

The Lamentations of Jeremiah

Chapter 5

The final chapter of the Lamentations is set as a prayer to Jehovah and is a most humble and fitting approach for merciful consideration of Israel's plight. All the pent up emotion of the prophet is enwrapped in the words of this book. He *now* stands free to pour out his soul unto the Lord Most High.

King Solomon, looking forward with the Spirit of God to these days of captivity, asked that when they came to pass that the fervent prayer directed toward God for Israel's cause might not go unheeded; that God would hear from heaven and forgive their trespasses and their sins—1 Kings 8.

"Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us" (Lam. 5: 1).

The prophet requests that the Creator would remember the things which had happened unto His people and observe their reproach. Yes, their Heavenly Father *would* remember what had come upon them. He is the All-powerful, Self-Existent God, working His will in all the events of history, having a paternal interest in Israel's destiny. Moses tells us that this land was God's especial care (Deut. 11:12)—

"The eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year."

How then *could* He forget? He is ever aware of what is happening, being the Director of all events to their glorious consummation.

This does not mean that He desires His servants to go their ways unheeding of Jerusalem's reproach. He is very pleased and honored to have all His called-out ones continually humble themselves in prayer to Him. This is a confession and declaration that they believe in all the wonderful characteristics of the Father. Did not James tell us that true prayer can accomplish great things?—

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jam. 5:16).

God knows beforehand what the working out of the purpose will be. Yet the prayers of His sons and daughters, rising as a cloud of incense before His throne, are pictured as affecting the results. *If it were otherwise the command to "be instant in prayer" would be meaningless.* God's foreknowledge has taken all this into account.

The sum total of the effective prayers of the faithful throughout the long ages is found in the glorious answer to prayer, the deliverance of the earth from the bondage of sin and death. This is the objective unto which its groanings and strivings for 6000 years have all been tending.

Therefore by the Spirit of God working in and through the children of righteousness, they shall be found "*workers together with God*," fellow-laborers in bringing all things to the glory of the Father:

"For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry; ye are God's building" (1 Cor. 3:9).

This principle is illustrated in Moses' intercession on behalf of Israel in the wilderness. God would have destroyed Israel as a nation and rebuilt from Moses:

"Let me alone" (said the Lord) "that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation . . . And Moses besought the Lord his God" (Exo. 32:10-11).

Through the pleading of Moses and appeal to God's honor and greatness, the nation was allowed to survive at that time. Again *all these things were foreknown by God*, yet how honored is the Father when men turn to Him with dependence and trust!

The power of prayer was typified upon another occasion also, when Aaron ran among the congregation with a burning incense censor in his hand and "stood between the living and the dead. Thus the plague was stayed" (Num. 16:47-50).

Therefore let all the righteous constantly join in the spirit of Jeremiah, calling to God's memory the reproach of Israel. The Psalmist exhorts us to—

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee" (Psa. 122:6).

Isaiah, speaking of the prospect of Israel's glorious future, said:

"I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem: they shall never hold their peace day or night. Ye that are Jehovah's REMEMBRANCERS, take ye no rest, and give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (Isa. 62:6-7 RV).

The night of Israel's captivity still reigns. Tribulation yet awaits her sons upon the mountains of Israel. The cords of bondage are now being woven strand by strand, by those who seek their hurt, *but in vain*. They will be broken as the bonds of Samson by the power of the Lord. Therefore it still remains for incense to rise unto the throne of grace and mercy.

This is our day to stand as the Lord's REMEMBRANCERS. Shall we be silent in their day of adversity? Be assured "deliverance will arise from another quarter," but it will not be for our honor. Let us take the exhortation of Jeremiah to those few who escaped the trials of his time:

"Ye that have escaped the sword, go ye, stand not still; remember Jehovah from afar, and let Jerusalem come into your mind" (Jer. 51:50 RV).

"Behold our reproach"—Lamentations 5: 1.

