

BIBLE OVERVIEW 3.

Prophets to Silent Years

1 Corinthians 10:11-12

These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

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BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

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BIBLE OVERVIEW

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BIBLE OVERVIEW

16.

PROPHETS

PROPHETS



Reap what you sow

MAIN EVENTS: Prophets Warn and Encourage

MAIN PEOPLE:

- to north (Israel): Hosea, Amos, (Elijah, Elisha)
- to south (Judah): Joel, Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk
- to Nineveh (Assyria): Jonah, Nahum
- to Edom: Obadiah

BOOKS OF THE BIBLE: see above

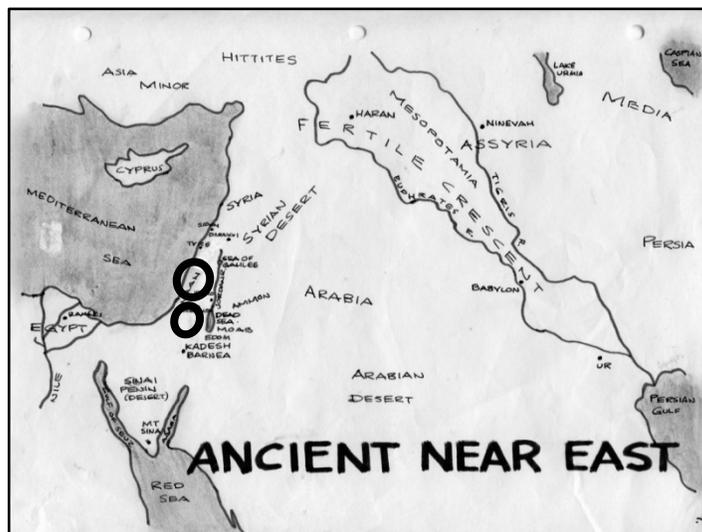
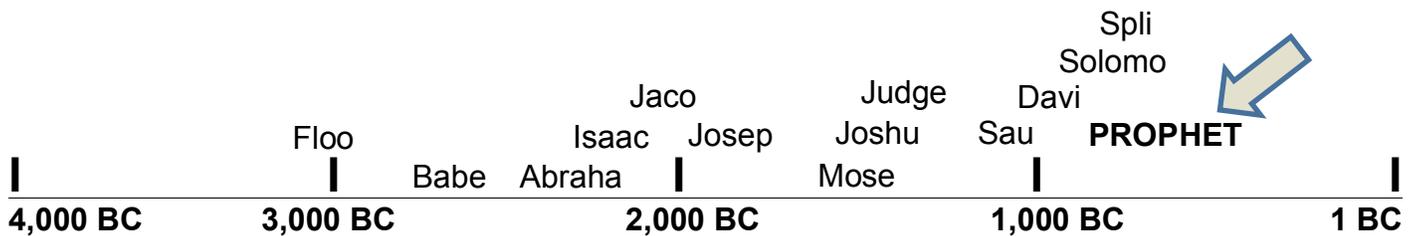
BIBLE VERSE: *Isaiah 59:20 "The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins," declares the Lord.*

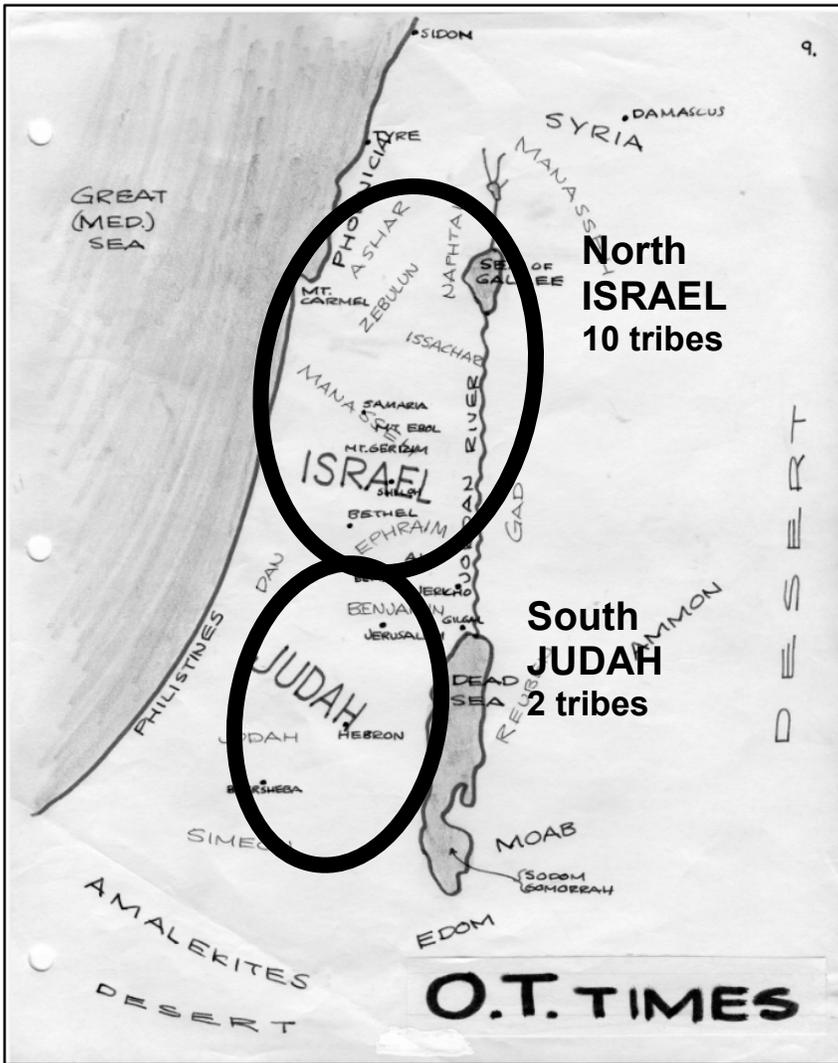
TIME: 931-586 BC

WORLD EVENTS AT THIS TIME:

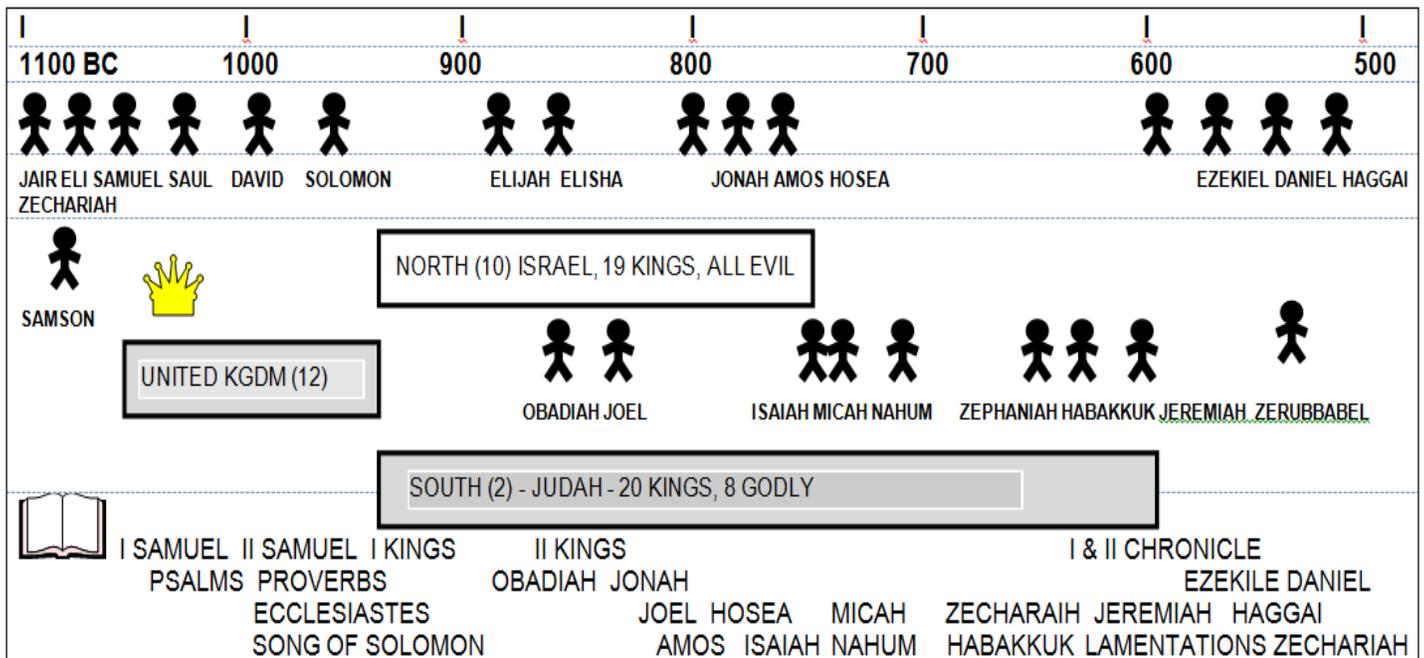
In India Mahabharata and Ramayana composed
Upanishads written in India

