed upon it also.

Separating the precious from the vile

But God has His own thoughts, and He acts according to His own will; He lays hold of that which is precious, owns it, and separates it from that which is vile. This is not precisely the judgment of God respecting evil; but when the judgment is imminent on account of the evil, the energy of the Spirit and the power of the word lead us to attach ourselves to the good, to discern it, to separate it from the evil, before the judgment comes. If Satan can, he will mingle them together. Those who know how to separate them shall be as the mouth of God. God will do it in judgment by smiting the evil: in the faithful the Spirit of God does it by separating the precious from the vile.

Refusal to return to the unfaithful obligatory

The third principle is, that, when once separated from the path of the rebellious by this spiritual intelligence, there must not be a moment's thought of returning to them. "Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them." Finally, in this position, Jehovah will make the faithful like a wall of brass. The rebels, who boast of being called the people of God, fight against His faithful servant, but shall not prevail, because Jehovah is with him. Deliverance is promised to Jeremiah. All this, while having its immediate application to the prophet, is most valuable instruction for us in the principle which it contains, to direct us in similar times. Patience is required, but the path is clearly marked out. There is always an open door on God's part; the separation of the precious from the vile makes us like the mouth of God; a positive refusal, when thus placed, to return to the unfaithful: such are the principles that God has here established. The word received in the heart is their source. At the same time the effect is very far from contempt of the fallen people; on the contrary, the heart of the faithful takes upon itself all the grief of the position in which the people of God, or those who publicly stand as such, are found.

Chapter 16

Jeremiah to avoid family relationships with the people to show what God would do

In Jeremiah 16 Jehovah teaches Jeremiah to avoid all family relationships with this people, and to cease from all testimonies of interest in what was going on among them. For He Himself had entirely broken off with them, and would cause all His testimonies to cease among them, and would drive them out of the land. But, after all, through the greatness of the evil which He would bring upon them, He would cause their deliverance out of Egypt to be forgotten in their yet greater deliverance from this evil. For at length God will pardon and comfort His people But before this He will recompense their iniquity. Afterwards the Gentiles themselves shall come and acknowledge the true God, the God of Israel.

Chapter 17

Trust in man or in God: the door of repentance opened

Jeremiah 17. The great thing, amidst all that was going on, was to trust in Jehovah. He who, failing in this, made flesh his arm, should not see when good came. Meantime the fire of God's anger was kindled and should not be quenched. How could a wicked and deceitful heart be trusted? The Lord searches it, to give every one according to his ways. The prophet, in the name of the people, casts himself upon Jehovah; and, on account of the wickedness of the adversaries who mocked at God's testimonies, he appeals to God. He had not desired the woeful day which He announced; neither was it by his own choice that he forsook the peaceful duties he owed the people to follow God in this testimony. He entreats God, whose terrible judgments were to scatter the people, not to be a terror unto him. God was all his hope in the day of evil. What a picture of the condition of the remnant in the last days; and, at all times, of the portion of one who is faithful when the people of God will not hearken to his testimony! Nevertheless, it being still called To-day, God in His longsuffering opens the door of repentance to the people and to their king, if they have ears to hear.

Chapter 18

The potter's vessel: a solemn warning of judgment

In Jeremiah 18 this principle is fully demonstrated before the people (v. 1-10). But the people in despair as to God, in the midst of their boldness in evil and in contempt of His marvellous patience, give themselves up to the iniquity by which Satan deprives them of their hope in God. God announces His judgment by the prophet, whose testimony provokes the expression of the confidence felt by a hardened conscience in the certainty and immutability of its privileges, and of the blessings attached to the ordinances with which God had endowed His people, and to which He had outwardly attached these blessings, which maintained their relationship with Him. What a dreadful picture of blindness! Ecclesiastical influence is always greatest at the moment when the conscience is hardened against the testimony of God; because unbelief, which trembles after all, shelters itself behind the presumed stability of that which God had set up, and makes a wall of its apostate forms against the God whom they hide, attributing to these ordinances the stability of God Himself. Conscience says too much to allow the unbeliever any hope of standing well with God, even when God opens His heart to him. "There is no hope," he says; "I will continue to do evil; moreover the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise; nor," he adds (the false prophets having the ear of the people), "the word from the prophet." The warning which this chapter contains appears to me very solemn. I can scarcely imagine a more terrible picture of the professing people's condition. The prophet asks for judgment upon them. This is in the spirit of the remnant trodden down by the wickedness of the Lord's enemies.

