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JEREMIAH 21: 1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, when king Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur the son of Malchijah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah, the priest, saying,

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Nebuchadnezzar being come up against Jerusalem, Zedekiah sends Pashur and Zephaniah to the prophet to request him to intercede with God in behalf of his people, Jer 21:1, Jer 21:2. But he is declared to be against Jerusalem, and the whole land of Judah; and the only mitigation of their punishment must proceed from their surrendering to the king of Babylon, Jer 21:3-10. Prophecy concerning the house of the king of Judah, Jer 21:11, Jer 21:12. Notwithstanding the amazing fortifications round about Jerusalem, in which the people vainly trust, the Lord will most assuredly visit them for their iniquities; the city shall be taken by the Chaldeans, Jer 21:13, Jer 21:14.

Verse 1

The word which came unto Jeremiah - The chapters in the remaining parts of this prophecy seem strangely interchanged. This subject has been mentioned in the introduction, and some tables given; and to these the critical reader is requested to refer. The discourse here was delivered about the ninth year or the reign of Zedekiah. This chapter, observes Dr. Blayney, contains the first of those prophecies which were delivered by Jeremiah, subsequent to the revolt of Zedekiah, and the breaking out of the war thereupon; and which are continued on to the taking of Jerusalem, related in chap. 29, in the following order: Jer 21:1-14, 34, 37, 32, 33, 38, 39.

Pashur the son of Melchiah - There can be little doubt that this Pashur was a different person from him who was called the son of Immur in the preceding chapter.

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JEREMIAH 21: 2 Please inquire of the LORD for us; for Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon makes war against us: perhaps the LORD will deal with us according to all his wondrous works, that he may go up from us.

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Verse 2

Inquire, I pray thee - See whether God intends to deliver us into or out of the hand of the Chaldeans.

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JEREMIAH 21: 3 Then Jeremiah said to them, You shall tell Zedekiah:

JEREMIAH 21: 4 Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, with which you fight against the king of Babylon, and against the Chaldeans who besiege you, without the walls; and I will gather them into the midst of this city.

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Verse 4

I will turn back the weapons - Every attempt you make to repel the Chaldeans shall be unsuccessful.

I will assemble them into the midst of this city - I will deliver the city into their hands.

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JEREMIAH 21: 5 I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation.

JEREMIAH 21: 6 I will strike the inhabitants of this city, both man and animal: they shall die of a great pestilence.

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Verse 6

They shall die of a great pestilence - The sword may appear to be that of man, though I have given the Chaldeans their commission; but the pestilence shall appear to be the immediate act of God.

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JEREMIAH 21: 7 Afterward, says the LORD, I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and his servants, and the people, even such as are left in this city from the pestilence, from the sword, and from the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those who seek their life: and he shall strike them with the edge of the sword; he shall not spare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy.

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Verse 7

Nebuchadnezzar - This name is spelt as above in twenty-six places of this book; and in ten places it is spelt Nebuchadnezzar, which is the common orthography. The difference is only a ʾ resh for a ʾ nun; but the MSS. are various on this point. It is the same person who is intended by both names; and here all the Versions, except the Arabic, which omits the name, have it in the usual form.

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JEREMIAH 21: 8 To this people you shall say, Thus says the LORD: Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death.

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Verse 8

Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death - Meaning escape or destruction in the present instance. This is explained in the next verse.

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JEREMIAH 21: 9 He who remains in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence; but he who goes out, and passes over to the Chaldeans who besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be to him for a prey.

JEREMIAH 21: 10 For I have set my face on this city for evil, and not for good, says the LORD: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.

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Verse 10

He shall burn it with fire - What a heavy message to all; and especially to them who had any fear of God, or reverence for the temple and its sacred services!

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JEREMIAH 21: 11 Touching the house of the king of Judah, hear the LORD's word:

JEREMIAH 21: 12 House of David, thus says the LORD, Execute justice in the morning, and deliver him who is robbed out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my wrath go out like fire, and burn so that no one can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.

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Verse 12

Execute judgment in the morning - Probably the time for dispensing judgment was the morning, when the people were going to their work; but the words may mean, Do justice promptly, do not delay. Let justice be administered as soon as required.

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JEREMIAH 21: 13 Behold, I am against you, O inhabitant of the valley, and of the rock of the plain, says the LORD; you that say, Who shall come down against us? or who shall enter into our habitations?

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Verse 13

O inhabitant of the valley, and rock of the plain - Dr. Blayney translates: "O thou inhabitant of the levelled hollow of a rock." With all his explanation I cannot see the good sense of this translation. Jerusalem itself, though partly on two hills, was also extended in the valley; and Zion, the city of David, was properly a rock, strongly fortified both by nature and art; and by its ancient possessors, the Jebusites, was deemed impregnable.

Who shall come down against us? - Probably the words of those courtiers who had persuaded Zedekiah to rebel against the king of Babylon.

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JEREMIAH 21: 14 I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, says the LORD; and I will kindle a fire in her forest, and it shall devour all that is around her.

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Verse 14

I will kindle a fire in the forest thereof - I will send destruction into its center, that shall spread to every part of the circumference, and so consume the whole.

The beginning of the thirty-fourth chapter should follow here. See the arrangement on Jer 34:1 (note).