Reproach means disgrace, shame or infamy. It comes from a root word which means the gathering of the crop, the autumn and winter season, or ripeness of age. Israel's reproach indicates that their iniquity had come to the full. They were now gathering of the fruit which their sin had sown. They were cold and unresponsive to the Word of God. Their winter season had set in.

The force of the prophet's prayer to God and the depth of their reproach is seen when we compare the items recalled to the Father's notice (Lam. 5: 2);—

"Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our house to aliens."

The promises of God in the past were real and literal in the eyes of the nation. *But they had presumed upon them*. They felt that they were unconditional. Yet, whether we look at the Abrahamic, Mosaic or Davidic covenants we observe that they were *reciprocal*. The land itself was the basis of the covenants:

"All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever" (Gen. 13:15).

"Ye shall dwell in your land safely, and I will give you peace in your land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid" (Lev. 26:5-6).

This was their heritage. It was that unto which they had been brought from the darkness of slavery in Egypt. It was described unto them in the richest terms:

"A land flowing with milk and honey" (Exo. 3:8).

This was a glorious heritage for which they did not have to labor, a country all prepared for them. They were guaranteed these conditions would continue while they placed their confidence in their Creator, and obeyed His voice.

Jeremiah's prayerful lament is now a confession of national departure from God's way. Certainly it was not the condition which their Father desired, nor that which was to be their ultimate destiny by the nature of the promises.

The prophet Jeremiah had expressed the Creator's mind and intention with Israel. The very inheritance which God had granted them was intended to *stir them up to a realization that He was their Father*. Jer. 3:19 (Goodspeed trans.)—

"I thought, how would I rank you among the sons, and give you a pleasant land, the goodliest heritage of all the nations! And I thought, surely you will call me Father, and will not turn back from Me!"

But they were as an unfaithful woman. They rejected the blessings which were bestowed upon them. They refused to have God as their Father. But seeking the parental protection of their idols and those of the nations they learned to their dismay (Lam. 5: 3)—

"We are orphans and fatherless, our mothers are as widows."

This was the actual circumstance in many cases, we may be sure. Judah's stand against the will of God, refusal to submit to the yoke of Babylon, in drinking of the cup which had passed over unto them, would take the prime of their nation, leaving them a broken, despised and unwanted remnant. This same agony was repeated again during the first century after Christ, and has been perpetuated during their long night of wandering.

They spiritually are still orphans and fatherless, and as in widowhood. The prayers of prophets and faithful men have not been answered as yet, except in the sense of working in the development of things to the glorious consummation still to be effected.

Jeremiah's words are again a confession that the idolatries and superstitions of the world are no guarantee of protection against the evils of the nations. It is a prayer placing them nationally and prophetically before God as in a position for consideration. It is a humble admission that God is the Father of all those who put their trust in Him.

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him" (Psa. 103.13).

So also He has declared, that He will be (Psa. 68:5)—

"A Father to the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows."

This was the hope in the prophet's heart during his long and solitary vigil. He saw his nation spurn the love of their Father. He knew the destitute condition they would be in without the Heavenly assistance. Yet he trusted that the time would come when the prodigal son would return:

"They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn.

"He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd doth his flock" (Jer. 31:9-10).

But that day is yet future. The prophet did not see it in his time. Paul in writing to the Corinthians indicates our relationship to the fulfilment of these things. He takes the point from the national plane of Israelitish regathering to the spiritual level when God dwells in the fullest sense in the children of righteousness, among those who have separated themselves from the world and all its activities. Quoting Jeremiah's words, Paul declared:

"God hath said, I will dwell IN them, and walk IN them; and be their God, and they shall be My people.

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate: and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

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"We have drunken our water for money: our wood is sold unto us" (Lam. 5: 4).

The richness and supply of the good land unto which they had been led by the mercies of God were now appropriated by their enemies, and their very possessions were sold back to them at a price, the items for their very existence and meager comfort.

But water has a far deeper and more important significance in the Spirit's declaration here. Israel and Judah had both spurned the water of life flowing from Jerusalem and the prophets thereof. They chose the waters of strange lands, of foreign peoples, and of worldly associations. In consequence God told them He would bring overflowing waters, great and many, upon their lands (Is. 8).