Chapters 19 and 20

Judgment announced: the priest's opposition and Jeremiah's sufferings

Jeremiah 19 and 20 shew us the judgment of Jerusalem announced in terms that require little explanation; and we have in Jeremiah 20 a sample of the opposition of the priests, and of Jeremiah's sufferings. But this does not prevent Jeremiah's denouncing the priest himself, and repeating that which he had said of Jerusalem. Nevertheless we see the effect of these sufferings on his heart. He was compelled, as it were, by the Lord to bear this testimony. He has not (and it is the same with the remnant) the willing spirit that rejoices in tribulation by the power of the Holy Ghost. He was the subject of constant mockery. They watched for his halting, so that he would gladly have been silent; but the word of Jehovah was like fire in his bones. Alas! we understand all this — the deep iniquity of the men who are called the people of God; the way in which the feeble heart recoils before this iniquity, that has neither heart nor conscience; and how on these occasions the word is too strong in us to be shut up in our heart. Nevertheless with all this fear he had also the consciousness that Jehovah was with him, and he again asks for vengeance (which, in fact, is deliverance, and the only deliverance of those who have the testimony of Christ in such a position). This deliverance is celebrated in verse 13; but in verses 14-18, we see to what a point personal grief may drive those who are subjected to such a trial as this. See the same thing in Job — a picture of the same condition, that is to say, of a soul tried by all the malice of Satan, without the full knowledge of grace, in the sense of its own nothingness, and in the forgetfulness of self. This will be precisely the state of the remnant in the last days. Christ is the model of perfection in what answered to these circumstances of trial, the reality of which He thoroughly experienced and felt, when He had yet to undergo for others what laid the foundation of grace for them.

Chapters 21 to 23

God's righteous answer to Zedekiah: the Shepherd after His own heart

Jeremiah 21 - 23. On the occasion of Zedekiah's request to Jeremiah to know if the Lord would interfere in favour of the people against Nebuchadnezzar, the Spirit of God has brought the testimonies together that were given with respect to all the members of David's family who presided, so to say, at the ruin of Jerusalem — Jehoahaz (Jer. 22:10), Jehoiakim (v. 13-19), Jeconiah (v. 20-30). The judgment of Zedekiah had been pronounced (Jer. 21); and after having declared, as we have seen, that the door was always open to repentance, and that blessing always attended a godly walk (Jer. 21:12; Jer. 22:1-5), judgment is again pronounced, and a sentence from God upon the different kings. Finally (Jer. 23) the expression of Jehovah's indignation against these evil pastors gives rise to the declaration that He will raise up a Shepherd after His own heart, namely, the true Son of David, the Messiah. The just indignation and the judgment of God are expressed in the strongest terms.

Chapter 24

The good and bad figs; man's unfaithfulness and God's faithfulness

Two things attract our attention in Jeremiah 24. First, submission to the judgment of God when He executes it is the proof of intelligence in His word — of real spirituality. Want of faith leans, not on the

stability of the promises, but, under pretext of the promises, on that of the ordinances and of the men who enjoy them . Those who submit to this judgment of God upon the unfaithfulness of man (a judgment which leads to the enjoyment of these promises, and operates to the setting aside of ordinances, the stability of which God had not guaranteed; but in connection with which man would, if faithful, have enjoyed the promises) — those, I repeat, who submit to this judgment, shall enjoy the full and entire effect of these promises, to which it is impossible that God should be unfaithful. The second thing to be remarked is that, when God would encourage the faith of those who submit to His judgment (being led by this submission to a holy conviction that man has deserved it), God stops at nothing short of the full and entire accomplishment of the promises, which depend on His faithfulness, whatever may have been the unfaithfulness of man — an accomplishment which can and shall be enjoyed solely by means of a work of God in man, that will bring him into a condition suitable to this accomplishment (see v. 6, 73. The position of the people at the time of Jeremiah's prophecies furnished an evident opportunity for the development of these two principles; for the people and the house of David had entirely failed in their faithfulness to God. It is very afflicting, and very humbling, when we are obliged to confess that God's enemies are in the right. The only comfort is that God is in the right (Ezek. 14:22-23), and that in the end He cannot fail to accomplish His gracious promises.

