

use for the God of Israel, and introduced all sorts of wickedness into the land during his long reign of about fifty years.

In Isaiah 39 we are told how Hezekiah had made alliance with a nation a little to the south of Assyria, far to the east of Judah. This nation had for a long time been subject to Assyria, but occasionally had succeeded in gaining its freedom. At this time it must have seemed like a very small power in comparison with Assyria. Its name was Babylon and a thousand years earlier it had been the ruler of the whole of Mesopotamia, but for many years it had been of very secondary importance. When representatives from the king of Babylon came to see Hezekiah and Hezekiah treated them as the closest of friends, Isaiah informed Hezekiah that men from this very place of Babylon, would in the future conquer Judah and carry its people away captive so that even the descendants would be slaves in the palace of the king of Babylon. This is the ending of chapter 39 just before our section begins.

Judged by modern standards the people of Judah were not particularly wicked. Their morality was far higher and their honesty was far greater than that of the people of most of the nations around them. Archeological clearly substantiates these facts. However, in comparison with the opportunities that they had received, having been given God's law and the revelation of God's person and of His love, they had fallen far short of what had been expected of them, and consequently deserved the great punishment of the exile. This punishment had come to the ten tribes of the kingdom of Israel just north of Judah. They also were part of the whole of the people of Israel and Isaiah often calls them Ephraim rather than Israel, Ephraim being the leading tribe of the northern kingdom just as Judah was the leading tribe of the southern kingdom. The whole kingdom is thought of as Israel and after the north kingdom is taken into exile, the southern kingdom is often called by the name of Israel rather than by the name of Judah. Thus properly the name of Israel belongs to both kingdoms but of course after the northern kingdom disappeared only the