From their beginnings as a nation they were constantly murmuring for water. They could not see nor realize that God Who had the power to bring them from the bondage of a mighty nation, Who had the purpose of freeing their lives from servitude, could realize their every need and requirement.

They had not perceived that it was God Himself that was directing and bringing them into the very circumstances which were designed to reveal the extent of their trust in Him. God knew exactly how long they could survive without water. *He wanted them to drink deeply of that spiritual Rock which followed them, which Rock was Christ.*

When they had espoused the heathen waters of Baal worship, of Moloch and others, they were buying waters of death, rather than the water of life.

"We have given the hand to the Egyptians, and to the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread" (Lam. 5: 6).

Previously the prophet had chided his people for turning from the water which alone could give life in any eternal sense:

"For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the Fountain of Living Waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? Or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?" (Jer. 2:13-18).

The exhortation is vital. The lessons of Israel and Judah are full of meaning for us as we see the first rays of the dawn of another day for Israel. These things were "written for our learning and admonition." The prophet did not write in vain (Jer. 17:13):

"O Lord, the Hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from Me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the Fountain of Living Waters" (Jer. 17:13).

The Master could rightly represent himself as the source of water to satisfy the thirst of spiritual Israel. And he promises that those who *partake of the Word as he did* will find within themselves a never-ending supply of this life-giving element.

As the people thronged around in the last day, the great day of the feast—as the Savior's time drew near, he offered this water to all. His appealing cry rang out:

"If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37-38).

He was but repeating the words Isaiah had recorded of him before,

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (55:1).

The water of life is the gift of God. It is offered freely to all those who desire it. Yet it goes begging. The prophet thereafter goes on to illustrate that this water is the everlasting covenant, the sure mercies of David, the glorious promise of all nations blessed in Abraham, when the curse shall be removed.

This was the water which Israel rejected for the transitory waters of association with Egypt and Assyria. Now is the day for us to drink while the appeal is still ringing out. The blessing of so drinking is accentuated in the final message of God through Jesus:

"I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely" (Rev. 21:6).

"He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb . . . Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:1, 17).

Jerusalem had looked in every direction for help except to the proffered hand of God. They had played one nation against another, Egypt against Assyria and Assyria against Egypt. The superstitions of these nations could not provide in their season the necessities of life. The very nature of their idol worship was to supplicate the pagan gods of fertility for their land. But they were unimpressed by the True Provider of rain in seed time, and the Giver of the early and the latter rain.

"Servants have ruled over us" (Lam. 5: 8).

This was another aspect of their reproach. God had set the bounds of the nations according to the lot of His chosen people. Now these alien nations had absorbed their land and had set their appointed officers over them, and despised their kingly line of descent, and rulership. And when we truly understand that God was their King and the One who ruled over them, the magnitude of the reproach is evident as we see the stranger lord it over God's heritage. Was it in prophetic vein that Solomon said,

"I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth" (Eccl. 10:7)?

The respect, the honor and the dignity to which they as the chosen of the Lord were heir were trampled in the dust. Yet it will not always continue thus. The ray of hope has burnt in the hearts of spiritual Israel, through the years. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Zechariah

was caused to utter a prophecy concerning the day when the reproach would be removed and the order of servitude reversed again:

"In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech. 8:23).

Chapter 5, Verses 9 to 15

The Mosaic covenant promised them a land of plenty, all the blessings of full barns, and winepresses. Their exposed condition in Jeremiah's time was such that all the surrounding nations invaded them and took the produce of their labor.

"We gat our bread with the peril of our lives, because of the sword of the wilderness" (Lam. 5:9).

Daily bread was a necessity. It was promised by God to Israel for faithfulness. It came in the wilderness and they gathered of it day by day. There was then no "sword of the wilderness" which they had to fear. They had to fear themselves, those inner impulses which rebelled against the chastening hand of an All-wise Father. They did not learn to seek *first* the will of God, and that when necessary all these things would be added.