Chapter 25

Universal judgment beginning with Jerusalem; the earth given into Nebuchadnezzar's hand

Jeremiah 25 closes, so to say, this part of the prophecy with a general summary of God's judgments on the earth, giving it into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. The immediate application to events already accomplished does not offer much difficulty, but we shall find a good deal, if we would bring in also an allusion to the last days. Israel, to whom the door had always been held open, is first judged. The chapter begins by announcing the judgment of God upon Jerusalem, because she had refused to hear the call to repentance which had been addressed to her during twenty-three years. And here let us notice the hardness of the people's heart, stubborn in evil, and refusing to bow the neck to God's testimony, in spite of all the pains God took, if we may so speak, to warn them. And indeed it is His own language: "Jehovah has sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, but ye have not hearkened" (2 Chron. 36:15). Jehovah had always set before the people a full and abiding blessing, if they repented; but they would not. The prophet announces that Jehovah will bring all the families of the north under Nebuchadnezzar, against Jerusalem, and against the adjoining nations, all of whom should assuredly drink the cup of judgment that the Lord had mingled for them. Jerusalem shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years; and after that the king of Babylon himself should be judged and punished, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah against all the nations. For, having begun with Jerusalem, it should be a universal judgment. That which should immediately happen was the judgment of the nations around Palestine, and afterwards that of Babylon, which was the instrument of their judgment. But the fact that the city called by the name of Jehovah was to be laid waste implied the judgment of all the nations. Consequently, in the symbolical action of the prophecy, all the nations connected with

Israel, all those of the world as then known, are forced to drink the cup. But this is expressed in terms that include the nations of the whole earth. The historical application of verse 26 does not go farther than that which happened by means of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Sheshach, who should drink subsequently to the others. But a principle of universal judgment is comprised in this. The universal evil is developed (v. 29-38). The only question that can be raised is whether, in this ulterior destruction of all the kingdoms of the earth, the expression "King of Sheshach" has any application to one who shall possess the same territory, or if it is merely Nebuchadnezzar. I doubt its going farther.* The picture of universal judgment ends the first division of the prophecy. That which follows gives details and particular cases. {* In either case the judgment does not appear to me to go farther than the oppression of the nations by the king of the Gentiles, who is raised up in place of the throne of God in Jerusalem, and his own destruction at the end of his wicked career. The destruction of Babylon had a peculiar importance; first, because it was substituted by God Himself in place of His throne at Jerusalem; secondly, because it was the only Gentile power directly set up by Him, though all power be from Him. The others replaced Babylon providentially. Hence, at the destruction of Babylon, Jerusalem is restored (however partially it shews the principle), and the power which judges Babylon is the setter up of God's people again in the holy city. Babylon — its setting up, its rule, and its destruction — involved the whole of the direct dealings of God with the Gentiles, and with His people in power. All the rest came in merely as a prolonging by the bye.

Chapter 26

Renewed calls to repentance: the longsuffering of God

Jeremiah 26 begins this series of details with a prophecy of the commencement of Jehoiakim's reign. The people are warned, as being already in sin, that if they repent, they shall escape. We have constantly seen this character attached to the prophecies of Jeremiah, as though God said, "To-day, if ye will hear my voice." Circumstances rendered this appeal urgent, for in fact, if Israel did not repent, the house of Jehovah was to be like Shiloh. We find that of which God had warned the prophet. They strive against him; but, as Jehovah had promised, they gain no advantage over him. We see that it is the ecclesiastical party that excite the people against the testimony which God bears to them by the mouth of the prophet. But God turns the heart of the princes and of the people towards him. There were some also who regarded the ways of Jehovah. Their intelligence did not go far, but sufficiently so for deliverance; they feared God. We may remark here, that conscience laid hold of the word of God in its immediate application. No doubt the evil would go on increasing, and, when ripe, the judgment would be accomplished (for God does not strike before iniquity has come to its height), and then the prophecy would be fulfilled. But conscience, under the influence of the word, takes knowledge of principles which are judged by it, even when all is not yet ripe for judgment; and as yet consequently the judgment is not executed (v. 18, 19).

