

Overview of The Bible Update December 2018

How does the Bible as a whole fit together? The Bible is unified and is one book from Genesis to Revelations. Jesus is the subject of the entire Bible.

One unifying thread in the Bible is the authorship of God. Every word of the Bible is God's word. The Bible contains all that God wants us to know about Him. Every word written is for our instruction, Romans 15:4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

The Bible makes it clear that God has a unified plan for all of history.

He has a purpose--a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him (Christ), things in heaven and things on earth.

He has a purpose for doing this—Ephesians says 1:12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. God created us for His glory.

This plan He has always had Isaiah 46:9-10, remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.

This plan is on His time Gal 4:4-5 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

The work of Christ on Earth is the most important thing in history. We look back to the cross and also forward to the second coming of Christ to the finish of His work. 2Peter 3:13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

The unity of God's plan causes Him to make predictions of future events and for these promises to be fulfilled such as the coming of the Messiah. Isaiah 9:6-7

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

There is one future prediction still to come see 2 Peter 3:13 above

Christ in the Old Testament

Since God's plan focuses on Christ and His glory, it is natural that all the Old Testament points toward Jesus 2 Cor. 1:20 "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory."

Jesus spent time teaching that the O.T. does point to Himself. Luke 24:44 "Then he said to them", "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

Luke 24:45-48 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

You are witnesses of these things.

He God opened their mind to understand the Scriptures Luke 24:45. The Old Testament as a whole looks forward to the actual accomplishment of salvation that took place once-for-all in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Promises of God

In what ways does the OT look forward to Christ? There are specific promises in the OT directly pointing forward to the coming of Christ as the Messiah. (Micah 5:2, Isaiah 7:13-14 & 9:6-7 & 40:3-4 & 53:1-4 & Psalm 45:6-7 & 2:7 & Psalm 22:1-21 & 78:1-2, Jeremiah 31:15, Hosea 11:1, Zechariah 9:19. The whole Bible points to Jesus. The Old Testament points forward and the New Testament points back to Jesus.

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The following notes include every book of the Old Testament which might be too much material for the class time. It is all right to only teach a couple of the prophets and continue to the New Testament. It is, however, recommended that after graduation the class continues to study together and finishes studying the prophets and study in depth various books of the Bible.

Overview of Genesis: The Book of Beginnings

For around 2500 years God's story was an audible story told over and over down through the generations. This was a very reliable way to keep history and it still survives in societies without written languages. The first five books of the Bible were written by Moses. They are a section of the Old Testament known as the Pentateuch (five books) or the Torah (law).

Genesis tells how God created everything, and that His creation was very good because there was no sin. Soon Adam and Eve sinned and all the troubles of the world came from that first sin. After the first sin, man could not stop sinning which brought God's punishment on man. We learn that God punishes sin with fierce punishment. We also learn that as soon as man sinned God started the process of saving man from his sins and restoring a good relationship with man. God announces in Genesis 12 that he is going to work His plan of salvation through Abram (Abraham) and his descendants, who include Jesus.

I. The beginning of time Genesis chapters 1-11 contain the first two thousand years. There are four main events in these eleven chapters.

1. First is the creation story. Genesis 1:1-chapter 2 It is very important that we understand this creation story—why? The world teaches evolution which is the idea that everything was created by just happening without God doing the creation. This is clearly wrong. The Bible says God spoke and created everything out of nothing which is correct. John 1:3 tells us that nothing was created without Jesus. He is our creator and also He keeps everything working.

A. Read verses 1-13. We must understand that it was easy for God to create the entire universe and all life. This helps us understand that our God is powerful without limit. We must stand in awe of Him; totally respecting Him. His creation reveals a lot about His personality. For example, we know He likes beauty and variety.

B. Genesis 1:27 Man was created in the image of God. This means what? It means we have personality like God—we possess knowledge, feelings and a will, and the ability to choose right and wrong—to reason. We have morality to know right from wrong and also we have spirituality which allows us to have a relationship with God. All other animals are controlled by their instinct alone.

C. Genesis 1:26-30 God tells Adam that he is to rule over the earth. 1 Cor. 6:2-3 says the saints will judge the world. We are not just animals; we are rulers because we have a special relationship with God.

D. The question often asked in Uganda is whether family planning is wrong because of Genesis 1:28. While this is an important question in Africa, it does not appear to be important in the west. I say this because the commentaries I read about this passage do not mention the part about filling the earth at all. Instead, they stress the role we humans play in ruling over the earth.

I think we must interpret this passage as a whole starting in verse 26 and concluding in verse 31. The passage seems to be teaching us that we humans are created special; in the image of God. Because of this, we are

given responsibility for ruling the earth. We could spend a lot of time studying this passage, but I will limit myself to the question about filling the earth.

At the time this order was given, there were only two people on this whole earth, and obviously the earth needed to be filled with people in order for them to rule. Are there now enough people to rule over the earth? Let me share my opinion about this. I say we humans have fulfilled the commandment to fill the earth and that family planning is not a sin because there are enough humans to rule the earth.

Following are some of the reasons that I say this:

1. The population of the earth has increased from the original 2 to around 7,000,000,000 people today.
2. Today, there are more than enough people on earth to rule the earth. We see evidence for this statement by observing how man has caused many animals either to become extinct or almost extinct. Many parts of the earth are ruined because of man's actions such as the earth slides off mountains because of what man has done.
3. Many parts of the world experience hunger and famine because there are more people than food in these areas.

While it is not for me to say how many children people should produce, I can say, based on 1 Timothy 5:8, that God only wants you to have as many children as you can provide for. You must provide food, shelter, clothing, medical care, parent's time, and education for each child you produce.

Families in most western countries only have two children per family. They have reasons for this such as:

1. There are enough people in their countries.
2. Raising children is expensive and unlike Uganda, western countries will make parents pay for their children. You cannot just abandon the children. Failure to pay to support your children in the United States will result in the parents being put in jail.
3. Christian culture requires that parents provide for their children.

The type of family planning which prevents conception is not a sin. The type of family planning which kills the baby after conception is murder. Because of modern medicine safe and effective birth control is available.

E. Gen 1:31 it was a perfect creation. Why? Because there was no sin just like in heaven.

F. Genesis 2:1-3 God establishes the seventh day as a holy day as a day of rest. It is still important today to observe the Sabbath.

i. We need a day off so that we can worship God.

ii. Humans need a day away from work each week. God designed us to need a day to rest and relax and spend time with family. We work much better if we take a day off and we get more total work done if we work six days per week than if we work seven days a week.

G. Genesis 2:4-25 God repeats the creation story to speak more about humans who are the most important part of creation. He tells us more about our beginnings. This is not a separate creation account rather as I said it allows God to tell more about the pinnacle (top) of His creation which is humans.

i. Verse Genesis 2:15-17 tells us that we are to work. Will we work in heaven?

ii. Chapter 2 verse 18-24 also gives details about the relationship men and women have through the creation of Eve. Verse 18 teaches us that woman was created to be a helper to man and verse 24 gives us the basis for godly marriage which is that we are one person and since we would never abuse ourselves so we will never abuse our wives.

iii. We will also never divorce because once we are married we become one person and we can't truly be divided. God hates all divorce.

2. The second main event of the first eleven chapters is the fall of man.

A. Gen. 3:1-7 Sin enters the world—man had free will to choose to obey God or to disobey God, and Adam chose to disobey and this is the first sin. Man has been choosing to sin ever since. All the troubles of the world come from this one act. Romans 3:23 and Romans 6:23

B. God immediately announces punishment for the serpent, Adam, Eve and all of creation. Genesis 3:14-19, Romans 8:19-23 All life suffers from this first sin. Sin is very serious and God punishes all sin. There are two types of punishment for people.

i. Earthly punishment which is given to all people whether they are Christian or not. An example is that any person who commits adultery with an HIV infected person can get aids and suffer and die.

ii. Eternal punishment.

a. The unsaved person goes to hell when he dies and he suffers forever for his sins.

b. The Christian person has the penalty for his sins paid for by Jesus, and so he goes to heaven. Jesus was punished on the cross for every sin ever committed by every Christian.

C. Genesis 3:8-15 God seeks man and extends grace by not immediately killing man. God begins His plan of reconciliation.

i. In verses 8 & 9 God begins the process of redeeming or saving man as soon as the first act of sin is completed. God seeks out man to reestablish or start over the relationship.

ii Verse 21 says that God killed animals and made clothes for Adam and Eve. This killing of animals and covering Adam and Eve showed that:

a. Man must be clothed to stand in the presence of a holy God.

b. Man can't by his own action clothe himself and make himself acceptable to God; it takes the action of God to make man acceptable to God.

c. God will provide what is necessary to be acceptable to Him.

d. God killed the innocent animals to show that the shedding of blood is necessary to regain paradise. This act of shedding the blood of these innocent animals pointed ahead to the coming perfect sacrifice of Jesus when His blood was shed.

l.ii. God makes a promise of the defeat of Satan in Gen. 3:15 A very important verse because in it God forecasts the defeat of Satan and the triumph of Jesus.

a. The bruising of the heel means that Satan will hurt Jesus which happens at the cross. On the cross Jesus was punished for every sin every Christian ever did.

b. The bruising of the head means that Jesus will kill Satan and it was on the cross that Jesus defeated Satan, and Jesus won the war.

3. Genesis 4 Cain and Abel are the first reported natural born humans. We see that Cain murders his brother. The sin nature is passed from Adam to all his offspring. All humans continue to sin and as we go through the Bible we see that man is unable to live without continually sinning and God punishes all sin. Because of this man needs a savior.

4. The third main event in the first eleven chapters of Genesis is the flood. Genesis chapters 6-9 report the story of Noah and the flood.

A. Sin continues to increase in the world and God mentions destroying all humans. Genesis 6:5-7 God tells how He was grieved by man's sinfulness.

B. We see in verse 8 that Noah alone found favor in God's eyes. Beginning in verses 13-14 God speaks to Noah and tells him to prepare an ark or a boat so that Noah and his family will be spared from the coming flood when all the rest of the people will be destroyed.

C. The story of the great flood tells us that sin continues to grow more and more until God shows His wrath for sin by sending the flood as fierce judgment. We see that God is patient with people, but when His patience runs out then His punishment is fierce.

i. Genesis 6:22 tells that Noah obeyed God. Hebrews 11:7 tells us that it was by faith that Noah was saved just as Christians are saved through their faith in Jesus.

5. The fourth main event of chapters 1-11 is the tower of Babel. As time goes on man continues to sin.

A. Genesis 11 is the story of the tower of Babel. People get together and conspire to disobey God. They built the tower because of their great pride and disobedience to God's order in Genesis 9:1 to fill all the earth.

B. God's answer was to give them new languages so that they could not understand each other and so they are dispersed all over the earth.

II. The rest of Genesis beginning in chapter 12 is the story of how four men were used by God. These men Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph are known as the patriarchs or fathers of the Jews.

1. The first of these is Abram who was later called Abraham. (Abraham was called Abram until the birth of his son Isaac). He is the father of the Hebrew nation; the father of the Jews.

A. Gen. 12:1-4 Abram's call to the holy land—was Abraham called because he was a special person? No, he was a pagan and a coward—twice he gave his wife away to save himself. This shows how God reaches out to sinners. However, we read here that Abram in faith left his home and follows God, and Abraham is known as a man of great faith see Hebrews 11:8-19.

i. Genesis 12:1-3 God makes a promise (covenant) with Abram. These are great verses to memorize. This is known as the Abrahamic covenant where God first reveals the way He will work to restore peaceful relations

with man. He will work his plan of salvation through Abraham and his descendants. Jesus is a descendant of Abraham. He sets the people known as Hebrews, or Israelites, or later Jews apart as God's own special people who He will work with.

B. Gen 15:1-21 God seals or signs this covenant with Abram; sealed with blood. This makes the covenant official. Covenants are like contracts between God and man. Most covenants are promises from God and require nothing from man such as this one. However some covenants such as the covenant of circumcision requires man to do something, see chapter 17 below to learn about the covenant of circumcision.

i. Gen. 15:4, Abram was promised children but even though Abram is a man with great faith in God, sometimes he doubts God. Abram thought that he and his wife were too old. We learn that at times our faith weakens, but then it grows strong again. This happens to all of us.

C. Gen 16 is the story of Abram's unbelief and how he and his wife conspired and how Abram produced a male child through his servant which resulted in the birth of Ishmael. Even though Hebrews 11:8 calls Abraham a man of faith; we see that at times his faith, like everybody's faith, weakened. Abraham's son Ishmael was born and he is the father of the Arab nations which produced the Muslims who are the enemies of Israel today. This act of unbelief caused Israel's terrible enemy to be founded.

D. Gen 17 reports about the covenant of circumcision. Verses 1-6 contain a promise from God that at the age of 99 Abram is to be renamed Abraham because he is promised a male heir and will as God promised earlier be the father of a multitude of nations.

i. God promises blessings to Abraham and to his descendants. The blessing is Jesus and our salvation through Jesus.

ii. Next in verses 9-14 we have the covenant of circumcision where the Hebrew's are set apart as God's special people. Circumcision is a symbol which set God's people apart from all other people just as baptism does to Christians today. This is the teaching also of the New Testament that we Christians live in this world but we do not belong to this world. Our real home is with God in heaven. See John 17:14-16 and 18:36.

iii. In verses 15-19 God promises to bless Sarai, even though she is 90 years old, with a child and she is to be renamed Sarah which is a fitting name meaning princess because she is to be the mother of kings.

iv. Verse 17 reports that Abraham laughed with joy over the promise of a son; an heir. He is overjoyed with this news.

E. Genesis 18-19 Sodom and Gomorrah—a terrible story about how wicked man can be and how fierce God's judgment will be.

i. Genesis 18:1-15 describes a heavenly visit. We see in verse 3 that Abraham recognizes that God is visiting him. Abraham extends hospitality to his visitors, and is told again that he is to be a father in the next year. We see that Sarah finds this news, so incredible, so unbelievable that she laughs. Look at God's response in verse 14 when He asks, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Read how this question is answered in Luke 1:34-38.

ii. The story about Sodom and Gomorrah comes next. Genesis 18:20 God reveals His displeasure against the people of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their sinfulness just as Genesis 6:5 reveals His displeasure at the time of Noah. Verse 21 God says they deserve destruction. Their sins were many, and they engaged in

homosexual sin which terribly angered God. This sin is an attack of the beautiful gift of marriage which God gave to us.

a. Verses 22-33 report how Abraham pleaded (interceded) with God. We learn here that at times it is all right to plead with God as long as we do this respectfully and our argument is for the right reason. Note that Abraham's pleading was not for his personal gain; instead it was to protect others such as the innocent people in Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham's pleading was based on the righteousness of God and this is what he appealed to.

b. Genesis 19 reports how God destroyed the cities because of the terrible sin of the people; only rescuing Lot's family from the destruction. We read that the punishment was fierce as sulfur and fire destroyed the cities. Genesis 19:24

c. We see even in this rescue that Lot's family was punished for disobedience. They were instructed to not look back, and Lot's wife disobeyed and she was immediately turned into a pillar of salt. Genesis 19:17 & 26

d. Genesis 19:30-38 reports a shameful story about Lot and his two daughters. It is a story of how the daughters did not trust God so they got Lot drunk and then they slept with him to have children. They each had a son who became the fathers of two nations; Moab and Ammon. These two nations became enemies of the Jews.

F. Gen. 20 Story about value of prayer in God's eyes. We read here how Abraham to protect his own life gave his wife to Abimelech. However, before Abimelech could have sexual relations with Sarah God warned Abimelech and told him he would die unless, Abimelech had Abraham pray for him. In other words God required prayer before He would act for Abimelech. A powerful story here about the sovereignty of God and the power and importance of prayer.

G. Gen. 21 the son of promise Isaac is born. God always keeps his promise. God can't lie according to Titus 1:2

H. Chapter 22 God orders the sacrifice of Isaac. We see here why Abraham is called a man of great faith because he obeys God and prepares to sacrifice his son Abraham. We see that at the last moment God provides a substitute to be sacrificed in the place of Isaac. This looks forward to Jesus who God provides as the lamb to be sacrificed for our sins on the cross.

I. Gen 24 Isaac is not known for much beyond being the father of Jacob. Abraham sends his servant back to his homeland to pick a wife for Isaac so that Isaac does not marry a local or foreign wife. Later we will see how foreign wives cause God's people to get into trouble. Abraham knew God's will and he followed it. How do we know God's will? Read the Bible and pray that God will reveal the deeper meanings of the Bible to you.

J. Chapter 25 Abraham dies and twin boys, Jacob and Esau are born to Isaac. Jacob means deceiver or liar—Jacob was second born but tricks Esau into giving up his birthright as firstborn and also tricks Isaac into giving him his first born blessing. Jacob did not need to deceive his brother because God had already chosen him over Esau Gen. 25:23. Romans 9:10-13 God is sovereign and he chooses who he will love.

2. The second patriarch (father) is Isaac.

A. Genesis 26:2-4 is a renewal of the promise of blessing that was originally made to Abraham. This is a reminder that the blessing is still valid and always will be. There is not much reported about Isaac in the Bible.

B. Isaac did deny that Rebekah was his wife just like his father did see 26:7

3. The third patriarch is Jacob. We know the type of man Jacob is by his name which means deceiver or liar. He fathers twelve sons who become the twelve tribes of Israel.

A. Gen. 28 reports that Jacob flees to Aram to uncle Laban to escape from the anger of Esau after he stole the firstborn blessing from Esau. Genesis 27:41-42 reports that Esau wanted to kill Jacob. Now Jacob was a cheat and a liar, but uncle Laban is even more deceitful than Jacob, and cheated him repeatedly.

B. As Jacob fled from his brother's wrath he was alone and probably frightened as he travelled into unknown territory. Genesis 28:10-19 records how God comes to him in a dream and reassures him. We see that even though Jacob was all alone in the desert that he really was not alone because God was with him. Matthew 28:20 tells us that God is always with us. Jacob was raised in a rich family but now he was all alone and he had no wealth so God shows His love and reassures and comforts him.

i. God repeats in verses 28:13-15 the promise He originally gave to Abraham and told Jacob that he was the heir to this promise. He tells Jacob that everything will be all right and that Jacob will continue to live and that he will return to the land God promised Abraham and his heirs. God reassures Jacob that he, Jacob, will have a family.

C. Chapter 29 tells the story about how Jacob meets and falls in love with Rachel and he agrees to work for uncle Laban for seven years to earn Rachel as his wife. We read here how the wedding takes place and how Jacob wakes up in the morning to find that Uncle Laban had cheated him and it was Leah in his bed and not Rachel. How do you think this could have happened? Laban requires that Jacob works for another seven years to earn Rachel as his wife. So Jacob had the difficulties of living with two wives.

D. Genesis 31:1-55 reports the trip home for Jacob after about twenty years.

i. We see in verses 1-3 that it is time for Jacob to leave his uncle. God used Laban to drive Jacob away.

ii. The most important thing that happened to Jacob on his trip home is found in Genesis 32:22-28 when he meets God. Jacob was a fearful man when he met with God. He knew that he had to meet with his brother Esau, who might still want to kill him, and verse 24 says he was all alone. Often a person has to be in the situation of Jacob in order to realize his need to meet God. He struggled all night with God before he surrendered to God. This is his personal meeting with God where Jacob becomes a new person just as a Christian does when he meets with God and is converted and is made a new person. We see Jacob's name changed from deceiver to Israel which is a better name for the man who is the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. This is his rebirth as a new child of God.

E. Jacob is a new person and he is given the name of Israel to show that he no longer is a total liar. The rest of his life is one of difficulty caused by his children. We see that God works with all kinds of bad sinners.

i. Chapter 34 reports how Jacob's daughter Dinah was raped by the son of the ruler in Shechem. The son proposed marriage which Israel wisely rejected because this God's people were to only marry in God's people. Also this marriage would have meant the Hebrew people would have been absorbed by the much larger kingdom of Shechem. This would have meant the end of the distinct people God planned to use to bring salvation to all the world. Jacob took terrible revenge and destroyed the city of Shechem and all the people.

F. Chapter 38 tells terrible stories about Judah, one of Jacob's sons, and his family. As we study how wicked Judah is we should remember that Jesus is descended from Judah. Once again we are reminded that God can work with anyone no matter how wicked they or their family are.

i. Chapter 38:1-5 reports that Judah went and became friends with a Canaanite man and married one of their women which was a sin.

ii. Chapter 38:5-10 tell us the well-known sad story of Onan, a son of Judah, who disobeyed God and was punished with death for this.

iii. Next in verses 11-26 is the sad story about Tamar who is the daughter in law of Judah. When her husband dies she has certain rights. Judah is supposed to provide a husband for her from his other son, but he does not do this. So Tamar takes the matter in her own hands and becomes pregnant by Judah. Judah proposes to kill Tamar because of this even though he is the guilty person. It is another story that shows just how wicked people can be even when they are the ancestors of Jesus. Why should the woman be killed and not the man?

4. The last patriarch is Joseph who is a unique man. He is unique because he had no scandals in his life. He was a very moral man.

A. Genesis 37 begins the story of Joseph and how God prepared the way for His people to live in Egypt. Joseph was the first born son of Rachel who had been barren for so many years while her sister Leah had many children. Remember that Rachel was the favorite wife of Israel and Joseph became the favorite child of Israel and everyone knew it. Joseph is 17 years old as we begin the story.

B. Chapter 37:5-11 reports that Joseph told his family that he dreamed they would bow down to him and pay him respect. This made Joseph's family very angry with him. These dreams later proved to be prophetic words and the dreams come true.

C. Gen. 37:28 reports that his brothers sold Joseph as a slave to some Ishmaelite's who took him to Egypt. God wanted to prepare the way for His people to be able to move to Egypt where they were to live until they were ready to take possession of their promised land, and this is part of God's plan.

D. Gen. 39:1 reports that God had blessed Joseph and caused him to be sold to Potiphar a very important official of Pharaoh the ruler of Egypt. Now Joseph was faithful to God and God blessed Joseph because Potiphar made Joseph the overseer of his household. However, Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph and when he remained faithful she falsely accused him of attacking her. Joseph went to prison where God again blessed him and he was put in charge of the prison.

E. Gen. 40 reveals the purpose that God had in putting Joseph in prison. It was so that he was able to meet the cupbearer of Pharaoh who was in prison for a short time. Joseph interpreted a dream for the cupbearer who was shortly restored to his favored position. Later in this story we see how this was part of God's plan to provide for His people to come to Egypt.

i. In chapter 40:14 Joseph ask the cupbearer to remember him when he is freed. We see in verse 23 how unfaithful people often are as the cupbearer forgot Joseph.

G. Genesis 41 reports that two years later Pharaoh has a dream which no one could interpret for him. The cupbearer then remembers that Joseph could interpret dreams so he told this to Pharaoh who released Joseph from jail to interpret his dream.

i. Genesis 41:17-24 Pharaoh tells his dream to Joseph.

ii. In verses 25-36 God is given credit as Joseph interprets the dream for Pharaoh and predicts the coming famine and gives Pharaoh a plan which averts disaster and will make Pharaoh very rich.

iii. Verses 37-41 Joseph then is made the second most powerful man in Egypt. He now has the power to save his family.

H. Gen. 42 Famine forces Joseph's brothers to come to Egypt for food and eventually Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and his family moves to Egypt. This fulfills the first part of an earlier prophecy Gen 15:13-14.

I. Gen. 50 after Jacob dies, the brothers fear Joseph will want revenge, but in verses 4-21 Jacob reveals his godly heart and reassures them of their future.

i. Verse 20 is a great verse; it goes along with Romans 8:28. These verses are great comfort for us when men wrong us.

J. Gen. 50:25 Joseph reveals his desire to have his bones buried in the Promised Land.

K. Genesis closes with Israel in Egypt where God wanted them to live. They not only are living in Egypt, but God has made it so they are well treated.

Summary of Genesis

Genesis—World begins and is perfect. Man sins and evil is in the world. Once man started sinning he couldn't stop. We see over and over that God is a God of judgment and He will punish sin. We see terrible judgment as sometimes individuals such as Onan are punished and another time every person on earth is punished with the exception of Noah's family.

God immediately, after the first sin, begins the process of reconciliation through Jesus and we see his plan unfolding. He chose Israel as the people He wanted to use to bring salvation to all people. Even in the first book of the Bible we see God has a plan to redeem us. We also see that man in his natural state is sinful and unable to reconcile himself to God. The rest of the Old Testament continues the story of how God arranges everything so that at the right time, the world is ready for the appearance of Jesus.

Exodus Overview

(Quick Exit)

There are two main parts to Exodus. Part one, chapters 1-18, is the story of how God used Moses to deliver the Hebrew people out of slavery in Egypt; this story looks forward to the time when Jesus later delivered us out of our bondage to sin. Part two, found in chapters 19-40 is the story about how God started teaching His chosen people at Mt. Sinai how to live differently than other people, how to

live as God's people. God's people, then and today are supposed to be different. Exodus 20 is where God gave the Ten Commandments and started teaching His people how to properly worship Him.

Moses is one of the great human figures in the Bible, and he was a prophet. He wrote the first five Bible books and also Psalm 90. He was a Levite which means he was in the family of Priest. He lived 120 years, and he didn't seem to age. Deuteronomy 34:7 He walked very close to God for forty years, but his sin caused him to be punished and not enter the Promised Land. Moses was a great man of God, but he was also a man with many faults such as his bad temper, and he was a murderer. Moses was a sinner just like every other person.

Exodus begins about 430 years after the end of Genesis. God is in charge of events and He figures it is time for the people to move to take control of the land He had promised to Abraham for his descendants to own. We don't know exactly why the Hebrews had to spend 400+ years in Egypt. One reason might be to give them time to establish an identity as a nation. Another reason might have been to allow their numbers to increase so that they would be numerous and powerful enough to conquer the promised land of Canaan.

Exodus 1:1-2:10 The birth and early life of Moses. The Hebrew people were favored by Pharaoh at the time of Joseph, but there was a change in Egypt verse 8-10 and the new leaders feared and disliked the Hebrews. Pharaoh made life very difficult for the Hebrews. In fact, he made life so difficult that the people became ready to leave Egypt. God had decided it was time for His people to go so He made life difficult so that the people wanted to move. It was time for the Hebrews to go conquer the land He had promised Abraham. Verses 11-14 reports how the Egyptians tried to control the Hebrews through abuse.

Next in verses 15-22 Pharaoh orders the death of every Hebrew newborn baby boy. The same thing happened almost 1500 years later when Jesus is born see Matt 2:16.

We learn a lesson, in Christian ethics, from this story, and the lesson is reinforced in the story of Rahab the prostitute. The lesson is that while it is always a sin to tell a lie. We are permitted, maybe even ordered, to lie when the lie will prevent the murder of an innocent person. Murder is the more serious sin.

Exodus 1:16 Pharaoh ordered the midwives to kill the male babies. In verse 17 the midwives disobeyed Pharaoh. In verses 18 & 19 the midwives lied to Pharaoh. In verses 20 & 21 God rewards the midwives for not killing the children.

Again in Joshua 2:1-4 God gives us another story to teach the same lesson. Verse 4 reports how Rahab lied to protect the lives of the Hebrew spies hiding in her house. Joshua 6:25 reports that because of

what Rahab did, she and her household were allowed to live with the Hebrews. Hebrews 11:31 calls what Rahab did an act of faith in God. James 2:25 says this lie was an act of faith that justified Rahab. Matthew 1:5 tells us that Rahab was an ancestor of Jesus. We see that Rahab was blessed because she lied to protect the spies.

Remember we are not to lie ever except only to prevent the murder of an innocent person.

Chapter 2:1-10 reports how Moses was saved from death and ended up being raised by Pharaoh's daughter. God arranged things so that Moses' birth mother was able to nurse him, and his mother was even paid for this by Pharaoh's daughter. Moses was raised and educated in Pharaoh's house. He spent the first forty years of his life living a privileged life in the king's house as a member of the royal family.

Chapter 2:11-15 Moses reports that Moses never forgot that he was a Hebrew and he became angry when an Egyptian was beating a Hebrew slave so he lost his temper and killed the Egyptian. Because of this murder Moses is forced to flee Egypt. He flees to Midian (located in current Saudi Arabia), and there he marries Jethro's daughter Zipporah and settles down for forty years. Meanwhile the Hebrews continued to be tormented in Egypt.

Chapter 2:16-4:17 tells the story about Moses living the next forty years in the desert.