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION: Palestine





This long but sad time in Bible history is called the Prophets because God used these godly men to try to reach His people and turn them back to Him. It was during this time that 19 evil kings ruled Israel (northern 10 tribes) and 20 kings (only 8 weren't totally evil) ruled Judah (southern 2 tribes). The prophets warned of the coming judgment for disobedience but also gave hope of a future restoration of Israel when God would be recognized as their King. While most people during this time, especially in the north, did not follow God, there was always a faithful remnant which remained true to Him.



MEET THE KINGS & PROPHETS OF ISRAEL (North)

Does God judge sin among His people? He certainly does. He is patient beyond belief, but His standards of purity are not to be taken lightly. The history of Israel, the northern 10 tribes, shows this clearly. We'll look at a quick overview of the kings and the prophets during that time. There were many prophets God sent, listed below are only the ones recorded in the Bible.

JEROBOAM, king for 22 years when the nation split after the death of Solomon (1 Kings 11:26-14:20; 2 Chronicles 9:29-13:22). He was a servant of Solomon. The prophet Ahijah tore a garment into 12 pieces and gave 10 to Jeroboam, signifying the nation would be torn after Solomon's time and he would rule the 10 northern tribes. So he wouldn't be killed because of this prophecy, he fled to Egypt. He returned when Solomon died and Rehoboam raised the taxes. The northern 10 tribes asked him to be king. He built 2 gold calves so the people would not go to Jerusalem, which was in the southern kingdom, to worship. Thus he set an idolatrous pattern for the north. He was told to repent by several prophets: Ahijah, Iddo, an old unnamed prophet and another prophet who predicted his death. He didn't repent and was stricken by God and died.

NADAB, son of Jeroboam, was king for 2 years (1 Kings 15:25-28). He was an evil king and was assassinated by Baasha who succeeded him.

BAASHA, son of Ahijah who tore the garment into 12 pieces, was king for 24 years (1 Kings 24:27-16:7; 2 Chronicles 16:1-6). He assassinated Nadab and everyone in the royal house. He led the north to war with the south, Judah.

ELAH, son of Baasha, ruled for 2 years (1 Kings 16:6-14). As was true of all the kings in the north, he was evil and never followed God. Elah was especially wicked and was assassinated while drunk.

ZIMRI killed Elah and made himself king (1 Kings 16:9-20). He was the Captain of the Chariots and only ruled for 7 days. Omri attacked him and burned the king's house with him in it.

OMRI. Army Captain, who killed Zimri, then ruled for 12 years (1 Kings 16:15-28). He built Samaria and made it the capital of the north. He had good vision and wisdom but did not follow God. He lost a lot of his territory to Syria.

TIBNI ruled during the same time as Omri and tried to overtake the throne but lost.

AHAB, son of Omri, followed his father and ruled for 22 years (1 Kings 16:28-22:43; 2 Chronicles 18:1-34). He was a capable leader and ambitious builder, but he did not follow God. He was one of the worst kings Israel had (1 Kings 16:29-33). Jezebel, an evil Gentile woman who worshipped Baal, married Ahab and dominated him, influencing him to even more evil (1 Kings 21:25-26). God sent ELIJAH to warn them but they tried to kill him. Instead, they died under God's judgment.

AHAZIAH, son of Ahab, ruled after him for 2 years (1 Kings 22:40-2 Kings 1:18; 2 Chronicles 20:35-37). He followed his mother Jezebel's pagan influence. He tried to kill **ELIJAH** but his soldiers were destroyed by fire. He made an alliance with Judah, but God doomed it because they were not following Him. Elijah foretold his death, which happened when he fell through a lattice.

JORAM, another son of Ahab and Jezebel, next ruled for 12 years (2 Kings 3:1-9:25; 2 Chronicles 22:5-7). He was very evil, but did somewhat restrain Baal worship. When the Syrians attacked, **ELISHA** said God would deliver him and He did. He was killed by Jehu and his body thrown into Naboth's vineyard, thus fulfilling prophecy and ending the evil line of Ahab.

JEHU was anointed by Elisha the prophet as king and reigned for 28 years (2 Kings 9:1-10:36; 2 Chronicles 22:7-12). He was a corrupt man who weakened the nation. He destroyed anyone he could find from Ahab's family, including his 70 sons and all his advisors. He was the one who killed Jezebel by throwing her out a window. He wiped out Baal worship in Israel and claimed to worship God but left the golden calves to be worshipped. He disobeyed God. In battle he lost much land to the Syrians.

JEHOAHAZ was a son of Jehu and was king for 17 years (2 Kings 13:1-9). He had a disastrous reign. Syria dominated Israel so he turned to God for help, but when God delivered them he returned to idolatry.

JOASH (also called **JEHOASH**), was a son of Jehoahaz and reigned 16 years (2 Kings 13:10-14:16; 2 Chronicles 25:17-24). The nation broke free from the Syrians during his reign but he was spiritually bankrupt and continued in the evil ways of the kings before him.

JEROBOAM II, son of Joash, reigned for 41 years (2 Kings 14:23-29). He recaptured lands lost to Syria. The people were poor and oppressed. Dishonesty and greed were everywhere. Worship was hypocritical. **HOSEA**, **AMOS** and **JONAH** were alive and ministering during this time. Jonah traveled to Nineveh, Assyria to deliver God's message to them. Amos was a shepherd in Judah whom God sent north to denounce the people for their idol worship, greed, corruption and oppression of the poor. He was very courageous and faithful. Hosea was a member of the upper class who was deeply committed to God and lived His message by marrying a prostitute named Gomer who was unfaithful to him. Despite that he bought her back as his wife, a picture of God and His rebellious people.

ZECHARIAH was the last from the house of Jehu to rule and only ruled 6 months (2 Kings 14:29-15:12). He was a son of Jeroboam II and was assassinated by Shallum.

SHALLUM, another in a long line of evil kings, ruled just 1 month (2 Kings 15:10-15) was in turn assassinated by Manahem.

MANAHEM, a military commander, ruled for 10 years (2 Kings 15:14-22). He was a cruel, evil man.

PEKAHIAH, son of Manahem, ruled 2 years (2 Kings 15:22-26). He was evil and continued to lead the nation into idolatry. He was killed by his military commander, Pekah.

PEKAH, a military leader, ruled 20 years (2 Kings 15:27-31; 2 Chronicles 28:5-8). He continued idol worship in Israel. God used him to discipline Judah. God also used Assyria to take much land from Israel and discipline them in turn. Half of the nation was killed or destroyed during his reign. He was assassinated by Hoshea

HOSHEA, the 19th and last king of Israel, ruled for 9 years (2 Kings 15:30-17:6). He was evil, but not as bad as the previous kings. He didn't officially sanction idolatry, but he didn't remove the idols, either. He became a puppet king controlled by Assyria until he rebelled against them. He was defeated and imprisoned. The nation was taken into captivity by Assyria.

For many years the believers in God who lived in the north had moved to the south, so in effect the south, Judah, became the real nation with the godly remnant from all twelve tribes living there. Unfortunately they, too, turned from God.