Chapters 27 and 28

Refusal of submission to the Gentile head appointed by God in rebellion against God Himself

Jeremiah 27 and 28 go together. Their chief subject is the submission to the head of the Gentiles, which God requires of the Jews. But before dwelling on this, I would call attention to the care which God bestows on His people, warning them again at each new phase of their career towards judgment. We remember that Zedekiah brought down this judgment by rebelling against the king of Babylon. At the beginning of his reign the Lord sent His word by Jeremiah to warn all the kings around, as well as Zedekiah, that they must submit. If they submitted, they should dwell in their land in peace; if not, they should be driven out and perish.

Let us now observe the place which, as Creator of the earth, of man and beast, God gives to the king of Babylon. God has given the nations, and even the beasts of the field, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar for a certain time. God establishes the central and universal power, and the nation that refuses to submit to it would be in rebellion against Himself, and should be consumed. Compare Daniel 2:38, which adds the fowls of the heaven to his dominion. All on earth was subjected to this king of the earth — the imperial head taken from among the Gentiles. It was a government appointed of God, who had forsaken Jerusalem, and would no longer protect her unless she submitted to this government. It appears that the kings of the surrounding countries were plotting with Zedekiah to throw off the yoke of the king of Babylon, and that the mission of their ambassadors was the occasion on which this prophecy was given, God declaring that He would have all submit to this yoke, for it was He Himself that imposed it.

Man under a new trial: his failure

This fact — that God has committed power in this world to a man — is very remarkable. In the case of Israel man had been tried on the ground of obedience to God, and had not been able to possess the blessing that should have resulted from it. Now God abandons this direct government of the world (while still the sovereign Lord above); and, casting off Israel whom He had chosen out from the nations, grouping the latter around the elect people and His own throne in Israel, He subjects the world to one head, and committing power unto man, He places him under a new trial, to prove whether he will own the God who gave him power, and make those happy who are subjected to him, when he can do whatever he will in this world.

I do not enter here into the details of the history of this trial: they belong to the Book of Daniel. We know that man failed in it. Senseless and presumptuous, he ravaged the. world and oppressed the people of God, trod down His sanctuary, and prepared for himself a judgment so much the more terrible that Satan will induce him to resist it, and will aid him in his rebellion. Nebuchadnezzar alone answers in all points to that which we have just said. He is the head of gold. God had committed immediately to him the government of the world. Cyrus had personally a more peculiar place, and one more honourable in some respects. But as an empire, the Persians only took the place of one that already existed; and the sources and character of power continually deteriorated, in proportion as their distance from God and His gift increased.

False prophets and teachers: God's testimony to the true prophet

False prophets as well as false teachers oppose the truth in this very point on which God tries His people. They can use all other parts of truth in order to deceive, and appear to have increased faith in them. It is manifest that the secret of the Lord is never with them. But whatever appearances may be, they neither stop nor turn away God from the path He takes. Yet the true prophet's position is a painful one. He may seem for the time to be reduced to silence; for the popular falsehood possesses the hearts of the people. Jeremiah had to go away. Nevertheless in the combat between truth and error God often intervenes by a striking testimony, and so it was here. The function of the prophet, with respect to the government of the world and of the people's walk, is always a testimony to the judgment which hangs over unfaithfulness.

Chapter 29

Coming deliverance: God's own thoughts of grace

Jeremiah 29. On the other hand the prophet comforts those who, by the judgment of God, were subjected to the yoke which He had imposed upon them. The Jews in Babylon should dwell in peace, quietly seeking the welfare of the city in which they were captives. The time of deliverance should come. The spirit of rebellion should be punished. Finally, having insisted on the people's submission to the judgment, God reveals His own thoughts of grace. This submission was necessary, because of Israel's sin; for God must maintain His own character, and not identify Himself with the ways of a rebellious people. But He must needs manifest Himself as He is in His grace. The execution of the judgment, and Israel's ruined condition, brought the truth and beauty of the grace of God into yet greater prominence.