Chapter 3:1-6 Moses meets God, this is what is called a theophany—when God appeared to Moses in a way that allowed Moses to know that God was present with him. Previously it had happened to Abraham and Jacob. Remember God is a spirit; He is invisible. (Col. 1:15) God often met with men he intended to use for His purposes. God only allowed these humans to see something that represented Him because we humans, in our fallen state, can't tolerate seeing God's face. Verses 7-10 God calls Moses to lead His people out of Egypt to the Promised Land. Look at 3:11 to see the bad reaction of Moses to God's call. See Isaiah 6:8 to see the only proper reaction of a believer to God's call. The rest of chapter 3 sees God and Moses arguing about Moses being the one who should lead the people out of Egypt. Remember the Bible teaches us

Chapter 4 reports how God and Moses continue to argue until as verse 14 reports God became angry. So God appointed Aaron to be a spokesperson for Moses and Moses returns to Egypt. He tells the people that God knows about their suffering and is going to deliver them from their bondage. Verse 31 reports that the people are very happy.

Read Ex 4:24-26 for an example of how God must be obeyed. It seems that Moses had disobeyed God and had not circumcised his son.

Exodus 5 the battle begins between Moses and Pharaoh. Moses asks Pharaoh to allow the people to travel three days into the wilderness so that they might worship God. Pharaoh's answer in verses 6-9 was to make the work load of the people even harder.

Chapter 5:21-23 reports that the people show, as they will continue to do, that they don't trust God and they complained to Moses, and even Moses even turns on God. This is something we should never do. It shows a lack of trust in God.

Exodus 6:1-8 God is very patient with the people. He makes promises that He will deliver them out of slavery and take them to the promised land of Canaan which He will give to them. He also promises to be their God. He does this even after the people and Moses turn against Him which shows that God is a very loving, forgiving and patient God.

Exodus 6:28-12:30 tells about the ten plagues which are ten battles between Pharaoh and Moses. Read chapter 8:1-15 to see how it typically went between Pharaoh and Moses. God through Moses did a miracle and then Pharaoh's magicians, through the power of Satan, duplicated the miracle. This is a lesson for us that Satan was very powerful in Moses's time and he is just as powerful today. We see, after every plague, that God hardens the heart of Pharaoh which causes Pharaoh to resist Moses to. Exodus 4:21 teaches us that God is sovereign and it is God who hardens Pharaoh's heart so that he refuses Moses request.

The last plague, reported in chapter 12, is the worse one; it is the killing of all first born males in Egypt both human and animal. This is what finally caused Pharaoh to allow the Hebrews to leave the country.

The Passover story is the story about how the blood of an innocent lamb sprinkled on the doorpost saved the inhabitants of the house from death. The Passover lamb points us toward our own salvation. It is the blood of the innocent Lamb of God, Jesus which saves the Christians from eternal death in Hell. Remember the Bible says, in Heb. 9:22, without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness for sin.

Exodus 12:1-20, God gives instruction about how the Jews are to observe the Passover in the future. History tells us that the Hebrews stopped observing Passover during the time of the judges and didn't start observing it until the time of King Josiah hundreds of years later.

Exodus 12:29 reports that at midnight all firstborn males of Egypt were killed, in every house, which did not have blood sprinkled on the doorpost. Just as God saw the blood on the doorpost and spared the family, so today God sees the blood of Jesus covering Christians and spares us the second death which is hell.

The Hebrew people leave Egypt. Ex. 13:17-22 reports how God Himself led the people, in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Verse 19 reports how they remembered Joseph's request and took his bones with them. Genesis 50:25.

Exodus 14:4 reports that God again hardens the heart of Pharaoh who decides to chase after the Hebrews. Verses 10-12 report the complaining against God again of the Hebrew people.

Exodus 14 is the story of the Red Sea crossing. Pharaoh thought that he had trapped the Hebrews against the sea, but, God gave Moses the power to cause the waters of the sea to open up and allow the Hebrews to escape. He then closed the waters on top of the Egyptian army and caused them to drown. So once again God caused his people to escape. Verse 31 tells how once again the Hebrews believed in God.

We must remember our God is a wonderful God when we are experiencing good times and also when we are having great difficulties. He is always a good and loving God.

Chapter 15:1-21 records how the people rejoiced and sang and danced praising God. This is known as Moses' song. The people only loved Moses and God until their next trouble which is recorded in verses 22-24. We see that the people had no faith in God and every time things were not as they wanted they complained against God. Verse 25 again tells how God provided for His people and gave them good water to drink.

Chapter 16 reports how God provided food from heaven—manna and quail. Once again verses 1-3 record how the people complained against God because they were hungry. The people showed again their lack of faith in God. Despite their complaining, God provided them with food such as manna and even quail.

God provided each day's needs just in time and as much as needed. The people were taught to trust God and only gather one day's needs except for the Sabbath. God provided this food until they reached the Promised Land.

Chapter 17 the people again grumble against Moses and God because they want water. Finally they arrive at Mt. Sinai where they stay, for a long time, and God teaches them how to worship Him and how to live their lives in obedience to His rules.

Chapter 19 begins the second part of the book of Exodus where God begins teaching the people. This teaching continues through the book of Deuteronomy until the people enter the Promised Land. God is teaching the Hebrews how to live as His people—a people who are different from the World. The Hebrews were really pagans while they lived in Egypt and they needed to be taught about their God

Just as the Old Testament taught that God's people were different from the world, so The New Testament also teaches that Christians are to live differently from the world. One sign that the Jews were different was that the males were circumcised see Genesis 10-14. Today all Christians are to be baptized which identifies us as Christians, and sets us apart from the world.

Chapters 20-23 God makes a covenant with the people when He gives them the law and promises blessings for obedience.

1. There are three different types of laws given to the people of the Old Testament. These are known as:

A. Ceremonial Laws are laws telling the Jews how to worship God during the Old Testament times. These laws governed how to worship in the temple and do the sacrifices. Christians do not obey these laws because we are not under the old covenant and we don't worship God the way people did in the Old Testament. We Christians are under the new covenant.

B. Civil laws are laws telling how the government is to rule the people. We do not follow these laws because they were for the original nation of Israel which does not exist today.

C. Moral laws are to be obeyed by us. These laws tell us how we are to obey God. The Ten Commandments are to be obeyed.

2. Exodus 20:1-17; God gives us the Ten Commandments which are still an authority over us today. We must remember that these are ten laws and not just suggestions. All ten of them are to be obeyed today and this includes honoring the Sabbath, and proper worship.

The Ten Commandments

1. *You shall have no other gods before me.* This order is about who we worship. This means we worship only the God of the Old Testament, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and nobody else.

The Apostle Paul says us in 1 Timothy 2:5 "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

Isaiah 43:11 says, "I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior."

We read in John 14:6, "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

The Bible clearly and repeatedly teaches that there is only one God and He is a jealous God. Isaiah 42:8 says. "I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols."

This means that you must not worship any other god. We must worship only Jesus Christ.

2. *You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.*

You shall not bow down to them or worship them. This commandment is about how we worship. We do not worship idols such as icons or crosses.

This commandment is closely related to the first commandment and it focuses on how we disobey the first commandment. Idol worship is man's attempt to bring God down to his size. Humans want to make their own gods instead of accepting the only true God. It is the true God who helps us. Read Isaiah 46 to see how idols are a burden on people while God is a helper to his people. This burden of idolatry is very easily seen in India; a country full of Idols. We get depressed whenever we visit India because they have idols all over the place even in rural places. They also have many temples. They spend a lot of money and time fixing and cleaning their temples and idols. The idols do nothing for them.

Idolatry is what led to the downfall of Israel in the Old Testament times. An idol is anything which replace God in our lives. This includes love of money, sports activities, our jobs and anything which get between yourself and God.

3. *You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name.*

Always use God's name with respect. Never use it in idle conversation. An example of misusing God's name is when people casually say "O God."

Misusing God's name is called blaspheme. Some common ways even Christians misuse God's name are idly repeating the name of God, changing the meaning of God's word to say what you want it to say, using a passage out of context, cursing someone, etc.

4. *Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.* It is set aside for us to go to church and worship together. To do acts of mercy and enjoy our families.

Jesus told us the Sabbath is a gift from God, and while this true, observing the Sabbath is still a law which we are to obey. Many Christians think it is no longer a law and that they can do whatever they want on Sunday. They say this because they want the day to be completely free of restrictions; a day they can do whatever they want. We do have a lot of freedom but we are to corporately worship and we shouldn't do things such as shop or eat at restaurants. These activities and others which keep people from being able to go to worship themselves are to be avoided. Remember there is no place where the Bible says we don't have to obey the Sabbath so it is still the law.

5. *Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.* This also means to respect our elders see Leviticus 19:32.

This commandment is important because it teaches us that the family is God's way to raise a family. It means that parents are to discipline their children and teach the children to grow up to obey God and be good citizens. The children are to respect their older relatives and if necessary provide for their care when the parents become very old. The parents are to not abuse their children.

6. *You shall not murder.*

Murder is defined as the killing of a person illegally. 1 John 3:15 says you commit murder just by wishing a person to be dead. Murder includes abortion and euthanasia. Murder is terrible because it is the killing of a human being who is created in the image of God. You can't undo a murder even if you want to. For example, most murders are committed when a person is angry and the murderer is instantly sorry.

It is permitted to kill a person when you are a soldier of a lawful government in a war. It is also permitted to kill a criminal who has lawfully been convicted of a crime and sentenced to die.

7. *You shall not commit adultery.* You can violate this command with your eyes or thinking of committing adultery see Matthew 5:28

. This commandment forbids any sex outside of marriage between a male husband and a female wife. It is a sin to even think about sex with anybody except your spouse. It is sin to look with lust at a person you are not married to. Marriage is defined as the union of one man and one woman. This union is to be voluntary for both the man and the woman and it is for life. Marriage is a wonderful gift from God according to Genesis 2:24. It is God's way to raise a family. Adultery either destroys or badly damages a marriage. Sex between unmarried people is sin and also very dangerous because of disease and unwanted pregnancy.

8. *You shall not steal.* Stealing is taking someone else's property without their permission. There are many examples of stealing such as asking for a receipt bigger than the purchase, sleeping when you are paid to work, etc. Stealing is always a sin. More examples of stealing are shoplifting, keeping balance when the store gives you too much. not giving to God,

9. *You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.* Do not lie; there is no such thing as a littler lie because all lies are terrible. One lie destroys complete trust forever.

A Christian

is to be known as a person who always tells the truth. We are to keep all our promises and commitments.

10. *You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.* Covet

means to want something very strongly. It is sin when the thing you covet belongs to someone else or that your desire becomes too strong such as you desire money more than anything else. Sometimes coveting is good such as coveting to know God and His Bible is good. Coveting my wife's affections are good.

You must be satisfied

with what God has given you. Do not be jealous when you see someone become more prosperous than you. It is all right to ask God for something such as a new car, but be satisfied if you do not get the new car. Do not be jealous if your neighbor gets the new car. Jealousy can make you covet other people's property enough to steal the property. Countries go to war because of jealousy. Coveting leads a person to borrow money which they can't repay.

B. God continues through chapter 24 to give the people various laws about how to live (such as laws about the Sabbath and about slaves).

Chapters 25-31 God gives detailed instruction for the building of the tabernacle which was a large tent where God would live with the people. The word tabernacle means dwelling place read 25:8 which tells us that this tabernacle is a place where God will dwell with His people. Verse 9 teaches us that God is very particular about his dwelling place and most of the rest of the book is devoted to instructing exactly how the tabernacle is to be built. We learn that God has proscribed how we are to correctly approach Him. He gives precise details about the building, furnishing of the tabernacle and the dress of the priest. God shows that He wants us to properly prepare to worship Him.

Chapter 32 the people show their true hearts because while Moses was spending time with God, the people made a golden calf and worshipped it; verses 1-6. Both God and Moses were extremely angry. Verses 7-14 records that God threatens to destroy the people and start over again. Again we see another example of a man correctly arguing with God. Verse 14 tells us that God relented and spares the Hebrews.

Verses 19-20 reports that Moses has a temper and we see what he does. Verses 26-28 we see the punishment for the people's sin as 3,000 men were killed.

Chapter 33:18:23 reports that Moses is favored by God and again God allows Moses to see Him. Moses again meets with God and is again given instructions about how the Hebrew people were to

live. Note that even though Moses was very favored and loved by God. God still severely punished him later for disobedience by not allowing him into the Promised Land.

Chapter 35 describes how the people freely gave their gold and other valuables to the Lord so that they could be used to build the tabernacle. They brought these items out of Egypt with them which God had promised in Genesis 15:14.

God gave exact instructions for building the tabernacle and about worship. These exact instructions teach us to be careful about how we approach God. These instructions also teach us that God's people are different from other people and they are to live differently. This is also true for Christians; we are to live in a way that shows that we belong to Jesus.

The people were not allowed to enter the holy of holies to meet with God. Once a year only the high priest was allowed to enter the holy of holies to take a blood sacrifice to seek forgiveness for his and the people's sins. This was not a perfect sacrifice so it had to be repeated continually. Later Jesus became the perfect sacrifice and there are to be no further sacrifices.

We Christians are privileged to be able to meet with God at any time day or night and talk to Him ourselves. We don't need a high priest to go between us and God because Jesus is our high priest. Jesus was without sin which meant His sacrifice on the cross was the perfect sacrifice acceptable by God the Father as payment for our sins. It also means that never again should a sacrifice be done.

Exodus closes in chapter 40 verses 34-38 on a positive note talking about the glory of the Lord filling the tabernacle which is where the Lord next spoke to His people see Lev. 1:1.

Overview of Leviticus

The subject of Leviticus is the idea that you shall be holy--1Peter 1:16 and Leviticus 11:44-45.

Leviticus continues the story started in Exodus at Mt Sinai. God is teaching the Hebrews how to live lives pleasing to Him, how to be His people. The Hebrews are to live as a people separate from other peoples. We Christians are to live differently from the World. John 15:19. God's people are to concentrate on living for God. We Christians focus on living for eternity and not this current world. Our real home is in heaven with God. A Christian gets his rewards in heaven while the only rewards a non-Christian ever will get are in this life.

The laws were given to the Hebrew people so that they would know what God expected of them. If they perfectly obeyed the Law they could get to heaven by their own work and they would not need a savior. However, people can't perfectly obey God so we need Jesus to save us from our sins.

Reading Leviticus can be boring but there are lessons for us. We learn that:

1. Our God is a hands on God, in other words our God is very active in our lives.
2. God is particular about how we worship Him and we get much instruction in Leviticus about worship. Instruction that is good for the church today.
3. There were differences in sacrifices between God's people and other people.
 - A. Other people sacrificed to read the future and to appease false gods.
 - B. Hebrews sacrificed to emphasize that they should be holy. It was a way to seek forgiveness for sin. Old Testament sacrifices pointed the way to the ultimate, final sacrifice of Jesus.
4. The Levites serve as OT priest; only the high priest could access God in the Holy of Holies. Now we have Jesus as high priest Hebrews 5:5 and we Christians have access to God all the time Heb. 4:14-16.
 - A. Only we Christians have this access which means, for example that God is ready at all times to meet us in prayer. This is not true of pagans because they have no access to God see Isaiah 59:2 and John 9:31. Pagans can only reach God when they repent and put their trust in Jesus.
5. There is no longer a need for sacrifice, but we learn by studying the sacrifices. Leviticus teaches us about the importance of blood to atone for sin. See Lev 17:11. The New Testament also teaches us in Hebrews 9:22 and 1 John 1:7 that there is no forgiveness of sin without the shedding of blood. The Christian receives his forgiveness from the shed blood of Jesus on the cross.

Why study these laws? Many Christians say we don't need to study them because we are no longer under the law. It is true that we are no longer judged by the law, but we are still supposed to obey the moral laws such as the Ten Commandments. We need to look at the broad teachings of the law and obey those laws that apply to our modern society; those laws which are timeless such as Deuteronomy 25:4 and 25:13-16, Exodus 23:5 and 1-9 and Leviticus 25:14

The prominent subjects of Leviticus are:

1. God is holy while we people are sinful. Our sinfulness is the main problem confronting all people. The message of Leviticus is that there is forgiveness and cleansing for sin which allows us to have fellowship with God.
2. Laws. Leviticus is the most legalistic book in the Bible. There are many kinds of laws which are designed by God to lead us to Christ so that we can be justified by faith. Galatians 3:24 God's laws show man his corruption and convict us of our sin. Obeying God's laws is a good way for us to live.

A. We see the dietary laws for Israel here. Later in Acts 10:10-16 we see that Christians are now able to eat all foods.

3. The five offerings. Leviticus 1-7 talks about offerings to God. There are five different offerings. These are:

A. Burnt offerings (chapter 1:3-17) The people devoted themselves to God through purifying fire.

B. Meal offerings (2:1-16) Thanking God for their lives and offering their lives for His service.

C. Peace (3:1-17) Participating in the blessings of fellowship with God.

D. Sin (4:1-5:13) Being forgiven because they were sinners.

E. Trespass (5:14-6:7) Being forgiven for the sins they committed.

4. Chapters 6:8-7:36 are the priesthood chapters which are about the Old Testament priest.

A. The office of priest in the Old Testament was very important because priest were the mediators between God and His people. This is why there are such detailed instructions about the priest in Leviticus. Today Christ serves as our mediator and He allows us direct access to God.

B. The book of Hebrews has a good study comparing the Old Testament priests, who were sinful men, with the New Testament priest, who is the perfect high priest—Jesus Christ.

C. Lev. 7:31-36 God makes provision for the priest to eat. We must follow this example and make sure our pastors eat.

D. We see in chapter 8:1-4 that God ordered the appointing of Aaron and his sons as priests. In other words, God called them just as He still calls us to our office of pastor or elder. Make sure you are called by God and not by yourself.

E. Chapter 10 verse 1-2 Aaron's sons are killed by God because they disobeyed God in their worship. We are to approach God properly with respect and repentant hearts. It is a good idea when you begin your worship service with a prayer of repentance.

5. Day of Atonement. Chapter 16

A. This was the most important day of the year for Israel because this was the day the forgiveness of sin reached its highest expression. This was the only day of the year that the high priest could enter the most holy place in the tabernacle. This was a very solemn day, for example, it was the only day of the year that fasting was required.

i. Leviticus 16 tells how two goats are picked. One goat is slain and the other symbolically has the sins of the people placed on it and it is driven out of the camp taking the sins of the people with it. Verses 21-22 tell about this removal of sins.

B. The Day of Atonement is replaced by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus for our forgiveness of sins.

6. Holy Times chapters 23-25

A. God set apart holy days when the people were to meditate about Him. We get our word holidays from this. Many Christians celebrate the holiday of Christmas and Easter. In the United States Christians celebrate Thanksgiving which is a day set apart to give special thanks to God.

There are practical lessons for us in Leviticus such as Leviticus 20 verses 1-5. We read that God hates the sacrifice of children. Death is the penalty. Note verses 4-5 teach severe penalty for the person who witnesses this and does not try to stop it. I wonder how God feels about the sacrifices of children we have here in Uganda. Do we Christians allow this terrible sin without trying to stop it? How about other sins?

Overview of Numbers

The book was originally named "in the desert" which is where the story takes place. The Septuagint, which was the first translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek, changed the name to Numbers because the people were numbered.

It is the story of 40 wasted years walking or wandering in the desert because of disobedience by both Moses and the people. Numbers teaches that God will punish sin and only Joshua and Caleb of that generation were allowed into Promised Land.

The Hebrews traveled three months going from Egypt to Mt. Sinai. Then they stayed almost a year at Mt. Sinai, and then it took 40 years to travel to Moab and the Promised Land. The whole trip from Egypt to Moab normally took just a few weeks.

Three main parts to book

I. First is at Mt. Sinai as people prepare to leave where they lived ever since chapter 18 of Exodus. Numbers 1:1 thru 10:10

1. A census or counting of the people. 1:1-54

2. In chapter 2:1-4:49, God organizes the people by giving each tribe its own area, and later each tribe will be given its own land in a separate area. He assigns Levites to be priest to each tribe. God is preparing the people to travel to the Promised Land. He also continues their religious instruction.

Numbers 3:1-10 repeats the story about how Aaron's sons were killed for disobedient worship and how God expanded the numbers of priests to include all the Levites.

3. Legislation 5:1-8:26

A. God teaches in chapter 8:25& 26 that the Levites above the age of 50 are to continue to assist in the duties of worshipping God but they no longer are the leaders. We church leaders must be develop young replacements to take over our leadership positions. Every pastor has a time when he must be willing to retire and step aside.

4. Final events at Sinai 9:1-10:10

II. Second part of numbers is the journey from Mt. Sinai to Edom chapters 10:11-20:21. The Hebrews managed to make what should have been a two week trip into a forty year ordeal because of their bad attitude toward God.

1. First is the trip to Kadesh 10:11-12:16

A. Chapter 11 reports that the people continue to complain about God and Moses. Moses asks God for help. God give Moses help in chapter 11:16&17. He appoints seventy elders to help Moses. Later in the New Testament God appoints elders and deacons to help do the work of the church.

B. Chapter 12 reports how Aaron and his sister rebelled against Moses who was God's ordained leader. Let us study this rebellion.

- i. Verses 1-2 report the crime which is they rebelled against Moses who is God's chosen leader.
- ii. Verse 3 reports that Moses was very meek and he had no pride even though he was a great godly leader.
- iii. Verses 4-8 reports that God, Himself, defends Moses and rebukes Aaron and Miriam for their rebellion.
- iv. Verses 9-10 God is angry and punishes Miriam.
- v. Verses 12-13 Moses intercedes and asks God for mercy for Miriam even though Miriam attacked him.
- vi. Verses 14-15 God is merciful to Miriam and makes her punishment temporary instead of permanent.

2. Next is a story which takes place at Kadesh about the people not trusting and disobeying God who punishes them for this. Numbers 13:1-2 God sends out spies to look over the land that verse 2 tells God had promised to the people. Read verses 3-16 God sends out representatives of each of the twelve tribes of Israel who were to possess the land. Verses 25-33 The spy's report. Caleb and Joshua reported that they should immediately conquer the land but the others doubted that God would keep His promise to give them the land. They did not believe God when He said they could have the land. They said that the inhabitants were too strong to be conquered which showed a complete lack of trust in God. Chapter 14 reports that this rebellion by the people angered God. Look at verses 11-12. We see that God threatens to wipe out the people. Verses 13-19 Moses intercedes and God pardons but promises punishment. Verses 20-37 God tells the adults that their punishment will be that none of the adults will live to enter the "promised land." They will wander for forty

years in the desert until all the adults are dead. Verses 37-38 God immediately puts to death the ten spies who did not trust Him.

3. Moses rebellion reported. Chapter 20 verses 2-5 report how the people provoked Moses to anger by again complaining about their treatment by God. Verses 8-13 God gives Moses specific instructions to speak to the rock at Meribah and it would give water, but Moses instead struck the rock and he is punished, for this disobedience, by not being allowed to enter the “promised land”. God punishes every sin.

III. The third major section of Numbers consists of chapters 20:22-36:13 and tells about their years of wandering aimlessly in the desert while all the disobedient adults die off.

1. Aaron’s death is next. Chapter 20:22-29 reports the death of Aaron.

2. The people again complain about God and we have the story of the bronze serpent chapter 21:4-9. God sent venomous snakes to punish the people for their rebellion, and many Israelites died. People then repented so God provided a way for them to be saved. Moses put a bronze serpent on a pole and the people were instructed to look at the bronze serpent to be saved. In John 3:14-15 Jesus likens this to being saved by looking to Jesus.

3. Chapters 22-24 tell an interesting story.

A. Chapter 22 King Balak of Moab was afraid of the Hebrew people so he asked Balaam to put a curse on the Hebrews. God told Balaam to not curse the Hebrew people. Balak kept trying to convince Balaam to curse the Hebrews and so God allowed Balaam to go to see Balak. It appears that God did not want Balaam to go see Balak. The evidence for this is the story about the donkey getting in the way of Balaam and stopping him from traveling further. God told Balaam to go but only say exactly what God told him to say.

B. Chapter 23 God told Balaam to bless the Hebrew people instead of cursing them. Balak kept trying to get Balaam to curse the Hebrews but Balaam said he could not curse the Hebrews because God wanted to bless them.

C. Balaam in chapter 24 in a vision tells how God has been blessing Israel. In verse 9 Balaam repeats the promise of blessing that God had made to Abraham.

i. God in verses 15-25 has Balaam speak a prophecy to Balak. He speaks about the coming of King David who will destroy Israel’s enemies of Moab and Edom. The prophecy looks forward to David rescuing the people from their earthly enemies but the scepter looks forward to Jesus coming and rescuing His people from their bondage to sin.

4. Numbers 27:12-23 God appoints Joshua to take over as leader for Moses.

5. Chapters 28-30 have more religious instruction.

6. Chapter 36 reports that the people have finally reached the plain of Moab which is at the entrance to the land God had promised the Hebrew people.

Overview of Deuteronomy

Name=second reading of the law it could also be called final instruction from Moses

I. Chapter 1-3 is the introduction. Forty years have passed since they have left Egypt and people are now on the banks of the Jordan river ready to cross over. Normally it would only take 11 days for the journey from Mt. Sanai to the Promised Land but because of disobedience of the people it took forty years. Moses, an encourager, gives the people an encouraging talk, final preparations for the entry to the “promised land.” He recounts their history since leaving Mt Horeb (another name for Mt Sinai). Moses reminds the people of the consequence of their sin and rebellion. Chapter 1 verse 3 Moses reminds the people that his authority is from God and also reminds them that his words are God’s words.

II. Moses reviews the laws the people have been given.

1. Moses in chapter four reminds the people to either obey God and enjoy blessings or disobey and suffer punishment.

2. Chapter five the Ten Commandments are again reviewed. These commandments are the basis of United States law.

3. Chapter 6 has a very important teaching in verses 4-10, which instructs us to love the Lord our God with all our heart and all our soul and all our might, with all our might. Jesus in Mark 12 also repeated this commandment when He said this was the most important commandment. John 14:5 says we show God that we love Him when we obey Him. We must obey God to show our love.

4. Chapter 7:6-8 gives us the basis of our covenant relationship with God. It is God’s sovereign choice see Romans 8:29-30.

5. We see in chapter 14:21 how not to interpret scripture, how not to build a doctrine. The Jews use the end of this verse to teach that God says that you can’t eat meat and dairy products at the same meal.

6. Read chapter 18:15-22 which has important teaching about prophets. We read that Moses is a true prophet and verse 15 promises that God will raise up another prophet which He did—Jesus. In verse 20, God says false prophets are to die. Verse 22 tells us we can identify a true prophet by the fact that his prophecies will happen. Who was the first prophet mentioned in Bible? See Genesis 20:7

III. Chapters 27-30 Final comments from Moses about obeying God.

1 Chapter 27:15-26 is a list of curses for disobeying God.

2. Chapter 28 verses 1-14 promises blessings for obeying God see verses 1-6 and the rest of the chapter read verses 15-19 promises curses and punishment for disobeying. See Isaiah 57 for this same idea. Usually we will see more written about the curses than the blessings; it seems as if God wants to make sure we are warned.

3. Chapter 29 is a renewal of the covenant given at Mt Sinai in Exodus chapters 20-23 when God gave them the law and promises blessings for obedience.

A. Chapter 29 verse 29 and Isaiah 55:8-9 are very important verses which help us understand that we don’t understand everything about God and so we can’t explain everything about Him.

4. Chapter 30 God reminds the people that they have a choice of life or death. Verse 16 promises life for obedience and verses 17-19 offers death for disobedience.

IV. Chapters 31-34 Leadership is transferred to Joshua.

1. Chapter 34 reports the death of Moses at the age of 120 when he is in good health. God took Moses to the top of Mt. Pisgah and allowed him to see the “Promised Land “, but Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land.

Joshua Overview

This book begins a new section of the Bible. This section is called the historical section because it covers the history of the Israelites from the entrance to the “promised land” to the time the Old Testament ends. The section begins with Joshua and ends with the book of Esther.

It is both a book of victory, of conquest but also a book of failures by the people.

There are two main sections.

I. Chapters 1-12 report how the people conquer the land.

1. Chapter 1 God commissions Joshua. Verses 1-9 have some important lessons for us. A. Verses 5-7 & 9 We need to be bold in serving God. He says that He will always be with us. B. Verses 7-8 remind us to obey God always.

2. Chapters 2 and 5:13-6:27 relate the story of the capture of Jericho. Chapter 5:13-15 is felt to be a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus.

A. The story of Rahab hiding the two spies and thus being spared when the city falls is told in chapter 2.

B. These spies unlike the earlier spies brought back a positive report verse 24.

C. Tell the well-known story about how Jericho was captured. God orders that the army should march around the city once per day for six days. On the seventh day they are to march around the city seven times and then they are to shout and the walls of the city fall down. All the treasure belongs to the Lord and every living creature, all humans and every animal, is killed except the family of Rahab. This victory at Jericho is a story of a great triumph for God’s people.

3. chapter 3:1-17 reports how they crossed the river Jordan with dry feet just like crossing the Red Sea earlier and God fulfilled the promise that He made to Abraham to take the people to the promised land .

4. Chapter 4:1-9 reports how the people made a memorial to God with stones.

5. Chapters 7-8 report the conquest of the next town Ai. A story of disobedience and disaster followed by obedience and triumph.