God sought to impress them again in later years in a similar manner during the time of the kings, when He withheld the rain, and brought famine. He made the sharp contrast between the failure of Baal to provide, and the power of God to control the elements essential for seedtime and harvest.

But He indicated that the cause was much deeper than the hunger for daily bread. It lay within their hearts. And therefore a famine of a far more serious nature was to strike home to them:

"I will send a famine in the land, not of bread, nor of thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.

"And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east. They shall run to and fro to seek the Word of the Lord—and shall not find it" (Amos 8:11-12).

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"Princes are hanged up by their hand" (v. 12).

The name Israel means "a prince of God." The name was conferred upon Jacob on the occasion when he wrestled with the angel and prevailed (Gen. 32:28)—

"Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed."

Israel, as a nation, were the *princes of God*. They were the chosen race, to be witnesses of the glory and majesty of the Creator. What shame and reproach befell them as their leaders were now hanged up before the eyes of all nations and peoples!

Certainly now they had no power to wrestle with God; nor did they deserve the honored position of a prince in His eyes. Their power to contend with their Father waned with their faith in Him. They did not then have the power to contend with their surrounding nations. They were now displayed as witnesses of the truth and justice of God's Word (Deut. 29:24-26)—

"All nations shall say, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land: what meaneth the heat of this great anger? Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God . . . for they went and served other gods."

Ironically the Law which they had despised, which they had abhorred, they could not avoid in death—

"He that is hanged is accursed of God" (Deut. 21:23).

Supplications for the nation ascended to God through the years from the hearts of those who looked to the end of the purpose. They recognized that God, Who had foreknown His people, *would finally establish the everlasting covenant*. But in the meantime the lessons of shame, reproach and degradation were also to be impressed upon succeeding generations.

What Israel experienced in the time of Jeremiah, they were again to pass through in another six centuries. This time it was to come as a culmination of all their wickedness, the filling up and overflowing of their cup of sin, in the hanging up of the Prince of Princes. It was their leaders who incited the people to cry,

"Crucify him. Crucify him!"

Again the darkness settled down over the nation and the lessons of Jeremiah were impressed anew. Those who claimed to be princes in Israel were slaughtered by the Roman legions. Their children were led forth as slaves to all the marts of the empire.

Through the centuries the true princes have been unidentified as princes by the world. Their kingdom is not of this age. They are the weak and lowly of the earth's inhabitants. From the beginning it has been illustrated that they should be bruised by the power of sin. They have been crucified through all ages, hung up as a spectacle and gazingstock for the world to see and jeer at. The Psalmist declared,

"For Thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter" (Psa. 44:22).

The portion of those who have wrestled with God against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places, has been—

"They had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain by the sword—of whom the world was not worthy" (Heb. 11:36-38).

Through the long night of waiting, watching, and wrestling, tribulation has been the portion of the saints. These are the real princes in the sight of God, awaiting the manifestation of the sons of God, in power and authority. These are the "Kings of the East," or "*Kings out of a Sun's risings*" to use the translation of bro. Thomas in Eureka, Vol. 3. These princes shall be revealed for all men to see in the near future.

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"They took the young men to grind, and the children fell under the wood. The elders have ceased from the gate, the young men from their music" (vs. 13-14).

These verses reveal aspects of the captivity which do not appear from the historical record. This is a feature of other parts of the Scripture record. It manifests the unity and integration of the whole message. We observe additional details of the Israelitish bondage and deliverance from Egypt in the verses of the beautiful Psalms. We gather the full picture, if we carefully read our daily portions of the Divine Word.

The *aspect of servitude* is impressed by these final verses of Lamentations. Certainly it was the antithesis of the promise of a joyful inheritance, without the fear of oppression.

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof . . . How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" (Psa. 137:1-4).

It was a day of sorrow and mourning. The joy of victory and exaltation was for their enemies. The true godly sorrow was manifested in the case of Nehemiah. Said the king of Persia:

"Why is thy countenance sad? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart."