Chapter 30

The day of Jacob's trouble: promised deliverance and sure judgment

Some details of the circumstances that accompany its exercise deserve our attention, as well as the character which God displays in it, and the extent of its effects. In Jeremiah 30 God commands Jeremiah to write in a book all the words of the judgment which he had heard, for God would restore the people. Now this deliverance found Israel at the height of the distress. This is the first thing presented to the prophet. No day could be compared to this day of Jacob's trouble. It is the day spoken of in Matthew 24 and Mark 13. But in this extremity God comes to the help of His people, who shall be delivered. And now, God having executed His judgment and acted according to His own counsels in grace, this deliverance shall in consequence be full and complete. Israel shall serve Jehovah their God and David their king. The ruin (v. 12) was complete, incurable: no remedy could heal it. It is God who had smitten His people for the multitude of their sins. Nevertheless He was with them to save them; and consequently all the nations who had availed themselves of God's anger to devour Israel should be themselves devoured. Zion should be rebuilt on her own foundation, joy and peace should be in her

dwellings, the governors of the people should be of her children. Israel should be the people of Jehovah, and Jehovah should be their God. Finally a principle which we have seen clearly explained is here announced, namely, that judgment should fall upon the wicked; that this judgment went forth to smite the people of God first, because they were wicked and must bear the consequence. But wherever the wicked might be, this judgment should reach them. Wheresoever the carcase might be, there should the eagles be gathered together.

Chapters 31 and 32

Israel's complete restoration and blessinf: enjoyment of complete deliverance

Jeremiah 31. But it would not be Judah only, to whom the prophecies of Jeremiah were addressed, that should be restored — all the families of Israel should enjoy this blessing. Jehovah should be their God, they should be His people. A few words will suffice to fix the reader's attention on this beautiful prophecy. All the tribes are there, but all in renewed relationship with Zion. It is a deliverance wrought by the Lord, and it is therefore complete. Its enjoyment is not hindered by weakness. It is a deliverance that melts the heart and produces tears and supplications, but which removes all cause for tears, excepting grace. They shall sorrow no more; their soul shall be as a watered garden; they shall be satisfied with goodness from Jehovah. Ephraim has repented, and God will cause him to feel that He has never forgotten him. The Lord has always remembered His erring child; Judah shall be the habitation of justice and the mountain of holiness. This shall be through a new covenant — not that which was made when they came out of Egypt. The law shall be written in their heart; they shall all know Jehovah; and none of their sins shall be remembered any more. If God should overthrow the ordinances of creation, then, saith He, shall Israel be cast off for all that they have done. Finally the Lord declares in detail the restoration of Jerusalem.

I would add that in verse 22 I see only weakness. Israel, feeble as a woman, shall possess and overcome all strength — seeing that strength manifests itself in that which is very weakness.

The purchase of the field

These two chapters give in general the prophetic testimony to Israel's restoration. Jeremiah 32 applies it to the circumstances of the Jews besieged in Jerusalem; taking occasion, from the ruin that evidently threatened them by the presence of Nebuchadnezzar, to announce the infallible counsels of God in grace towards them. Jeremiah had declared that the city should be taken, and Zedekiah led captive. But Jehovah had caused him to buy a field, in proof that the people should assuredly return. He points out the iniquity of the people and of the city from the beginning; but now that, in despair through sin, their ruin appeared to them inevitable, Jehovah declares not only a return from captivity, but the full efficacy of His grace. He would give oneness of heart to the people, that they may serve Him for ever. Their relationship to God as His people should be fully established according to the power of an everlasting covenant. Jehovah will rejoice in doing them good. He would plant them in the land with His whole

heart, and His whole soul. It was He who had brought all this evil in judgment, and it was He who would bring all the good which He had promised.