A. First we read that Achan disobeyed God and kept for himself some of the treasure from Jericho and this caused the army of Joshua to be defeated by men of Ai. Achan and his family were put to death and then Ai was captured by the army of Joshua.

6. Chapter 9 reports the story about how the Israelites were tricked because they acted on their own and did not consult God when they dealt with the people of Gibeon. This meant that the Israelites had to live with the people of Gibeon and not destroy them.

A. Lesson for us about how we should always ask God for advice and not make our own decisions see verse 14 that they did not seek God's advice.

B. Another lesson about good leadership. Joshua had some shortcomings.

6. Chapters 10-12 reports how the army of God destroyed and conquered many kingdoms.

II. The second section of Joshua chapters 13-24 tells how the land is divided.

1. All the tribes except for the tribe of Levi were given land. Why did Levi not get any land?

2. Joshua 23 reports his farewell to the Israelite leaders.

A. Joshua talks about their accomplishments and reveals why he was a real man of God. Read verse 3 & 5 where Joshua gives credit to God for all their victories. All of God's true servants always give God credit for all their victories. We remember that we humans can't win any battles by ourselves. We only win when God does the work.

B. He also reminds them to remain faithful to God especially in the area of intermarriage with the Canaanites. He warns that if they disobey then God will display His anger against them. This is the same message Moses gave to the people.

3. Joshua chapter 24 verses 1-13 reminds the people of God's faithfulness to them through the ages and how he gave them the land he had promised their ancestors Genesis 12:7.

4. Verses 14-28 Joshua makes his farewell speech to the people and he tells them to be faithful and only serve God. Verse 15 is a very well-known Bible verse in which Joshua commits all his family to follow God. The people all promise to do this. We will study in the book of Judges how well they keep this promise.

5. Joshua dies at the age of 110 and is buried in the land God gave him.

Overview of Judges

I. Introduction. The author and time written is unknown but Judges covers around 400 years and is known as Israel's dark ages (like Uganda during Idi Amin). It is a time characterized by the last verse of the last chapter of the book chapter 21 verse 25. This idea that the people went their own way instead of following God is repeated several times earlier in the book. Jesus says about this idea: John 14:15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." I guess the people did not really love God. Remember their earlier promises to obey God—they promised to obey God but they just couldn't do it.

The Judges are not really judges rather they are military leaders—war lords. The pattern of Judges is that the people sinned and got in trouble and when their enemy was punishing them they turned to God and He sent them a Judge who helped them. There were twelve Judges.

II. Chapters 1-16 reports about the twelve different judges.

1. The first problem is described in chapters 1:1-2:5 after Joshua died. The people of Israel failed to complete the conquest, and they did not drive out all the inhabitants as God had ordered in Deuteronomy 20:16-18. It is disobedience to God whenever we don't do exactly as He orders. We must obey all of God's orders exactly and never compromise. The problem in Judges is that the inhabitants left alive in the Promised Land influenced the Hebrew people in a bad way. Many of the problems in the western church are caused because the people compromise and don't obey all of the rules God gives us. An example for Christians is that God orders us to not marry a non-Christian. Often Christians decide to compromise which means to disobey this rule, and marry a non-Christian. Many times this marriage causes the Christian to stop serving God; often the person even quits going to church. Often the children are not raised to be Christian.

2. Read 2:1-5 Israel's disobedience and prophecies of future troubles because of their disobedience. This is the story throughout the Bible.

A. Chapter 1 Verse 1 is a theophany. (See also Exodus 3:2-6)

3. Chapter 2:6-16:31 Stories of constant failure. Joshua's generation is dead, and the next generation rejects God.

A. Look at 2:10 read. We see that the new generation did not know about God. This was and is a major problem in the church. See Deut. 4:10 to see one of many verses where God tells us to teach our children about God—we are responsible to teach our children about Jesus.

The following pattern is repeated over and over in the book of Judges:

1. The people sinned as the Israelites did evil in the sight of the Lord.
2. War as Judgment=the Lord sold them into the hand of an enemy nation for a number of years and they suffered.
3. Then the people repented and cried out to God to save them from their trouble.
4. Then came deliverance as God raised up for them a deliverer (judge) who saved them. And the land had peace until the people began to sin again.
5. This cycle of sinning followed by repentance followed by deliverance followed by sinning happened over and over again for over 400 years.

Some judges were good and some were bad.

Deborah was a good judge and she gave full credit to God for her triumphs. 5:1-9 & 31

Gideon was a good judge who occasionally had a sin problem. As we study Gideon we will see how the statement that “God helps those who help themselves” is so wrong. We will see that God takes the weak person and gives this person the strength to do mighty things.

A. Gideon is called by God to lead God’s people who are being terribly abused by the Midian people. Chapter 6:1-27. God in verse 12 calls Gideon a mighty man. Gideon points out that he is not a mighty man because he is, according to verse 15, from the weakest clan in his tribe and he is the least in his family. In verse 16, God tells Gideon that he will be strong because He (God) will provide the strength and that God get’s the glory not Gideon..

B. God wants Gideon to lead his army against the Midian army. Gideon shows his faith is weak and he tests God with a fleece of wool. Judges 1:36-40

C. Gideon is now ready to lead God’s army. Chapter 6:1-18 reports how God prepares His army. We see that God sends home everybody except for 300 soldiers because God wants to demonstrate that it is not the people’s strength that will win the battle instead it is God’s power that will provide the victory.

D. The 300 soldiers faced an army of 135,000 enemy soldiers and God causes them to destroy the army of Midian. Judges 7:19-25 makes it clear that God won the victory and not the people.

Jephthah see chapter 11:1-12:7 was a bad judge. See the story of his vow (11:29-40).

A. Was his vow verses 30-31 a good vow? Of course it was a bad vow. See the result of His vow verses 34-40. Do you think God wants someone to sacrifice his child? Leviticus 20:1-4 tells us that God strongly forbids this behavior. The lesson for us is that we must always be careful to only make vows that we know are pleasing to God.

III. The book of Judges closes with two horrible stories of general anarchy and lawlessness see chapters 17-21.

1. The last section differs from the first section—internal problems rather than an external enemy became Israel's big problem. Israel was her worst own enemy just like church today. The fight is within the church. This is a very common problem today in our churches.

A. Chapter 17-18 Reports story of Micah; a story of idol worship involving a Levite and the tribe of Dan. This is similar to your pastor being part of idol worship.

B. Chapter 19-21 reports a terrible story about the rape and murder of the concubine of a Levite by members of the tribe of Benjamin. This led to warfare between the tribe of Benjamin and the rest of Israel. It shows just how low the chosen people of God had fallen—as low as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

2. Judges 21:25. The statement that in those days that there was no king and everyone did what was right in their own eyes tells us that we must live by rules and that we must have absolutes of right and wrong. God gives us these rules in the Bible.

Ruth—one of two books named after women

This is a delightful story of God blessing faithful servants in a special way. We see in chapter one that this story happens in the time of the judges.

Ruth and Naomi and Boaz are the main characters. Ruth is not a Hebrew but she is the daughter in law of Naomi. They are two widows—poor like in Uganda, Ruth loves her mother in law Naomi and returns to Israel with her. Boaz notices Ruth and befriends her and eventually marries her. The faithfully did what was proper and lawful for Boaz to do to take Ruth as His wife. Ruth and Boaz are the great grandparents of King David and also in the line of Jesus is Rahab the prostitute.

This book comes just after the book of Judges which showed the unfaithfulness of the nation of Israel in the period of the Judges, and how the people of Israel were punished for their disobedience. Now Ruth tells us a story about how God rewards the faithfulness of three people. Ruth is from Moab and this story proves that God's covenant is not just for one people group but for others who also can enjoy benefits from being one of God's people; living in covenant with God.

1. Ruth chapter 1 tells us that Ruth and her mother in law Naomi lose their husbands and both become widows in Moab the home of Ruth. Naomi returns to Israel and Ruth goes with her.
2. Ruth in chapter 2 meets Boaz who is kind to her.
3. Ruth and Boaz marry chapters 3 and 4 and they are parents of the grandfather of King David which makes them ancestors of Jesus. Matthew 1:5-6 & 31.

I and II Samuel Overview

Samuel, Saul, and David are the three main characters. Samuel is a real man of God. There is no scandal attached to his name as there is with so many other Bible people such as King David.

I. Samuel

1. Even his birth has a lesson for us. I Sam 1:1-8 reports how Hannah is married to a man who has another wife. Hannah is barren and wishes that she would have a child. She suffers persecution 1:6 from the other wife who has children.

2. Hannah turns to God verses 9-18 and she prays with her whole heart for a son and she promises God that if He will give her a son she will dedicate him to the Lord's service for his life. Notice verse 18 reports how Hannah has peace of mind after she prays and turns her request over to God. She vows to God that her son will be a Nazirite. Is this a good vow? Remember the vow of Jephthah? In Luke 1 the Holy Spirit commanded that John the Baptist should live as a Nazirite. We first hear about this idea of a Nazirite from Numbers 6:2-8. This is a vow of separation either for life or for a shorter period of time.

3. Chapter 1:20 reports that God gives her a son and Hannah keeps her promise to give her son to the Lord's service. As soon as Samuel is weaned, he goes to serve with Eli the priest. Hannah willingly gave up the pleasure of raising her son when she gave her son to God. Often serving God has a price that must be paid. For example, missionaries must leave their families behind.

A. Remember the words of Jesus as found in [Mark 8:34](#) "And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." God's people are often called to sacrifice to serve Him.

4. Hannah's song chapter 2:1-11--she praises God in prayer. This can be compared to Mary's prayer and also others who praised God for His faithfulness. We should imitate this and periodically spend extended time praising God.

5. Chapters 2-3 talk about the wickedness of the sons of Eli the priest and the judgment God pronounces--which is the death of Eli's family which happens later and is reported in 1 Kings 2:27.

6. Chapter 3:1-10 reports about the call of Samuel and how God was with him. Samuel is the last of the judges. Let's discuss God's call.

7. Chapter 4 tells in verse 10-11 how Israel lost the Ark of The covenant. The Ark was very important and symbolized the presence of God. They lost it because they misused it by carrying it into battle like a good luck charm or really as an idol by carrying it into battle. Talk about this type of idolatry now—good luck charms or wearing a cross.

8. Chapter 8--Israel demands a king. We see that Samuel's sons were appointed as judges to replace him, but his sons were evil men who verse 3 say took bribes. This caused the elders of Israel to reject these sons and demand a king. Samuel was upset, but God told him verse 7 that they weren't rejecting Samuel instead it was God they were rejecting. God had Samuel warn the people about the problems of Kings in chapter 8:10-18. God gives the people their request verses in 19-22. As we study the impact the kings have on the people we will see the truth of God's warnings. People tend to follow their leaders and so a bad king led the people into trouble with God.

9. In chapter 9 God appoints Saul from the tribe of Benjamin to be king. Look at verse 2 to see a description of the physical appearance of Saul. Remember this when we get to David.

II. The story of King Saul before David was king. We see the kind of King Saul is.

1. Chapter 10 covers the anointing of Saul who was from the tribe of Benjamin.
2. Samuel retires as their leader in chapter 12 and tells them to obey God. Verses 13-25 sounds like the last instructions from Moses to his people.
3. Immediately after a few victories over the enemy Saul reveals his true heart. Chapter 13 verses 8-14 tell how Saul offered a sacrifice to God for which Samuel reprimanded him. Why was it wrong for Saul to offer a sacrifice? This causes Samuel to tell King Saul that his reign will not continue and that God has already decided to appoint another king—A king after God's own heart.
4. Chapters 13-14 continue with stories about how Saul continues to have victory even though he makes poor decisions such as a rash vow calling a curse on anyone who eats before the enemy is defeated.
5. Chapter 15 reports how Saul for the second and last time is rejected as king. Saul is instructed by Samuel to destroy all of the enemy even their livestock. Saul disobeys this order from God and God tells Samuel that He is sorry that He made Saul king. Saul appears to repent but it is too late, and Samuel leaves him forever.

III. I Samuel Chapters 16-31 talks about both King Saul and David. We don't have much time for this study so let me give you the story in a condensed version. God picks David to be the next king. Look at his qualifications chapter 16:7, it is his heart. It is important to judge a person because of his heart as this is what God does. Luke 11:39 and Matthew 23:27

1. There is a long story in Samuel that continues to the end of the book. The story tells how Saul in his jealousy tries repeatedly to kill David, but David even though he had opportunities refused to harm Saul who he considered to be God's anointed one. We will look at a couple of stories.

2. Chapter 17 reports the well-known story about David and Goliath. This story tells of the great faith of David as he trusted God with his life, and David won a great victory for King Saul.

3. Chapter 18:1-16 tells the story about how Saul's heart appreciated what David was doing, but soon Saul started hating David, and he tried to kill David. 1 Samuel 18:7-9 shows the cause for Saul's hatred to be jealousy. Jealousy destroys many people.

4. We see in chapter 18 verse 10 that God sent a harmful spirit to Saul which turns Saul into a mad man. Look back to chapter 16 verses 13-14. We see that God has given His blessing to David and removed it from Saul.

5. Verse 11 reports that his anger became enough that he tried to kill David, but as we saw God gave His blessing to David and even though Saul repeatedly tried to kill David he couldn't overcome God's blessing David.

6. Chapter 24:1-7 David could have killed Saul, but we see why he did not. David loved and obeyed God even if it meant that Saul could live to continue attacking David's life.

7. David endured many years of attacks by Saul, but he never harmed Saul because he felt that "Saul was God's anointed one." Chapter 1 of 2 Samuel reports that David ordered death for the man who killed Saul.

8. Chapter 29 gives an example of just how wicked and far away from God Saul was as he consulted a medium or witch. Deuteronomy 18:10-12 forbids what Saul did. 1 Chronicles 10:13-14 tells us that this led to Saul's death and led to the end of his family's rule.

II Samuel

This is basically the story of King David's reign. He is known for being a person who does many wrong things, but he also is known for being a man who loved God, because he was always quick to repent. He was primarily known as a warrior king. He fought almost continually and he enlarged the borders to include most of the land God had promised the people. David first had to secure Judah and then later he secured all Israel. Most of the last fighting he did was because of his sin with Bathsheba which caused his son to later lead a rebellion.

I. The first section chapter's 1-10 talks about David's battles to secure his kingdom.

1. It took six years for David to secure his kingdom. All together David ruled seven and a half years over Judah and then thirty three years over all of Israel.

2. Chapter 5 records how his army captured Jerusalem, also called Zion, and also known as the city of David. This became the capital city of Israel and the center for their worship. It still is the capital.

3. Chapter six tells us how the Ark of (God) the Covenant came to Jerusalem. Verse 6-7 gives us a reminder that God expects to be obeyed. These verses reveal two transgressions. One being that they were not transporting the ark the way God had commanded—see Exodus 25:12-14. Also Uzzah was not allowed to touch the ark he was not a Levite. This is a troubling story but it gives us a lesson in just how serious God is about us following His orders and about how serious He treats sin.

A. David and Israel rejoiced when the Ark of the Covenant comes to Jerusalem 2 Sam 6:13-21. 2 Samuel 6:13-15 reports a joyous celebration. It is good to really celebrate God.

B. Note in verse 16 and 20-23 how David's wife Michal reacted to the way David celebrated. Remember she was a daughter of King Saul. What do you think about this?

4. Chapter 7 David desires out of an attitude of gratitude to build a building to worship God, but God says no. Later 1 Chr. 22:8. We read that it is for David's son to build because David has too much blood on his hands God rewards David's attitude and he covenants with David and tells him that:

A. Verses 10-11 God would provide a place for Israel to dwell securely forever.

B. Verses 12-13 God would raise up David's son who would build the temple.

C. Verse 13 God would establish David's dynastic line forever.

D. Verse 14 God would establish a father-son relationship with David's descendants. We enjoy this relationship today since we are the adopted children of God.

E. Verse 14-15 God's loving-kindness would not depart from David's dynastic line as it had from Saul. This is known as the Davidic Covenant and is fulfilled in Jesus.

Verses 18-19 records David's prayer of gratitude.

5. Chapters 8-10 record more great victories and also an act of kindness to a grandson of Saul.

II. Chapters 11-19:8 David's sin and family problems

1. All the previous good things were followed by the terrible story of David's sin of adultery and murder. Chapter 11 tells the story about how King David committed adultery with Bathsheba and then causes

Bathsheba's husband to be killed when Bathsheba becomes pregnant. So King David commits adultery and murder.

2. Chapter 12 tells how Nathan the prophet confronts David with his sin and verse 13 reveals David's heart because when his punishment is pronounced, David immediately repents. Verses 15-22 reports how the child born to him and Bathsheba died. David fasted and prayed for the child to recover but still the baby died. We learn that David was forgiven for his sins but he was punished. Verse 23 tells us that there is life after death. We also see David's acceptance of God's will.

3. Chapters 13-18 continue to report the price David paid for his sin; his son Amnon rapes his half-sister Tamar which causes her brother Absalom to kill Amnon. This led to a full scale rebellion by Absalom who forced David to flee the city. Absalom publicly had sexual relations with his father's wives and concubines. Finally Absalom was killed, and David publicly mourned for his son. A person can still repent but be punished on earth for his sins.

III. Chapters 19-24 ends this book continuing to report more of David's troubles.

1. Chapter 20 reports that a worthless man of the tribe of Benjamin by the name of Sheba leads a revolt against King David.

2. Chapter 21 begins by telling us of a three year famine which God told David was caused by the injustice done to the Gibeonites by King Saul. They were allowed to put to death seven of Saul's sons to satisfy this matter.

3. Chapter 21 ends reporting another war with the Philistines.

4. Chapter 22 David's song of deliverance. Read verse 1-7.

5. Chapter 24 ends the book of II Samuel with David once again getting into trouble. We also read about the purchase of a site in Jerusalem for offering burnt offerings to the Lord. There is both good and bad things in this last chapter which describes how David often led his life.

A. We read in verse 1 how God allowed Satan to lead David to order that a census be taken which is apparently against God's orders.

C. We don't know why this was wrong, but verse 10 shows that David knew that he was guilty of sinning by ordering the census, and his conscience bothers him so he goes to the Lord in repentance.

D. Verses 11-17 is the story of how God punishes David. He gives him a choice of three punishments. David chose and God sent disease which killed 70,000 men. Samuel's warning in 1 Samuel 8:9-18 was correct that kings cause trouble. Who wants a king?

E. 2 Samuel 24:18-25 is the last story in the book and tells how David bought land for an altar, and this is the spot where later the temple was built. Note in verse 24 a lesson for us about being willing to pay a price to serve God. We know that many thousands of Christians today suffer persecution because they worship and serve God in many countries of the world.

Below is an article about persecution recently in Uganda:

Much of the persecution in recent years has been taking place in predominately Islamic nations. Idi Amin, the self-appointed President for Life, a Muslim, seized power in Uganda in a coup in 1971 and soon he and his brutal followers began to try to set up the Islamic State of Uganda with funds from Saudi Arabia and Libya.

The problem they faced was that many of their people were devout Christians and so they began a system of killing that is almost beyond belief. . . . By the end of his reign of terror in 1979 when he was toppled by Tanzanian troops, some 500,000 Ugandans had been murdered, 300,000 of whom were believers.

We Christians must be willing to pay the price.

I and II Kings Overview

As the title suggests, this is the story of all the kings of Israel after King David until the fall of Jerusalem and the end of an independent monarchy. It is a sad story which tells how King Solomon became king at a time when Israel was a rich and powerful nation. Mostly it is a story about the failure of God's people to obey God which led to the rapid decline of their nation. King Solomon came to the throne with much promise of being a great king but, he married outside the Hebrew community and was led to idolatry by these wives. Chronicles repeats the story of the kingdom of Israel, but does it from a different perspective that of the priest.

We divide First Kings into two parts. The first part, chapters 1-12 tell about King Solomon and the United Kingdom, and the second part tells about the first part of the divided kingdom. The two books of Kings are really one book and the story just continues from first to second Kings. It is a story of God's people turning their backs on Him and following false gods even though God tried many ways to turn His people back to Himself. Even sending the prophets.

I. King Solomon rules over a united kingdom.

1. Chapter 1:1-5. Even before King David dies there is a family fight over who is to be king. Adonijah son of one of the earlier wives declares himself king by his own authority which authority he really does not have. When King David hears about this he announces that Solomon the son of Bathsheba will be king. Eventually Adonijah is put to death and Solomon consolidates his kingdom by killing his half-brother.

2. In chapter 2 verses 1-4 King David has final words with Solomon in which he told his son to be faithful to God. There is a promise of blessing here.

3. Chapter 3 reports in verses 1-2 that the seeds of the downfall of Israel are planted as Solomon enters into an agreement with Pharaoh to marry Pharaoh's daughter. Next we read about what is the high point of Solomon's reign. Verses 5-14 tell how The Lord asked Solomon what he would like and Solomon, instead of asking for things for himself, asked God for wisdom to be a good ruler. This so pleased God that He granted Solomon's request and in addition we read what God gave Solomon in verses 12-14. Verses 16-28 tell about a decision which showed how wise Solomon was. We see that Solomon certainly started out being a great king but we shall see that his unfaithfulness to God cause him to fail to end up as a great king.

4. Chapter 4 reports how prosperous the kingdom was with God's blessing coming to them. Verses 20-23 & 25-26. Look at verses 29-31 to see how blessed King Solomon was.

5. The next story is about another blessing; the building of the temple which begins in chapter five and continues until it is dedicated in chapter eight. The temple became the place where God dwelled with His people and where they worshipped Him. The temple was a very expensive and elaborate building. For example, there was a lot of gold used in its construction. The temple was constructed during the golden years of Solomon's reign. Look in verse 63 of chapter 8 to see how much was spent on dedicating the temple. For hundreds of years Jewish life was centered on the temple. Now they have no place to sacrifice for the forgiveness of their sins.

6. Chapter 9:1-9 tells us that as soon as the temple was finished God again appeared to Solomon. God again repeats the promise of blessings for obedience and terrible punishment for disobedience.

7. Chapter 9:10-11:13 talks about Solomon's golden years as king. He was blessed with riches like no other king. Other rulers honored him. We also see that he had 700 foreign wives and 300 concubines. Verses 2-8 of chapter 11 tell how God was angry because of this and how these wives led Solomon to worship idols instead of the true God.

8. Chapter 11:9-13 tells exactly why God is angry with Solomon and how God's punishment was to raise up adversaries to Solomon including Jereboam who took most of the kingdom away from Solomon's son. God delayed the punishment until after Solomon died because of David his father.

9. There are lessons to be learned from Solomon's life. Solomon was blessed like no other person with wisdom and riches. He had everything a person could want all because of God. Then he turned his back on God and ended up at the end of his life realizing how futile his life had been. Read the book of Ecclesiastes to see how he realized that he had wasted his life.

Many people realize too late in life that they had chased wealth and lived solely for their own pleasure, but they had wasted their lives. We have only one life to live. The question is will we live it for ourselves or for God.

King Solomon's reign was the high point of Israel's history. We read how large and prosperous the kingdom was. The rest of Israel's history is a continued story of decline. In the northern kingdoms case, their decline was steady, and in the case of Judah the decline was up and down. The northern Kingdom had sinful kings, but the kingdom of Judah had a few godly kings which caused God's judgment to be delayed.

II. The next part of First Kings talks about the divided kingdom.

1. Chapter 12:4-14 Solomon's heir was his son Rehoboam who was very harsh with the people and caused most of them to revolt. Rehoboam's rash act caused the destruction of his kingdom. We read in verses 18-19 that the northern kingdom revolted. They went with Jeroboam who set up another kingdom known as either the northern kingdom or Israel or Ephraim. The only tribes left to the original kingdom were Judah and the small tribe of Benjamin.

2. The first reaction of Rehoboam was to get an army to recover his people, but God gave different instructions. Chapter 12 verses 21-24. Why? Maybe it was to save Judah from destruction? Remember, Rehoboam with two tribes wanted to attack the ten tribes of the northern kingdom. Later in history the two nations did fight.

3. King Jeroboam chapter 12:25-33, in an act which had long term effect on Israel, sets up two worship centers in Israel. He also has two golden calves made for his people to worship. He thus takes his people completely away from the true God and personally leads them to idolatry. He does this so that his people will not return to Jerusalem for proper worship where they might be tempted to rejoin their brothers in the kingdom of Judah. Jeroboam is an evil king in the sight of God. Every time the Bible reports about a new king for either Israel or Judah, it reports whether the new king ruled as a good king in God's eyes or a bad king. All of Israel's kings were bad; some of Judah's were good and some bad which may explain why this kingdom survived longer than the northern kingdom.

4. Now we come to King Ahab of Israel who we are told in 1 Kings 16:30 was wicked even more wicked than any of the previous kings. He married Jezebel a woman so wicked that her name is synonymous to this day with evil. We see in verses 31-33 the reason that Ahab was considered worse than his predecessors was that he introduced the worship of Baal in Israel. Verse 33 says that Ahab did all he could do to make God angry.

5. In chapter 17 we are introduced to a tremendous figure in the Bible. Elijah the prophet enters the scene in the northern kingdom. God sent many prophets to both the northern kingdom and Judah. He did it to correct the behavior of the people—to call them to repent of their sins and to worship and serve God as they knew they should.

A. Because of Israel's sins in chapter 17:1 Elijah predicts no rain until he, Elijah, allows it to rain again. This is what happened. The sign of a true prophet is when his prophecy comes true, and verse 7 tells us the drought has come. God caused the drought because His people were so sinful.

B. This cause Elijah's life to be in danger from attacks by King Ahab so verses 2-6 tell how God protected and provided for His prophet. We learn that if God has a job for you then He will provide for you and protect you.

C. Verse 7 tells us that it is time for Elijah to move on to another job that the Lord has in mind for him. In verses 8-24, the prophet goes to Zarephath where he saves the life of a widow and her son. The first thing he did was to provide food for them because they were starving due to the famine in the land. Next as chapter 17 verses 17-23 report, he brings the son back to life after he died. It is significant that Elijah did this in a foreign country. Later in Luke 4:26 Jesus tells of this story to make the point that he, Jesus, was not sent only to the Jews, but to save all people groups from their sins. The Jews were so angry about this that they made their first but not last attempt to kill Jesus. Why were the Jews so jealous? Jealousy is a terrible sin with often terrible results, and it is a problem even in the church.

D. In chapter 18 Elijah returns to Israel which is suffering terribly from the three year drought that Elijah had earlier predicted.

E. Chapter 18:23 begins one of my favorite stories in the Bible; a remarkable story. The story takes place three years after Elijah predicted the drought. Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal to a contest to see who serves the true God. Read verses 20-39 the story about how Elijah humiliates the prophets of Baal. Note how Elijah ridicules the false prophets in verse 27. Elijah completely humiliates the false prophets, and in verse 40 he kills the false prophets. Do you believe verse 46, that a human can run faster than a horse? These events should completely convince the people to abandon their false gods and worship the true God.

f. Chapter 19 reports how fear overtakes Elijah and he flees from King Ahab's wrath. This verse is proof that we all can have times when our faith falters. Look at Matt 14:28-31, and note how Jesus helped Peter out when he failed. We read in verses 5-16 how God ministered to Elijah when he was depressed and how God restored Elijah to His service. Verse 18 is proof that God always has His remnant.

G. Chapter 19:16-21 reports the call of Elisha another remarkable prophet, who replaces Elijah. God is teaching church leaders that they must prepare so that their ministries can continue after their time. It is important for church leaders to train somebody to take over their ministry and continue it. I hope the ministry that I am currently involved in last long after I die.

H. 2 Kings 2:1-12 reports how Elijah is taken up to heaven. Elijah and Enoch (see Gen. 5:24) are the only two people reported in the Bible who do not die. We read how a "chariot of fire" is sent by God to pick Elijah up and take him directly to heaven. The Christians who are alive when Jesus returns will not experience

physical death see I Thessalonians 4:16-17. Elijah and Enoch were special people to not have had to suffer death.

6. 1 Kings continues the story about just how wicked Ahab and Jezebel were. We read in chapter 21 the story about how they conspired to steal land away from Naboth. Jezebel in verses 9-10 arranges for Naboth to be killed so that they can steal the property.

A. 1 Kings 21:17 reports how God orders Elijah to return and confront King Ahab about his sins. In verses 21-24 Elijah pronounces God's judgment on Ahab and his family. Verse 23 tells how the dogs will eat Jezebel. 2 Kings 9:33-37 reports the story about how this prophecy is fulfilled.

B. 1 Kings 21:27-29 reports that because King Ahab humbled himself God delayed punishment until a future generation. 2 Chronicles 33 records a similar story about King Manasseh. King Manasseh was a very wicked king in Judah who also repented after God pronounced judgment on him and so God delayed the punishment until after King Manasseh died.