To which Nehemiah replied,

"Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?" (Neh. 2:2-3).

Notice how his mind was primarily on the *sepulchres*—the place of sorrow and reflection. Notice also the place which Caleb chose as the lot of his inheritance, he who was faithful to God (Josh. 14:6-15). He chose Hebron, the home of Abraham, and the Cave of Macpelah, the *sepulchres of his fathers*.

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"The joy of our heart is ceased: our dance is turned into mourning" (v. 15).

The true young men of God will not be found whiling away their time with music and dance in this time of Israel's sorrow and the Gentiles' ascendancy. This is the nature of the Noahic generation, which shall come again upon the world, "Eat, drink and be merry." Solomon, through inspiration, said,

"There is a time to laugh" (Eccl. 3:4).

But he had previously stated,

"There is a time to weep."

Set in this order we see the Divine purpose—"the cross before the crown." So also we read, "*Weeping endureth for the night (it is now night), but joy cometh in the morning.*"

We identify ourselves with the weeping, sackcloth generation when we accept Christ. Why should we assume that because it is a time of prosperity we can laugh with the world? Such laughter is as the crackling of thorns under a pot in the ears of the Heavenly Father. We are in the vineyard. It is a time of sowing the seed. It is not yet the time of ingathering of harvests.

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psa. 126:5-6).

"*The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned!*"—Lam. 5:16.

The crown in this case is a symbol of royalty. The days of Jeremiah saw the end of the Davidic line upon the throne. Ezekiel (21:26) had spoken of the removal of the crown. Hosea (3:4) had said they should remain many years without the symbols of royalty. These are prophecies which Israel's history has amply proven true. But the prophet's remarks are on a higher plane for the faithful. The crown was rejected many years earlier. Said God to Samuel:

"They have not rejected **thee**, but they have rejected **Me**, that I should not reign over them" (1 Sam. 8:7).

God was their king, but they preferred to be like all the other nations. *Therefore God gave them exactly that which they sought.* As all other nations lost their kings, so this evil came upon them.

How necessary that we retain God ever before our minds—that we be "sealed in the forehead" with the Word of God! As a type of these spiritual things, which Israel let fall from their head, we find God instructing Moses concerning the High Priestly adorning:

"Thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it: 'HOLINESS TO THE LORD' . . . and it shall be upon Aaron's forehead . . . **that Israel be accepted before the Lord**" (Exo. 28:36-38).

How could Israel be acceptable unto the Lord with such a crown removed? In its place they had set the gaudy tinkling symbols of idol worship. How urgent is the lesson for each of us, that we constantly place the mark of God in our foreheads, that our minds receive the Divine impressions, that they be always as a crown of glory upon our head! To those who carry the crown of holiness unto the Lord, will the words of Rev. 22:4 apply,

"They shall see His face; His name shall be in their foreheads."

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"The mountain of Zion is desolate, the foxes walk upon it" (v. 18).

The original for "fox" appears to be the jackal (as the Rev. Stand. Ver. renders it). The jackal is an unclean animal, and a scavenger. Its appearance in the vision, speaks of corruption and desolation and death. We obtain the same thought concerning Assyria and Babylon, when the prophets speak of their perpetual destruction. So it was in Israel's case.

Actually the outside nations have taken over the ruins, and have quarrelled over Mount Zion for centuries. In a broader sense the nation of Israel has been trodden under foot of the jackals in all kingdoms. *Such was the last sad vision the prophet experienced of Mt. Zion, the object of all his hopes and prayers.*

Jeremiah, alone in vision, saw the ruins of all that he had labored for, all that was left of the splendor of Jerusalem. He saw the scavenging jackals, the "doleful creatures", moving stealthily from stone to stone. These, as the Creator's servants, performed the purging of what was left. Their presence spoke of the death of the body. The Master in similar vein declared,

"Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together" (Matt. 24:28).