Chapter 33

The King-Priest, the Son of David, in whom Jeremiah's covenant will be fulfilled

Jeremiah 33 repeats with ample and rich abundance the testimony to these blessings, and dwells particularly on the presence of the Messiah; it announces that the branch of righteousness shall grow up unto David, executing judgment and righteousness in the land. Judah shall be saved and Jerusalem shall dwell safely. Her name shall be "Jehovah our Righteousness." David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel (not merely Judah), nor the tribe of Levi a priest. The Lord's covenant with the heavens and the earth shall fail, before this covenant with David shall be broken. However deeply sunk in despair the people might be, the Lord would never cast off Jacob, or His servant David, but would cause their captivity to return and would have mercy on them. The reader will remark how complete this revelation of deliverance is in its objects: first Judah, who was then particularly in question, then all Israel, then the land, then Messiah and the priesthood. Although, as a comfort to those in Babylon, the captive Jews are encouraged with a sure hope on their repentance (Jer. 29); yet in general Judah is joined with Israel in the same deliverance. It is looked at as a whole. Indeed, after Jeremiah 29, save Jeremiah 31:23-24, where Ephraim had been already distinguished, and Jeremiah 33:7, 10, 16, in present grace because of the siege, Israel is always put before Judah when both are named, and God glories in the name of the God of Israel. We do not get in Jeremiah the rejection of Messiah. His subject is present sins, and future purposes in which Messiah comes in. With this chapter the second part of the book closes, that is, the revelation of the full effect of God's grace towards ruined Israel, a result which should be according to His purposes of love, and perfect according to His counsels.

Chapter 34

Renewed iniquity and certain ruin

Jeremiah 34. On the occasion of renewed iniquity the prophet announces the certain ruin of the people. Nevertheless Zedekiah, though carried captive to Babylon, should die there in peace.* In the succeeding chapters we have some details of the obstinate rebellion which led to the destruction of Jerusalem and of all Judah. {* God's ways in this are remarkable. He had broken the oath of Jehovah, and he is judged as profane. It was mainly through the influence of others (for he was disposed to listen to Jeremiah), and therefore mercy is extended to him.}

Chapter 35

The obedience of the Rechabites and Israel's disobedience

Jeremiah 35. The obedience of the Rechabites is set forth in order to shew out more clearly the sin of Judah — disobedient in spite of the remonstrances and the patience of God. God does not forget the obedience that glorifies His name. The family of the Rechabites shall never fail.

Chapter 36

God's call and testimony despised: the inevitable result

Jeremiah 36 furnishes us with another example of the obstinacy with which the kings of Judah despised the call and the testimony of God. Jeremiah was shut up; but God can never fail in means to address His testimony to man, whatever efforts they may make to escape it. Baruch is employed to write the prophecies of Jeremiah, and to read them, first to the people, then to the princes, and at last to the king himself. But the latter, hardened in his evil ways, destroys the roll. Jeremiah, by God's direction, causes the same words to be written again; and others also, for he neglects no means to reach and lay hold afresh of the people's conscience. But all was useless.

Chapters 37 and 38

Zedekiah's weakness: God's perfect ways in sparing the righteous

Jeremiah 37 gives us Zedekiah in the same state of disobedience. A show of religion is kept up, and, having a moment of respite which excites some hope, the king seeks an answer from the Lord by His prophet. But the favourable circumstances, through which it might appear that the wicked may escape from judgment, do not alter the certainty of the word. Jeremiah sought to avail himself of the opportunity to avoid the judgment which was coming upon the rebellious city; but this only serves to manifest the hatred of the heart to God's testimony; and the princes of the people — accusing Jeremiah of favouring the enemy, because he proclaimed the judgment that should fall on the people by their means — put him in prison. Zedekiah manifests some conscience by releasing him {See preceding note.}. In general there is more conscience in Zedekiah personally than in some others of the last kings of Judah (see v. 21, and Jer. 21; Jer. 38:10, 14, 16). On this account, perhaps, were those few words of favour and mercy addressed to him in Jeremiah 34:5. But he was too weak to allow his conscience to lead him in the path of obedience (compare Jer. 38:2-12). This last chapter gives us the history of his weakness. Nevertheless in the midst of all this scene of misery and iniquity we find some rare examples of righteous men; and, however terrible His judgment may be, God remembers them; for His judgment is terrible because He is righteous. Ebed-melech, who delivered Jeremiah, is spared. Baruch also preserves his life; and even Zedekiah, as we have seen, is comforted by some words of encouragement, although he must undergo the consequences of his faults. The ways of God are always perfect, and if His judgments are like an overwhelming torrent as to man, still everything, even to the smallest detail, is directed by His hand; and the righteous are spared. The prison even becomes a place of safety for Jeremiah, and Jehovah deigns not only to spare Ebed-melech, but to send him a direct testimony of His

favour by the mouth of Jeremiah, that he may understand the goodness of God in whom he had trusted.