C. The last act of Ahab was to not listen to the prophet from God who predicted disaster for him if he went into battle. Ahab was killed in the battle. So he died disobeying God just as he lived his life.

7. Elisha's ministry like Elijah's was to try to call the people to turn from their idolatry to the true God so that God could bless His people.

A. Elisha also performed many miracles (2 Kings 2 verses 18-21) reports how he purified the water for the city of Jericho.

B. Chapter 4 verses 1-7 reports how Elisha helps a poor widow. Comment on the special love God has for widows and orphans. James 1:27 teaches how we Christians are to act toward widows and orphans—they are special in God's eyes.

C. Chapter 4:8-36 tells how just like Elijah he Elisha brought a woman's son back from the dead. There are five people who brought people back to life from the dead. These are Elijah and Elisha in the Old Testament and then Jesus, Peter, and Paul from the New Testament.

D. Chapter 13 reports the death of Elisha. Verses 20-21 report that even after death he was able with God's power to bring a person back from the dead. This miracle was done by God and not the dead Elisha.

8. What was the purpose of miracles in the Bible; acts of mercy? They were to authenticate the ministry of people like Jesus and Elisha.

III. Summary of Israel—the northern kingdom.

1. There were 19 kings and they were not good in God's eyes. The northern kingdom lasted about 208 years before Assyria captured the kingdom and it ceased to exist for all times. It was the practice of conquering kings in those days to take the captured people out of their homelands and resettle them throughout their lands. This they felt kept their captured people from uniting and rebelling. They then moved other captured people into the land they had just emptied.

The people of Judah and later the people during the time of Jesus hated the Samaritans the occupants of the old northern kingdom feeling that they had stolen their kinsman's land. You will read of this hatred in the New Testament. The ten tribes who were taken away by the Assyrians have not been heard from since and they are communally referred to as "The lost tribes of Israel."

2. The story of the kings of Israel is one of sadness as they turned away from God and went their own way until their punishment. They went from blessing and prosperity to destruction.

3. Let's look at a typical king of Israel 814 B.C.—King Jehoahaz read 2 Kings 13:1-9. He was evil and the Lord allowed his enemies to punish him. Then the king prayed to God verse 4, and God rescued them so that they lived again in safety. Then verses 6-7 reports they again sinned and God again punished his kingdom. This king ruled about 17 years before the army of Syria destroyed his army. Is there any question as to why God punished His people? We see another lesson here about how bad leadership causes the people to suffer.

IV. A look at Judah. Some of their kings were good and some were evil. The good kings may have been the reason God allowed the southern kingdom to last longer.

1. 2 Kings 18:1-8 describes King Hezekiah as a good king who honored God. He was king when the northern kingdom was conquered by Assyria. A few years after the kingdom of Israel fell, the king of Assyria attacked Judah. All of Judah was conquered by Assyria except Jerusalem.

2. Chapter 18:19-35 tells how as the army of Assyria surrounds the walls of Jerusalem; the commander of the army ridicules Jerusalem and calls on them to surrender.

3. Chapter 19 records how King Hezekiah was very frightened and he goes to the temple where he pours his heart out to God, and begs God to rescue him. Isaiah the prophet tells him that God is going to rescue him and predicts that the Assyrian army will return home in defeat. Verses 35-36 report the death of 185,000 men of the Assyrian army. This caused the Assyrians to return to their capital in defeat, and was the beginning of the end of their empire. The new power in that part of the world was Babylon.

4. King Hezekiah dies and his son Manasseh becomes king. Chapter 21 verses 1-2 tell us that, unlike his father, he was an evil king. It was during his time that verses 10-15 predict that, because of their evil, God will allow the kingdom of Judah to be captured just as Israel was. Late in his life while in captivity and being tormented by his captors Manasseh repented and God allowed the kingdom to last another fifty odd years.

3. Chapter 25 tells how the Babylonians under king Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem and took the people into captivity. This was a terrible fate and many of the Jews suffered as slaves. God may be patient with people, but when he loses His patience, His judgment is terrible.

I and II Chronicles

I and II Chronicles like Kings are really one book. The first time that I read through the Old Testament I wondered why it was repeating much of the history that I had already read. It is true that it does repeat much of the history of the Jews, but it is written differently to remind the people about their relationship with God. In other words it was written with a religious point of view. It was written after the exile at the end of the historical period of the Old Testament.

A man by the name of Gleason Archer wrote, that the books were, “Composed with a very definite purpose in mind, to give to the Jews of the Second Commonwealth (Israel after exile) the true spiritual foundations of their theocracy (heritage) as the covenant people of Jehovah. This historian’s purpose is to show that the true glory of the Hebrew nation was found in its covenant relationship to God.” God gives them a second chance.

In other words, the books of Chronicles are a clear warning to the people never again to forsake the temple and the worship of the living God. They have been severely punished by God, and now they should have learned their lesson and be ready to obey God.

Even though the Jews were restored to their land, they were not an independent country like they were during the days of David and Saul. They were ruled by the Persians and others later on such as the Romans during the time of Jesus. The temple they built was a very poor one in relation to the one built by Solomon.

I. Many of the first chapters of Chronicles are about the genealogy; the ancestry of the Jews even covering the returnees from exile. This is the reason we know that the books of Chronicles was written after the exile.

II. Much of the books of Chronicles are about the rule of David and of Solomon.

1. Chapter 10 tells how Saul ceases being king. Verse 13 reports how King Saul died. It was because he was unfaithful to the Lord even consulting a medium or a witch instead of asking the Lord for guidance.

2. Chapter 11 begins the story about how David became king of all Israel and we read about his reign.

3. Chapter 16:8-36, read 8-17 records David’s great song of praise and thanksgiving as he celebrates the Ark of God coming to Jerusalem. Read and use this as a prayer guide for your own prayers. Use God’s own words as found in scripture in your own prayers.

4. Chapter 17 repeats the promise of God to David that his kingdom will last forever. (This is known as what covenant? Explain a “kingdom” verse 14 which will last forever?) Davidic

5. David was not allowed to build the temple, but God allowed him to help in the preparation to build the temple. Chapters 22 & 28 and 29 tell what he did. Mostly he gathered the materials used in the construction of the temple. Chapter 22 verse 14 tells how he gathered gold and silver. Chapter 28 sees David instruct Solomon in how to build the temple. He gives good advice to his son, in verse 8-9, where he instructs him to know and serve God faithfully. Verse 20 is encouragement for Solomon. This instruction is for us also.

6. Chapter 29 we see David's heart for God as we see that David gave all his own treasure to the building of the temple because as verse 3 says David was devoted to the temple of his God. Then in verses 6-9 we see that the people also freely gave to the building of the temple and they rejoiced that they were able to give. What an example of how our hearts should be about our treasures, our priorities.

7. Chapter 29:10-19 another good example of how to pray.

8. We are at the end of David's life and notice that there is no report of David's great sin with Bathsheba, or the rebellion of Adonijah. The story in 2 Kings 11:9-13 is also omitted. The focus of Chronicles is positive. The focus is on the history and salvation. The author was telling the people that even after their great sins and punishment that the covenant promises were still valid and all was not lost.

III. There is very little about the northern kingdom in Chronicles as most of the emphasis is about the temple and positive aspects of the kingdom. There is much about worship.

IV. Final fate of Jerusalem. 2 Chronicles chapter 36

1. Verses 11-16 We see the last king of Judah described as evil. Then we see that all the leaders of the priest and the people were unfaithful. Next we see that because God had compassion for his people He had sent prophets to warn them, but the people scorned the warnings and this is the same thing as scorning God.

2. Verses 17-20 describe terrible punishment for the people. Most of those who survived the battle of Jerusalem, with the exception of the poorest (2 Kings 25:12), were taken away into captivity to Babylon.

3. The love of God shows through, even as He is punishing His people, God offers hope for the future. Jeremiah promised (Jeremiah 35:11-12 & 29:10) that the exile would last seventy years. Unlike the northern kingdom, Judah's exile was not forever.

4. Keeping positive, verses 22-23 identify Cyrus as the anointed deliverer of God's people. Go to Isaiah 44:28-45:2 to see the prophecy about Cyrus as given over a hundred years earlier than it happened.

Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther

These books complete the historical section of the Old Testament. Esther was written during and about the exile and the other two books were written after the return from exile and how the people lived when they began living in Jerusalem again. Now, we would expect to see that the Jews have learned their lesson and that they faithfully obey and worship God. Let's study these books to see how things worked out in Jerusalem. The return of the people after 70 years fulfills the prophecy we reported earlier from Isaiah and Jeremiah and Daniel.

The book of Ezra is primarily about the return to Jerusalem

1. The first return is under the leadership of Zerubbabel in 536 BC. There were two prophets sent by God during the exile and three prophets after the exile to guide the people. God never gives up trying to guide His people.
2. Chapter 1 tells how God controlled Cyrus to not only allow the people to return, but to help them by providing the things they needed- see verses 1-8. Cyrus was not a generous person by nature according to history which shows that it was God working in Him.
3. Chapter 2 reports who returned and that Zerubbabel was the leader of the return. Zerubbabel was a direct descendent of David. Very few of the Jews ever returned to Israel.
4. Chapter 3 reports that the people started rebuilding the temple, however opposition stopped the work in 534BC and it was stopped for 14 years. They started with the altar first and then the temple itself. They built the altar first so that sacrifices could start again.
 - A. Some of the reason the temple work was stopped was because of enemy opposition, but we see another reason on Haggai 1:4—the people took care of themselves first. We must put God first because otherwise there will never be enough to give to God—money or time.
5. Chapter 4:1-3 We see the enemies of the Jews approach Zerubbabel to supposedly offer help in rebuilding the temple, but wisely the Jews reject their help and obey the command of Cyrus. There are a couple of things we can learn from this.

First thing is that whenever the Lord's work is going forward we can expect to have strong opposition from the enemy.

The second thing is that we must be careful to not align ourselves with the enemy. Who is the enemy?—any non-Christian is our enemy because any non-Christian is at war with God; see Romans 5:10. So those who approached Zerubbabel to help were not really friends. They were as verse 2 tells us people brought into Samaria (Northern Kingdom) and they were people who worshipped many gods along with a little worship of the true God. Mixing pagan worship along with worship of the true God does not make you a Christian. There

is even a fancy word to describe this practice which is common. It is called Syncretism, and means combining different religions with each other. An example would be to combine Christianity with superstition, astrology, and/or witchcraft. Another example would be to allow a non-Christian preach in our church such as a politician.

A. It is very important to realize that Christians do live in the world, and we must interact with the world, but we must maintain a separation.

6. These enemies manage to stop the building of the temple until a new king of Persia comes to power. King Darius commands that the temple be built and that royal treasure be used to help to finance it. Chapter 6:8. Work began again in 520 BC and was completed in four years. Two prophets Haggai and Zechariah helped motivate the people.

7. We need to comment about how much the kings of Persia did to help the Jews get reestablished in Jerusalem. These kings were pagans and they were not known for being generous with their money. But they gave much of their wealth to finance the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple. Look at verses 21-24 of chapter seven where we see the king giving money to support the work and even exempting the priest and those serving the temple from paying taxes. God is showing His control of world events by causing these men to be so generous. This tax practice is part of U.S. law today—no tax on churches.

8. Chapter 7 introduces Ezra, who is identified in verse 6 as a priest who was skilled in the law and who would lead and instruct the people of Jerusalem in proper worship.

9. We see in chapter 9 that the people have not learned their lesson, and they are not obeying God. Ezra pours out his heart to God in one of the greatest prayers in the Bible read chapter 9:2-15 confessing the sins of the people acknowledging as verse 2 says the leaders of the people have led the people into sin. This chapter is great instruction about our proper attitude toward God in how we should repent. We see that fasting was part of his confession. The great sin was intermarriage with the peoples of the land.

10. Chapter 10 closes this book with the people confessing their sin of intermarriage, and they agree to set aside their foreign wives. We don't know the fate of the wives and children.

The book of Nehemiah continues the story of the resettling of the Jews in Judah. Nehemiah is a man who prays a lot which is an important mark of a man of God. His life is an example of the zeal that we should have for God's work and how no matter what the cost we must faithfully serve God. Nehemiah had a high government position and was in close contact and was highly favored by king Artaxerxes. Nehemiah was willing to sacrifice his high position and risk his life—are you?

1. Nehemiah in chapter one receives a report from Judah that all is not well. It is about 90 years after the first Jews return under Zerubbabel to Jerusalem, and still the walls to protect the city are not rebuilt. Remember in those days walls were the protection for a city.

2. Chapter 1 verses 4-11 records the godly response of Nehemiah to this bad news. There is a lesson for us here. We need to study his prayer and copy it and also note that fasting is a good practice.

3. Now that he is properly prepared himself, he is ready to do something dangerous as in chapter 2 he asks the king for permission to go to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem he inspects the walls and like a good leader he tells how they will rebuild the walls, and so no discouragement. We see in verse 19 that the enemy is at work in the person of Sanballat and Tobiah.

4. In chapter 4 Nehemiah organizes the workers, and the work on the wall continues. The chapter also reports about the opposition that rose up, and how the work went on with some of the Jews building and some standing guard to protect the workers.

5. In chapter 5 we see the heart of Nehemiah as first verses 1-13 report we see that Nehemiah is not just a building supervisor; he is also a spiritual leader. There is a famine which has caused many of the people to have to sell their land and also many to have to sell themselves into slavery to their richer Jewish brothers. This makes Nehemiah very angry and he convinces the rich ones to stop exploiting their poorer brothers and to return their property.

A. Verses 14-19 tell how he did not accept the high payment that he was allowed as governor of the land of Judah. He did not want to be a burden to the people. This is a good example for all good leaders—we sacrifice for our people.

6. Chapter 6 tells about more unsuccessful opposition to the work. Verse 15 tells us that the wall is completed and it is done in the amazingly short time of 52 days.

This is a major victory because now the city of Jerusalem can be defended against its enemies.

7. Chapters 8-10 cover a time of spiritual revival in Jerusalem. Read 8:1-3 & 5-8 where we see the people gathering to read God's Word. Note that they stood all day and as they listened to the Scriptures being read there were Levites(an example of preaching) available to explain them to the people. Verse 5 tells how Ezra was elevated as he read. Symbolically this is how we are to treat the Word of God. We are to treat it with a lot of respect, to elevate it. All our teaching—all our preaching is to be built around the bible.

A. Chapter 9:1-3 the people gather for a time of worship. They fasted and they repented. Verses 6-37 make up a long prayer from a repentant people. Verses 32-37 the people acknowledge that God has acted

righteously and faithfully with His people. They also acknowledge that they had been unfaithful and deserve the punishment that they have received. They tell how the punishment has been severe.

B. Verse 38 of chapter 9 and chapter 10: 1-39 the people make a written and signed covenant promising to obey all of God's law. The steps to revival here were fasting and praying and repenting, then asking God to end their punishment because they promised to obey God. I wish my home country would do this.

The people after this time turned from idolatry and intermarriage to becoming very legalistic and in the time of Jesus we have the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

8. Chapter 12 reports that the people dedicate their new wall and there is worship at the temple. Things are looking better for the Jews.

9. Chapter 13 reports that Nehemiah had made a trip back to the king, and while he was away there was again trouble. Verses 4-5 report that Tobiah, an enemy of the Jews see Nehemiah 2:10 and 4:7-8, was given a room in the temple to live in. This is in direct violation of the rules we read of in verse 1. As soon as Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem, he solved this problem look at verses 6-9 where we read that the furniture of Tobiah the enemy was thrown out of the temple where he was living.

A. We also read in chapter 13 that the people had not kept their promise to obey God. Nehemiah spent the rest of his time correcting the people as they failed to obey God. Look in verse 30-31 for the final words of Nehemiah a real man of God.

In all time God is faithful.

Esther

Esther is a unique book in the Bible, it is unlike any other book. It is the second book in the Old Testament that is named after a woman. Esther takes place earlier in history than Nehemiah. It is in Persia during the time of exile that we read how God used a Jewish girl to save His people from a wicked plot to destroy them. The word God is never used in the book, but we clearly see the hand of God at work. We can all draw confidence from the book of Esther because we see that God will not allow His people to be all destroyed, and His church will never be destroyed. I am not going to say much about Esther as it is a delightful and pleasing story to read and it is easy for you to understand.

1. The main part of the story is that the Jews are threatened with extermination. This is something that happens continually down through history. It has mostly been misguided Christians down through the ages who have persecuted Jews. The Catholic Church has been very guilty. Remember the inquisition? The Germans also tried to kill all Jews during World War II. They murdered over six million Jews. Today many

Muslims want to kill all the Jews. All these enemies of God need to do is read Genesis 12 to see that they should love and protect the Jews and that they will not succeed in killing all the Jews.

2. We learn that the fate of the Jews is determined by a sovereign God. It is interesting that once again God has used a woman to bless His people.

3. One of the important Jewish holidays celebrated even today is called the feast of Purim. This refers to the casting of lots (maybe dice?) to determine the date that all the Jews were to be killed. The Jews during the feast of Purim celebrate the fact that God caused them to not be killed, but their enemies were killed instead.

This closes the history of Israel in the Old Testament. The remaining books that we will study from the Old Testament are about the times of the books we have just studied.

There are four divisions to the book of Esther

1. The scheme of evil anticipated 1:1-2:23. God arranges events so that Esther, a Jew, is made queen and is in position to later rescue the Jewish people.

2. The scheme of evil is planned 3:1-4:17 Evil Haman manipulates the king so that he orders the killing of all Jews. Notice fasting and praying takes place.

3. This plan of evil fails chapter 5:

4. The victory is celebrated 9:18-10:3. The feast of Purim which the Jews celebrate to this day.

Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

We have finished our coverage of what are known as the books of history, and we now move on to what is known as the "Poetical Books". These are varied books as we shall see. Sometimes these books are known as "Wisdom Literature or writings" because there is much good advice in these books. A good way to study the Psalms is to read one each day. My wife and I sometimes read one each evening together before we go to sleep.

Job

The Old Testament is divided into four sections by the Protestant Church. The book of Job is the first book in the section called the books of Poetry. This section of the Bible includes Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.

Job lived, we think, about the same time of Abraham or possibly earlier. This is a good book to study when you are suffering. It will help you understand that suffering is common to all people, and suffering does not stop when you become a Christian. We know that many, of God's people in the Bible, suffered. Consider Joseph, King David, Jeremiah and Paul to name a few. Even Jesus suffered.

The book of Job proves that the prosperity gospel is wrong. God does not provide prosperity to those who are His faithful servants just because they are faithful. We read in this book that Job lost all his property and he suffered terribly physically. Yet, Job 1:1 tells us that Job was a very godly man and that he feared God and he was blameless. This teaches us that:

1. Godly people suffer physically and materially. God sometimes orders suffering for His people without any apparent reason.
2. Innocent people suffer. A Christian sometimes suffers even when he has not done anything to cause the suffering. Often a person's suffering is caused by things we can't identify. See Luke 13:1-5
 - A. Sometimes a person does suffer because of a known sin. An example is: committing adultery with a person who has AIDS can cause the person to get sick with AIDS, suffer and die.
 - B. Most of the time however, a person suffers and the cause of his suffering does not point to a specific sin.
3. Godly people suffer and still praise God. They don't love God only when life is good. Satan claimed in Job 1:10-11 that Job only loved God because life was good for Job. Job proves that the true man of God loves God even when things are bad.

Outline of the book of Job

I. Introduction of Job (1:1-5)

1. Job lives in the land of Uz which is located east of Israel. (1:1)
2. Job is blessed both with family and riches. (1:2-4)
3. Job is truly a godly man. (1:1 & 5)

II. The heavenly Court (1:6-12)

1. There is as gathering in heaven of the angels (sons of God). This gathering includes Satan who challenges God about whether Job is truly a godly man.
2. God tells Satan that Job is truly a godly man. (1:8)
3. Satan says that the only reason Job is godly is because of Job's worldly blessings. (1:9-11)
4. God allows Satan to test Job by taking away all Job's worldly possessions; everything except Job's health. Note that Satan can only do what God allows. (1:12)

III. Disaster Strikes (1:13-22)

1. Four messengers bring news to Job that his wealth has been destroyed and even his children are dead. These messages come quickly, one after the other, and in a very short time Job goes from being a rich man with children to being poor with no children. (1:13-20)

2. Job humbles himself and acknowledges that it is God who controls whether or not we have possessions; we come into this world without possessions and we will leave the world without possessions. This shows us how little importance we should place on our possessions. (1:21)

3. Job did not accuse God of doing anything wrong; Job accepted the loss of his possessions and still Job did not turn against God. (1:22)

IV. The Heavenly court again (2:1-6)

1. God and Satan meet again. God boasts to Satan that Job did not turn away from God because of the disasters he suffered. (2:1-3)

2. Satan says this is only because Job's body has not been attacked, just his property, and that Job will turn against God if Job suffers physical harm. (2:4-5)

3. God again shows that He controls events and He allows Satan to attack Job's body; only Satan must not take Job's life, (Job 2:6)

V. Disaster strikes again (2:7-10)

1. Job's physical suffering is terrible. (2:7-8)

2. Job's wife gives him bad advice and advises him to turn against God. (2:9)

3. Despite everything that has happened to him, Job remains faithful to God. (2:10)

4. Job is not aware of the reason for his suffering. He does not know that God watches him with favor and approval. God confidently predicts the outcome of his trial.

VI. Job's friends arrive (2:11-13)

1. They were so shocked, by the terrible suffering Job was experiencing, that they did not recognize their friend and they were speechless for a week. Job 7:5 gives us an example of just how bad Job looked.

VII. Job loses his patience (3:1-26)

1. Job loses heart and he complains. He questions why he was born and he longs for death.

VIII. Job's three friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar speak. (4:1-31:40)

Job's three friends each speak in turn and, after each friend speaks, Job replies. Job's friends do not offer him any comfort. They each incorrectly say that Job's suffering is caused by his sins. They say that Job's terrible suffering is caused because Job is a great sinner.

IX. Elihu, another friend joins the discussion (32:1-37:24)

1. He is angry with Job because Job justifies himself rather than God. (32:2)

2. He is angry with Job's friends because they said Job was wrong but they had no good answer. We should not say anything at times.(32:3)

3. Elihu comments that sometimes suffering is discipline, and what is bad for the body is good for the soul. (33:19-30)

X. God speaks (38:1-41:34)

He strongly makes the point that Job and all humans are ignorant about the universe. We don't even understand how natural things work, so, we can't expect to understand how God deals with His creation. We humans are very limited in our power to control events; we are even very limited in understanding the things that happen.

1. God, in chapters 38 and 39, tells Job that He alone has the power to control everything, and God gives many examples of how He created everything and how He made the rules about how the natural work is to behave. Isaiah 45:7 teaches us that God is the one who makes all disasters such as mudslides.

XI. Job replies to the Lord (42:1-6)

Job is humbled by God and admits he is wrong. He admits that God is all-wise and that while he does not understand why he suffers, Job knows that the 'why' it is not important. Job acknowledges that God is on the throne and that God will do what is best. In other words, Job trusts God completely and repents that he questioned God.

XII. Job is restored by the Lord (42:7-17)

God rebukes Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. God not only replaces the possessions Job lost, he gives Job twice as much as he had before.

1. Job's family came and comforted him over the evil God had brought to Job. (42:11)

Christ and His church

I. The mystery of suffering or -why suffering exists.

1. Suffering exists because of sin in the world. So, everybody including all animals suffer because of the sin in the world.

2. Some other reasons a person suffers.

A. Sometimes suffering is caused because of a personal choice a person makes.

i. An example is when a person chooses to smoke cigarettes and develops lung cancer and suffers and dies from this.

B. Most of the time we suffer without knowing exactly why.

i. Job's friends told Job that he was being punished for his sins. (Job 4:7-8 and Job 8:4) We know that this was a wrong reason. Job 1:8 tells us that Job was a good and upright man, and his suffering was not caused by anything Job had done wrong.

ii. Don't ever be like Job's friends who, several times, told Job that his sins caused his suffering. Job (8:4-6; 5:17; 11:14) Most of the time we cannot identify exactly why a person suffers. Consider what Jesus said in John 9:1-3 to prove that a person's suffering may have nothing to do with his personal sin.

a. Even if we can identify the sin which is causing a person to suffer, we should not add to his suffering by telling him the reason he is suffering. A true friend will offer comfort and refrain from criticism. Just give comfort without judgment.

b. Job 19:13-19 tells how even his family rejected him and added to his suffering.

3. Elihu gave a better answer for why we sometimes suffer when he said it was God's way to teach, discipline, and refine Job, although this was not the correct reason in this case.

A. Hebrews 12:5-11 teaches us that discipline is a sign that God loves us.

i. God's perfect answer is that suffering is a test of trusting God for who He is, and not for what He does.

4. Jesus proves that a person can be completely innocent of any sin and still suffer. Jesus never sinned but He suffered more than any other person ever did when He was crucified. He suffered both the physical pain of being crucified and he also suffered from being separated from God the Father for the only time ever.

5. Job also gives us a very clear prophecy concerning the resurrection of Christ and His church. (Job 19:25-27) This statement is one which shows Job's confidence in God even when Job is suffering so horribly.

Application

1. God rules. Nothing happens unless He allows it to happen. (Daniel 4:34-35; Psalm 115:3)

2. Satan the great adversary is very powerful (1 Peter 5:8), but his power is limited by God. (Job 1:8 & Job 2:6)

A. We must never underestimate the power of Satan. He is so strong that we should never face him in our own strength. (Jude 1:9) We must ask God to protect us from his attacks. (Ephesians 6:10-18)

B. Only Jesus was strong enough to withstand the attacks of Satan. He defeated Satan while He was on the cross.

3. Discerning the will of God

A. Job's friends used the wrong ways to discern the will of God. Eliphaz used dreams and visions.

(Job 4:12-16) Bildad used traditions passed down from previous generations. (Job 8:8-10) Zophar used experience and reason. (Job 20:2-3)

B. Four thousand years later when we have the complete word of God in the Bible, People still try to lead people the wrong way by using dreams, visions, traditions, experience and reason.

C. We must understand that God doesn't speak to us through dreams and visions any longer because the Bible is completed. (Revelation 22:18) Traditions such as witchcraft mislead us. The modern world uses experience and reason, which they call science, to mislead people.

D. The correct way to discern God's will is to follow the teachings of the Bible and also pray.

4. All things work together for good, even our suffering. (Romans 8:28) Christians must remember that our current suffering is nothing compared to the blessings coming. (Ephesians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 4:17)

A. We Christians must realize that we must live this life preparing for eternity. Our suffering is only for a minute while heaven is forever.

Conclusion

1. The main lesson from the book of Job is that God always knows what He is doing and why. We must walk by faith and not by sight. We must always trust that God knows what is best for us no matter our situation in life. We must remember that God is in charge of everything.
2. Suffering is part of living and will always be with us. The New Testament teaches us that God has many reasons for us to suffer.
3. God does not owe us any explanation for anything He allows to happen.

Psalms

“God’s love letters to his Church”

There are a number of authors including David who wrote more than half of them. The Psalms include many of the emotions of men from deep sorrow to high spots of joy. The Psalms are much quoted in the New Testament; 116 times.

Many of the Psalms instruct us in proper worship.

There are as many as ten different types of Psalms:

1. Didactic=Psalms of formal teaching such as 1, 5, 7, 15, 17, 50, 73, 94, 101.
2. History=78,105,106,136.
3. Hallelujah or praise=106, 111-113, 115-17, 135, 146-50.
4. Penitential or confession=6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143.
5. Supplication=86.
6. Thanksgiving=16, 18.
7. Messianic=2, 20-24, 41, 68, 118.
8. Nature=8, 19, 28, 33, 65, 104.
9. Pilgrim during time of pilgrimage; such as a trip to Jerusalem for worship purposes=132-140.

10. Imprecatory or cursing=35, 52, 58, 59, 69, 83, 109, 137, 140.

Let's look at some examples:

1. Teaching read Psalm 15. Verse 1 ask who is welcomed by God. Verses 2-5 tell us the correct behavior especially verse 2.

2. Hallelujah read Psalm 113 for wonderful instruction in praising God.

3. Penitential read Psalm 32. Verses 1-4 teaches us that only the forgiven are truly happy. Verses 5-11 teach repentance and verse 11 talks about true joy.

4. Psalm 86 teaches us how to properly ask God for something.

5. Psalm 16 teaches how to properly thank God.

6. Sometimes a Psalm starts talking in a way that could refer to a human king, but can only be completely fulfilled in Jesus such as Psalm 2. Some of this could refer to King David, but some such as verse 7 must refer to Jesus. Psalm 22 is another Messianic Psalm ie it is a prophetic Psalm telling about Jesus in the future. Look at this Psalm to see a clear description of Jesus when he was being crucified. Look at verse 1 to see the words that Jesus spoke a thousand years later on the cross see Matthew 27:46.

