

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Under the emblem of the good and bad figs is represented the fate of the Jews already gone into captivity with Jeconiah, and of those that remained still in their own country with Zedekiah. It is likewise intimated that God would deal kindly with the former, but that his wrath would still pursue the latter, Jeremiah 24:1-10.

Verse 1

The Lord showed me, and, behold, two baskets of figs - Besides the transposition of whole chapters in this book, there is not unfrequently a transposition of verses, and parts of verses. Of this we have an instance in the verse before us; the first clause of which should be the last. Thus: -

“After that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with the carpenters and smiths from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon, the Lord showed me, and, behold, two baskets of figs were set before the temple of the Lord.”

Jeremiah 24:2 - “One basket had very good figs, even like the figs that are first ripe; and the other basket had very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad.”

This arrangement restores these verses to a better sense, by restoring the natural connection.

This prophecy was undoubtedly delivered in the first year of the reign of Zedekiah.

Under the type of good and bad figs, God represents the state of the persons who had already been carried captives into Babylon, with their king Jeconiah, compared with the state of those who should be carried away with Zedekiah. Those already carried away, being the choice of the people, are represented by the good figs: those now remaining, and soon to be carried into captivity, are represented by the bad figs, that were good for nothing. The state also of the former in their captivity was vastly preferable to the state of those who were now about to be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon. The latter would be treated as double rebels; the former, being the most respectable of the inhabitants, were treated well; and even in captivity, a marked distinction would be made between them, God ordering it so. But the prophet sufficiently explains his own meaning.

Set before the temple - As an offering of the first-fruits of that kind.

Very good figs - Or, figs of the early sort. The fig-trees in Palestine, says Dr. Shaw, produce fruit thrice each year. The first sort, called boccore, those here mentioned, come to perfection about the middle or end of June. The second sort, called kermes, or summer fig, is seldom ripe before August. And the third, which is called the winter fig, which is larger, and of a darker complexion than the preceding, hangs all the winter on the tree, ripening even when the leaves are shed, and is fit for gathering in the beginning of spring.

Could not be eaten - The winter fig, - then in its crude or unripe state; the spring not being yet come.

Verse 5

Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge - Those already carried away into captivity, I esteem as far more excellent than those who still remain in the land. They have not sinned so deeply, and they are now penitent; and, therefore, I will set mine eyes upon them for good, Jeremiah 24:6. I will watch over them by an especial providence, and they shall be restored to their own land.

Verse 7

They shall be my people - I will renew my covenant with them, for they will return to me with their whole heart.

Verse 8

So will I give Zedekiah - I will treat these as they deserve. They shall be carried into captivity, and scattered through all nations. Multitudes of those never returned to Judea; the others returned at the end of seventy years.

Verse 10

I will send the sword - Many of them fell by sword and famine in the war with the Chaldeans, and many more by such means afterwards. The first received their captivity as a correction, and turned to God; the latter still hardened their hearts more and more, and probably very many of them never returned: perhaps they are now amalgamated with heathen nations. Lord, how long?