MEET THE KINGS & PROPHETS OF JUDAH (South)

The northern kingdom, Israel, had 19 kings, all evil, and was taken to captivity in Assyria, never to return. The southern, Judah, had a few kings who were good or partly good. They lasted longer than Israel but eventually went into captivity in Babylon because of their sin and disobedience.

REHOBOAM was the first king of the south and reigned 17 years (1 Kings 11:42-14:31; 2 Chronicles 9:31-12:16). He was the son and successor of Solomon, but because he rejected the advice of his older advisors and followed the suggestions of his young friends, his greed led to the country breaking in two. Solomon had heavily taxed the people and they needed relief, but Rehoboam increased the tax load, thus causing the ten northern tribes to pull away in 922 BC. God's prophet **SHEMAIAH** advised him to not try to force the north to stay. Judah, some of Benjamin, and later Simeon stayed faithful. Jerusalem stayed their capital. The south was soon attacked by Egypt, who took away the vast riches Solomon had accumulated. Even though they seemingly stayed faithful to God, they still set up high places for Baal worship and made wooden images to bow down to and worship.

ABIJAM, son of Rehoboam and grandson of Absalom, reigned for 3 years (1 Kings 14:31-15:8; 2 Chronicles 13:1-22). He had fourteen wives, twenty two sons and sixteen daughters. **IIDDO** the prophet ministered to him.

ASA, son of Abijam, ruled for 41 years (1 Kings 15:8-24; 2 Chronicles 14:1-16:14). The first ten years of his reign were peaceful and he removed the idols and images that were built. **AZARIAH** the prophet encouraged him to follow God and he did so. The Ethiopians attacked and God protected them. Instead of trusting God, they paid the Syrians to help them fight Israel. **HANANI** the prophet rebuked him for doing that, so Asa put him in jail. He got a foot disease and didn't turn to God, so he died two years later. His reign was mostly but not entirely good.

JEHOSHAPHAT, son of Asa, ruled 25 years (1 Kings 22:41-50; 2 Chronicles 17:1-20:37). He was a godly king with a good heart for God. He attacked idolatry and sent teachers to teach the people about God. When he faced danger from his enemies he turned to God and received his help. He restored God's high standards of justice and fairness. His mistake, though, was to marry his son to a daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, for she was very ungodly.

JEHORAM was a son of Jehoshaphat and was king for 8 years (2 Kings 8:16-24; 2 Chronicles 21:1-20). He started as a godly king but his wife, Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, led him into sin. He was killed by Jehu when Ahab's entire family was destroyed.

AHAZIAH only reigned one year (2 Kings 8:24-9:29; 2 Chronicles 22:1-9). He was a son of Joram and nephew of Ahaziah. He became king when he was 22 but was very evil, having been influenced by his evil mother Athaliah. He also was killed by Jehu.

ATHALIAH herself ruled for 7 years after her husband and son were killed (2 Kings 11:1-20; 2 Chronicles 22:1-23:21). She was a daughter of Ahab and Jezebel and very evil. She killed all her grandsons so they wouldn't challenge her rule. Only Joash remained because he was safely hidden and unknown to her. She brought in Baal worship and destroyed part of the temple. The High Priest Jehoiada declared Joash king and killed her.

JOASH was a son of Ahaziah and ruled for 40 years (2 Kings 11:1-12:21; 2 Chronicles 22:10-24:27). He was seven years old when he became king. He was the only descendant of David not killed, and that is because he had been hidden. He repaired the temple and restored worship to God. He destroyed Baal worship. Jehoida, his advisor, kept him close to God. When Jehoida died, Joash drifted into idolatry. **ZECHARIAH** the prophet was stoned for rebuking him. When Syria invaded he

was wounded, then died. **JOEL** the prophet lived during this time as well. He was a citizen of Jerusalem, perhaps a priest who spoke in the temple.

AMAZIAH, son of Joash, was king for 29 years (2 Kings 11:1-12:21; 2 Chronicles 22:10-24:27). He personally followed God but he allowed idol worship to remain. He had a great victory over Edom but then brought in their gods. He was proud of this victory and then attacked Israel but lost. This was God's judgment on him for his idolatry. **OBADIAH** the prophet went to Edom to pronounce judgment against them because they attacked Jerusalem during its time of distress.

AZARIAH (UZZIAH), a son of Amaziah, became king when he was 16 and ruled for 52 years (2 Kings 15:1-7; 2 Chronicles 26:1-13). He reigned longer than any king before him. Sometimes he co-reigned with his father, then later his son. He was a wise, pious, powerful king who extended Judah's territory and brought in prosperity. He reinforced Jerusalem and had a strong army. He was spiritually sensitive and sought God's will and guidance through a prophet. However he had a problem with pride and saw himself as a god, as the pagan kings did. He once entered the temple to burn incense and got angry when the priests challenged him. He did not repent so God struck him with leprosy and he lived the rest of his life isolated from everyone. **ISAIAH** and **MICAH** ministered during these times. Micah was a country boy who used images from country life.

JOTHAM, son of Azariah, was king for 16 years (2 Kings 15:32-38; 2 Chronicles 27:1-9). He was a godly king but the people stayed in idolatry. He built up Jerusalem and other places, defeated the Ammonites, and prospered because he depended on God. **ISAIAH**, **MICAH** and **HOSEA** ministered during his reign and encouraged him.

AHAZ, son of Jotham, reigned 16 years (2 Kings 16:1-20; 2 Chronicles 28:1-27). He was ungodly and promoted the worship of Molech, pagan rites and human sacrifice. He made images of Baal and burned his baby sons. He was attacked by Israel and other neighboring nations when 120,000 were killed and 200,000 captives taken. He was defeated by the Philistines and Damascus, killed, and buried without honor because he was not worthy of the royal tombs. **ISAIAH**, **MICAH** and **OBED** ministered during his reign and encouraged him.

HEZEKIAH, son of Ahaz, reigned for 29 years (2 Kings 18:1-20:21; 2 Chronicles 29:1-32:33). He was a very godly son of a very ungodly father. He reopened the temple and revived the priesthood. The high places and bronze serpent were destroyed. It was the most thorough reformation in Judah's history. During this time the north fell captive to Assyria, but the godly remnant of Jews from each of the ten tribes in the north moved south, making the south the total nation again. When he showed off his wealth to a Gentile king he was rebuked by **ISAIAH**. He had a serious illness, but God promised him fifteen more years of life. He rebelled against the authority of Assyria and was attacked by them, and the Angel of the Lord killed 185,000 Assyrians. **ISAIAH** and **MICAH** ministered during his reign and encouraged him.

MANASSEH, son of Hezekiah, reigned 55 years, longer than any other Israelite king (2 Kings 21:1-18; 2 Chronicles 33:1-20). When he was 12, he started ruling and removed all worship of God. He was Judah's most wicked king. He rejected his godly father and followed his ungodly grandfather Ahaz. He restored the Baals and Asheraths. He set up worship of the sun, moon and stars. Molech, the very evil Ammonite god, was restored. He became more evil than the pagans the Jews drove out of the land. He was captured and taken to Egypt. This humbled him and he repented while there. When released he went back to Jerusalem and tried to reverse his evil deeds but it was too late. When he died his own son reversed the few improvements he had made. **ISAIAH** ministered and died during his reign. During this time also **NAHUM** went to Ninevah. The revival there under Jonah had been short lived and they fell back into sin, so God sent Nahum to announce that judgment was coming.

AMON, son of Manasseh, was king for 2 years (2 Kings 21:19-26; 2 Chronicles 33:21-25). He was very evil and idolatrous, so bad that his own servants killed him.

JOSIAH, son of Amon and grandson of Manasseh, became king at 8 years of age and reigned for 31 years (2 Kings 22:1-23:30; 2 Chronicles 34:1-35:27). He had godly advisors who kept him obedient to God. At 16, he started his own relationship with God. When he was 18 he found a copy of God's Word and started applying it. He brought peace, prosperity and reform. When he was 20, he started to cleanse the land from evil. At 26 he reinstated God's law and worship of God. He died in battle against the Egyptians. **JEREMIAH** prophesied and ministered during this reign. **ZEPHANIAH** started his ministry the same year as Jeremiah and was a descendant of David and Hezekiah,

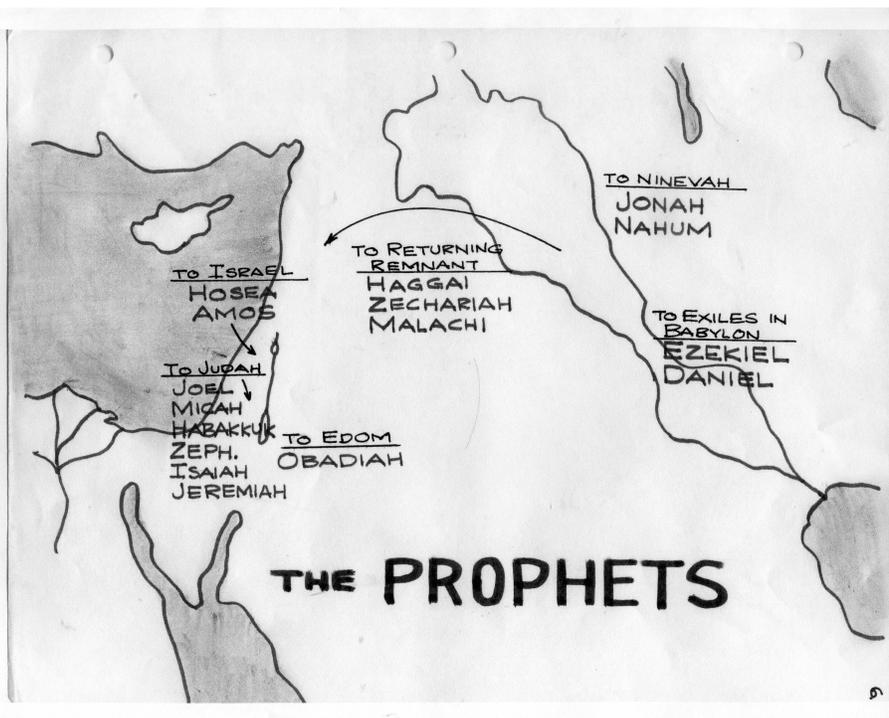
JEHOAHAZ, son of Josiah, only reigned for 3 months (2 Kings 23:31-33; 2 Chronicles 36:1-4). He was taken away to Egypt. **JEREMIAH** prophesied and ministered during this reign.

JEHOIAKIM, son of Josiah, ruled for 11 years (2 Kings 23:34-24:5; 2 Chronicles 36:5-7). He did evil in God's sight, so much so that **JEREMIAH** condemned him and said no one would mourn his death. Actually Jeremiah prophesied for 40 years during the reigns of the last five kings of Israel. He burnt Jeremiah's prophecies and allowed Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, to take over the country and make him a vassal king. Three years later he rebelled and was taken captive to Babylon. He also killed **URIJAH** the prophet. **HABAKKUK** also ministered during this time. Habakkuk was very courageous and had deep emotional strength. He was both a prophet and poet.

JEHOIACHIN, son of Jehoiakim, reigned 3 months (2 Kings 24:6-16; 2 Chronicles 36:8-10). He was very evil and was taken to Babylon by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar. **JEREMIAH** and **HABAKKUK** prophesied and ministered during this reign.

ZEDEKIAH, son of Josiah, was the last king of Judah and ruled 11 years (2 Kings 24:17-25:30; 2 Chronicles 36:11-21). He was placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar and never fully accepted as king by the people. Many false prophets said Judah would break free from Babylon. When Egypt, Moab, Ammon and Edom rebelled, they wanted Judah to join them. When they rebelled Babylon attacked, surrounded and put the city to a deadly siege. In July, 586 BC, the wall of

Jerusalem was broken, the city destroyed and Zedekiah was caught while trying to escape. He was forced to watch his own sons killed, then he was blinded and led away to Babylon. **DANIEL** was also taken to Babylon then. **EZEKIEL** had been taken earlier. **JEREMIAH** prophesied and ministered during this whole time. Called the "weeping prophet" because of his tears over the destruction of Jerusalem, he described it all in the book of Lamentations. He was often beaten, opposed, arrested and kidnapped. Eventually he was forced to go to Egypt and was killed there.



OBADIAH: RETRIBUTION

TITLE: After prophet who wrote it
AUTHOR: Obadiah (“Worshipper of God”)
DATE of WRITING: 586 - 585 BC
PLACE of WRITING: Canaan
TIME COVERED: Obadiah’s day to Jesus’ return
RECIPIENTS: Edom (Arabs)
KEY VERSE: 1:15 *“The day of the LORD is near for all nations. As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head.”*
KEY WORDS: “Edom” (9 times) “cut off” (3 times)
PURPOSE: Warn Edom of judgment because of their pride and malicious treatment of Judah when Judah was having troubles
THEME: Retribution for Edom



Some of the most severe words in the whole Bible are addressed to the proud, be they believers or unbelievers. Proverbs especially has much to say about the dangers of pride (3:34; 6:16-17; 8:13; 10:17; 11:2,12; 12:9,15; 13:10; 14:21; 15:5,10,12,25,32; 16:5,18-19; 17:19; 18:11-12; 20:6; 21:4, 24; 25:14, 27; 26:5, 12, 16; 27:2; 28:11, 25; 29:8, 23; 30:12-13). Pride is so bad because it is the root of all sin. Pride is self-centeredness, and all sin can be traced back to that. In fact, pride was the reason Lucifer rebelled and was cast out of heaven (Isaiah 14:12-21; Ezekiel 28:11-19). All pride brings judgment. Many times we don’t think we are ‘proud’ because we only define pride as thinking we are better than everyone else. Basically, though, pride is thinking of ourselves before God. The cartoon character Charlie Brown is a proud person, not because he thinks he’s better than others, but because he is self-centered. Everything in life is viewed in light of how it will affect him. Thinking we are inferior to others is as prideful and untrue as thinking we are superior to others. They are two sides of the same coin. Any self-centeredness or self-sufficiency is pride and therefore sin.

OBADIAH is a book about the judgment that comes to those who are proud. It’s the shortest book in the Old Testament as well as the first of the prophets in chronological order. Obadiah’s name means “servant/worshipper of God.” Nothing else is known about him. He is the most obscure of all the prophets. We do know that he lived about 100 years after the split of the nation into north and south. He is the first prophet to write down his message.

EDOM is the nation that Obadiah preached to. Although he was a Jew, he was sent to his Gentile neighbors to warn them of God’s coming judgment, much as in the case of Jonah. The Edomites were harsh enemies of the Jews. The enmity started in Rebekah’s womb, where Jacob and Esau struggled against each other (Genesis 25:20-23). This rivalry was revealed at birth (Genesis 25:24-26). They fought over the birthright and then blessing. They were in conflict their whole lives. This antagonism continued in the following generations. The Edomites wouldn’t let Moses and the Jews walk through their land. Saul fought them. David conquered them. They joined Ammon and Moab in fighting the Jews. One of the reason Herod was so disliked by the Jews was that he was an Edomite. Today they are part of the Arab people. Always, though, they have been characterized by self-centeredness (pride). Obadiah was sent to warn them that this would bring God’s judgment.

THE DOOM OF SINNERS is shown first (verses 1-9). In their pride the Edomites thought they were impregnable because of their rock-like fortresses in the land east of the Jordan. It is easy today, too, to put our faith in our government and military, thinking they will protect us. However, God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). Edom took advantage of others in their times of weakness, so God would have them reap what they sow. The same would happen to them. Edom was famous for great statesmen, counselors and government officials. They took pride in this. God would have these men become like fools, for they would have no real understanding of their present dangerous situation. Their brave soldiers would become cowardly. Now that he has their attention, Obadiah tells them why this will happen.