7. Psalm 109 is called an imprecatory Psalm. These are troubling to us as they pronounce curses on someone like a witch doctor does. Read verses 6-11 to see how someone is asking God to take away his enemy. Many Christians are troubled by the harshness of these Psalms. Note that these verses call on God to judge your attacker; not for you to do the judgment yourself. My way to handle this is for me to pray for a person to repent and come to the Lord or for the Lord to replace the person.

Let's look at a great Psalm for comfort in times of trouble. This Psalm was popular in the USA years ago when it was still permissible to read the Bible in school. Many students used to memorize this Psalm. It is over forty years since reading the Bible was made illegal in school, and forty years of moral decline have followed. Let's read Psalm 23.

Proverbs

Most of the Proverbs were written by King Solomon with some from King Hezekiah and a few by other authors. The definition of a proverb is a persuasive saying that teaches a truth. These proverbs or statements cover everything in the world. These proverbs are good advice, but they are not promises. Their purpose is

to encourage us to live righteously before God. Many are easy to understand, but there are some that are very difficult to understand.

The proverbs are good for all ages and many are especially good advice to young people such as 1:8-10, 3:11, 5:20, 10:5, and others. They contain good instruction for how a young person should behave to live a proper life, and avoid many of life's troubles. The subject of the proverbs are about sin, honesty, evil people, social relations; actually any of the things that we might encounter in life.

Five purposes of the proverbs are:

1. For obtaining wisdom and instruction see Pr. 1:2. The Bible tells us that wisdom and instruction come from God see Job 28:12-18, 21, and 23.
2. Pr. 1:2 says these proverbs help us understand words of insight. They will help us tell truth from lies such as when people try to fool us. For example, they will help us to carefully examine the facts to tell if something is good for us. An example is we don't trust that a person is telling us the truth about a passage in the Bible unless we see it in the Bible. Many false teachers will tell you that God promises that Christians will be prosperous or that "God helps those who help themselves." As you learn to discern or tell the truth, you learn to look in the Bible for yourself before deciding what is correct.
 - A. Hebrews 5:14 tells us that mature Christians are more able to tell good from evil. It is good to listen to the elders, but you must still discern that the elders are telling the truth.
3. Pr. 1:3 says the proverbs are for learning how to become disciplined and to do what is right and fair. They help us live the way that pleases God. We learn in Pr. 11:1 that God wants us to be honest in our business dealings and not cheat anybody.
4. Pr. 1:4-5 tells us that they are for teaching us to add to our knowledge. Verse four says they teach the young, but verse five tells us they also instruct the older and wise person. We should always be ready to learn no matter how old we are. No person is ever too old to learn. The wise person knows this but the foolish one thinks he already knows all he needs to know.
5. Pr. 1:6 tells us the book helps us learn to think and dig deeper into important things such as the truths of the Bible. Many people read quickly over the verses of the Bible and only look at the surface truth. There is much to learn from the Bible which we only learn after much reading and praying and study. For example, the surface message of John 3:16 is easy enough for anyone to understand but we can study this verse over and over again and still learn more about God's love each time we study it.

The Proverbs teach us in many areas such as:

1. Anger -Pr. 14:17, 29; 15:18; 16:32; 19:11 these talk about controlling anger. Many people are in prison because they got angry and they hurt or killed someone when they failed to control their temper.
2. Mercy -Pr. 3:9-10; 11:24-26; 14:21, 19:17; 22:9 teach us to be benevolent. Christians are known for doing acts of mercy.

3. Discipline -Pr. 13:24; 17:6; 19:18; 22:6, 15; 23:13-14 teach us about children and how discipline, including spanking, is good for the child. We do this because we love the child. Proverbs 3:11-12 teaches us that, if we belong to God, He will discipline us because He loves us, see Hebrews 12:5-11 for more of this idea.
4. Fear of God -Pr. 1:7; 3:7; 9:10; 10:27; 14:26-27; 15:16,33; 16:6; 19:23; 23:17; 24:21 all talk about fearing The Lord. We have great respect and reverence for God, and know that He can be very fearsome. The non-Christian ignores the awesome power and judgment of The Lord.
5. Fools -Pr. 10:18, 21, 23; 12:15-16; 14:9,16; 15:2; 17:10,12,24; 20:3; 23:9; 27:22; 28:26 teach about fools.
6. Friends -Pr. 17:17; 18:24; 19:4; 27:10, 17 teach us about friends.
7. Work -Pr. 6:6-11; 10:4-5, 26; 12:27; 13:4; 15:19; 18:9; 19:15,24; 20:4, 13; 24:30-34; 26:13-16 teach us to not be lazy but to work hard.
8. Treating others -Pr. 14:31; 22:22; 28:16 teach us to not oppress people; to treat people with mercy and kindness.
9. Pride-Pr. 6:17; 11:2; 13:10; 15:25; 16:18-19; 18:12; 21:4,24; 29:23; 30:13 teach about the dangers of pride.
10. Peacemaking -Pr. 3:30; 10:12; 15:18; 16:28; 17:1, 14, 19; 18:6, 19; 20:3; 22:10; 25:8; 30:33 tell us to be peacemakers instead of causing trouble.
11. Use of the tongue -4:24; 10:11-14, 17-21, 31-32; 12:17-19, 22; 13:3; 14:3; 15:1-2, 4-5, 7, 23; 16:13, 23,27; 17:4; 18:6-7, 21; 19:1 teach about the dangers of an uncontrolled tongue. Read James 3:1-10 for more about the tongue.
12. Wealth -Pr. 10:2, 15; 11:4, 28; 13:7, 11, ; 15:6; 16:8; 18:11; 19:4; 27:24; 28:6, 22 give us much wisdom about wealth and possessions.
13. Evil women -Pr. 2:16-19; 5:3-14, 20; 6:24-35; 7:5-27; 9:13-18; 23:27-28 teach us to stay away from evil and dangerous women.
- 13b. Wife -Pr. 5:18-19; 11:16; 18:22; 19:14; 31:10-31 teach us that a godly wife is a wonderful gift from God and she should be cherished.
14. Wisdom -Pr. 1:7, 20-22; 2:6-7,10-11; 3:13-18, 19, 21; 4:5-9; 8:1-16; 9:1-6; 12:8; 14:8; 18:4; 19:8; 24:3 teach us that wisdom comes from The Lord. We can gain much wisdom from studying our Bible. Godly parents and elders can also teach us much wisdom.

The book of Proverbs is a good guide to living a Christian life with much practical advice and is comparable to James in the New Testament. You should study all of them, and read a chapter or part of a chapter at a time.

Ecclesiastes

This is another book of wisdom. It is not certain who the author is, but most people think it is King Solomon. He lived his life in such a way that the book describes the way he probably felt at the end of his life. We read about a man who despairs over how he lived his life.

We know that Solomon started his life with great promise; we remember that God gave him great wisdom and also great wealth. Solomon was not satisfied and he sought more wealth, and he worshipped other gods. Now

at the end of his life he realizes that life without the true God at the center is meaningless. The only things that last are what we do for God. Solomon is sad because he realizes that he has wasted his life chasing the luxuries of life instead of dedicating his life to serving and worshipping God.

This is a lesson that many people never learn until it is too late. The things we leave behind us on earth are meaningless such as our houses, our position in life such as being king, or very rich. What can we take with us? 2 Tim 4:8 talks about the crown of righteousness which Jesus will award to us as we enter heaven for telling people about Him. We will fellowship forever in heaven with people who are there because we told them about God's plan of salvation. Let's briefly look at the book of Ecclesiastes:

I. There are two life views. One is the view of people as the natural, ungodly man does. The other view is that of a man who knows God. The purposes of Ecclesiastes are to show the futility of chasing after materialistic goals as an end to themselves, and to point to God as the source of all that is truly good.

1. Every pursuit of man is futile if God is excluded. There is value to live only if God is a part of our life.
2. Only God's work endures and last, so that only He can impart true value to man's life and service.

II. Vanity

1. Ten vanities:

Human wisdom 2:15-16

Human fame 4:16

Human labor 2:19-21

Human insatiateness 5:10

(Never satisfied)

Human purpose 2:26

Human coveting 6:9

Human rivalry 4:4

Human frivolity 7:4

Human avarice 4:8

Human awards 8:10, 14.

The book concludes chapter 12:9-14 with the idea that all of humanity is dependent on God. Verse 13 is the key here. Ecc. 12:13 The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. The original language is "for this is the whole of humankind." To obey him is to be truly human and to reach our greatest potential as part of creation. In other words, all our value as humans is found in our relationship with God.

Song of Songs or Song of Solomon

This is a love song, and verse one tells us that it is about King Solomon. Some people see it as a love song between God and His people Israel. Others like me see it as a celebration of love shared between young lovers created in God's image. Putting a book such as this in the Bible shows that God is interested in all our human activities. The relationship between a husband and his wife is the second most important relationship there is. What is the most important relationship? A good marriage is honoring to God and is a good setting for raising the next generation to be God's people.

Some of the expressions are strange to us such as 4:1-5. This was a correct way of admiring a young woman in the oriental culture of the times. Many people are uncomfortable with the sexual content of the book. God makes it clear that sexual love between a husband and wife is a good thing.

Theological Theme: Our societies are driven by misuse of sex which often results in tragedy for those involved in sexual misconduct. This book recognizes the sensual side of human nature as part of God's wonderful creation. God created us "male and female" and most of us are quite happy about that. The marriage bond provides the closest possibility in human relationships (Gen. 2:24), and one in which there need be no shame (Gen. 2:25). This book testifies that men and women complement each other in the husband and wife relationship. It affirms the sanctity of marriage and approves erotic, heterosexual love within marital bonds. Note homosexual sex or sex between unmarried people is not approved of ever.

Overview of The Prophets

The last major section of the Old Testament is the prophets. The arrangement of the books is not chronological which means they are not arranged in the order when they happened. Their ministry is further proof that God really does love us. After man chose to sin, he was at war with God and he was condemned to hell. God immediately started to redeem man. Man was not capable of doing good by himself so God sent prophets to help draw man away from his sin, and to turn back to God. This effort failed and the only hope for mankind is our savior—Jesus Christ.

What a prophet does

1. Forth tells—A Bible teacher who is teaching from the Bible is a prophet. Some Bible prophets like Jonah did not predict the future at all.
2. Foretells—tells the future. A common prediction was to look forward to Jesus Remember they did not see all the future and did not often understand their own prophecy. Dan. 12:8-9

The prophets are the most unread and least studied books of the Bible. Many pastors and Bible teachers never teach from the Prophets. I believe this is because of two reasons. The first is that the prophet's message is hard to accept because it is one of warning of punishment because the people are sinning. The other reason is because the message of many of the prophets is difficult to understand. Their message is worth the effort of studying them. There are many practical lessons for us.

As you study the prophets try to find out the time in history they are talking about and also the location and who they are speaking of. Sometimes it can be difficult to be sure of time and place. Some like the prophet Jeremiah we know that he is a prophet to Judah and he is speaking at the time just before and during the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians.

Facts about prophets

1. There were many who are unknown to us, and they are not mentioned in the Bible by name, and are only mentioned in passing 1Sam 10:5. There were many of these.
2. Some prophets are mentioned in different books. Elijah is found in I Kings. Elisha and Nathan and Moses are all mentioned inside different books of the Bible; none of these wrote their own book.
3. Some wrote books which carry their name such as Isaiah, Jeremiah (Lamentations), Amos.
4. Some are called Major Prophets because they wrote long books such as Isaiah and Jeremiah.
5. Some are called Minor Prophets because they wrote short books such as Micah or were written about in a short book such as Jonah.
6. Every prophet's message is important no matter how long or how short.
7. How do you know if a prophet is false? We judge a prophet to be a true prophet if what he predicts comes true.
 - A. Is his message consistent with the Bible? A true prophet will never deliver any message that contradicts the Bible. For example, a true prophet would never say that he has a revelation allowing you to ignore a Bible command at any time.
 - B. Does his prediction come true? There are severe penalties for false prophets see Deut. 13:5 or 18:20.

The prophet's messages are sometimes very difficult to understand and sometimes impossible to totally understand. They are often not studied by Christians because of this reason. They often do require extra effort to understand, but the effort is worthwhile. Expect to slowly understand them as you study them over and over, and do not expect to quickly understand all they had to say. As with all scripture reading, you must ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand the message. How does God speak to us now? Today God speaks to us through His written word which is the Bible. The only future we can tell from the Bible is that Jesus is coming back again in complete victory.

There are no foretelling prophets now Rev. 22:18-19 or Deut. 4:2 or Hebrews 1:1-2

Common themes of the prophets

1. Covenant obligations=obey God= remember who God is and what He has done= they are called to remember God as they live. This is forth telling

- A. The prophets called the people to quit their sinning such as idol worship and return to God and His word.
 - B. The prophets called the people to remember that God had set them apart and that they are to live holy lives. They are to show goodness (testimony)
 - C. The people are to live at peace with each other; this applies to the Church today.
2. A second theme is The Day of The Lord. This refers to God's eschatological or end times judgment. This contains two aspects
- A. God's judgment on unbelievers—emphasizes that unrepentant sin will be punished eternally.
 - B. Salvation is for God's people who will be cleaned up and the unbelievers purged.

The Day of The Lord will come with judgment for sinners and rewards for the faithful.

3. Another important theme is the concept of Messiah (the coming savior)—Hebrew word means Anointed One. Means set aside such as elder

A. There are many predictions and descriptions about the Messiah in the writings of the Prophets. We can clearly see descriptions of Jesus in the writings of the prophets.

Messianic Prophecy: A Definition

The term "Messianic prophecy" refers to a compilation of over one hundred predictions (conservative estimate) in the Old Testament regarding the Messiah. They have undeniable accuracy even though these prophecies were recorded by numerous writers into various books over 1000 years. We are assured that these prophecies were not conspired after the fact due to the Dead Sea Scrolls and Septuagint. These items existed prior to Jesus' time on earth.

Messianic Prophecy: The Fulfillment

Jesus Christ fulfilled the Messianic Prophecy foretold by the Old Testament authors. Study the prophecies yourself and consider the probability of just one person fulfilling even a few of these specific prophecies! Luke 24:44 says, "Then he said, 'When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me by Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must all come true.'"

Consider these Old Testament prophecies and the New Testament fulfillment by Christ:

- Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1; Luke 2:4-7)
- Born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:21-23) as a descendant of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; 22:18; Matthew 1:1; Galatians 3:16), of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10; Luke 3:23, 33; Hebrews 7:14), and of the house of David (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Matthew 1:1)
- Herod killing the infants (Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 2:16-18)
- Taken to Egypt (Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:14-15)
- Heralded by the messenger of the Lord (John the Baptist) (Isaiah 40:3-5; Malachi 3:1; Matthew 3:1-3)
- Anointed by the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11:2; Matthew 3:16-17)
- Preached good news (Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:14-21)
- Performed miracles (Isaiah 35:5-6; Matthew 9:35)
- Cleansed the Temple (Malachi 3:1; Matthew 21:12-13)
- Ministered in Galilee (Isaiah 9:1; Matthew 4:12-16)

- Entered Jerusalem as a king on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:4-9)
- First presented Himself as King 173,880 days from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem (Daniel 9:25; Matthew 21:4-11)
- Rejected by Jews (Psalm 118:22; 1 Peter 2:7)
- Died a humiliating death (Psalm 22; Isaiah 53) involving: rejection (Isaiah 53:3; John 1:10-11; 7:5,48), betrayal by a friend (Psalm 41:9; Luke 22:3-4; John 13:18), sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12; Matthew 26:14-15), silence before His accusers (Isaiah 53:7; Matthew 27:12-14), being mocked (Psalm 22: 7-8; Matthew 27:31), beaten (Isaiah 52:14; Matthew 27:26), spit upon (Isaiah 50:6; Matthew 27:30), piercing His hands and feet (Psalm 22:16; Matthew 27:31), being crucified with thieves (Isaiah 53:12; Matthew 27:38), praying for His persecutors (Isaiah 53:12; Luke 23:34), piercing His side (Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34), given gall and vinegar to drink (Psalm 69:21, Matthew 27:34, Luke 23:36), no broken bones (Psalm 34:20; John 19:32-36), buried in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57-60), casting lots for His garments (Psalm 22:18; John 19:23-24).
- Rose from the dead! (Psalm 16:10; Mark 16:6; Acts 2:31)
- Ascended into Heaven (Psalm 68:18; Acts 1:9)
- Sat down at the right hand of God (Psalm 110:1; Hebrews 1:3)

Overview of Isaiah

Isaiah contains many prophecies telling details about Jesus which are very accurate. There are also predictions about the coming judgments. These tell how the people of Israel are to be conquered and punished. These predictions are accurate even though they were often given many years before the events actually happen. For example, the name of Cyrus was used accurately hundreds of years before his birth. Isaiah 44:28

When you study the prophets, it is important to be able to place them in their location and also their time in history when known. For example, Isaiah was a prophet to the people of Judah during the time of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. At the beginning of his ministry Judah was going through a time of much prosperity, and as is so common the people in their prosperity abandoned God. This is what has happened in the United States. The United States is a very prosperous nation where God used to be honored, but now prosperity has caused The U.S.A. and Europe to abandon God. By the end of Isaiah's time the prosperity had ended, and many Americans are afraid that this is our near future.

The first 39 chapters of Isaiah are primarily concerned with the sins of both the people of Jerusalem, and also the surrounding countries. In other words, the judgment of God is the main message. Even though God in the Old Testament mainly worked with the Jews, He also at times let it be known that He was God of the whole world.

The first prophecies in Isaiah are the very common ones of warning the people. Let's briefly study chapter one to see the pattern of this kind of teaching.

1. Verse one tells us the details of when Isaiah lived and the people he worked with.

2. Then we have the indictment or the list of charges God has against the people, and the punishments for the people's sins. Read verses 2-9. God tells the people that they are sinning. The sin is that they have rebelled and turned away

from their God. Much of Isaiah's writing is about warning the people to not worship idols; instead they should worship God. Isaiah tells them that God is unhappy with them. Isaiah was a very well educated person which we see often in his writings. Look at verse 3 where he is ridiculing the people by telling them that even the ox and the donkey are smart enough to know their masters, but Israel is not that smart.

3. Verses 10-15 God is commenting that the people's worship is not acceptable to Him because of their unclean hearts. In verse 15 God threatens to turn His back on the people. This is a serious threat, and we should fear to have God say this about our people and our land. See 2 Chronicles 7:13-14 where God is talking about what happens when he has withdrawn His blessing from a place and then what happens when His people turn back to Him.

4. In verses 16-19 the people are called to repent and turn away from their sin and to follow God. Look at these verses to see that there are great blessings offered if we turn from our sins and turn toward God.

5. Then the rest of the chapter reports that there will be blessings to them. This is the same message for us today.

Let's look at another example of Isaiah's message. Chapter 5:1-7 God talks about a vineyard that He has taken such good care of. Verse 2 tells that God expected to harvest good grapes but instead he harvested wild or bad grapes which are not good to eat. God was disappointed and so verse 5 He tells that He will remove its protection and verse 6 says He will send judgment. Verse seven tells that God is really talking about His people. The rest of the chapter is talking about severe judgment. Note in this chapter unlike earlier chapters there is no call to repent and then be blessed. God is not giving these people a second chance. This is a warning to all of us.

Isaiah can be difficult to understand because many of the chapters are out of chronological order. An example of this is chapter six where God calls Isaiah to service as a prophet. You would expect this chapter to be the first one instead of being chapter number 6. The reason for this, I am told is, that Isaiah would speak and his words were written and then posted on the gate to the city, and left for people to read. Later they were gathered up and stored until they were put in book form. Sometimes this caused them to be out of order.

Chapter 6 is the story of God commissioning or calling Isaiah to be a prophet. We see in verse 5 that Isaiah sees God. Do you remember the lesson from when Moses saw God? This is called what? It is called a Theophany see Exodus 3:2-6 for another one. Isaiah's reaction to meeting God we see in verse 5. His response is what our reaction should be whenever we think of God as we think of His wonderful presence. We should be overcome with the thought of His wonderful holiness and our wretched sinfulness.

1. Note how God in verses 6-7 cleanses Isaiah from his sins. This process is similar to what we do often when we pray, and confess our sins. We spend time praising God for who He is, and we ask Him to clean us of our sins.

2. Now Isaiah has been cleaned up by God and is ready for God to put him to work, and God asks him the question that He asks every believer see verse 8. God asks every one of His people to serve Him, and the answer Isaiah gave is the only correct answer. "Here am I send me" God has a job for every Christian and every job is important including cleaning the church.

3. The rest of the chapter teaches us an important lesson as we read that Isaiah's ministry will not be successful and that it will be a long ministry. Actually Isaiah was a prophet for around 65 years. Jewish tradition reports that King Manasseh killed Isaiah by having him sawn in half. In any case the people never did what Isaiah asked them to do which was to obey God; yet Isaiah remained faithful to God. His life should be an example for us.

Isaiah, as a result of meeting God, became aware of God's holiness in a special way which we see in his writing. He used the phrase "The Holy One of Israel" over 25 times to describe God. We see this phrase in verse 4 of chapter one for the first time. His awareness, his knowledge of God's holiness is something we should copy. We become aware of God's holiness by reading and studying the Bible. The better we know God, the more we understand how holy and perfect God is and how sinful and dirty we humans are.

Chapter 19 is an oracle or prophecy about Egypt. Verses 1 and three say that they are guilty of idolatry and sorcery which is witchcraft. Then God pronounces judgment. In verse 16 we see the people of Egypt acknowledge God as they fear Him see Psalm 111:10. We see in verses 18-21 the conversion of the people. Verse 22 tells that He will heal the people after they become His children. God in verse 25 pronounces a blessing on His people of Egypt. The early church was strong in Egypt, and the remnants survive to today.

In chapter 40 of Isaiah the message changes from emphasizing judgment to a message of comfort. Look at chapter 40 verse 1. Here Isaiah is speaking a message to the people living far in the future when they are in captivity and are suffering. The idea of comfort from God should be reassuring to all Christians. God's comfort comes from the idea that God is strong enough to comfort us and He loves us so much. John 3:16-17. We Christians have a reason to always be joyful because of our relationship with God.

Isaiah has predictions about end times. Look at chapter 65:1-7 where God predicts punishment for disobedient people. Chapter 65:17-25 tells of blessings for obedient people. Study chapter 57 to see the fate of people clearly. Verses 1-2 tell us we Christians can look forward to rest and peace while verses 20-21 promise that there will be no peace for the wicked.

Chapter 58 is a chapter about worship. Verses 1-2 God is rejecting the people's worship because they seek to worship God while continuing their sinful practices.

Verses 3-6 instruct us in fasting. God says that He will be delighted Verses 8-14 God says he will be pleased if they live righteous lives as they worship Him.

There are many prophecies about Jesus in the book of Isaiah. We see clear pictures of the life and suffering of Jesus in this prediction written 700 years before Jesus lived. The book of Isaiah shows how blind a person can be in denying the truth about Jesus. The Jews study this Book and then ignore the predictions about Jesus. The predictions are so clearly fulfilled by Jesus that everyone who reads Isaiah should be able to accept Jesus as the Messiah. Let's look at a few of these prophecies.

1. Isaiah 7:14 read. We see that a virgin will have a baby and that the baby will be named Immanuel which means God with us. I only know of one person who was born of a virgin, and that was Jesus. (Luke chapter 1) Jesus fulfilled the name of Immanuel because He was God and He lived among man.
2. Let's look at bad and good government. Chapter 9:1-7 gives us a description of the rule of Jesus especially looks at verse 6-7. There will be righteous government. Isaiah 3:4-6 promises bad government as a form of judgment or punishment.
3. Chapter 11:1-17 talks about Jesus. The stump of Jesse in verse one refers to the father of King David. We are reminded that David was promised that his line would be king forever. Jesus is this descendent. The stump refers to the fact that by the time of Jesus the kingship was no longer a big tall tree because of the fall of the kingdom all that was left was a small branch trying to grow out of the stump.
4. Beginning in Isaiah chapter 42:1-7 we find the first of four passages of what are known as servant passages which are applied to Jesus life. Verses 2-3 tell that He will be as gentle ruler. Verses 6-7 tell how He will heal the blind which means physical healing, but he is also talking about spiritual sight here.
5. Chapter 49:1-7 and 50:4-11 also are pictures of Jesus as a servant.
6. Chapter 52:13-53:12 we see the suffering servant which is probably the most well-known of the servant passages. Let's look closer at this passage.
 - A. Isaiah 52:13 we see Jesus is to be exalted and he will shut up the kings of the earth.
 - B. Chapter 53:1-3 tells us that Jesus suffered rejection from the people and experienced sorrow and grief.
 - C. Verses 53:4-6 Tells us that He suffered for us and that His suffering came from God.
 - D. Verses 7-9 tell us Jesus accepted His fate without protest even though He was innocent He went to His death on our behalf. Jesus was so powerful that His going to the cross was because He loved us. Nobody was strong enough to make Him die unless He agreed.
 - E. Verses 10-12 tell that God who crushed Him would also reward Him. The servant achieved victory through a life of suffering, because suffering fulfilled God's plan. Suffering still fulfills God's plan.

Jeremiah and Lamentations

The prophet Jeremiah followed Isaiah's death by sixty years. His message was about the coming judgment of God on Judah and Jerusalem. Jeremiah is often known as the weeping prophet because his heart was broken as he delivered the messages of judgment. Jeremiah 9:1 and 13:15-17

Much of this book is history reporting about the final days of the kingdom of Judah. Some of the book is a biography of Jeremiah, and part of the book is prophecy to Judah. The book can be confusing because it is not put together in

chronological order. It is like Isaiah in that it appears the messages were given at separate times and put together later without caring about when the message was originally given.

He was born a priest and like Moses he did not want to do the job God called him to do. God tells him that he is called to do this job and that God will help him and protect him. God preserved his life but, Jeremiah was put in prison, beaten, and almost killed. He is an example to us that when God calls us to service we must answer His call no matter what it costs us. The cost of service is often high; it might even cost you your life.

He served as a prophet for over forty years during the reign of five kings. The first king Josiah was the only godly one of these; the others were all evil in God's sight. He was prophet during the time when Judah and Jerusalem were conquered by the Babylonians. This was a terrible time for Jerusalem because the Babylonians were very cruel, and Jeremiah loved the people.

Judah had by this time lost its independence and is only allowed to exist under the rule of the foreign nations of Egypt and Babylon. Both of these countries battled to dominate Judah. The only reason that Israel was a powerful and rich nation during the time of Solomon was that God had blessed them. By the time of Jeremiah, the sins of Judah had caused God to withdraw His blessings of protection. This meant that Judah is too weak to remain independent.

I. Jeremiah during the reign of King Josiah. 640-609 BC 2 Chronicles 34-35:27

1. Five years after he began his work as a prophet, the Book of the Law is discovered in the temple. 2 Kings 22:8. This led to a revival in the land, and Judah again worshipped God as they were led by the godly King Josiah. Jeremiah warned that the revival was only effective if the people changed their hearts to worship God. Jeremiah 2:22

2. The book of the law was never totally lost; just not followed. This is similar to what happened to the Bible at the time of Martin Luther. The Bible was available to only a few people, but its teachings were not taught or followed by these people. The church invented its own way of worshipping. When Martin Luther read the Bible, he started the Lutheran church, a Protestant Church, in protest against the Roman Catholic Church. After King Josiah died he was followed by evil kings and Judah stopped worshipping the true God. This shows that the people had not listened to Jeremiah telling them that their hearts must be changed. They worshipped God externally, but their hearts were still sinful.

II. Three evil kings rule Judah from 609 BC to 597 BC.

1. The first of these kings was King Jehoahaz who remained king for only three months, and then he was taken in exile to Egypt which was the powerful nation in the area at that time. Jeremiah is forced to speak against the bad things the king and people are doing. It is dangerous to speak against the king, and often Jeremiah will be forced to do this in the future. Even the prophet Ezekiel prophesied the downfall and exile of king Jehoahaz. Ezekiel 19:3-4

2. King Jehoiakim became the next king, and he also was evil. The king of Egypt made him king after he removed Jehoahaz. While Jehoiakim was king, Egypt and Babylon fought a battle which Babylon won, and Babylon became the power in the area replacing Egypt. This was important to Judah because Judah was such a weak country that they were ruled by first Egypt and then Babylon. Babylon took many captives and much treasure back to Babylon. The prophet Daniel was one of the captives.

