

this prophet the idolatry commenced by Jeroboam in Dan and Bethel had continued for 150 years, and all classes of the people were sunk in vices of various kinds.

The first three chapters of his book contain a symbolical representation of the fallen people and God's statement that He had now rejected them. In order to exemplify this, the Prophet is commanded to wed a "wife of whoredoms" and to give to the children names indicating the wrath of God. The Prophet having complied with this command is again directed to love another adulteress "according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel" (3:1), thus giving to the ten tribes remarkable object lessons concerning their faithlessness towards Jehovah. The severe denunciations in this part of the book close with promises of a final restoration. (Ch 2: 14-23; 3, 4, 5.)

The following chapters reiterate more fully the subjects of the first three. In chapters 4-10, the Prophet brings up the charges against the people: "There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, lying, killing, stealing and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood." "The priests are like the people." For these sins the judgment of destruction is pronounced, but the book closes with a prediction of God's blessings as the final outcome.

Whether these last promises refer to the return of some Israelites under Ezra or whether they remain to be fulfilled is not clear from the book itself. Paul, directed by the Spirit of revelation applies some of these promises to the gentiles (Rom. ix, 25, 26), an application that could not be made except by the light of continuous revelation.

ISAIAH lived B. C. 765-698 and was consequently part of the time contemporary with Hosea. He prophesied among the Jews as Hosea prophesied among the Israelites.

The political aspect of the world at this time is important to notice. Judea and Israel had now long been two kingdoms and the latter was fast approaching her destruction. With Moab, Edom and the Philistines, Judah had repeated conflicts. Each of these tributaries striving more or less successfully to gain independence. Assyria was now growing in strength and extending her conquests on all sides. Egypt had been subdued by Ethiopia and the two countries were strengthened by a union. A struggle between Egypt and Assyria, the two rival powers of the world, was coming, and both these powers endeavored to secure the alliance of Judah as well as of Israel, wherefore the injunctions of the Prophets were for the people of God to keep a strictly neutral position without any regard to flatteries or threatenings. Babylon had just commenced her struggle for independence, and tried to form an alliance with Judah, for which purpose a special ambassador, Merodach Baladan, was sent to King Hezekiah. This pious king, in an unguarded moment, entertained

the messengers and displayed to them his own treasures and the treasures of the house of the Lord, which kindness and courtesy drew forth from the more clear seeing Prophet of God the awful announcement that the time would come when all these treasures should be carried away into Babylon, and that even the princes of Judah should be made base slaves in the palace of Babel (ch. 39).

During the time of this Prophet, the kingdom of Judah was invaded by the combined forces of Syria and Israel. This unfortunate kingdom, Israel, had fallen through idolatry and every sin, but she filled her cup of iniquity by combining with an idolatrous nation in war upon her brethren. This brought the long predicted destruction, and Israel was captured by the Assyrians. The event stands out more clearly as a judgment of God when it is remembered that the same Assyrian power was miraculously defeated when attempting to invade Judah.

If we keep these facts in view, the writings of Isaiah become intelligible and clear.

The first twelve chapters of this book contain reproofs, warnings and promises, chiefly directed to Judah and Israel. In these promises, predictions of the coming of Messiah and his work are prominent. The next chapters (13-23) are directed against Assyria, Babylon, Moab, Egypt, Philistia, Syria, Edom, and Tyre. In chapters (24-35) the sins and the misery of the people are rebuked. The Assyrian invasion is predicted and the destruction of Samaria, while the deliverance of Jerusalem is being promised. The four chapters are historical, describing the invasion of Sennacherib and the defeat of his army, and also the sickness of the King Hezekiah and his recovery. The closing chapters (40-66) are again prophetic embracing events from the Babylonian captivity to the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom of Christ. The deliverance of the Jews from Babylon, the character, sufferings, death and glory of Messiah, the gospel call of the gentile world, the wickedness of the Jews in rejecting Messiah and their consequent scattering, their final return and the prevalence of the kingdom of God, all these are clearly predicted, but the subjects are often blended together, and the transition from one to another is sometimes so rapid as to render it difficult to follow the connection. Indeed, in order to understand fully the passages that refer to events yet future, some divine revelation seems to be necessary. For it is only by the aid of the spirit of prophecy that prophecies can be fully understood.

MICAH, B. C. 758-699, was a contemporary of Hosea and Isaiah, and lived in the southern part of the kingdom of Judah. He does little more than reiterate the predictions of the two mentioned prophets, adding such illustrations and exhortations as were suitable to the class among whom he labored.

One of his most remarkable predictions states that the gift of prophecy should be withdrawn

from the ten tribes for a long time. "Therefore, night shall be sent you, that ye shall not have a vision, and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets and the day shall be dark over them. Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer from God." (iii: 6, 7.)

Here it is predicted that the people should be left in spiritual darkness because of the cessation of prophecy, but the darkness shall not be an everlasting one, for it is a night caused by the "setting of the sun," and consequently, as day follows night, so a time will again come when the prophetic day shall dawn upon the people. This is clearly implied in the language used, so that the very threat to withdraw the spirit of prophecy implies a promise of its renewal.

NAHUM, B. C. 720-690. This prophet was contemporary with Micah and Isaiah. He commenced his ministry at the time of the captivity of the Ten Tribes. And while the Assyrian power was boasting over this success, he is called upon to announce the fall and destruction of their great metropolis, Nineveh. This is the theme of the whole book. Nahum wrote his predictions in poetical form, and its sublimity of style is unsurpassed. The 12th and 13th verses of the first chapter are a parenthetical insertion, giving to the captives in Assyria a promise of deliverance at some future time.

INTERVAL OF FIFTY YEARS.

For a space of 150 years, the voice of prophecy had now been heard among the people. Sometimes two or more inspired men were raised up at the same time, in different parts of the country. But with the death of Isaiah, Micah and Nahum, an interval of fifty years comes during which period no prophecies were delivered, as far as we know. During this time the Ten tribes toil in their captivity, and Judah, still in possession of his inheritance in Palestine, is growing in sin and hastening on to destruction. But as this fatal moment approaches, God again sends inspired messengers to warn the people, and to declare His decrees. He never overthrows nations without due warning. He never said that further revelations were superfluous.

ZEPHANIAH, B. C. 640-609, revives the prophetic office again after fifty years' interval. It seems that God left the people to themselves during the reign of the wicked King Manasseh, and first when Josiah had ascended the throne the voice of God was again heard. This prophet announces the approaching judgment upon Judah on account of their idolatry and other sins. Baal, with his black-robed priests (chemarim), and Moloch are to be cut off, men and beasts, fowls and fishes to be consumed (ch. 1). In the second chapter he predicts the overthrow of the Philistines, the Moabites, Ammonites and Ethiopians.