Bro. Thomas wrote in Eureka, Vol. 2: "*When the 'Israelites indeed' as the chosen generation, died off from the arena, the nation became a carcase, fit only for the talons of the Roman Eagle, according to the predictions of Moses, Daniel and Christ.*"

Jeremiah had made the contrast between the glorious Abrahamic prospect and the scene of desolation. But his mind was fixed on a higher and more enduring state than the immediate failure of his people to keep their part of the covenant.

"Thou, O Lord, remainest forever; Thy throne from generation to generation" (v. 19).

This was the secret of his abiding faith. It has been the foundation of all the righteous, as they have labored to serve in an acceptable manner, and yet who have lived to see the visible objects of their labors ruthlessly removed by other hands—*hands which have not comprehended the exalted nature of that which has been destroyed.*

We recognize the truth of the fact that the throne of God is in the heavens, and that it endureth forever—

"The heaven is My throne" (Isa. 66:1).

—and that it hath been founded from time immemorial, a fact beyond our powers to comprehend (Psa. 93:2)—

"Thy throne is established of old, Thou art from everlasting."

Yet there is an aspect of the prophet Jeremiah's words in v. 19 which has a bearing upon the preceding thought of the falling of the crown. It was not the ultimate purpose that the throne of God over Israel should be always waste. If it were so, then would the words of Moses be true,

"The nations which have heard the fame of Thee will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which He sware unto them, therefore He hath slain them in the wilderness" (Num. 14:15-16).

"*The throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel*" (1 Chr. 28:5) will yet have a glorious continuance from generation to generation. All the prophets concur in this joyous prospect. It is comprehended in the work of Christ who will reign for God and dwell with men. The fulfilment of the hopes of the patriarchs hinges upon this very thing.

David wrote of "a good matter," as he said, "touching the king." And he used an expression which the writer to the Hebrews definitely links with Christ. Psa. 45:6—

"Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre" (Psa. 45:6).

These words are prefixed in Hebrews 1:8 with—

"But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever . . . etc."

This was the prospect which Jeremiah saw for the future, though many years of weeping would intervene. God's hand is not shortened that it cannot save:

"What though all the world resist Him!
God will realize His plan . . .
Then shall Israel, long dispersed,
Mourning seek the Lord their God . . .
While the greater Son of David
Rules a conquered world in peace"—Hymn 110.

The final utterances of the prophet are a pleading for renewed Divine recognition of the nation. As they are set in the Auth. Ver. (the Rev. Ver. makes it a question) they appear hopeless—

"Thou hast utterly rejected us" (v. 22).

But the Psalms were the basis of the prophet's hope. When he said:

"Turn us and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old."

—he was quoting Psa. 80, which outlines the purpose of God through Jesus as the vine out of Egypt. It shows us the righteous nation as the vineyard which the Lord had planted; and the Branch which God has made strong as a means of salvation, accomplishing that which man was unable to effect for himself. This Psalm also indicates an intervening time of sorrow and trouble. But it ends on a note of triumph and resurrection—

"Quicken us and we will call upon Thy Name" (Psa. 80:18).

The necessity for a turning to the Lord is clearly manifest. There must come a declaration of repentance and turning from evil. God will then direct the steps into the ways of right. He will turn about the circumstances *if we place our confidence in Him*. But in His own order. So also the nation of Israel will be finally brought to Divine favor. Goodspeed renders Lam. 5:22 this way:

"If Thou wert to reject us completely, Thou wouldst be going too far in Thine anger against us."

Not too far for just deserts, but too far *according to His previous utterances*. Such a proposal would be out of harmony with all the promises of God. Moses said that God would raise unto Israel a Leader like unto him, whom they would hear.

They rejected this Leader when he came the first time, but their hearts will be turned from stone to flesh when he returns in power and glory; when their pride and self confidence is abased before the Northern Hosts, and when God fights for them as in the day of battle. Then shall they open the gates of their hearts unto him,

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in . . . The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of glory" (Psa. 24:9-10).

Then shall they say (Luke 13:35)—

"Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord."

E.F.H.