THE DESCRIPTION OF SIN is given next (10-14). The Edomites are violent and belligerent, especially to the Jews (God's people). In their self-sufficiency they feel indifferent, apathetic, even aloof from those who are in need. Finally, they are greedy. Like vultures, they are quick to plunder weaker, vulnerable and defeated neighbors. In their pride they thought only of themselves.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT concludes the book (15-21). The coming judgment on Edom will be bad, but the future judgment will be worse. In the Day of the Lord (specifically the battle of Armageddon) it will be much worse, for they will be totally annihilated. Despite all this, there is a time of coming restoration for those who turn to God for mercy and forgiveness. This will be the Millennium. The Jews as a nation then will be restored and enjoy peace and prosperity like never before. All they lost will be returned. Opposing God's people just wasn't/isn't wise!

The message from this book is clear: we will reap what we sow if we only sow in sin and unrighteousness. Those who never turn to God for salvation, but instead live in selfishness and self-centeredness, WILL BE JUDGED!

OUTLINE OF OBADIAH

I. DOOM OF SINNERS 1-9

- A. Pomposity 1-5
- B. Treachery 6-7
- C. Timidity 8-9

II. DESCRIPTION OF SIN 10-14

- A. Belligerence 10
- B. Indifference 11-12
- C. Greed 13-14

III. DAY OF JUDGMENT 15-21

- A. Retribution 15-16
- B. Restoration 17-18
- C. Recovery 19-21

JOEL:

DAY of the LORD



TITLE: After prophet who wrote it

AUTHOR: "Joel" "Jehovah is God/Elohim"

DATE of WRITING: About 838 - 756 BC

PLACE of WRITING: Judah

TIME COVERED: Joel's' day to Millennium

RECIPIENTS: Judah (south)

KEY VERSE: 2:28-32 *'And afterward, I will*

pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the survivors whom the LORD calls.

KEY WORD: "Day of the Lord" (5 times)

PURPOSE: Present locust plague is a picture of worse judgment to come if no repentance.

THEME: Christ will return and rule the world, bringing peace.

It's the middle of the night and you are awakened from sleep by the raucous ringing of your smoke alarm. Are you pleased or perturbed? A red light on your dashboard glows menacingly, informing you the oil level in your car is dangerously low. Do you resent the interruption or are you relieved to discover the problem?

In Joel's day God used locusts to wake up His people and alert them to the condition of their nation so they could turn back to God before even worse things happened. Instead of responding with gratitude and repentance, though, the people complained and blamed God.

DESOLATION IN THE DAY OF THE LORD (1:1 - 2:17) Locust plagues are devastating. Locusts collect 5" thick on the ground and eat their own weight each day, devouring everything but rocks and tree trunks. They can cover over 400 square miles and travel across oceans. Devastation and famine always follow in their wake. God sent these locusts to get the Jews attention, so they'd repent and turn to Him before the next hoard came through. The army of Assyrians would bring worse destruction than the locusts brought. All this points to a future time of devastation even worse. It is when the Antichrist's army comes through and brings worse death and destruction than the locusts or even the Assyrians. The only way to be free from any of these three plagues is by repentance and confession of sin. Unfortunately the Jews don't repent from any of them, and suffer miserable consequences. Following the final one, though, there will come deliverance. Thus Joel's attention turns from the present oppression to that which will come in the Day of the Lord.

DELIVERANCE BY THE DAY OF THE LORD (2:18 - 3:21) The Day of the Lord is that time which starts in the middle of the tribulation and continues through the Millennium and on into eternity. It will take the awful suffering of the tribulation to do what the locusts and the Assyrians haven't been able to do -- turn the Jews back to God. Then, however, there is a time of peace and prosperity promised, such as the world has never known. That is the Millennial Kingdom which then goes on for all

eternity. What a blessed hope that was for oppressed people! As our world today drifts further and further from God, this blessed promise of future deliverance and restoration becomes our hope, too.

OUTLINE OF JOEL

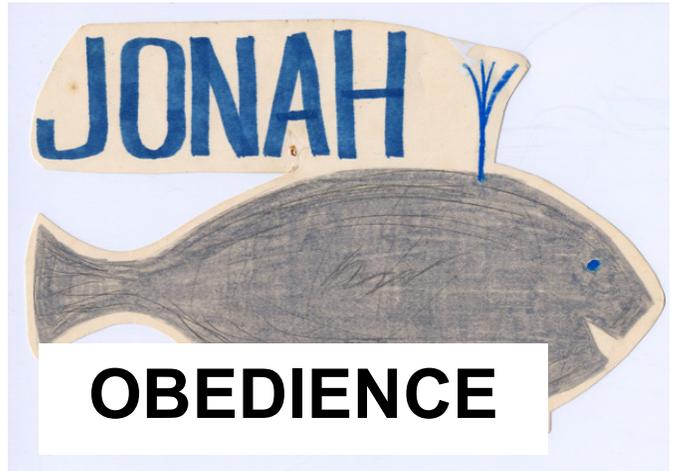
I. DESOLATION BY THE DAY OF THE LORD 1:1-2:17

- A. Character of the Destruction 1:1-12
- B. Reactions to the Destruction 1:13-14
- C. Picture of the Destruction 1:15-20
- D. Prophecy of the Destruction 2:1-11
- E. Exhortation because of the Destruction 2:12-17

II. DELIVERANCE BY THE DAY OF THE LORD 2:18-3:21

- A. Immediate Deliverance 2:18-27
- B. Future Deliverance 2:28-3:21

JONAH: OBEDIENCE



TITLE: After prophet who wrote it

AUTHOR: "Jonah" means "dove"

DATE of WRITING: About 810 BC

PLACE of WRITING: Nineveh

TIME COVERED: A few months in 810 BC

RECIPIENTS: Nineveh, Assyria

KEY VERSE: *3:10 When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.*

KEY WORD: "prepared" 4 (God prepares a wind 1:4, storm 1:4, fish 1:17, gourd 4:6, worm 4:7, east wind 4:8)

PURPOSE: to show God's love for Gentiles and how He deals with His disobedient servants

THEME: God's resurrection power conquers all

Have you ever had to learn something the hard way? I'm sure all of us have. Jonah certainly did! Sometimes the most familiar stories lose their impact because we've known them so well for so long. There's a good reason that they are the ones we teach children and remember so well. They are very special in their meaning and significance. Pretend you don't know the story of Jonah. Look at it with fresh eyes. It'll mean a lot more to you.

JONAH FLEEING (chapter 1) Jonah came from Israel and God called him to go to Nineveh. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, one of the cruelest, most brutal nations to ever exist. They were conquering everyone in the near east in Jonah's day and were about to destroy Jonah's nation: Israel. When a boy, he saw his hometown destroyed by the Assyrians. Friends, relatives, perhaps even parents were killed. For these reasons, when God asked him to go warn them of coming judgment, he went the opposite way instead. In his bitterness and unforgiveness he disobeyed God. He wanted revenge, not one chance of mercy. He became so hardened in his conscience he could sleep right through a storm at sea. He knew God was disciplining (not punishing) him. When the sailors reluctantly threw him into the water the storm stopped. They gave the glory to God. Jonah had never witnessed to them, but God got His glory from it anyway.

JONAH PRAYING (chapter 2) When Jonah hit the water he started praying. The Hebrew of Jonah 2:1-6 make it clear Jonah knew he was dying. When the large fish swallowed him he was still alive, perhaps even with his head above water. He knew it was all over then, though. Before going unconscious, as the whale (?) was swallowing him, he prayed and confessed his sin. Then he died. Three days later the fish spit him upon dry land and God brought him back to life. Jesus used this as a picture of His own death and resurrection (Matthew 12:39-40). When he came back to life he praised God and committed himself to follow God -- even going to Nineveh. God gave him another chance.

JONAH PREACHING (chapter 3) After walking 500 miles (about a month) with plenty of time to think, he arrived at Nineveh. It was a large city, taking 3 days to just walk through it! The city was very proud, wicked, hard and stubborn. Jonah's message was not one of repentance. He offered no mercy. He simply proclaimed "40 days and Nineveh will be destroyed." The next day it was "39 days...." Still, people repented immediately. Perhaps seeing him contributed to that. He was

probably hairless and had his skin splotched from the stomach acids of the fish. He was a living picture of how God judged sin yet restored those who repented. His message spread like wildfire. Even the king repented, ordering all people and animals to fast and show their repentance. It was the greatest revival ever!

JONAH LEARNING (chapter 4) Jonah, however, didn't give up hope that God would still destroy the city and people in it. He was angry that they repented, fearing God might show mercy. He sat on a hill awaiting the end of the 40 days. It was hot, but a vine grew to give him shade. Then a worm ate the vine and the shade was gone. Jonah was so upset at the loss of his shade he wanted to die! This was just God's way of showing him how selfish he was. He didn't care about all of Nineveh but did care about his own comfort! What an end to the story. Everything obeyed God but Jonah. The storm, dice used by the sailors, the sailors, fish, Ninevehites, gourd, worm and east wind. Everything but Jonah, the one who claimed to "fear" God (1:9), obeyed Him.

I think the story ended well for Jonah, though. I think he repented and grew through his selfishness. The fact that he wrote and distributed this account of his experiences after leaving Nineveh leads me to this conclusion. Unfortunately the story didn't end so well for Nineveh. They went on to conquer Israel, although they weren't the cruel nation they used to be. God's timing is seen in this for He wanted Israel disciplined, not unreasonably punished. A little over a hundred years after Jonah went to Nineveh, God sent Nahum with the same message. This time there was no repentance and God used the Babylonians to destroy Nineveh.

OUTLINE OF JONAH

I. JONAH FLEEING (Away from God) 1

- A. Reason 1:1-2
- B. Route 1:3
- C. Result 1:4-17
 - 1. Result to Sailors 1:4-11
 - 2. Result to Jonah 1:12-17

II. JONAH PRAYING (Back to God) 2

- A. Confession 2:1-6
- B. Praise 2:6-8
- C. Repentance 2:9
- D. Answer 2:10

III. JONAH PREACHING (With God) 3

- A. Command 3:1-3
- B. Content 3:4
- C. Consequences 3:5-10

IV. JONAH LEARNING (Ahead of God) 4

- A. The complaint 4:1-3
- B. The Curriculum 4:4-11

AMOS: ACCOUNTABILITY

TITLE: Amos

AUTHOR: "Amos" = "Burden Bearer"

DATE of WRITING: 810 - 785 BC

PLACE of WRITING: Israel (North)

TIME COVERED: Amos' day to eternity future

RECIPIENTS: Israel (North)

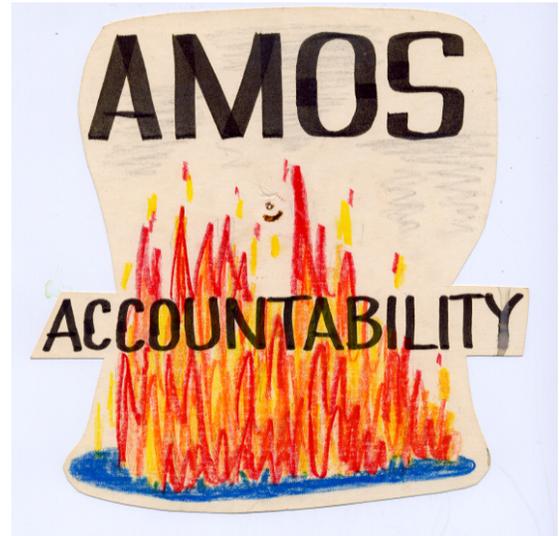
KEY VERSE: 4:11-12 *"I overthrew some of you as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. You were like a burning stick snatched from the fire, yet you have not returned to me," declares the LORD. "Therefore this is*

what I will do to you, Israel, and because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel."

KEY WORD: "Transgression" = 12 times; "I will not turn away your punishment" = 8 times

PURPOSE: to warn Israel (North) to repent from their many sins or face severe judgment.

THEME: The inevitable judgment of God on sin.



How often do we think "that will never happen to me"? When I was a young boy I always assumed house fires always happened to others and would never happen to me. Then my room caught fire, and I've never said that again. At least I haven't said it about fire. I still assume that about a lot of other things, I'm afraid.

The nation Israel (northern 10 tribes) felt the same way about God's judgment on their nation. They were 'God's people,' went through all the motions of worship, were economically prosperous, filled their lives with pleasure, and had a strong army. What could happen?

AMOS the prophet came from near Jerusalem, and was sent by God to warn the northern kingdom of coming judgment. A country boy who picked figs and did some shepherding, he was hardly the man we would expect to be sent on such a mission. He was faithful, though, and did what God asked. **ASSYRIA** was on the horizon, warlike and very aggressive. They were very harsh and cruel, and their goal was to rule the world. **ISRAEL** (the northern kingdom) was in great economical prosperity but was spiritually bankrupt. They were idolatrous, worshipping golden calves instead of Jehovah. **GOD** was very angry with the people: "The Lord roars from Zion" (1:1). God is like an angry lion about to bring destruction.

I. VIGILANCE of the PROPHET (1-2) Imagine you are in a courtroom. The trial begins with the formal arraignment. God's accusations against the nations was because of their repeated acts of sin. God found each guilty and passed sentences of judgment on them: Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon and Moab. All this sounded great to Israel, for these nations were their enemies. However when he started saying what God would do to them because of their sins, they weren't nearly as happy!

II. VOICE of the PROPHET (3-6) Amos' second sermon (chapter 3) continues the courtroom imagery. This time the case against Israel is presented. They broke their covenant with God. They made promises to be faithful to God, to love and obey Him and Him alone. Witnesses are called to show Israel's guilt, nations that were better witnesses for God than His own people (Ashdod and Egypt). Israel was found guilty and sentence passed: their strong military would be defeated and most of the people would be killed.

The third sermon (chapter 4) goes into more detail about the sins they are charged with. The women overindulged themselves and thought life was only for one pleasure after another. "Fat cows" God calls them. Everyone still outwardly went through the motions of worshipping God, but they were just going through the motions. They had no place in their lives for God.

God tried to warn the people many times, but they were too stubborn to listen. He sent food shortages, droughts, crop failures and military defeats to get their attention and have them return to Him, but they never did. They still insisted in trusting in themselves only.

Sermon number four (5-6) is like a funeral lament. Amos is so sure of Israel's destruction it was like it already happened, like they were already dead. Forgiveness and restoration was still available for individuals who repented, but for the nation as a whole it was too late. Judgment was sure to come.

III. VISIONS of the PROPHET (7-9) The sermons are now over. Next come illustrations of what the judgment will be like. God says He will send a plague of grasshoppers to destroy everything, but Amos asks for mercy and God relents. The same happens with a great devouring fire. Still, God says He will destroy the nation. The Jews don't want to hear Amos' preaching any more, so they tell him to stop and go home. They are like over-ripe fruit (8), good for nothing but destruction. Outside they look fine but inside they are rotten. God the righteous judge has declared it so and so it will be.

Still, like all the prophets, God doesn't end on a note of despair. There is always hope. God has Amos remind the Jews about their glorious future when all will worship Him in peace and righteousness. The Messiah will reign on David's throne and everything will be perfect. But until then . . .

OUTLINE OF AMOS

Introduction (Judgment) 1:1-2

I. VIGILANCE OF THE PROPHET (Prophecies) 1-2

Prophecies of Damascus, Philistia, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah, Israel

II. VOICE OF THE PROPHET (Sermons) 3-6

A. Privileges Despised (Present) 3

B. Perversity Described (Past)

C. Punishment Declared (Future) 5-6

III. VISIONS OF THE PROPHET (Visions) 7-9

A. Locust 7:1-3

B. Fire 7:4-6

C. Plum-Line 7:7-17

D. Over-Ripe Fruit 8

E. False Altar 9:1-10

Conclusion (Hope) 9:11-15

HOSEA:

LOYAL LOVE



TITLE: After prophet who wrote it

AUTHOR: Hosea = "Jehovah is Salvation"

DATE of WRITING: 785-725 BC

PLACE of WRITING: North (Israel)

TIME COVERED: 785-725 BC

RECIPIENTS: North (Israel)

KEY VERSE: 3:1 *The LORD said to me, "Go, show your love to*

your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes."

KEY WORDS: "Love," "whoredom/spiritual adultery" (14 times)

PURPOSE: to announce that God will chasten His unfaithful "wife" but will restore her to a place of blessing.

THEME: Loyal love of God for His own despite sin and unfaithfulness.

ADULTEROUS WIFE & FAITHFUL HUSBAND (Hosea 1-3) The book of Hosea starts with a very sad love story. Hosea, God's prophet, actually lives out God's message. He is a walking audio-visual to communicate God's truth to the people.

God tells him to marry a woman named Gomer. He is loyal and faithful to her and God, but she is disloyal to him. She is sexually unfaithful. In fact, many scholars believe the children born to her are not his. As her immoral lifestyle continues she finds her self taken in slavery and on the auction block, being sold as a slave. Hosea shows up and pays the price to buy her back, restoring her as his wife. It is a sad, moving story. The Jews couldn't have missed the meaning of it, though.

ADULTEROUS NATION & FAITHFUL GOD (Hosea 4-14)

In Hosea 4-7 we see that **God is Holy - He Hates Sin**. The parallel between Gomer and Israel (the northern 10 tribes) is here elaborately done. Israel is the spiritual wife of God as Gomer is the physical wife of Hosea. As she became physical unfaithful, so Israel has been spiritually unfaithful to God, willfully rejecting their sacred relationship and putting idols first. The Jews worshipped Baal by sacred prostitution and child sacrifice. God remained faithful to them, but they were unfaithful to Him, abandoning His love. As Gomer, they were unfaithful, unthankful and unworthy. They gave themselves to others and as a result their health and reputation were ruined. They only cared about material things, but those 'things' didn't satisfy and they ended up deserted and abandoned by their 'lovers.' Israel, like Gomer, was unable to help herself. Deliverance could only come by Someone greater coming to their aid.

In Hosea 8-10 we see that **God is Just - He Judges Sin**. Again visual aids are used to show God's message: a dying man shows there is no future, a flaming fire shows all will be devoured, a half-baked cake shows the tastelessness of the Jews 'religion,' a deceitful bow shows they can't be trusted, a pleasureless vessel shows God has no joy in His people and a forgetful servant shows the Jews are of no service to God. All these show Israel is guilty before God. Still, God is patient and in His mercy puts off judgment to give time to repent. However God is also just, and the time to settle accounts will soon arrive. Barrenness and bondage are coming. While it may be too late for the nation as a whole, individuals can still turn to God in repentance and receive forgiveness and mercy.

Finally, in Hosea 11-14 we see that **God is Love - He Has Mercy on Sinners**. Hosea, like all the prophets, ends his message on a note of hope. Consolation will follow chastening. A time of peace and deliverance is coming in the future.

The book concludes with Hosea pleading one last time for the people to repent and turn to God. God will forgive and restore, as Hosea did Gomer. "Hosea" means "God is Salvation," the same as "Joshua." It's written differently in English to be able to tell them apart, but they are the same in Hebrew. Hosea is a picture of loyal love. He redeemed Gomer by paying a price to buy back what was already his. God did the same with us. Each loved their 'wives' in spite of their sin and were faithful despite being shown unfaithfulness. They didn't set their loved ones aside but suffered personal agony because they cared more about the other than their own ease and comfort. They were willing to pay the price to buy back what was really theirs, to forgive and restore. Each looked forward to enjoying an intimate relationship with his loved one after restoration: Hosea with Gomer and God with His people in the millennium. That is the future hope, the consolation which will eventually come.

One day a little boy wandered into the woods on his way home and got lost. Finally he found his way home but hid in the barn all night long. He was afraid because he was late. His parents were up all night searching the woods for him because they loved and missed him. Had he understood their concern he could have spent the night in his bed with his family. The same is true of us and God. He is anxious and willing to have us back, it is our choice to stay away.

OUTLINE OF HOSEA

I. ADULTEROUS WIFE and FAITHFUL HUSBAND (Hosea and Gomer) 1-3

(Narrative, Symbolic Illustration – The Prodigal Wife)

- A. Sin: Pollution of Gomer 1
- B. Judgment: Punishment of Gomer 2
- C. Mercy: Pardon of Gomer 3

II. ADULTEROUS NATION and FAITHFUL GOD (God and Israel) 4-14

(Sermons, Spiritual Truth – The Prodigal People)

- A. Sin: Pollution of Israel 4-7
- B. Judgment: Punishment of Israel 8-10
- C. Mercy: Pardon of Israel 11-14

ISAIAH: GOD IS SALVATION

TITLE: After prophet who wrote it

AUTHOR: Isaiah "Salvation is of Jehovah"

DATE of WRITING: 722-681 BC

PLACE of WRITING: Judah

TIME COVERED: From Isaiah's time to eternity future (messages cover reign of 5 kings)

RECIPIENTS: Southern kingdom, Judah

KEY VERSE: *6:1-3 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."*

KEY WORDS: "Holy One of Israel" 25 times, "judge/judgment" 52 times, "comfort" 18 times

PURPOSE: Outward religious activity without an inner attitude of love & submission brings judgment

THEME: God is holy and man is not, therefore unless sin is confessed and removed judgment comes

The Old Testament is divided into three main sections: History (Genesis - Esther), Poetry (Job - Ecclesiastes) and the Prophets (Isaiah - Malachi). The largest prophetic books come first (Major Prophets - Isaiah - Daniel) followed by the smaller books. Isaiah is the first prophetic book we come to, not because he was the first chronologically but because his book is the largest of all the prophets. Even more than being foremost in quantity, it is also foremost in quality. Having 66 chapters, like the Bible has 66 books, it has been called the Bible in miniature. Isaiah uses the term 'salvation' 26 times while all the other prophets only use it 7 times combined. It shows much about Jesus and salvation. The first 39 chapters show man's condemnation, his need of salvation, just as the first 39 books in the Bible, the Old Testament, show the same thing. The final 27 chapters of Isaiah, and books of the Bible (the New Testament) show God's consolation, His provision for man's need. Truly this is a special book!

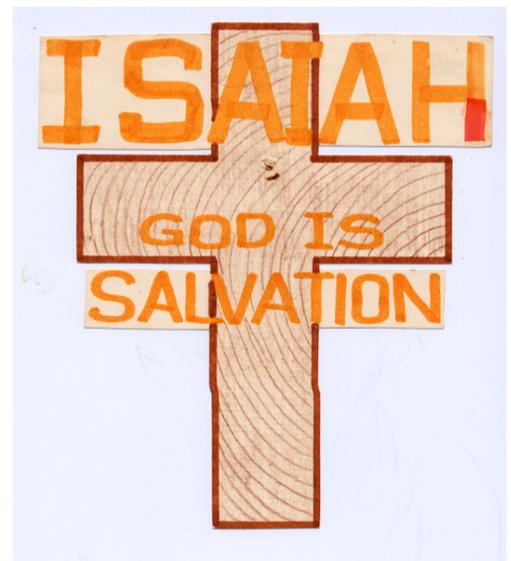
CONDEMNATION (1-39) The book opens foretelling that God's judgment is to come onto Judah, the southern kingdom (1 - 12). Their rebellion and sins are detailed. In contrast to man's sinfulness we see God's holiness. God revealed His glory to Isaiah (6) and this became the motive for as well as the content of Isaiah's whole message.

Isaiah doesn't just foretell judgment and destruction, though. Every time God sends a message of judgment He also includes words of hope and restoration in the future. Isaiah is full of prophecies about the Messiah to come. He is to be born of a virgin (7:14) and come from the line of David (11:1), called 'Immanuel' (7:14), be a stumbling block to Israel (8:14) and a light to the nations (9:2). He is to be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace (9:6).