Chapters 39 to 44

Zedekiah carried to Babylon: useless endeavour to escape judgment

After this, Jeremiah 39 and the following chapters give us the history of the confusion and iniquity that reigned among the remnant who were not carried captive to Babylon, in order that they should be scattered, and that all should fully bear the judgment which God had pronounced. Nevertheless, if at this last hour this remnant had submitted to the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, peace should have reigned in the land, and these few that remained should have possessed it. But some revolt, and the others fear the consequences of their folly. There is no idea of trusting in Jehovah. They consult Jeremiah, but refuse to obey the word of the Lord from his mouth. They take refuge in Egypt to escape Nebuchadnezzar, but only to fall under the sword which would have spared them in Judea, had they remained there in subjection to the king. In Egypt they give themselves up to idolatry, that the wrath of God might come upon them to the end. Nevertheless God would spare even a little remnant of these, but Pharaoh-hophra, in whom they trusted, should be given up into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, as Zedekiah had been.

Chapters 49 to 51

Encouragement to individual faithfulness: judgment of nations and Babylon

Jeremiah 45 gives us the prophecy with respect to Baruch, already mentioned. Jeremiah 46 and following chapters contain the prophecies against the Gentiles around Judea, and against Babylon herself. We shall find these special elements in the prophecies that refer to the nations — the judgments are not those of the last days, as in Isaiah, but (according to the general character of the book) refer to the destruction of the different nations, in order to make way for the dominion of one sole empire. It is thus that, in the case of Judea, the judgment is even now executed.

God's ways in government with the nations and His people

But there is a difference with respect to the restoration of those nations in the last days. Egypt, Elam, Moab, Ammon, are restored in the last days; Edom, Damascus. Philistia, Hazor, are not. The reason of this is easily seen. Egypt and Elam form no part of the land of Israel. God in His goodness will have compassion on those countries; they shall be inhabited and blessed under His government. When the people of Israel entered Canaan, Ammon and Moab were to be spared. They were not Canaanites under the curse; and however deplorable their origin might be yet, being related to the family of Israel, their land was preserved to them, although to the tenth generation they could not be admitted into the congregation of Israel (Deut. 23:3). And when God shall put an end to the dominion given to Nebuchadnezzar, and to the empire of the Gentiles, these nations shall again enter into the countries

that were allotted them. But, although Edom had been spared, and were even to be received amongst Israel in their third generation, yet as their hatred to Israel had been unbounded, they should be totally destroyed in the judgment of that day. Compare Obadiah throughout, especially in verse 18. Their land should form a part of Israel's territory, and was, in fact, a part of it, although they themselves were spared at the beginning as the brethren of Israel, but only, alas! to abuse this favour; so that the judgment would be more terrible upon them than upon the rest. Damascus, Hazor, and Philistia were a part of the land of Israel, properly so called. These nations disappear as distinct nations, as to their territory. At the close of the judgment on Egypt, God sends words of encouragement to Israel. Israel had leant on Pharaoh when Nebuchadnezzar had attacked Jerusalem. The Egyptian power appeared to be the only one capable of balancing that of Babylon. But God had ordained the fall of Egypt, who would willingly have taken the chief place. This was, however, appointed for Babylon. The country from which they were brought out (the world, considered as man in his natural independent character, organising in his own strength) would like to prevail over idolatrous corruption and Babylonish principles; but these were to be in force until the time appointed by God, when God will judge them. Now Israel having leant upon Egypt, would apparently fall with Egypt; but God watched over them, and they were to return from their captivity and dwell in peace. The ways of God in government are well worthy of attention here. God would judge the nations; He would chastise Israel in measure. His people should not be condemned with the world. Grace abused brings down the most terrible judgments; thus it was with Edom.