A. Jeremiah as prophet warned the people that their sins would lead to their destruction.

God, through Jeremiah, called the people to repent so that he could bless them. However the people continued to sin and instead of going forward they went backward. Chapter 7:23-24

B. God hates the idolatry and immorality of Judah and so he uses Jeremiah to denounce the false shepherds (leaders) and false prophets who mislead the people. Chapters 23:1-2 and 27: 9-10

The leaders and prophets were angry with the message of coming doom from Jeremiah and they demanded that Jeremiah be killed. Chapter 26:8 The threat to kill Jeremiah was very real as another prophet by the name of Urijah was killed. Chapter 26:20-23

C. Jeremiah prophesied the death of Jehoiakim. Chapter 22:18-19

3. King Jehoiakim became king for three months. He was an evil king and Jeremiah predicted he would be taken as a prisoner to Babylon. This happened and he remained in prison, in Babylon, for thirty-seven years. Jeremiah 22:24-30 and Ezekiel 19:9

IV. The last king of Judah was Mattaniah, who King Nebuchadnezzar, the ruler of Babylon renamed Zedekiah. Ezekiel 17:12-13 shows how completely Babylon was in charge of Judah because it says that Nebuchadnezzar made Zedekiah king.

1. God through the prophet Jeremiah tells the people to submit to the rule of Babylon for seventy years. Jeremiah 29:10 Chapter 51:59 reports that Zedekiah went to Babylon probably to reassure Nebuchadnezzar of his loyalty.

2. Five years later, Zedekiah foolishly disobeyed God and rebelled against the king of Babylon. He had previously promised Nebuchadnezzar, by swearing an oath to God that he would not rebel against him. 2 Chronicles 36:13 and Ezekiel 17:13-21

3. This revolt causes Nebuchadnezzar to invade Judah and attack Jerusalem. King Zedekiah asks the prophet Jeremiah whether he will win. Jeremiah tells him that the people should desert Jerusalem and surrender to Nebuchadnezzar because he will lose. He also tells Zedekiah that he should surrender and beg mercy from Nebuchadnezzar because Jerusalem is going to be destroyed. Jer. 21:9-10

4. This message which is unpopular causes Jeremiah to be thrown into a muddy prison. Jeremiah 38:6 verse 13 reports that he is soon rescued through the efforts of an Ethiopian.

5. These are sad messages about God's judgment coming to Jerusalem. It will be harsh judgment, but God shows that he still loves His people because He gives Jeremiah some encouraging messages to deliver. Jeremiah 30:18,22 and 31:3 The lesson for us is that sometimes it is necessary to discipline a person we love, but we must remind them we still love them and that the punishment is for their benefit. God tells the people that, after their punishment, He will restore them to Jerusalem. Chapter 29:10

6. The Babylonians destroy the city and the temple. Many of the people are taken as captives to Babylon. Jeremiah remains in the city until he is forced to go to Egypt where he dies.

V. Even in this book which contains so much sadness there are glorious Messianic prophecies.

1. Chapter 3 begins with God being angry with His people because of their idolatry. However, in verse 12, God calls on His people to repent and He will be merciful. The reference of looking to the north is the way that God says that His mercy is also offered to the remnants of the ten tribes of Northern Israel as well as Judah.

A. Verses 16-17 refer to the time when we will no longer need the Ark of the Covenant because the Messiah is coming and He will satisfy any needs.

2. The New Covenant (promise) is mentioned. Israel has been a nation in covenant with God since the day of Abraham when God promised to bless all people through Abraham. Genesis 12:1-3 At Mt. Sinai God gave the Hebrew people the covenant of law which brought curses on the people for disobedience and blessing for perfect obedience. Exodus 24:7 The people could not perfectly obey the law so it brought condemnation to the people.

A. Jeremiah reveals a new covenant which is sufficient for the forgiveness of sins; for salvation. Jeremiah 31:31-34

B. The new covenant totally replaces the old covenant. Hebrews 8:13 The life and death of Jesus Christ is at the center of the new covenant. Luke 22:20

C. The new covenant is a covenant of grace. Jesus does all the work and salvation is freely given to His people. Ephesians 2:8-9

VI. Application

1. Most of Jeremiah's message is a message of judgment. This is somewhat surprising because Jeremiah is such a sensitive individual. Look at how he weeps for the people which is the reason that he is known as the weeping prophet. Jeremiah 9:1 and 13:16-17.

A. Seven hundred years later we see this same tenderness in another prophet; Jesus, who also wept for His people. Matthew 23:37

B. Jeremiah delivered some hard prophecies, but also some remarkable words of grace from God. These are tremendous words of love and compassion from God. Jeremiah 29:11 and 31:3

2. Declaring the judgment of God.

A. Jeremiah was a gentle person, but he still faithfully declared the terrible judgment of God on the people who he loved. Jeremiah 7:20,30,33-34 A mark of a true Christian leader is a person who is loving and tender toward his people but can exercise discipline when needed.

i. There are more references in the Bible to the anger, fury, and wrath of God than there are to His love and tenderness. Psalm 90:11

B. Most of the references to hell and eternal torment in the New Testament come directly from Jesus. It was on the cross that Jesus tasted death and hell for His people. We see this in that awful cry of Jesus, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Matthew 27:46 We must understand how terrible our sin is, and how terrible hell is to better appreciate our salvation through faith in Jesus.

3. The condition of the human heart by nature

A. The human heart is naturally evil. Jeremiah 17:9 Jesus talked about evil that comes from within defiling man. Mark 7:21-23 Matthew 23:27

B. Every person is evil and condemned by his sin which prevents him from entering the kingdom of God. Romans 8:7-8

C. To enter the kingdom of heaven we must have a new heart. Ezekiel 36:26 Jesus expresses this by saying that we must be born again. John 3:5

4. Plea to backsliders

A. Jeremiah calls on God’s people to not fall away from God; to return to Him before it is too late.

i. He tells the people of Jerusalem that they are more sinful even than Israel and God punished Israel by allowing the Assyrians to conquer them. Jeremiah 3:11

ii. He calls on the people to return to God and repent and God will not stay angry. Jeremiah 3:12-13

iii. They must return to God quickly before it is too late. A spoiled pot can be saved and reshaped only while it is still wet. Jeremiah 18:4-6 The pot can’t be saved after it is old and dry, then it can only be destroyed. We, like the pot, can only be shaped into a Christian while we are still alive. Jeremiah 29:13-14 and Isaiah 55:6-7

5. Standing alone

A. Often Jeremiah must have felt that he was all alone. Often you will be abandoned when you bring unpopular messages. Jeremiah was rejected by family, friends, rulers, prophets, and priests. All turned against him. He was beaten and threatened with death. Jeremiah suffered like the later prophet, Jesus. Isaiah 53:3

VII. Conclusion

1. Jeremiah is full of warnings from God for Judah. God was certainly patient with Judah, He warned, threatened, and pleaded with His people to stop disobeying him. He did this for hundreds of years. God is patient but there is a limit to His patience, and when He decides to punish, His punishment is fierce. God has not changed since Jeremiah’s time, and we should pay attention to these warnings.

Lamentations

The book is a sad book because it writes about the funeral of Judah. The book is a series of funeral poems composed by Jeremiah who is known as the weeping prophet. It is the saddest book in the Bible. God has severely punished His people and Lamentations is an expression of their grief.

I. First poem: The destruction of Jerusalem Chapter 1:1-22

1. The first lamentation is the grief stricken cry over the destruction of the city of Jerusalem. The city lies in ruins because after many warnings, God has brought complete destruction to the city. The destruction is complete and the city is deserted and despised. The picture is of a weeping widow who has lost her husband and children and has no hope. Lamentations 1:11 This is what it will be like for every person who ignores all warnings and will not accept Jesus and become a Christian. When they die and go to Hell, they will be grief stricken and sorry that their future is suffering in Hell forever.

2. Jeremiah makes it clear that the punishment is from God and is caused by the sin and rebellion of the people. Lamentations 1:8 the prophet pictures that the people admit that they are guilty, and God is entirely just in punishing the people for their rebellion.

3. Jeremiah tells how their enemies are happy that they have suffered this destruction. Jeremiah calls for the destruction of these enemies because they are also guilty of sinning before God. Lamentations 1:21-22.

II. Second Poem: The righteous anger of God. Chapter 2:1-22

1. It is true that the destruction of Jerusalem has been done by the Babylonians, but they have only done this because God has used them as His agents to punish the people. It is God who has caused the destruction. Lamentations 1:1-6. God sometimes uses people who do not belong to Him to do what He wants done; even punishing God's people. Earlier He used Assyria to punish the northern kingdom of Israel. Isaiah predicted that God would use Cyrus to free the Jews from their captivity and return them to Jerusalem. Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1.

2. God certainly has good reason to punish His people. Now Jeremiah calls on the people to repent. He calls on God to remember that they are still His people, despite their sins. He calls on God to look on His people with mercy and compassion. Lamentations 2:19-20

III. Third Poem: The anguish and hope of the prophet and people. Chapter 3:1-66

1. Jeremiah identifies with the people in their misery. He pours out his anguish over the suffering of the people. In this time of trouble he still has hope and confidence in God. Lamentations 3:23-24

2. Even in this terrible time Jeremiah has faith in the future because God has been faithful in the past, and God has promised to be faithful in the future. Jeremiah knows that God does not delight in punishment; it is something He only does with good reason. Lamentation 3:33.

3. Jeremiah continues to admit that the people have earned this punishment because of their unfaithfulness, disobedience, and rebellion against God. Lamentations 3:40-42

IV. Fourth Poem: The siege (attack) of Jerusalem Chapter 4:1-22

1. Jeremiah describes that they used to have glory and riches. He does this to show how far the people have fallen because of their sin. Lam. 4:1

2. Jeremiah describes the terrible suffering of the people during the siege and after the fall of Jerusalem. He describes the people as walking dead. Jeremiah describes a picture of horrible judgment from God. This is a warning to all people that their sins will bring terrible judgment on them. Lam. 4:2-8

V. Fifth Poem: A plea for the restoration of Israel. Chapter 5:1-22

1. The people have repented of their sin and so they ask God to deliver them from their misery. Lam. 5:1 The book closes without any assurance that God will return, but their only hope is in God who they call on. Lam 5:21

VI. Christ and His Church

1. Jeremiah as a type of Christ.

A. Jeremiah weeps over the destruction of Jerusalem and the people. Lam. 4:11 and 13

B. Six hundred years later Jesus wept over the coming judgment of Jerusalem. Luke 19:21-33

C. The Jews again are going to be punished because of their ongoing sins. Matthew 23:37

2. There are no direct prophecies concerning Jesus, but there are a number of verses that foreshadow the promised Messiah.

A. Lam. 2:15-16 then Psalm 22:13 and Matthew 27:39-44

B. Lam 3:8 and Matthew 27:46

C. Lam. 3:14 then Psalm 69:12 and Matthew 26:57-68

D. Lam. 3:18 then Psalm 69:21 and Matthew 27:34

E. Lam. 3:30 then 69:20 then Isaiah 50:6 and Luke 22:63-64

VII. Application

1. Life without God

A. The condition of the people without God is described in terms of having no rest, no pasture, and no comforter. Lam. 1:3 and 6 and 9 It is terrible.

B. It is only in Christ that we have these things. Matt. 11:28 and John 10:9 and John 14:16-17

2. The faithfulness of God

A. Even though the people are suffering so much; there is still hope and faith. Lam. 3:22-23

B. We can rely on God even in our worst situations. Isaiah 50:10

VIII. Conclusion

1. Lamentations is a book of deep agony, of terrible pain; yet even in this anguish Jeremiah declares God's holiness, His justice and sovereignty in the judgments He has set upon Judah. Another way of saying this is that God was just in punishing the people because they deserved punishment. People who go to Hell will have all eternity to know that they deserve their punishment.

2. No one could accuse God of impatience. It was only after hundreds of years of repeated warnings, threats, and pleas that the punishment of the Lord has fallen upon Judah.

3. Even in their time of deepest troubles, there is hope because God is faithful. Lam. 3:23

4. Even in the final words of Lamentations there is hope for the future. Lamentations 5:21-22

5. The situation seems hopeless, but Jeremiah is trusting in the promises of God. The covenant promises to Abraham, Moses, David, and Judah will not be broken. Jeremiah is like Abraham before him; he even believed against hope. Romans 4:18 No matter how hopeless your situation seems, no matter how impossible it seems, nothing in the world can remove the believers confidence in the Word of God. Let God be true but every man a liar. Romans 3:4

Ezekiel

The book was written by Ezekiel who was a priest and prophet to the Jewish exiles in Babylon. He was born in Jerusalem and taken into captivity during the second invasion by Babylon. He worked at the same time as Daniel and Jeremiah. Jeremiah was a prophet to Jerusalem during its last days before Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city. At the same time Daniel was a prophet in Babylon to the royal court.

Ezekiel is difficult to understand which causes people to not read it. The difficulty is caused by the fact that it is full of imagery. The author uses visions, prophecies, parables, allegories, signs, and symbolic acts to dramatize the message of God. This makes much of the book difficult to understand, but there are many truths which are easy to understand and have meaning to us.

I. The first part of the book reports the commissioning of Ezekiel. 1:1-3:27

1. God appears to Ezekiel in a vision similar to Isaiah's experience when God shows a picture of great glory to the prophets. We see a reaction to the description of God by Ezekiel which is common when men are brought into God's presence. Chapter 1:28 tells us that Ezekiel fell on the ground when he encountered the glory of God.

A. We all should tremble when we encounter God such as when we pray and read the Bible. Isaiah 66:5 Remember that God is holy and we are full of sin.

2. Now that Ezekiel has been laid low by God he is ready to be brought to his feet and commissioned by God. He learns that his ministry will be a difficult one like other prophets God; gives him a fivefold commission.

A. He is given the title of "Son of man" which is used about ninety times in the book. God may be punishing His people but He has not forgotten them, and He has sent Ezekiel to them to be a messenger. Ezek. 2:3

B. Ezekiel has authority from God, and he is speaking God's words. Ezek. 3:4

C. Ezekiel got his strength from God. We see this when God raised him to his feet. Ezekiel 2:2 God's servants should not try to work in their own strength. Instead draw your strength from Him. Ezekiel learns that he will work with peoples who are hardened against him so he will have a difficult ministry. Ezekiel 3:7-9

D. Ezekiel is to be faithful to his people, the Jewish people, even though they will be so difficult Ezekiel 3:5 and verse 11 Chapter two talks about how the people will resist the message from God just like they resisted most of God's prophets.

i. The lesson for us is that we must faithfully preach God's word even if the people reject it and us. We must do this even if it is dangerous to us. We must never preach messages such as the health, wealth, and prosperity message. We must only preach and teach what is in the Bible.

E. We must be obedient to God. See how Ezekiel obeyed God and ate the scroll which was the book of law when ordered to. Chapter 3:1-2 We learn we must obey the Bible which is the same as obeying God.

3. Human responsibility is a message God gives to Ezekiel. 3:18, 20, 33:8 God holds each of us accountable to do what God calls us to do. For example every Christian is called to be an evangelist.

A. We see this idea of God holding us accountable in other parts of the Bible. Paul talks about being in trouble if he does not preach the gospel. 1 Cor. 9:16

II. The second part of the book sees Ezekiel pronouncing judgment against Judah before the fall of Jerusalem. Chapters 4-27 Jeremiah was still in Jerusalem and Ezekiel was in Babylon; both were giving similar prophecies against Judah. These prophecies are mainly warnings of the coming destruction of Jerusalem because of the sins of the people.

1. God promises terrible punishment for the people because not only are they wicked; their wickedness is even worse than the pagan nations around them. Chapter 5:7-9

2. In a vision Ezekiel sees some of the sins charged against the people such as worshipping the sun and animals like the Egyptians. Chapter 8:10,14,16

A. Ezekiel pictures the glory of the Lord departing from the temple and the city.

i. He sees wheels on the Ark of the Covenant so that it can leave. Chapter 10:9

ii. He pictures the glory of the Lord leaving by moving to the threshold or door of the temple. Chapter 10:4. Then it moves to the east gate 10:19 and then out of the city to Mt. Olivet. 11:23

iii. The glory of God stays away from the Jews until chapter 43. The glory of the Lord refers to when the people are close to God and He is close to the people. God, Himself is the glory of the Lord. Part of the judgment or punishment the people suffered was when God removed His blessings and presence from them.

B. Ezekiel communicates by mouth and also by symbols and signs. Chapter 12:6 Ezekiel willingly sacrifices his personal comfort and interest. He continues to serve and obey God even after his beloved wife dies. Ezekiel 24:15-18

i. Ezekiel showed the attack of Jerusalem by acting as if he were in the town while it was under attack. His actions as described in chapter 4:1-17 picture the city when it is being attacked.

ii. Chapter 5 begins by describing Ezekiel foretelling the fate of the citizens of Jerusalem.

iii. He packed his belongings and dug through a wall to depict the exile of the population. Ezekiel 12-1-20

C. Meanwhile back in Jerusalem, King Zedekiah believes he is safe because he sees a contradiction in the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Jeremiah says that the king will be taken captive to Babylon. Jeremiah 21:7 Ezekiel says that the king will not see Babylon. Ezek. 12:13 Both prophecies are accurate because the eyes of king Zedekiah are put out before he is taken to Babylon, and so he travels to Babylon but, he can't see anymore. 2 Kings 25:7

3. King Zedekiah was made king by Nebuchadnezzar who made an agreement with him that he would not rebel against Nebuchadnezzar. This was a promise that Zedekiah did not keep. Ezekiel 17:13-15 The rebellion of Zedekiah was a sin and angered God because Nebuchadnezzar had made Zedekiah swear an oath or promise by God. 2 Chronicles 36:13

4. We learn in Ezekiel that God has been angry with Israel since they were in Egypt worshipping Idols. We learn that the only reason God had not destroyed Israel was for His own glory. Ezekiel 20:1-9

A. God will punish sin in His own time, and He never forgets.

B. God saves us for His own glory and not just for our own benefit although we do benefit. Isaiah 43:7, 46:13

5. Ezekiel's dearly beloved wife dies in the first year of the siege. Ezekiel 24:2.18 God reveals that this death is a sign that Jerusalem will not be spared defeat. Ezekiel 24:16-24

III. Judgments against the surrounding nations. 25:1-32:32

1. God also pronounces judgment on the surrounding nations because they worship idols and they gloat over the downfall of God's people. They not only rejoice over the destruction of Jerusalem; they help in attacking Jerusalem.

2. Egypt is the nation which God especially punishes. This is because Egypt has for hundreds of years, brought trouble to God's people. Egypt will continue as a nation but never again as a strong one. Ezekiel 29:15 History has proven this prophecy to be true as many nations have conquered and ruled Egypt, and today it is not a strong prosperous country. In fact it is very poor and has a bad Muslim government.

IV. Prophecies of return and restoration. Ezekiel 33:1-48:35

1. Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed in 538 BC, and the people were terribly punished. The people had refused to listen to the warnings God had given them through various prophets. They believed that because they were God's chosen people, God would not punish them severely. Chapter 24:25-27 records the last message from Ezekiel warning the people of coming judgment. Now Ezekiel is silent for three years about the coming fall of Jerusalem.

2. Once the city falls and the people realize that even though they are God's chosen people; they are still to be obedient to God or be punished, then God sends encouraging messages of restoration. Chapter 33-48

3. There are many messages about how the glory of the people is to be restored:

A. By listening to the warnings of the spiritual watchmen and repenting. Chapter 33 Today's application would be listening to God's warnings as delivered by His faithful preachers and teachers, and the Bible.

B. By removing the false shepherds and following the Good Shepherd (Jesus) who will come for the flock. Chapter 34 Today's application is to use God's Bible to identify the false preachers and teachers, and remove them. We are to follow only those who teach the truth about Jesus as found in the Bible.

C. By the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Chapter 37

D. By the overthrow of the enemies of Israel. Chapters 38-39

E. By Israel's restoration to her own land. Chapter 48

V. Christ and His church

1. Prophecies of the coming Good Shepherd who is Jesus

A. God identifies Himself as the Good Shepherd who will rescue His people and in love care for them. Ezekiel 34:11-16 We see many references to the shepherd who will provide for his sheep. Jesus calls Himself the good shepherd. John 10:11-16

2. Ezekiel pictures the new temple. Chapters 40 and 47 It is true that the temple, in Jerusalem, was rebuilt when the Jews returned to Jerusalem, after their exile, but the temple that Ezekiel describes is far greater than the temple the Jews rebuilt in Jerusalem.

A. Ezekiel's temple is a symbolic picture of Christ. It is a picture of the Messianic age when Christ lives with us.

i. Christ is the true and living temple. John 2:19-22

ii. He draws together His people as "living stones" to be "built up as a spiritual house" 1 Peter 2:5

iii. Christ is the one "in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord." Ephesians 2:21

3. The river of life is pictured in chapter 47 as pouring from the temple. This is not an actual river, but a picture of spiritual things. It brings life where previously there was only death. This symbolizes Jesus. John 4:10

4. The New Covenant

A. God is going to make an everlasting covenant of peace with the Israelites after they return to their land. Ezekiel 37:26-28

B. We see a picture of spiritual awakening when the Lord will blow His Spirit into those who are spiritually dead. 37:1-14

C. God tells how the people will be changed as they are given a new heart of flesh and cleansed. 36:25-27

D. Back in Jerusalem the prophet Jeremiah is also giving the same message at the same time as Ezekiel. Jeremiah 31:33-34

E. This is a significant new promise from God where He promises the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers. This requires the completed work of Jesus on the cross and His glorification.

F. The primary blessings of the New Covenant are:

i. The complete removal of sin through the blood of the New Covenant; the everlasting covenant. Ezekiel 36:25; Jeremiah 31:34; Luke 22:20; Hebrews 13:20

ii. The law of God written on a new heart; a heart of flesh which replaces the heart of stone. Ezekiel 36:26; Jeremiah 31:33; 2 Corinthians 3:3, 4:17

iii. The Holy Spirit of God indwelling all believers. Rom. 8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16

VI. Application

1. Ezekiel teaches that every person is responsible for his or her own actions. Humans from, Adam and Eve, the first two people often try to blame others for their sins. The Bible teaches that we must accept personal responsibility for the sins we do and not blame someone else.

A. Adam tried to blame Eve for his sinning, and Eve tried to blame the serpent for her sinning. Genesis 3:12-13

B. This idea of individual responsibility is reported in Ezekiel 18:4, 20. Nobody else is responsible for your sins.

2. A new heart

A. The corruption and sin of Israel have earned God's disapproval. Ez. 36:16-20 Israel has done nothing to gain God's love.

B. What God promises to do is to be done because God does not want to ruin His name, and not because the people have earned God's favor. Ezekiel 22-23

C. God is going to give the people a new heart. This heart will be filled with love for God and a spirit of obedience. Ezekiel 36:25-27 and 11:19-20

D. This promise was fulfilled in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Titus 3:3-6

3. Born of the Spirit. Twenty-nine times Ezekiel refers to the Spirit of God see 2:2 and 3:12. We see in Ezekiel that the Holy Spirit is the one who brings new birth (spiritual life) to people.

A. The story of the valley of dry bones shows the unique work of the Holy Spirit. Ezekiel 37:1-14 This is a story illustrating the spiritual death of Israel under God's judgment and the spiritual rebirth the Spirit will bring to them when God restores the people. The vision illustrates the collective misery of the Israelite people in exile. It illustrates their sad state in the absence of spiritual life.

i. The bones are very dry which indicates how deep the misery of the people is under God's judgment. The real misery of the people is their revolt against God and His Word, the rule of sin, and the subsequent moral ruin into which they have sunk.

ii. God commands Ezekiel in 37:4-5 to preach and to pray. He is to pray to spiritually dead sinners, John 5:25, and to call upon the Spirit of God to work His regenerating and renewing power. Titus 3:5

a. In other words Ezekiel uses the story of the valley of dry bones to teach that it is the Holy Spirit which brings about a Christians rebirth. The New Testament verses above illustrate this.

4. Church leaders are condemned for their self-interest and irresponsibility, for not taking care of the people. Ezekiel 13:1-23 The leaders failed their people by not providing good leadership and so the people were scattered because they had no shepherd. Chapter 34:4-5 One of the goals of Africans Teaching Africans is to train pastors so that they can be good leaders of their people.

A. We see in Ezekiel that the leaders were responsible to teach about God and sound a clear warning to sinners. They were supposed to take care of the people especially the sick, the widows and the orphans just like they would do for their sheep.

B. Leadership in the church of Jesus Christ is similarly important. The leaders are to preach the gospel and the people must be lovingly cared for. Acts 20:28; Colossians 4:17; 1 Timothy 4:16; 1 Peter 5:2-4; James 3:1. Think about the warning given to church leaders.

C. A shepherd's work cannot be done effectively without a shepherd's heart. You must be called by God to be a pastor or elder.

VII. Conclusion

1. God gave Ezekiel the job to convince the people that their exile would be long and hard. The first part of his message is about judgment. This note of gloom is replaced by great optimism. The message becomes one of restoration to their homes and God's favor when the people repent.

2. Ezekiel is often quoted in the New Testament, There are at least 69 direct or indirect quotations and 48 of them are in the book of Revelation. There is a clear view of Israel being restored in the end times.

3. Ezekiel talks about the return of the Lord and His being with the people. 48:35

4. The Bible teaches that there is great misery and sorrow when God deserts the people. Hosea 9:12

5. It is the presence of God which makes heaven the wonderful place it is. The presence of God is what makes the church and our lives so wonderful.

6. Look at the wonderful picture of heaven we have because of the presence of God. Revelation 7:15-17

Daniel

Daniel is the last of the Major Prophets and he served at the same time as Ezekiel and Jeremiah. He lived during the time that Jerusalem was conquered and destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. He was a teenager when he was taken to Babylon where he lived the rest of his life in exile. Daniel was probably from the upper class and well educated as these were the ones who were exiled to Babylon and picked to be in the royal court which is where Daniel served.

Daniel lived all through the time of exile and he witnessed the return of the Jews to Jerusalem although he did not join them. He was a remarkable man and he lived a life that was absent from blemish. He was like Joseph in not falling into serious sin. He and his three companions showed that it is possible to live in a hostile country and still remain faithful to God. Many of the people we read about in the Bible who served God were also men who at one time or another got into serious trouble. Look at the lives of Abraham, Noah, David, and Moses.

How did Daniel have such a good testimony for God when he lived in such a foreign place? He did this by studying his God and consulting him frequently. He prayed before he explained dreams and chapter nine contains a long prayer which we should study so that we can learn more about how to properly pray.

Some of the best known and easiest to understand Bible stories are found in Daniel. For example, children all over the world know the story of Daniel being thrown into the lion's den. Daniel also contains some of the most difficult to understand prophecies. Daniel himself did not always understand his own prophecies, and some of them we still do not fully understand.

I. General introduction chapter 1:1-21

1. It was the practice of King Nebuchadnezzar to govern his captive people by appointing some of their captives to the royal court where they were trained to be officials in the government.

A. Daniel, and three friends, were appointed to positions in the court where they were trained in the ways of the court of Babylon. The Babylonians wanted to turn these young boys from being Jewish into being Babylonian pagans. The first thing done to change these boys was to give them new names:

i. Daniel 1:6-7 Among these boys were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. And the chief of the eunuchs changed their names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.

ii. The Babylonians were determined to turn the fourteen year old boys into proper Babylonians who worshipped their pagan gods. Their original names honored their true God, but their new names honored pagan gods.

B. Daniel and his companions were often forced to take bold steps of faith to remain faithful to God. The first test was over the food they were given. Daniel was determined to obey the dietary laws God had ordered His people to obey so he asked to be fed only food God approved of. Daniel asked to not be forced to eat unclean foods. Daniel 1:6-16

i. Daniel respectfully put his request to those in charge of him and proposed a ten day test during which they would only eat food that was approved by God for Jews. God made sure that Daniel and his friends did well on their diet and at the end of the ten days they were healthier than the other students.

2. This was the beginning of a three year training program. At the end of three years their training was all over and the four friends were examined by the king. Daniel 1:19-20 The four friends were found to be the best of all the other students and previous graduates.

3. They were appointed to high positions and Daniel was still in office seventy years later. He remained in power even when Babylon was captured by other kings. Daniel 1:21

4. These men were very successful because they honored God first and they trusted Him completely. 1 Samuel 2:30 tells us that those who honor God will be honored by God.

II. Outstanding events in the life of Daniel chapter 2:1-6:28

1. Chapter two tells the story of the first of a series of events which are very dangerous to Daniel and his friends. King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream which terrified him and he wanted to know its meaning. His wise men could not interpret the dream and so the king threatened them with death. Daniel intervened and he and his friends prayed and God told the meaning of the prayer to Daniel.

A. Daniel, in 2:28-30, gives the credit for interpreting the dreams to God and makes sure to not take any credit for himself. This is an important lesson for us. God is the one who causes a Bible preacher or teacher to be good. It is God's power which heals people and not our own power. We must be humble and acknowledge that everything we do is done in the power of God and not our own power.

B. The dream points to the coming of future kingdoms on earth. The first four kingdoms have all come to power and are now gone. The Roman kingdom was the last of these kingdoms.

i. The last kingdom, the rock, in 2:44-45 is the eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ. This is powerful biblical imagery. Look at Psalm 118:22 to see this image of a rock for the first time. The rock indicates permanence.

C. King Nebuchadnezzar is impressed and he elevates Daniel to a position of great power. The king even in verse 47 acknowledges Daniel's God as the God of gods and the Lord of kings. However like so many people now living in eternal punishment, Nebuchadnezzar is not converted. He is still a pagan at heart and he has not renounced the pagan gods and turned to the Lord who is the only true and living God. Just knowing God is not enough, we must renounce all other gods and put all our faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone as we repent of our sins in order to be saved.

2. We see evidence that Nebuchadnezzar is still a pagan in the story found in chapter 3. The king builds a big idol which he orders everyone to worship. Daniel's three companions, refused to do this and so they were thrown into a fiery furnace where they were supposed to burn to death. Instead God preserved their lives and when the king looked into the fire he saw a fourth person in the furnace (verse 25). This was the Lord Jesus who had come to be with His people in their trial. Isaiah 43:2 tells us that our Lord is with us during our trials.

A. Once again Nebuchadnezzar is impressed with God, but he remains a prideful and arrogant pagan.

3. We have another vision in chapter four, and again only Daniel can interpret the dream. Nebuchadnezzar is the most powerful man on earth and he is very proud of his accomplishments. God decides to teach him a lesson.

A. God causes him to think that he is a cow and he lives like a cow for seven years. This is an actual sickness where people think they are animals and live like an animal. The name for this illness was lycanthropy.

B. The lesson here for us is that Nebuchadnezzar was a very proud man and took all the credit for his accomplishments. God decided to teach him a lesson, and he caused him to live like an animal to humble Nebuchadnezzar for seven years.

C. The treatment worked because 4:33-37 record that after seven years he Nebuchadnezzar recovered and he praised God and gave God the credit for his accomplishments. Many times God will humble a person so that He can then save the person.

4. Twenty years later we come to Chapter five during the rule of the last Babylonian king Belshazzar. Writing appears on the wall during a drunken party and again Daniel is called in to interpret. He predicts that the kingdom of Belshazzar is coming to an immediate end. That very night the Medo-Persian army conquers Babylon.

5. Chapter six contains the well-known story of Daniel in the lion's den. Darius is now king of the Medo-Persian Empire. The story is easy to read so we will only make a few comments. There are similarities to the story of Esther in this story. Both people were favorites to the ruler, and both had enemies who wanted to destroy them. The Medo-Persians had a rule which meant that once the king made a ruling he could not undo it. In both cases the king made a ruling, he later regretted, which he did not know would result in the death of people he favored. Both Esther and Daniel trusted God and remained faithful to him. In both stories, God rescued His faithful servants and destroyed their enemies. We also must trust God to deliver us, if not from physical death then certainly He will rescue us from spiritual death.

A. As a result of this, Daniel became a favorite of the king and he was put in a position where he could help the Israelites.

III. The rest of the book of Daniel is about various prophecies illustrating God's control over the nations.

1. The writings of these last six chapters of Daniel are largely apocalyptic. This is writing prophecy looking to the future and often to end times. Apocalyptic writing is found in several books of the Bible such as Isaiah, Joel, Zechariah, Daniel, and Revelation. The writing is full of symbols and dreams and visions which make it more difficult for us to understand.

2. Chapter seven starts out with a vision of four kingdoms. There is a similarity to the dream of chapter two here. As these kingdoms are presented, each one is more powerful and terrifying than the previous one.

At this point a judgment unfolds. Thrones were set up in heaven and the Ancient of Days took his seat, and the beasts are judged. These kingdoms have all passed with Rome being the last.

A. Daniel 7:8 introduces a little horn which most people think refers to the antichrist; the man of lawlessness of 2 Thessalonians 2.

B. There is much disagreement about how to interpret this passage, but some things are easily understood. Daniel lifts his eyes to heaven where he sees a succession of thrones which follow Rome and continue to the end of time.

C. As Daniel looks up, in verses 9-10, he sees the eternal majesty in all his glory. He sees a great God who is able to put down all who oppose Him. God presides over judgment.

D. Now in verse 13 we see a continuation of the vision. We see Jesus who appeared like a man. It is worded this way because this is before Jesus comes to earth and is born as a man. We see in verse 14 that Jesus is given power over an everlasting kingdom.

E. We see in verses 24-27 that the little horn or the antichrist will follow all the kingdoms on earth and become the ruler. All history is moving to the time when the little horn will emerge as the supreme power and he will persecute Christians.

He will arrogantly rule until as verse 26 tells us the court of heaven removes him from power, and Christians will triumph over evil. Verse 28 tells us how Daniel was troubled by what he saw but he kept it to himself.

F. The vision in chapter seven is a picture of the future history of the world. Evil will triumph for a time and get strong enough to even seem to challenge God. Christians will suffer and the church may go underground. At the height of the power of the antichrist, the Lord will return in complete triumph over evil.

3. We have a new vision in chapter eight. Verse 2 tells us that Daniel was caught up in the spirit and taken to the capital of the Persian Empire. The vision reports about kingdoms which were future to Daniel but they are past to us.

A. Daniel 8:9 while Daniel is looking at the four horns he concentrates on the little horn. The little horn refers to the rise in power of a ruler of a people called the Seleucids who will rule over the Jews during the 400 year period between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Verse 10-12 refers to the time of this terrible ruler persecuting the Jews. This ruler was very mean to the Jews and even stopped the Jews from sacrificing to their God and worshipping Him. Their ruler, a man named Antiochus Epiphanes, even brought the worship of false gods into the temple. It was a terrible time for the Jews.

B. Daniel is told in verses 13-14 that this period of terrible persecution will last for six years and four months, and then the temple will be cleaned up and the Jews can worship properly again. This is what actually happened.

C. What is the meaning of all this to the Jews? Verse 16 tells us that a voice orders an angel to explain things to Daniel. This voice must be Jesus because only God can give an order to an angel.

i. This prophecy was a source of comfort to the Jews who suffered under Antiochus. This is because verse 25 tells the Jews that the persecution will end. They are reassured that in the correct time God will remove their persecutor.

4. Chapter nine verses 1-2 we see Daniel was reading Scripture and he read the promise that at the end of seventy years the trials of Jerusalem would be over and the people restored. They would go back to Jerusalem. Notice that Daniel is 84 years old and he still learns from reading the Bible.

A. Daniel's reaction to this was to pray and we see in verses 3-19 a great example of how we should pray. Let's look at six lessons:

i. Daniel was serious about his prayer.

ii. The second thing about this prayer we see in verse 3. Daniel was very close to God, but Daniel still was reverent when he approached God.

iii. Much of his prayer is admitting that he and the people had sinned and it is their sins which caused God to give them the punishment they deserved. He mentions in verses 11 and 14 that Moses had promised this punishment for disobedience.

iv. Daniel came to God trusting in His mercy. We see this on verse 4.

v. He came to God with specific request. In other words, he told God what he wanted.

vi. David prayed privately.

B. This prayer leads to a great revelation which we see in verses 20-27. We read that his prayer was being heard in heaven while he was still praying, and Gabriel comes in response to his prayers. There are different opinions about the meaning of Gabriel's prophecy. Here is one interpretation:

i. Verse 25 is about rebuilding Jerusalem during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

ii. We also see a prediction of the Messiah in verse 25.

5. Chapters 10-12 are one section containing one long and complex vision.

A. Chapter 10 sees Daniel mourning the coming trials that his people are going to face.

i. We also see that there is spiritual warfare going on. Throughout the Bible we are given short glimpses of the spiritual world which is composed of forces which are good and those which oppose God. Satan is the leader of those who fight against God.

B. Chapter 11 and the first four verses of chapter 12 contain the vision which has three parts. There are different views about this prophecy and the one I present is a conservative one. The vision presents history from the time of Daniel up until the time that the Greeks ruled Israel during the time between the Old and New Testament. Then the vision leaps forward to the end times which will be a time of great persecution.

i. The first part is found in verses 1-19. Daniel was predicting future events for Israel, but for us today these events are history. Most of these events happened during the period of history which is the time of the four hundred years between the Old Testament and the New Testament. A study of this history shows that these predictions of Daniel were accurate.

ii. The second part of the prophecy found in verses 20-35 is about the very wicked ruler named Antiochus Epiphanes who ruled during this time between the Old and New Testament. He was mentioned in chapter 8 as “another horn”. He was the one who brought idolatry into the temple. History tells us much about this ruler and confirms the prediction of Daniel.

iii. The last part of this prophecy is found in Daniel 11:36-12:4. There is much disagreement about the meaning of this prophecy. Is it literal or symbolic? Is it history or are these events future for us today? I feel they are future because we can’t identify any of the events when we study history, and also verse 40 is talking about the battle at the end of time. This is when Jesus returns and we have the final battle where Satan is totally defeated and Jesus completes His victory.

C. Chapter 12:5-14 finishes the book of Daniel. Questions are asked and not answered. We see that there are things that Daniel does not understand and neither do we. The exact time and the exact way things will happen in the last days is a mystery to us.

D. Lessons from chapter 12.

i. The last part of verse four talks about how people will learn much but they will lack understanding. Our world today has seen a gigantic increase in knowledge such as science but, wisdom is lacking. These intelligent people ignore God. Proverbs 9:10 tells us that wisdom is from God.

ii. We see in this vision that wickedness will continue to increase. Daniel 12:7 and 10-11. We see evil increasing in our society today.

iii. The last thing we see is the way of the righteous. The point of chapter 12 is to encourage God’s people to triumph in the midst of evil. We do this by faith which we see in Verse 9 because God does not reveal everything to us. We must trust Him in everything including those things we do not understand.

iv. We see in verse 10 that persecution is coming and, at the time of the final fierce persecution, the righteous will understand but not the wicked. Nobody can understand verse 11 but verse 12 tells us the righteous will at the correct time be given understanding and we will be happy that we trusted God and were faithful. Verse 13 tells us that the faithful will be rewarded at the end.

Overview of the Minor Prophets

There are twelve books in the Bible that we call the books of the Minor Prophets. We will look at only a few of these because of a lack of time. These books like most of the Major Prophets are not often taught in church. Part of the reason is that they are not easy to understand. Another reason is that the message is mostly about judgment which many people don’t like to be reminded of. This is too bad because there is so much good teaching in these books.

Hosea

This book is the first of what we call the books of the Minor Prophets. These twelve books are found at the end of the Old Testament in our Bible. A good way to study these and the Major Prophets is to study them

along with the book of history that goes along with the time of the prophet. Hosea was a prophet to the northern kingdom at the time of 2 Kings 14 through chapter 17. This was at the very end of the northern kingdom when the Assyrians conquered the kingdom of Israel and ended this kingdom.

The message of Hosea is a difficult one. God is angry with his people because they have abandoned Him and worshipped false gods. He orders Hosea to marry a prostitute and God uses this to illustrate what Israel has done to God. Israel has prostituted herself in leaving God who has loved her and provided all Israel needs. We see this copied in the way Gomer treats Hosea.

Hosea had a difficult life. He married a woman who he loved and provided for. He was betrayed by this woman just as God was betrayed by His people. He loved the people of Israel and his message to them was hard. The people needed to repent to be spared God's wrath but they couldn't. The very existence of the northern kingdom was an act of rebellion against God so the kingdom was illegitimate and could not be true to God.

I. Part one of the book, Hosea's marriage is symbolic of God's relationship with Israel. Chapters 1-3

1. The story of the unfaithfulness of Gomer to Hosea is told and it parallels the story of the unfaithfulness of Israel to God. God provided for and loved Israel just as Hosea did for Gomer. Israel whored among the false gods just as Gomer whored with other men. Yet Hosea bought his wife back from slavery and so shall God rescue His people from their troubles.

II. Judgment is pronounced against Israel. This section, chapters 1-3, is apparently a summary of forty years of teachings of Hosea about the sins of Israel and the coming punishment. The people are invited to return to God which they refuse.

III. Chapter 11:12-13:16 is in some ways a repeat of the last section. Hosea demonstrates that their punishment is well deserved because of their long history of turning away from God. It does not matter how much God tries, Israel continues in her sin. God has to punish the people, but even in His anger does not destroy all the people.

IV. Israel's ultimate restoration. Chapter 14 God's grace shows as He announces that the people will be restored and they will no longer worship idols. Their hearts will be changed. There is a comparison here to Christ and His church

1. Just as Hosea had married Gomer, so had God become Israel's husband. Remember the church is the bride of Christ.

2. Just as Gomer had become unfaithful to Hosea so Israel became unfaithful to God. Much of the church of Jesus is unfaithful.

3. Just as Gomer was enslaved by her lovers, so would Israel become enslaved by the nations they were putting their trust in.
4. Just as Hosea restored Gomer so God would restore the remnant of Israel.
5. Just as Hosea redeemed Gomer with silver and barley so Christ would redeem the true Israel (His church) with the price of His own blood.

Prophecies

1. Called out of Egypt. Chapter 11:1 When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

Egypt represents spiritual slavery. Jesus rescued His people from this slavery and Jesus had come out of Egypt. Matthew 2:14-15 And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

2. Hosea reports the coming rejection of the Jews which we see happens when Jerusalem is destroyed in 70 AD. Paul in Romans 9:22-26 uses Hosea 2:23 and Hosea 1:10 to explain that both Jews and Gentiles will be restored to God's mercy through Christ.

3. Resurrection for Christ and His church.

A. Chapter 6:2 is a prophecy about the resurrection from the dead for both Jesus and His Christians.

B. Hosea 13:14 is a prophecy linking the resurrection of Jesus and the dead.

His resurrection is confirmation that we will also rise from the grave. ! Corinthians 15:20

Application

1. Chosen by grace. Just as Hosea chose Homer in her unworthiness, so God chooses us while we are just as unworthy as Gomer. God still does as Hosea 11:4 says when He draws us by cords of kindness and bands of love.
2. Mercy not sacrifices is what God desires. Hosea teaches that without mercy, our sacrifices or the way we worship is useless. Hosea 4:1-2
3. Leadership of God's people. Good leadership is important and Hosea attacks the bad leadership of his time. Bad leaders lead the people astray. Hosea 4:5; 4:6; 5:1; 6:9; 10:5; 5:10; 7:3-7; 9:15.

Conclusion. The book is a passionate one. It contains a love story both a human one and the one involving God and Israel. There are threats of tremendous punishments and also generous promises. We see a promise of better days coming as we will be restored and have everlasting peace. By His almighty power and His grace the Lord will ultimately deliver His people from death and Hell.

Joel

We know very little about Joel, for example, we do not know when he brought his message. He ministered to Judah. The name Joel means Jehovah is God. The message applies to all periods of history so the exact date is not important. The warning also applies to all nations even ours. Joel tells us that God has brought disaster to the land because of the people's sins.

While Joel describes a locust plague, it could be any severe disaster such as an earthquake, but this time it is locusts which have often through history destroyed the food of a region. Their destruction often brought severe famine to the people so the people understood the terrible judgment God was bringing to them.

1. Chapter 1:1-20 describes what is happening. He describes a plague of locusts which are devouring everything that is growing; anything that is edible.

A. Joel makes it clear in verse 2 that there has never been a worse disaster. He wants everybody in Judah to know how bad it is. He wants the lesson told to future generations.

B. In verse 15 Joel tells that the day of the Lord is coming. This phrase is often used in the Bible to talk about terrible judgment coming. Isaiah 13:6-22 describes the day of the Lord as being a day of terror.

2. Joel further describes the attack in chapter 2:1-11. He gives the picture of an invading army totally destroying everything it comes upon. Wave after wave of the army attacks and each wave brings more damage. The attack is so powerful that nobody can stand before it.

A. Verse 11 tells us that the army doing all this destruction is the Lord's army and they are doing what God wishes. Joel tells us that this is the day of the Lord and no one can endure.

3. In chapter 2:12-17 a new message comes from Joel. This is a call for the people to repent. Joel tells us what true repentance is.

A. We see from verses 12 & 13 that true repentance comes from the heart. The inner person is what God sees (1 Samuel 16:7), not just what is on the outside for the world to see. True repentance only comes from the heart and not just from the lips of a person saying he is sorry.

B. What is true repentance?

i. Confession of actual sins. We must admit we are sinners.

ii. We must truly be sorry for our sins.

iii. We must seek to change. We must turn from our sins and turn to God. We see this in verse 12 and 13 when God says to return to Him.

C. There are rewards for repenting. Verse 13 tells us that God is gracious and merciful and He will forgive us when we repent. Verse 14 tells us that He may even bless us.

D. In verse 15-17 Joel now teaches the importance of the leaders leading the people in repentance. It is important that the church has repentant leaders. Titus 1:5-9 teaches that church leaders are to be good examples for their people. They are to lead the church in going forward.

4. Joel 2:18-27 God promises great blessings for His people when they repent.

A. Joel 2:28-32 is quoted, by the Apostle Peter in Acts 2:16-21, during his sermon at Pentecost. Joel is prophesizing about the last days. This prophecy is looking forward to Jesus coming back again.

5. Chapter 3:1-21 talks about the fact that God's judgment is certain and it is for all people.

A. Verses 1-6 tell that God had complaints against the pagan nations. His complaints are that the pagan nations abused God's people. Today God is angry when the pagans attack Christians.

B. God says these are His people because He created them and because He redeemed them.

i. God created Israel by calling Abraham. In Genesis 15:5 God promised Abraham that He would give him descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven. This describes the nation of Israel.

ii. Jesus also redeemed His church when He paid for it with His blood so the church is the bride of Jesus see Revelation 19:7.

C. In verses 7-13, God challenges the pagan nations, who mistreated His people, to prepare to make war with Him (God).

D. In verses 14 & 15 God announces that soon He will decide the eternal fate of people.

E. God promises in verses 16-21 that He will be a refuge for His people forever. God's people will not be punished forever because of what Jesus did for us on the cross. We will be in heaven with Jesus forever.

Amos

We will now look at the book of Amos. Amos, we see from reading chapter 1:1, was a shepherd. This was the job of a common man so we know that, unlike Isaiah, he was probably neither well educated nor rich. He was a citizen of Judah although chapter 7:15 says that he was sent to be a prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel. Verse 1 also identifies the kings of both Israel and Judah so we know he lived when times were prosperous; this was about thirty years before Assyria captured the Northern Kingdom. As so often happens, the people, in their prosperity, abandoned God. They were very sinful and disobedient to God's laws.

1. In chapter 1:2 Amos tells the people that they must pay attention because God has something important for them to hear. The lion refers to God speaking and He roars because he has a frightening message for the people. "The pastures of the shepherds mourn, and the top of Carmel withers," alerts the people that hard times are coming. Mt Carmel is usually a moist place in the dry area of Israel, but God is promising judgment for Israel's sins as he tells the people that a normally moist place is going to be dry. He is predicting a drought.

2. In chapters 1-2:16 we see Amos in the kingdom of Israel preaching a sermon about how God is going to bring judgment down on surrounding nations for their sins. Chapter 1:3 he uses the expression that for three transgressions (sins) of a city and for four, He will not revoke the punishment. This is a unique way of saying that the sin listed for a city is not all they have done wrong. They are going to be punished because they keep on sinning over and over again.

A. The first cities that Amos (chapters 1:3-10) lists for punishment are all enemies of Israel. Punishment for these enemies is good in the eyes of the Jews; these are Damascus, Philistia, and Tyre.

B. The next cities listed for punishment, are Edom, Amman, and Moab who are all blood relatives to the people of Israel. The people of Israel are not so happy with their punishment, but it is still acceptable because God is still punishing other people and not the people of Israel. We see this in Chapter 1:11-2:3.

C. Chapter 2:4-5 mentions that the next country slated for punishment is Judah. The message is now uncomfortably close to home because this punishment is coming to fellow Jews, but the people of Israel still accept it because, after all, other people are being punished. Their crime is different than the other nations already listed. Their crimes are spiritual, and are crimes against God.

D. Now in chapter 2:6-16, Amos shows that he is a bold man because he is in Israel and he pronounces punishment on Israel. It was all right when he was talking about other people, but here he is a foreigner speaking against the people of Israel, and he instantly became unpopular. There is a lesson here that we must be faithful to God and always preach His message from the Bible no matter if the message is popular or not. We must seek to please God first and not man- even if it puts us in danger. Many pastors preach what is popular to please their people and this is wrong. Our sermons are not supposed to "tickle people's ears" instead we must often "step on their toes."

E. A problem Amos is addressing here is one that continues to be a problem even in today's church. The Jews felt that, since they were God's chosen people, they would not be severely punished by God. Well, Amos came to their country to tell them they were wrong. All people will be judged by God and judged based on their deeds and not their family relationship. Church attendance and membership will not save you. What will? Only being a true Christian will.

F. Chapter 2 verse 4 tells one of the reasons the Jews will be punished is that they have rejected God's laws and disobeyed Him. God treats both the people of Israel and Judah the same because they are one people in God's eyes.

i. Verse 4 also tells that another sin was that God's chosen people went to other gods.

G. Verses 6-8 report a list of crimes which is directed against Israel. The picture given in the following verses describe a totally corrupt society where the rich steal from the poor to get even richer. Their specific crimes are:

1. The first crime is economic oppression. This is the meaning of selling the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals. This crime is cheating poor people out of what they deserve both for big things such as silver or even for small things such as a pair of sandals.

2. The second crime found in verse 7 is that the rich people deny the poor people justice in the courts. The courts are corrupt.

3. The third crime is also found in verse seven which talks about the crime of immorality; specifically sexual.

4. The fourth crime in verse 8 is taking the warm clothes away from the poor. This crime is specifically forbidden in Exodus 22:26-27

5. The fourth crime is found at the end of verse 8 and is the sin of using the corrupt courts to take away the money of the poor. The people are unfairly fined.

H. The conclusion of this first sermon by Amos is found in chapter 2:9-16.

i. God reminds the people in verses 9-11 of all that He has done for them and that they owe their success to Him.

ii. In verses 13-16 Amos tells the people that all sinners will be judged and God will play no favorites. Every person will be judged the same no matter where he comes from.

3. In chapter 3:1-2 Amos begins a new sermon. He starts by pointing out that Israel, of all people on earth, should be faithful to God. However, the morals of the people of the northern kingdom were so bad that they were worse than those of many of the surrounding pagan nations. The church is supposed to operate at a higher standard than the surrounding unsaved people. It is sad but, many times, there is no difference between the church members and those not connected to the church. For example, the divorce rate for both groups (at least in America) is about the same. Look at what God did for His people:

A. God chose them to be His special people. He chose them out of all the other people on earth. He did not choose Abraham because Abraham was a man with spiritual understanding and faith in God. Abraham was a pagan when God chose him. God chose the people of Israel because He wanted to for His own reasons. Read Romans 9:11-15 to confirm this. If you are a Christian, then you were chosen by God.

B. God delivered the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. Romans chapter six tells us that God has delivered all Christians from the bondage of sin. We are no longer slaves to sin.

C. Israel, by reason of being chosen out of all the people on earth, has a special responsibility to God. God's chosen people have a higher responsibility to follow and obey God than other people on earth. Luke 12:47-48 teaches that people who have heard the truth about Jesus and rejected Him will be punished more severely than those who never heard, about Jesus, at the time of judgment.

4. Amos 3:6-8 is a series of warnings to the people. God is warning that He will bring severe punishment to those who continue to disobey Him.

5. Chapter 3 ends with a warning from God that there will be no escape from God's judgment; that there will be no place to hide. He tells them to live lives obedient to God in hope that God will be merciful to them.

6. In chapter 4-5:15 God reveals His feelings about religion. He hates (Amos 5:21-22) false religion where the people assemble and do what is right in their own eyes, but not the worship God directs and desires, John 4:23.

A. He starts in verses 1-3 by talking about the cows of Bashan which refers to women living in great prosperity. This shows that He is displeased by the rich, not because they are rich but, because they have become rich by oppressing the poor. They are not coming to worship God with clean hearts.

i. God, in verses 2-3, is promising to end their prosperity by bringing judgment on them. He is specifically talking about the coming Assyrians who will conquer Israel and take most of the people away into exile.

B. Amos talks about the false religion that is taking place in three sites that were significant in the early history of God's chosen people. These are Bethel and Gilgal mentioned in 4:3 and Beersheba mentioned in 5:5. The people have turned these sites into places where they worshipped idols. They disobey God's instruction about how they are to worship and also that they are to sacrifice only at the temple.

i. There is application here for Christian worship. We are to look to the Bible for our methods of worship and not invent ways to worship for our own pleasure. Our purpose in worship is to give to God the praise and worship He deserves. We are not to put our pleasure ahead of God's. We are to come to Him with clean and obedient hearts.

C. Amos goes on to tell why Israel's religion is dead.

i. First is the fact that Israel's religion co-existed with moral corruption. He adds in chapter 5:7, 10-13 to what he earlier said about corruption in chapters 1-3. The people were content to both live corrupt lives and to practice religion at the same time.

ii. The second thing that was wrong about their religion was that they had no sense of their sin. They made thank offerings and freewill offerings, but no sin offerings. Part of our worship must be our confessing our sins and asking God to forgive us so the He will accept our worship.

iii. The third thing that offended God was that they weren't seeking God in their worship. They were at worship for their own purpose. An example is found in Amos 4:5 which tells that they gave their freewill offerings so that they could boast of them.

D. Again in 4:6-11 God warns the people. He does this so that the people will repent and return to God but, they ignored God.

E. Amos closes out this section, in 5:14-15, by calling on the people to live in a way that pleases God so that God might have mercy on them.

7. Chapter five closes with Amos telling the people to beware of the coming "Day of the Lord" which is often mentioned in the Bible. Examples from Isaiah 13:6, Joel 1:15, Malachi 4:5 depict a terrible time when God brings fierce judgment. The day of the Lord is described in 2 Peter 3:10 as the day of the Lord's wrath; a horrible time.

A. Let us look at three characteristics of the "Day of the Lord."

i. Verse 18 describes it as a day of darkness. Hell is described in Matthew 8:12 and Jude 1:13 as a place of complete darkness. The Bible often associates light with the presence of God; see Psalm 104:2, John 8:12 and John 9:5. Light is good and darkness is bad. The "Day of the Lord" which Amos described is a time of terrible judgment. It is a time when you are separated from God which means separation from anything good; look at James 1:17. This also describes Hell where we would be completely separated from God forever.

ii. The second characteristic is that God is inescapable; there is no running away from God. We see in Amos 5:19 where the man runs away from the lion only to run into the bear and the serpent.

iii. The third characteristic which is found in verse 20 is that it is hopeless for the person who is against God.

B. Amos closes this in verses 23-24 by writing that there is still time to avoid the wrath of God. As long as he is alive a person can avoid the "Day of the Lord" by turning to Jesus to be his Lord and savior.

C. The "Day of the Lord" is not a bad day for the Christian because it is the day that the Christian goes to Heaven.

8. Chapter 6 is an attack on God's people who are complacent and satisfied with the way things are. This was wrong in the time of Amos and it is wrong in the church today. Many Christians don't seem to realize that there is a spiritual war

going on. As long as life is good, they are satisfied and don't mind about all the lost people surrounding them and they avoid confronting evil. We see this in western churches where the church avoids evangelism and especially foreign missions. Most Christians avoid trying to stop evil such as abortion and the spread of homosexual marriage. Matthew 16:24 is only one example of many in the Bible that teaches that we Christians are to be active in serving God. Often Christians don't seem to be aware that disaster surrounds them and is a constant threat.

9. Chapters 7:1-9 and 8:1-9:10 contain five visions.

A. The first vision is found in verses 1-3 where God is threatening to bring a plague of locusts which would mean starvation for the people. Amos pleaded with God to spare the people and God does spare the people from the locust.

B. The second vision is found in verses 4-6 and is one about the fire which is actually threatening a drying, in other words, a drought of the land. Once again Amos pled with God not to do this and again God spared the people from this.

C. The third vision is pictured in verses 7-9 and talks about God holding up a plumb line. God is saying that He is measuring or examining Israel to see if Israel is behaving the way God expects. We know that Israel is not living the way God expects so, in verse 9, God threatens to destroy Israel. We can only avoid this destruction if we will as Acts 16:31 says -believe in the Lord Jesus and, as Acts 2:38 says, repent and be baptized.

i. The plumb line for a Christian is the Bible which gives us the standards we are to live by.

D. The rest of chapter 7 is a report about an attack on Amos by Amaziah, the local religious leader, who brings charges against Amos to the king. Amaziah orders Amos to stop preaching in Israel and to go back to his own country. Amos obeys God and tells Amaziah in verse 17 that Amaziah and the nation will come to an end. We must always be bold and preach the truths from the Bible.

E. The fourth vision is found in chapter 8 and, at first, in verses 1-2. It talks about a bowl of summer fruit which seems good. However, the fruit is picked and is at an end. There will be no further harvest; no further blessings from God.

i. The rest of the chapter, beginning in verse three, is a list of troubles for Israel. Verses 8-11 tell how the land will suffer from spiritual famine. God will abandon the people. We see this in many lands where Christianity was previously strong, but now these places are mostly pagan. We see this in most of Europe and Canada and now the United States.

