

**THE CAPTIVITY OF THE
JEWS: AND THEIR
RETURN FROM BABYLON**

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The Captivity of the Jews: And Their Return from Babylon by Anonymous

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ANONYMOUS

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CAPTIVITY OF THE JEWS,



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and that "It is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts," Jer. ii. 19. The events recorded in the narratives of Scripture bear witness to the principles inculcated in the word of God. Some men may say they do not believe that similar results are now to be expected from the like proceedings; but the whole testimony of history, both concerning the Jews and other people, shows that, sooner or later, every nation has eventually suffered that just retribution for which its sins have called. Would that this important truth were duly impressed upon the minds of the rulers, and of the people, of every nation upon the earth!

The desolate state of Judea, and the afflicted condition of the Jews, after the destruction of Jerusalem, are powerfully described by the prophet Jeremiah, in his Lamentations, ch. i. 1—5.

How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people!
 How is she become as a widow, she that was great among
 the nations!
 And princess among the provinces, how is she become tri-
 butary!
 She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her
 cheeks:
 Among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her:
 All her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they
 are become her enemies.
 Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and be-
 cause of great servitude:
 She dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest:
 All her persecutors overtook her between the straits.
 The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the
 solemn feasts:
 All her gates are desolate: her priests sigh,
 Her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness.
 Her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper;
 For the Lord hath afflicted her for the multitude of her
 transgressions:
 Her children are gone into captivity before the enemy.

The prophet had previously given warning of the judgments coming upon the people; see Jer. xxx. xxxi.

All faces were turned to paleness.
 Alas! for that day is great,
 So that none is like it:
 It is even the time of Jacob's trouble.

But with the declaration and warning thus given of the extremity of suffering to be inflicted on the Jewish nation in the day of its captivity, promises of future deliverance and glory were given. The cause of the judgments was fully stated; also the extent to which they should go, and the manner in which they should be restrained, and that the Lord would not forsake his favoured people, even in their most severe sufferings, Jer. xxx. 11, and xxxi. 1—3.

For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee;
 Though I make a full end of all nations whither I have
 scattered thee:
 Yet will I not make a full end of thee:
 But I will correct thee in measure,
 And will not leave thee altogether unpunished.
 At the same time, saith the Lord,
 Will I be the God of all the families of Israel,
 And they shall be my people.
 Thus saith the Lord,
 The people which were left of the sword found grace in
 the wilderness;
 Even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest.
 The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying,
 Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love:
 Therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

By a beautiful personification Rachel is represented as rising from her grave at Ephrata, weeping for her children led into captivity, and refusing to be comforted; but yet a word of comfort is sent.

Thus saith the Lord;
 Refrain thy voice from weeping,
 And thine eyes from tears:
 For thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord;
 And thy shall come again from the land of the enemy.

And there is hope in their end, saith the Lord,
That thy children shall come again to their own border.

Here, as in other prophecies, the inspired seer is carried forward from the objects immediately before him, to others more distant and yet to come. The sufferings of the captivity at Babylon are blended with the greater sufferings of the dispersion by the Romans, and the return from the land of Shinar is lost sight of, in the latter day glory of the house of Israel; by this alone can the decided and emphatic language of chap. xxxi. 31—40, be fully realized. As yet it cannot be said of the Jews, that they all know the Lord, that their sin is remembered no more, and that the city is built unto the Lord, so that it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever. But it is not for us to anticipate when, and in what manner, these prophetic revelations will be brought to pass.

The Jews in captivity, after the destruction of Jerusalem, were chiefly to be found in Assyria, especially in Babylon, the capital of that land. To this country the captives from Judah had principally been led in three transportations. The first was in the third year of Jehoiakim, when Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem, and carried to Babylon many of the vessels and ornaments of the temple, with some of the people and of the nobles; among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, princes of the royal family. This was *n.c.* 605. It was rather the carrying away of selected prisoners and articles of value, than the breaking up of the nation. The temple still towered above its courts, the walls of Jerusalem were not thrown down, nor its palaces burned with fire. The exiles, as they cast a last, longing look at their once loved homes, still beheld the city of their God, in the mountain of his holiness, beautiful for situation.

The Jewish nation continued to despise the warnings of the Most High; the extent to which they carried their idolatrous practices is declared, Jer. xi. 13.

For according to the number of thy cities
 Were thy gods, O Judah;
 And according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem
 Have ye set up altars to that shameful thing,
 Even altars to burn incense unto Baal.

A darker hour speedily came. In the year a.c. 597, Nebuchadnezzar again invaded Judea, dethroned Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim, and made his uncle Zedekiah king in his stead. A large number of captives were then removed, to weaken the rebellious land. These were the nobles, the military, and the artificers, more than seventeen thousand in number. Many of them were carried beyond Babylon, and placed in different parts of Mesopotamia. The prophet Ezekiel was one of these captives.

The Jewish nation did not yet learn wisdom from past experience. Zedekiah revolted against the Assyrians, and joined the Egyptians. This led to the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, a.c. 586; when, after a terrific slaughter, most of the remaining inhabitants of the land were cleared away. A few of the poor of the people were left in the land, to be vine-dressers and husbandmen, 2 Kings xxv. 12; Jer. xxxix. 10. There were also some bands of armed fugitives dispersed through the country, "forces which were in the fields," Jer. xl. 7—13; xli. 11. Many of them perished by each others' hands, as is related by Jeremiah; this is noticed in "*The Kings of Israel and Judah.*" Most of the survivors retired into Egypt, where they perished, while others fled into the adjacent countries. The mass of the sinful people, so constantly rebuked by the prophets, thus disappeared from Palestine. The invading troops no longer occupied the land; they had indeed cut closely, according to the prophecy uttered by Isaiah nearly two hundred years before, which was now fulfilled. Isa. vii. 20—25.

In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that
 is hired,
 Namely, by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria,