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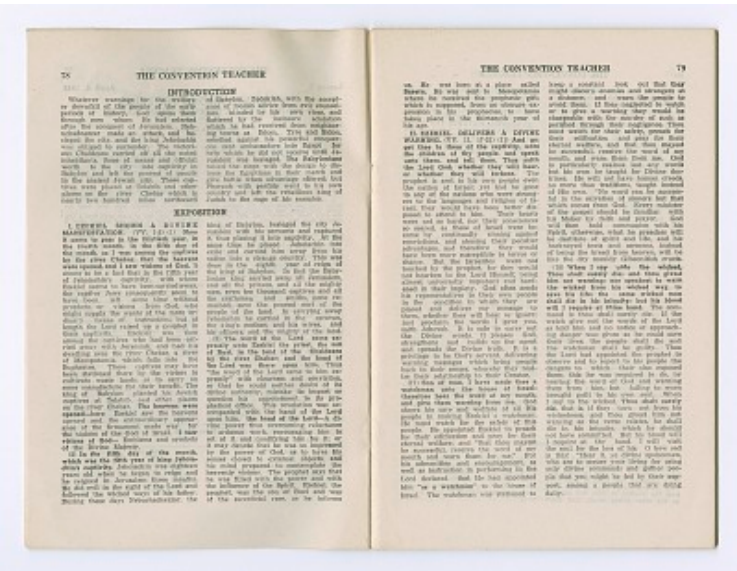
INTRODUCTION

Whatever warnings for the welfare or downfall of the people of the early periods of history, God spoke them through men whom He had selected after the conquest of Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar made an attack, and besieged the city, and the king Jehoiachin was obliged to surrender. The victorious Chaldeans carried off all the noted inhabitants, those of means and official worth to the city into captivity in Babylon and left the poorest of the people in the ancient Jewish city. These captives were placed at Telabib and other places on the river Chebar which is nearly two hundred miles northward of Babylon. Zedekiah, with the acceptance of foolish advice from evil counselors, blinded by his own vices, and flattered by the insincere adulation which he had received from neighboring towns as Edom, Tyre and Sidon, rebelled against his powerful conquerors, sent ambassadors into Egypt for help which he did not receive until Jerusalem was besieged. The Babylonians raised the siege with the design to distress the Egyptians in their march and give battle when advantage offered; but Pharaoh with perfidy went to his own country and left the rebellious king of Judah to the rage of his enemies.

EXPOSITION

I. EZEKIEL SHOWN A DIVINE MANIFESTATION. (VV. 1-3) (1) Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month as I was among the captives by the river Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. It seems to be a fact that in the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity, with whom Ezekiel seems to have been carried away, the captive Jews consequently seem to have been left some time without prophets or visions from God, who might supply the wants of the more ordinary means of instruction; but at length the Lord raised up a prophet in their captivity. Ezekiel was then among the captives who had been carried away with Jeremiah, and had his dwelling near the river Chebar, a river of Mesopotamia, which falls into the Euphrates. These captives may have been stationed there by the victors to cultivate waste lands, or to carry on some manufacture for their benefit. The king of Babylon planted his Jewish captives at Telabib, and other places on the river Chebar. The heavens were opened--here Ezekiel saw the heavens opened and the extraordinary appearance of the firmament made way for the visions of the God of Israel. I saw visions of God--Emblems and symbols of the Divine Majesty.

(2) In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity, Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. He did evil in the sight of the Lord and followed the wicked ways of his father. During these days Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, besieged the city Jerusalem with his servants and captured it, thus placing it into captivity. At the same time he placed Jehoiachin into exile and carried him away from the nation into a strange country. This was done in the eighth year of reign of the king of Babylon. In fact the Babylonian king carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men, even ten thousand captives and all the craftsmen and smiths, none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land. In carrying away Jehoiachin he carried in the caravan, the king's mother; and his wives, and his officers, and the



mighty of the land.

(3) The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekial the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the Lord was there upon them. Thus "the word of the Lord came to him expressly" with clearness and conviction, so that he could neither doubt of its divine authority, mistake its import or question his appointment to its prophetic office. This revelation was accompanied with the hand of the Lord upon him. the hand of the Lord--A divine power thus overcoming reluctance to arduous work, encouraging him to set at it and qualifying him for it; or it may denote that he was so impressed by the power of God, as to have his senses closed to external objects, and his mind prepared to contemplate the heavenly visions. The prophet says that he was filled with the power and with the influence of the Spirit. Ezekiel, the prophet, was the son of Buzi and was of the sacerdotal race, as he informs

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us. He was born at a place called Sarera. He was sent to Mesopotamia where he received the prophetic gift; which is supposed, from an obscure expression in his prophecies, to have taken place in the thirteenth year of his age.

II. EZEKIEL DELIVERS A DIVINE WARNING (VV. 11, 17-21) (11) And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord God; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. The prophet is sent to his own people even the nation of Israel; yet had he gone to any of the nations who were strangers to the languages and religion of Israel, they would have been better disposed to attend to him. Their hearts were not so hard, nor their consciences so seared, as these of Israel were become by continually sinning against convictions, and abusing their peculiar advantages, and therefore they would have been more susceptible to terror or shame. But the Israelites were not touched by the prophet, for they would not hearken to the Lord Himself, being almost universally impudent and hardened in their impiety. God often sends his representatives to their own people in the condition in which they are placed and deliver my message to them, whether they will hear or ignore; just proclaim the words I gave you, said Jehovah. It is safe to carry out the Divine words. It pleases God, strengthens and builds up the agent and spreads the Divine truth. It is a privilege to be God's servant, delivering warning messages which bring people back to their senses, whereby they realize their relationship to their Creator.

(17) Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. God shows his care and welfare of all His people in making Ezekiel a watchman. He must watch for the safety of his people. He appointed Ezekiel to preach for their edification and pray for their eternal welfare; and "that though mayest be successful, receive the word of my mouth and warn them for me." For his admonition and encouragement, as well as instruction in performing it; the Lord declared that He had appointed him "as a watchman" to the house of Israel. The watchman was stationed to keep a constant look out that they might discern enemies

and strangers at a distance, and warn the people to avoid them. If they neglected to watch or to give a warning they would be chargeable with the murder of such as perished through their negligence. Thou must watch for their safety, preach for their edification, and pray for their eternal welfare, and that thou mayest be successful, receive the word of my mouth, and warn them from me. God is particularly zealous lest any words but his own be taught for Divine doctrines. He will not have human creeds, no more than traditions, taught instead of His own. "No word can be successful in the salvation of sinners but that which comes from God. Every minister of the gospel should be familiar with his Maker by faith and prayer. God will then hold communion with his Spirit, otherwise, what he preaches will be destitute of spirit and life, and his hackneyed texts and sermons, instead of being the bread from heaven, will be like the dry mouldy Gibeonitish crusts.

(18) When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning; nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. The command is thou shalt surely die. If the watch give not the words of the Lord as told him and no notice of approaching danger was given so he could save their lives, the people shall die and the watchman shall be guilty. Thus the Lord had appointed the prophet to observe and to report to his people the dangers to which their sins exposed them; this he was required to do, by hearing the word of God and warning them from him, but failing to warn brought guilt to his own soul. When I say to the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, that is, if they turn not from his wickedness, and thou givest him not warning as the verse relates, he shall die in his iniquity, which he should not have committed. But his blood will I require at thy hand. I will visit the soul for the loss of his. O how sad is this! "Hear it, ye divine spokesmen, who are to secure your living for using only divine commands and gather people that you might be fed by their support, among a people that are dying daily.

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