F. The last vision we find in chapter 9:1-10, and it tells of the final end of Israel. God pronounces the end of His special covenant relationship with Israel.

i. Verses 1-6 tell about this ending of Israel which happens less than 50 years after Amos delivers his prophecy. We read in these verses that there is no escaping God's judgment.

ii. The second part of this prophecy found in verses 7-10 talk about the sifting of the church. Verse 7 makes the point that God no longer regards the Israelites as a special people. They are just like the people of Cush. The people, in verse ten, tell how they think they are special and that God will protect them from disaster.

iii. In verse 8 and verse 9 Amos tells the people that while many people in Israel will be destroyed, God will not destroy His faithful remnant. He will always preserve his faithful followers.

10. The last verses of Amos from 11-15 promise that God is going to bring a golden age to Israel. The book ends with a promise for future blessings for Israel. We see more about this idea in Romans 11. There are a few things to comment about, this coming time of blessing for Israel which is still in the future.

A. There will be blessing for Israel in particular. Verses 11-12

B. There will be a time of material blessing. Verses 12-13

C. The blessings will be permanent. Verse 15

Obadiah

We don't know who Obadiah was or when he wrote this book. Even though it is the shortest book of the Old Testament, it has lessons for us. God has much patience but there is a limit to His patience and

when His patience is finished, His judgment is very severe. This was true in Old Testament times and it is still true today.

Obadiah is a prophecy dealing with the destruction of Edom, a country which was both a long time enemy of Israel and a relative. Jacob's brother, Esau, was the founder of Edom. Edom had, throughout its history, been an enemy of Israel. Edom felt secure in its homeland which was east of the Jordan River. The country is mountainous and very easy to defend against attack. Today this land is part of the Muslim country of Jordan.

It seemed that, whenever possible, Edom acted against Israel. For example, Moses asked permission from the king of Edom to take the people of Israel through Edom on their way to the Promised Land of Canaan. The story, as recorded in Numbers 20:14-21, tells how the king of Edom threatened war if the Israelites entered Edom. Later in Numbers 24 Balaam predicts the conquest of Edom by Israel.

Chapter 1:1-9 of Obadiah predicts the destruction of Edom. This is despite Edom's security in her mountain forts and her wealth and her mighty soldiers.

Verses 10-14 point out that the reason for the destruction of Edom is that they treated Israel so badly. When Israel was defeated, Edom joined in the plundering of Israel by her enemies. As verse 10 points out this harsh treatment by Edom was toward her brother Israel.

The last section of Obadiah starts in verse 15 and brings God's judgment. Verse 15 tells us that the Day of the Lord is near for all nations. This Day of Judgment soon resulted in the end of Edom just as if Edom had never existed. The Day of Judgment meant deliverance for Israel.

The last section of Obadiah, beginning in verse 17, deals with the restoration of Israel. Israel will be punished by God but only for a short time. Edom's punishment will be permanent while Israel is promised a glorious future.

There are three things verse 17 teaches us about God's promise of future blessings to Israel. These promises are also promises to Christians. These are:

1. The Day of the Lord is a day of deliverance for God's people. It is the day we Christians are delivered from the bondage of our sins.
2. Verse 17 talks about being holy. For the Christian this means that God will make us holy. We will be made holy little by little now and perfectly holy when we die.
3. Verse 17 talks about how Israel will possess its own land again, and it tells the Christian that God will provide for all our needs.

Isaiah 63:1-4 is a prophecy about the final judgment when Christ returns. It gives us a picture of the man from Edom who has been killing his enemies. The man coming from Edom is Jesus returning to Jerusalem after He has fiercely destroyed all His enemies, especially Edom. When the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and took the people into captivity it appeared that Israel was finished as a nation.

At the same time, it appeared that Edom was to be a long lasting country secure in its mountain fortresses. However Obadiah prophesied the total destruction of Edom and the restoration of Israel.

Here in Isaiah we see that Jesus has destroyed all his enemies on earth specifically having judged Edom. Jesus returns to His people Israel when He is finished with judging the world.

Edom disappeared even before Jesus was born while Israel is still a healthy country. Edom is no more.

Jonah

A different type of Prophet, Jonah was sent to save not the people of Israel, but to save the people of their enemy Nineveh the capital of Assyria. The story proves that God cares about all peoples not just the Jews. This is one prophet whose story is known by most Christians in the west including children. It is easy to read and it is an interesting story. Jonah as you will see if you read the book is a very difficult person. Let's take a quick look at the book. There are only four chapters in this short book. Reading the book tells us that Jonah was a difficult person. He was disobedient to God and he pouted because he was disappointed when God did not kill the people of Nineveh.

Let's look at the story. Jonah is ordered by God to go to Nineveh to warn the people to repent or be punished. Jonah disobeys God and gets on a ship to go the opposite direction as he has no intention of going to Nineveh. God sends a fierce storm and the ship starts to sink so they throw Jonah overboard and the storm stops at once.

Then a fish comes and swallows Jonah. Sitting inside the belly of a fish for three days causes Jonah to repent, and he agreed to go to Nineveh. He went to Nineveh where he preached a sermon calling on the people to repent. The story closes with Jonah sulking because the people repented which Jonah did not want.

Let's see what we can learn as we look at the four chapters:

1. God is teaching His people that they are responsible to deliver the message of salvation to all people. This was a major fault of the Jews in the time of Jesus see Luke 4:26-29. When Jesus talked about God's blessings being for other people the Jews got angry and wanted to kill him.

2. We see that God honors repentance for sin for all people.

There are four divisions to the book.

1. Jonah wants his own way 1:1-16. God orders him to travel east to Nineveh, instead Jonah travels on a ship headed west. God responds to Jonah's disobedience by sending a strong storm, and Jonah was thrown overboard to drown.

2. Chapter 1:17-2:10. God extended grace to Jonah by sending a fish to swallow him, and preserving Jonah's life so that Jonah could do the job God had assigned to Him. Jonah prayed and God had the fish spit him out on land. Jonah spent three days in the belly of the fish which must have been an ordeal; obeying God is the best choice for us to make. John 1:17 and Matthew 12:40 Jesus refers to the three days in a fish and compares it to His three days in the tomb.

3. Jonah preaches to Nineveh 3:1-10. His sermon was very direct and short. "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned" To Jonah's amazement the people including the king believed the message and they repented and God spared them. The lesson here is that it is not the number of words that make a sermon effective, rather it is the power God gives to the words used.

4. Chapter 4:1-11, Jonah pouts (sulks or shows displeasure) over Nineveh being spared by God. He became angry to the point of desiring death at first because God spared Nineveh, and then because the plant died. In verses 10 & 11 God talks to him about his attitude where he cares more about the plant living than the 120,000 children living in Nineveh being spared. God here shows His compassion and mercy for those who repent. God's use of Jonah shows that God doesn't always use nice people to do His work.

Micah

1. Micah and Isaiah were both prophesying at the same time, and sometimes their messages were the same. Compare Micah 4:1 and Isaiah 2:3. Micah was a prophet who lived in Judah. We are only going to look at a few of His teachings because of time and the similarity of his message to other prophets.

2. Basically the message is that God loves His people even though He hates their sin. He and God especially hate the way the rich steal from the poor, see Micah 3:1-3. What do you think God thinks about Africa in this matter? Micah in 7:3 even mentions the sin of bribery. The message of Micah is that the people are sinning, the sin is identified, and the people are promised punishment if they continue sinning. The message closes with a promise of future salvation.

3. We see both in Isaiah and Micah that they are like God in that they love their people despite their sin. We see this same love for his people in the Apostle Paul look at Romans 9:3. The mark of a godly pastor is that he will preach all the Bible including the hard messages. He will offer godly counsel even if the advice is not what the people want to hear. He will also love his people and hurt so much for them that at times he will cry for them.

4. There are two key verses in this book that we want to mention. Mic 6:8 says "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" We see in this verse what God requires of each person.

Mic 7:18 says "Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love." Here Micah gives us a view of the fact that God Himself will one day pardon our sins.

5. Micah 5:2-4 talks about the coming Messiah, and that He will be born in the city of Bethlehem in the district of Ephrathah. We know this happened.

Nahum

Nahum is the second of two prophets who prophesied about Nineveh the capital of Assyria. Jonah was the first prophet to Nineveh and his message was one calling the people to repent to avoid being destroyed. The people repented and God spared Nineveh. Now it is over a hundred years later and Nahum has a new prophecy for Nineveh. This time God's

prophet doesn't call on the people to repent; instead he tells the people that God is going to bring terrible judgment to the city. It appears that the repentance that followed the message of Jonah did not last long, and that the people quickly reverted to their old ways.

Their old ways were terrible; Nineveh was much hated because they were such a cruel people. The city was founded early; Genesis 10 records that Nimrod was the founder of Nineveh. They were a strong people who ruled a large kingdom for many years. Nineveh believed in torturing people, for example, their history talks about them skinning people alive.

The prophecy of Nahum tells us that while God was primarily working with His chosen people, He was God of all people and all people are accountable to Him and he will judge them. Another lesson here is that while God is a very loving god, He is also a God of justice and His judgment is very fierce.

Chapter one is about the Lord's strength and the terrible punishment coming to His enemies. We also see that God has goodness for His people who trust in Him. Verses 8-9 make it clear that God will bring a complete end to His enemies. People want to only acknowledge the goodness and mercy of God, but we must also realize that His judgment of His enemies is terribly strong -see Isaiah 63:1-6 for another example of this.

Chapter 1:15-2:2 is a message to Judah that she must obey God and then, God will restore Judah. Chapters two and three detail the destruction of Nineveh.

There is application for us in this book:

1. Chapter 1:2 again teaches us the lesson of Exodus 20:5-6 that our God is a jealous god, and we are to worship and serve Him only.
2. We know that Nahum was a true prophet of God because history reports the complete destruction of Nineveh which to this day no longer exists.
3. God has always given clear warning about the complete destruction of those who rebel against Him and who don't worship Him. This warning is still as certain today as it was in the time of Nahum. The second death which is eternity in Hell is promised to the enemies of God see Revelation 21:8.

Habakkuk

We don't know much about Habakkuk, but he was a prophet to Judah shortly before the Babylonians conquered Judah. It must have been after the time when Josiah the last godly king ruled. Judah had abandoned their God and they behaved terribly toward God. Habakkuk was one of the many prophets that God had sent to call His people to repent of their sins and return to Him.

I. Chapter 1:1-11 contains the first conversation with God. It is a time of terrible sinfulness in Judah. The people worship idols and they are guilty of terrible immorality. Their leaders are corrupt and also deep in sin.

A. We know from verse 2 that Habakkuk has been praying for some time about the sinfulness of the people, and he feels that God does not hear him. He sees that the people have completely abandoned God and turned

to idolatry. Even the leaders are corrupt. Habakkuk, verse 3, doesn't understand why God allows the sinning to continue. Habakkuk can't understand God's silence. God replies in verse 6 that He will punish the people, and He will use the Chaldeans, another name for Babylonians, to punish them.

2. The second conversation with God takes place in chapters 1:11-2:20. Habakkuk, in Verse 13, tells that God can't tolerate evil so Habakkuk wants to know how God can use evil people to punish His people.

A. Verses 2:1-4 say that God's people must be patient and wait until God is ready to act. We must live by faith and trust God to do what is right at the correct time.

B. God goes on to say that He is well aware of how wicked the Babylonians are and that swift justice is coming and the Babylonians will be severely punished.

C. Verse 14 promises that a new world order is coming and life will be very different.

D. This section closes in verse 20 with the statement that God is in control, and all the earth will stand before Him as He judges them.

3. Chapter 3 is a prayer of worship. Habakkuk humbles himself before God and he praises God for His holiness, justice, and righteousness. He praises God for His control over everything. In verse 2 Habakkuk asks God to remember mercy during the time of His fierce judgment. He closes his book writing that he rejoices in God who is his salvation and his strength.

4. Applications

A. People don't want to believe in God's judgment despite warnings. Paul, in Acts 13:41, used Habakkuk 1:5 to warn the Jews. Even though people are warned over and over again about God's judgment they still refuse to believe. Many people have heard the message of the gospel and still refuse to believe in Jesus Christ for their salvation.

B. Habakkuk talks about living by faith in chapter 2:4. God's people have faith in God. They trust God when times are good and also when times are terrible. Compare how Jesus trusted God even in His terrible time in the garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:39).

5. Conclusion. It may appear that the wicked prosper and, often they do for a short time. However, eventually the judgment of God will fall on them. This is a warning to unsaved people who enjoy their lives and never listen to God. Judgment is coming for every person. The person who is not a Christian will be judged as guilty of their sins and sent to Hell.

This is one of the least read and understood books of the Bible. This is sad because the message of Zephaniah is just as applicable to us today as when it was delivered over 2500 years ago. The last few verses are very comforting particularly -chapter 3:17. We know that Zephaniah delivered his message during the time King Josiah ruled which was toward the end of the kingdom of Judah. This was shortly before Judah was conquered by Babylon. This was long after the northern kingdom was conquered by Assyria.

The first section of Zephaniah chapter 1:1-2:3 focuses on the coming day of the Lord which means the message is one of extreme judgment. It is almost as if Zephaniah is writing a summary of the other prophets as he writes a message promising total destruction see verses 1:1-4. This style of writing is called hyperbole which means the writing exaggerates something such as the destruction mentioned in these verses. God is not going to actually kill everything as verse 2 says although God is very angry and the destruction will be fierce enough that all the people will fear.

God is angry because of the many sins of all the people; they are all sinners not just a few of them and their sins cover every part of their lives such as:

1. Religion. Verses 4-6 tell about the religious sins of both the priests and the people. The people are guilty of idolatry and falling away from true worship. Specifically the people love money more than God and, they love things and other people more than God. They love their sins more than God, and their position with other people more than God. They **don't**, as Matthew 22:37 orders: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."
2. Social Customs. There are various interpretations for verses 8-9. Here is my view. Another reason for God being angry is found in verse 8 which talks about the leaders of the people leading the way into being disloyal to God. The reference to foreign attire means that the people wanted to closely imitate what the people of other nations did instead of being content to live differently. They forgot that God had chosen His people to be different (Deut. 7:6)
 - A. The first part of Verse 9 where the verse says On that day I will punish everyone who leaps over the threshold, may refer to the people following the practice of those who worship the false god Dagon, see 1 Samuel 5:5. The second part of verse 9 refers to the people being willing to observe the religious practices of false gods like Dagon, but they don't obey God's laws. This particular disobedience is about not obeying God's commands for honesty and justice.
3. Commerce. The next area that God is angry about is found in 1:11 and talks about the corruption where the merchants cheat people in the marketplace.
4. Complacency. God is angry because as verse 12 says the people believe that God will not react, and the people can do whatever they want to do either good or bad. They wrongly feel that God will not punish them for their bad behavior.

Next Zephaniah tells us that God's reaction to the sins of the people will be fierce judgment. Verse 14 again refers to the terrible judgment of the day of the Lord. God continues throughout chapter 1 to promise terrible punishment for the people for their sins.

This first section about judgment closes in chapter 2:1-3 with Zephaniah calling on the people to repent and obey God if they are to have any hope of surviving the coming judgment.

1. Notice that God is now so angry that He says, in chapter 2:3, that **perhaps** the people will be spared His judgment. He does not promise to spare them as he did 100 years earlier in the time of Amos. He was angry because of the sins of the

people in the time of Amos but He promised, in Amos 5:6, to spare the people who repented from judgment. God's patience has a limit and we should not try to find His limit.

The next section of Zephaniah is found in chapter 2:4-3:8 and expands God's judgment to all the people of the world and not just Judah. God is God of all the people and as we see in verse 8 that all people will be judged. Application for today is that every person will be judged according to their relationship to Jesus.

The last section of Zephaniah is found in Chapter 3:9-20 and is a message of encouragement; a message of restoration. Studying the Minor Prophets can be discouraging because of the messages of terrible judgment. However, these judgments are not God's final words. No matter how severe the judgments are God has a final message of hope for those who repent. The devil will be judged and sin will not be the final victor. God's blessings are not for everyone. They are only for His remnant. These blessings are for Christians only. Do you know for sure that you belong to Jesus?

Here is how you can know that you are a Christian:

1. Verse 9 tells us we must call on the Lord and serve Him "shoulder to shoulder" with other Christians. We must trust Him with our whole hearts, and serve Him faithfully.
2. Verses 11-12 tell us we must conquer our pride and become meek and mild. You must take yourself off the throne and put Jesus on it in your place.
3. Christians, as verse 13 tells us, must seek to live holy lives. We must try to obey God. John 14:15 tells us that if we love God we will obey Him. We become more holy as we grow more obedient.

We are now told in verse 14 to sing a new song; with joy. Verse 15 tells us we sing this song because God had removed our punishment and He is back with us.

The rest of Zephaniah is a message of great encouragement. Verse 17 is especially comforting. Here Zephaniah is telling us that God is so pleased with His people- Christians- that He sings with joy over us.

Haggai

Haggai and Zechariah were both Post-Exilic prophets. They were called this because they served after the Jews returned to Jerusalem after the exile. They both worked about the same time and their purpose was to cause the Jews to become active in rebuilding the temple so worship could be held there again. After their time of captivity, the Jews needed to be encouraged; they needed revival. God sent these two prophets for this reason.

The Jews that Haggai was speaking to were different from the Jews who lived before the destruction of Jerusalem. They were like many Christians today in that they were God's people, but they were living for themselves first and not God. Most of the time God's people desire to serve God but they take care of themselves first and then if they have any time or money left over they then remember God.

When they first returned to Jerusalem they began rebuilding the temple, but soon opposition arose to this work and they abandoned it. Fifteen years later they were still not working on the temple. God sent Haggai to encourage the people to resume rebuilding the temple.

Haggai 1:2 tells us that the people have decided that it is not yet time for the temple to be built. God's reason for the restoring the people to Jerusalem was to have them rebuild the temple so that they could properly worship God. The people ignore this fact.

Verses 3-11 record God's answer to the people's decision not to rebuild the temple. God delivers His message through Haggai to the people. First, in verse 4, God's words show scorn because the people have put their houses ahead of God's house. He goes on to explain in verses 10-11 that the reason for the famine in the land is their neglect of rebuilding the temple. They need to trust God and do the Lord's work before they take care of themselves.

We see in verse 12 that the leaders obey God and under their leadership the people responded by promising to obey God. Comparing verse one with verse fifteen, we see that the response of the people was very quick. In only twenty-three days the people started working on the temple.

The people quickly become discouraged as reported in chapter 2:1-9. They were discouraged because:

1. The work was hard, and at first, all they would be doing would be cleaning up the debris from the old temple site. The old temple had been totally destroyed and it would have been a huge job to clear the site so the rebuilding could begin. There would be nothing positive to see until after a lot of work had been done.
2. They did not have enough resources to build a large and rich temple such as the first one. Haggai in verse 3 draws attention to the fact that the temple they are working so hard to build will be very inferior compared to Solomon's temple.

God in verse 4 encourages the people. Haggai tells them that God is with them so be encouraged and continue the work. This is the same message God gave to His workers in the past. Joshua 1:6-9; 1 Chronicles 28:20 It is the same message God gives to His workers today. Here are some of the reasons God said to be encouraged:

1. In verse 5 God reminds the people of the covenant He made with his people when He brought them out of Egypt and provided for them. He reminds them that He will always be with them.
2. God reminds them in verse 8 that He owns all the gold and silver (Psalm 24:1) and He will provide all that they need.

3. He promises in verse 7 that He will come and fill the temple with His glory. The glory of the new temple will be found in the Lord and not in size and wealthy materials. It is not outward appearance that counts; instead it is the heart that matters. God's glory is found in churches where the people's hearts are focused on Him and the quality or size of the building does not matter.

The next message from God was delivered to the priest in verses 10-19. Haggai asks the priests two questions which they answered:

1. Verse 12 the question is, if something holy touches something that is not holy does the holy thing make the unholy thing holy. The priest answer is of course not.

2. Verse 13 the question is, if something ordinary touches something holy does this contact make the holy thing unclean. The answer is yes.

Now that the scriptural principles are established, Haggai in verse 14 says this is what has happened to the people and their work. The people are working on the temples, but they don't have their heart in their work. They are just working because they feel they have to. We should only serve the Lord if our heart is in the work and not because we feel it is our duty.

God calls on the people in verses 15-17 to remember their past failures which were caused by their heart attitude. Now in verses 18-19 God calls on the people to have a new attitude toward Him. He now promises to bless the people.

The last message is found in verses 20-23 and is addressed to Zerubbabel who is called governor. The world was very unstable at this time. Judah was very small and they were surrounded by many large aggressive nations. The people would have had their fears about their safety. God's message in verses 21-22 is that He is in charge and the people should not fear. This message applies to us today.

Zechariah

Zechariah is one of the most difficult books to understand from the Old Testament. We know, from verse one, that he spoke during the time of the return of the exiled Jews to Jerusalem. He was with the exiles who returned to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel, and he spoke about the same time as Haggai. His message was one to encourage the Jews who had been punished by God and now they faced a very difficult time rebuilding Jerusalem.

Zerubbabel's message to the Jews was that, even though things were very difficult for them, there was a glorious future waiting for them. His prophecies were about both the first coming of the Messiah and His second coming. The Jews looked forward to the glorious promises of the coming Messiah.

I. The first part of the book is found in 1:1-6 and is a call to repentance. Zechariah reminds the people that they are not to be disobedient like their fathers who caused God to punish them. God promises the people that if they will return to Him then He will not be angry with them the way He was with their forefathers. If the people will repent and obey God, He will accept them. This is the message to the church today -that if people will repent and turn to Him- God will welcome them.

II. Zechariah, in chapter 1:7-6:8, receives eight visions from God, delivered in one night. Briefly these are:

1. The first vision is reported in 1:7-17. The angel of the Lord appears as a man on a red horse. This man reports that the earth is reported to be resting quietly. This disturbs God because Jerusalem and Judah are still suffering and are not at peace. In verses 16-17 God encourages His people in Jerusalem and Judah by promising that they will be blessed with prosperity in the future.

2. We find four horns in 1:18-19 in the second vision. These represent the four nations from Daniel 7:1-8.

3. The third vision pictures a man measuring Jerusalem.

4. The fourth vision, beginning in 3:1, pictures the high priest, Joshua, dressed in filthy clothes which represent the sins of Joshua and the people. Satan is the accuser of Joshua, and God says that He will remove the sins from Joshua. This is a messianic prophecy. Chapter 3:9 foretells the removal of the sins of this land in a single day which prophesies the atonement. Atonement here refers to the coming sacrifice of Jesus when He was crucified and God the Father accepted this punishment as payment for the sins of all Christians. This means we Christians are at peace with God.

5. The fifth prophecy, found in chapter four, was of a gold lampstand and two olive trees. The lampstand symbolizes that God's people are the light of the world. Jesus spoke about this in Matthew 5:14. The olive trees represent the officeholders, the king and priest of Israel, who were Zerubbabel and Joshua when the prophecy was written. Later Jesus came as both king and priest.

6. The sixth vision is found in chapter 5:1-4 when Zechariah sees a flying scroll (a roll of writing paper). The message written on the scroll is that the sins of stealing and lying will be judged. This can be expanded to include judgment or punishment for all sins.

7. The woman in a basket is found in the seventh vision in chapter 5:5-11. The woman represents wickedness which is to be removed from Israel and taken to Shinar which, we remember from Genesis 11:2, is the place

where the people rebelled against God and built the tower of Babel. This symbolizes the removal of the sinning from Israel; even the idea of sinning.

8. The last of the eight visions in chapter 6:1-8 pictures four chariots that go throughout the earth delivering the Lord's judgment on the entire world.

III. The command to crown Joshua 6:9-15. The command is given here to crown Joshua the high priest. This is looking forward to the Messiah because no man is allowed to be both priest and king. The Messiah will be both king and priest.

IV. A question of observing additional fast days 7:1-8:23. The Old Testament only ordered one fast day per year which was the Day of Atonement. Ever since the fall of Jerusalem, the Jews had been fasting several times a year in remembrance of the fall of their city. Now that the people had been restored to Jerusalem the question was asked if they should continue this fast. God's answer to this question was that He was more interested in obedience than fasting. God is more interested in the heart attitude of the people than their outward show, such as fasting. God promise His blessing on the people if they will honor God by the way they live.

V. Chapters 9-10 are a new vision.

1. Chapter 9:1-8 talk about the coming of the conqueror (Alexander the Great) who conquered all the countries surrounding Israel in the order told in these verses. This vision predicts that Alexander will not destroy Jerusalem and, in fact, he doesn't destroy Jerusalem.

2. We now get a picture of the Messiah in verses 9-10. Verse nine pictures King Jesus riding into Jerusalem (see Matthew 21:5).

3. Chapter 9:14-17 again talks about the coming Messiah who will be a kind king; a king who protects his people like a shepherd does his sheep. This is unlike most kings who use the people for their own benefit.

VI. Chapter 11 is very difficult to understand, but we can tell it is predicting extreme judgment. Some commentators think it refers to the coming destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD.

VII. Chapters 12-14 contain a new vision.

1. Chapter 12 talks about how Jerusalem will be attacked but, even though the enemies think they can easily defeat Jerusalem, God will make sure their attacks do not succeed. This idea applies to the church. There are

many severe attacks on the church, but God will protect the church so that it will never be destroyed; there will always be a remnant.

2. Chapter 13 begins, in verse one, telling how the people are going to be cleansed from their sins. Verses 7-9 refer to the death of the Good Shepherd (Jesus). After this, His followers will be scattered and they will go through many trials when they will be refined and then they will be presented to God. God's people will call on His name and God will accept them as His people.

3. Chapter 14 closes this book by looking to the future. This is a very difficult passage to understand but, it seems to look forward to a time when Israel will again be a nation. Next, the other nations of the world will attack Israel but God intervenes, verse 3, and the enemies will be defeated.

A. Verses 6-11 tell that God will be with His people and there will be great blessings for Israel after the defeat of the enemies.

B. The next section, consisting of verses 12-15, tells that there will be great judgment or punishment for God's enemies. Verses 16-19 tell that those nations who turn to following God will be blessed.

4. The last two verses tell that a day is coming when everything will be holy. Heaven will be holy; there will be no sin in Heaven.

Malachi

Malachi closes out the Old Testament and looks forward to the New Testament. It was written during the time of Nehemiah. The prophet Malachi brings a message of love and warnings to God's people. The book is written like a conversation between God and His people. Forty-seven out of fifty-five verses are spoken by God.

1. God starts out in chapter 1:5 telling the people that He loves them and the proof is that He has destroyed their enemy; Edom.

2. Next, in 1:6-2:17, God says that the people continue to disregard God's love by dishonoring and disobeying Him.

A. Verses 6-8; God accuses the people of dishonoring Him with the poor quality of their sacrifices.

B. In chapter 2:5-9 God complains that His priests have not taught the truth about Him to the people. God wants the Bible to be faithfully taught to all his people both young and old, man and woman. Church leaders are responsible for this teaching.

C. Chapter 2:11 God again rebukes His people for marrying foreign wives. As we come to the end of the Old Testament we see that the people still have not learned their lesson.

D. God's next complaint, in verses 14-16, is that the people divorce their wives.

E. Verse 10 complains that His people don't love each other. 1 John 4:7-12 tells us that we Christians must love each other or we are not Christians.

F. We see in verse 17 that the people claim that God delights in their misbehavior which is totally wrong. God does not delight in the sins of His people.

G. God says that despite the people's failure, God will still vindicate His good name.

3. Chapter 3:1-6 talks about the future looking toward Jesus.

A. Verse one predicts the coming of John the Baptist who will announce the coming of the God of judgment. This is the Messiah.

B. Verses 2-4 tell that this God of judgment will bring judgment not just on the surrounding heathen nations, but on the Jews themselves.

C. We notice in verse 6 one of the characteristics of God. Our God never changes. He is holy which means that He is perfect and He will always be perfect. Every promise God ever made is just as true today as it was when He made the promise because nothing about God ever changes.

4. Malachi 3:7-12 is about how God accuses the people of robbing Him of His tithes and offerings. God makes it clear that we are to give our money to God and that it is a matter of trusting God.

5. Malachi 3:13-18 we see that many of the people don't respond the way they should to God. We see in verses 16-17 that, even in this nation of mostly unbelievers, God still has His faithful followers. The world is the same today as we see, even in His church, many people don't obey God, but He still has His faithful few.

6. Chapter 4:1-3 contain final warnings to the disobedient.

7. Chapter 4:4 God closes the Old Testament by reminding the people to obey His laws as given by Moses. In verses 5-6 Malachi closes by promising that God will send someone who will bring God's people to repentance. The use of Elijah's name here is confusing and has caused much disagreement. It is not known exactly who Elijah refers to.