The destruction of Babylon

Babylon yet remains. But, in Jeremiah, all the judgments are contemplated in connection with the setting aside of the independent nations, and the establishment of the one empire of the Gentiles — the chief subject of this prophecy; consequently the prophet is specially occupied with the historical fate of the empire, as established by God in the prophet's own days. It is Babylon and the land of the Chaldeans which are the subject of his prophecy. It is the judgment of this empire, to avenge the oppression of Israel by Nebuchadnezzar, who had broken his bones (chap. 50:17). Nevertheless, the deliverance of Israel, at the time of the destruction of Babylon, is given as a pledge and foretaste of their complete and final deliverance (Jer. 50:4-19, 20, 34; see also Jer. 51:19-21). For the destruction of Babylon was the judgment of that which God had Himself established as the Gentile empire. This is the reason why, even historically, her judgment was accompanied by the deliverance of Israel and the destruction of idolatry, by a man raised up to execute the righteousness of God. It has not been at all the same thing with the other empires, although, no doubt, they were also set up by the providence of God. But in their case it was not the immediate establishment of the empire on God's part, placing man in it under responsibility. Man, thus placed, had completely failed. He has tyrannised over God's people, established a compulsory idolatry, and corrupted the world by its means. Looked at as having the dominion of the world, which had been committed to him, he has been judged, and Babylon is fallen. It is important thoroughly to apprehend this truth with respect to this first empire. In principle the deliverance of Israel results from it, whatever the subsequent dealings of God may have been. See also the character of this judgment, Jeremiah 50:28, 33, 34. The next chapter furnishes us also with important principles in connection with this destruction of Babylon.

God's unchangeable faithfulness to Israel

Jeremiah 51:6 reveals the unchangeable faithfulness of God to Israel, in spite of the people's sins. It was the time of the Lord's vengeance. When the time that God indicated should have arrived — a time to be known only by those whose spiritua l discernment would enable them to apply the prophecy, the elements of which were given clearly enough in these two chapters (especially in the assaults of the nations), then those who had ears to hear were to leave the city. Moreover the fall of Babylon was a judgment pronounced upon idolatry. The portion of Jacob — Jehovah — might chastise His people, but He was not like the vanities of the Gentiles. After having chastised them, He would bring forth His righteousness in contrast with the Gentiles, who oppressed them, and would, finally, use them as His weapons of war. From verse 25 we see that it is the Babylon of those days which is in question. From verse 29 the historical circumstances that are related give us a very especial proof of this.

Chapter 52

Events relative to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple

The last chapter forms no part of the book of Jeremiah, properly so called. We find in it events relative to the destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple. After the remarks we have made, that which is said in it of Babylon will be easily understood.

The place of the first empire in man's hand in God's government; God's patience

I recapitulate here the principles of this book on account of their importance. The empire of Babylon, in consequence of the unfaithfulness of the house of David, was established by God Himself, and entrusted with the government of the world. But Babylon not only oppressed Israel, but set up idolatry, and corrupted the world. He who should have been a worshipper of the true God, and an instrument of His power, established, as far as he could, the influence of the enemy. God has judged him. The empire which God Himself established has been entirely overthrown. This judgment was executed against the pride of man, and against idolatry. At the same time it was the deliverance of Israel. This last consideration gave rise to a declaration on God's part of what Israel was to Him, and what it shall be in the last days. But the subject treated of is the Babylon of that day. Since then God has permitted other powers to exist, governing the world with universal dominion, until the final accomplishment of all His purposes. These empires have subsisted according to His will, have been raised up or cast down as He saw good. But neither of them has held precisely the same place as Babylon. None of them have been formally established in the place of Israel, nor has the destruction of any of them been the occasion of Israel's restoration. The word of prophecy assures us that at the end of the days, the judgment of the last empire will have this effect. The judgment of Babylon has, in a manner, foreshadowed it; as its moral character commenced the sad history of these monarchies, and served as a model to them in many respects as to the evil that should be developed until the end. But to understand the fundamental principles of this history, and the dealings of God, the place which this first empire held in these

dealings must be clearly and distinctly kept in mind. Besides the immense fact of the substitution of empire in man's hand, for the immediate exercise of God's government on the earth, the diligent testimony which God sent, and the warnings to king after king, to people and to priests, is very striking in this book, the patience of God's love and interest.