Next, judgment is seen as coming on the Gentiles, too (13-27). Babylon, Moab, Damascus, Ethiopia, Egypt and Arabia will also fall to God because of their unconfessed sin. Any who turn against God, then or in the future, will suffer the same fate.

Judgment will come on the whole world (28-35) as well. One future day the Messiah will return and judge all who oppose Him while rewarding those who have remained faithful to Him. Assyria, n will especially be punished for its cruel treatment of God's northern kingdom (36-39).

The second section of Isaiah turns from the dismal present to a time of hope in the future. Even the names of Isaiah's two sons reflect this two-fold message that God spoke through Him.



“Hasten the Spoil, Rush the Prey,” the first son, spoke of the coming judgment for sin. “A Remnant Shall Return,” the second son, talked about the coming hope of the time when the Messiah would rule in perfect peace and righteousness. What names! Every time the boys were called into the house for supper the neighbors heard a sermon preached!

CONSOLATION (40-66) God is still faithful, even when His people are unfaithful. He will keep His promises to Abraham and his descendants. A time of comfort will come when the Messiah will rule and reign forever (40-48). All God’s enemies will be judged and removed.

Sin and rebellion will then be removed and all will be perfect righteousness forever (49-57). This Messiah is called the “Suffering Servant,” for those two words describe Him and His mission. Chapter 53 is especially clear about this, sounding like something one would read in one of the Gospels. No wonder Isaiah is quoted and referred to in the New Testament more than any other Old Testament book. Isaiah 53 alone has almost 60 quotes or allusions in the New Testament! It is a book and chapter that must be understood before the New Testament can be really understood.

Isaiah closes with thoughts about the time when redemption will be finally and totally realized (58-66). God’s people will be restored and God’s glory recognized and worshipped everywhere. It will take the tribulation for the Jews to turn back to God, but it will happen. Thus, though the present seems bleak for the Jews, the future looks great because God is in charge of it all. There is hope because God is in control and God keeps His promises!

Isaiah’s painful warning of the consequences of taking sin lightly applies to us today, too. God is still holy, and we are not. Sin not covered by the blood of Jesus cries out for judgment, and a righteous and holy God will ultimately judge sin. The Suffering Servant is still the best answer, in fact the only answer. Have you confessed your sin and asked for His mercy in covering and removing it? That’s the only way to have a future in this sin-sick world.

OUTLINE OF ISAIAH

I. CONDEMNATION (Need of Salvation; Groaning Under God’s Judgment) 1-39

- A. Judgment on Judah 1-12
 - 1. Judah’s Rebellion 1-4
 - 2. Isaiah’s Commission 5-8
 - 3. Judah’s Messiah 9-12
- B. Judgment on Gentiles 13-27
 - 1. Judgment on Babylon and Moab 13-16
 - 2. Judgment on Damascus, Ethiopia, Egypt 17-20
 - 3. Judgment on Arabia and Tyre 21-23
 - 4. Judgment on Future Nations 24-27
- C. Judgment on World 28-35
 - 1. Calamity is Coming 28-30
 - 2. King is Coming 31-35
- D. Judgment on Assyria 36-39

II. CONSOLATION (Provision of Messiah; Glorifying in God’s Salvation) 40-66

- A. Redemption Promised 40-48
 - 1. Comfort for God’s People 40-43
 - 2. Calamity for God’s Enemies 44-48
- B. Redemption Provided 49-57
 - 1. Prince of Peace 49-51
 - 2. Suffering Servant 52-57
- C. Redemption Realized 58-66
 - 1. God’s People Restored 58-62
 - 2. God’s Glory Recognized 63-66

MICAH:

HOPE

TITLE: After prophet who wrote it
AUTHOR: Micah
DATE of WRITING: 749 - 697 BC
PLACE of WRITING: Judah
TIME COVERED: 749 BC - eternity
RECIPIENTS: Judah & Israel



KEY VERSES: *4:1-4 In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.*

KEY WORDS: 'Hear" 9 times; 'desolation' 4 times; 'gather' 9 times

PURPOSE: Judgment is coming, but eventually Israel will be restored.

THEME: Despite coming judgment, there is hope in the future.

Scientists once did an experiment where they took a number of pigs and put them in deep water. The pigs struggled for 24 hours and then drowned. Next they took another group and put them in deep water, just like the first group. However after 12 hours they allowed them to get out for 30 minutes. Then they put them back in. This group lasted 40 hours before drowning. Why did the second group last almost twice as long as the first? It was because they had the hope of being rescued again. Hope made all the difference.

HOPELESSNESS We live in a world today that is full of hopelessness. Music, art, movies and other areas of our culture clearly show this. The large numbers of people who suffer from addictions or psychological problems also point to this as a time of hopelessness. AIDS, nuclear warfare, financial pressures, breakdown of interpersonal relationships and pressures in the work place bring fear and emptiness. With no stable anchor to hold onto and nothing sure in the future, all people have is today. And when that goes sour there seems to be nothing left. Satan, the Prince of this World, promotes hopelessness for it causes people to think that death is their best alternative. As the kingdom of darkness grows, so does the suicide rate. All of this is because man has no hope.

GODS 'HOPE' The definition of the word 'hope' today refers to a wish, a possibility, something we'd like to happen. Often when all else fails and disaster seems certain people say, "All we can do is hope for the best." This isn't what the Bible is talking about when it uses the word 'hope.' When the Bible uses the word 'hope' it is referring to 'confident assurance.' It means something is 100% certain, its as sure as if it already happened. It is a guarantee of God's promises being fulfilled. Our confident assurance is that all things work together for good, God is in charge of everything that happens and it is all for our maturity and His glory, that Jesus may return for us at any moment, that when we die we will spend eternity with Jesus, and that we can never lose our salvation. Our hope is not in something we wish for but something we are assured of, so we have nothing to fear.

MICAH'S HOPE While each of the prophets offers hope after giving God's message of impending judgment, Micah especially focuses on that. Each prophet concluded his message by talking about the future time of deliverance which God would provide for His faithful people, Micah goes into extra detail about this. Micah himself lived and ministered during the time of Isaiah. While Isaiah was a

well-known prophet who ministered to rich, city people, Micah was an unknown who preached to poor country people. Both ministered during the time the Northern Kingdom was falling to Assyria.

PROPHECY OF RETRIBUTION (1-3) Although it will be several more generations until the Southern Kingdom actually falls, the final countdown has begun. It is too late to turn, for they are too committed to their sinful path. Judgment is approaching. Their wound is incurable. Sin is rampant. The family unit has broken down. Materialism, stealing and scheming are common. People take advantage of the poor. The leaders are selfish and self-centered. They hate good and love evil. False prophets abound and false truths are accepted as truth. Even the priests have turned from God, just teaching what will bring in the greatest offering. While there is no hope for the nation, there is still hope for the individual. Mercy is still available for each person who turns to God for salvation and forgiveness. They won't escape the results of sin in this life, but they will escape eternal consequences of hell.

PROMISE OF RESTORATION (4-5) Using almost the same words that Isaiah used, Micah writes about the hope the faithful Jews still have. He talks in detail about the millennium when the temple will be rebuilt and people will worship God once again. The Messiah will rule and reign, bringing peace to all. All will return to garden of Eden conditions. What a glorious hope that is for Israel! Micah says that the King who will rule over this kingdom will be born in Bethlehem (5:2).

PLEA FOR REPENTANCE (6-7) Because of this Micah pleads with the people to repent from their halfhearted worship, empty ritual, persistent rebellion, deception, hypocrisy, corruption, greed and idolatry. Judgment will come because of that, but there is a glorious future for Israel when their borders will be expanded and all nations will come to Jerusalem to worship and serve the Messiah King. What a glorious hope that is for them all!

OUR BLESSED HOPE We have a hope even greater than the Jews had. We have a far distant hope of spending eternity with God, too. We have a near future hope of the rapture or, if we die first, being immediately with God in heaven. We have a present hope as well. All things DO work together, there IS a plan and purpose for all that happens, God IS sovereign and does all because He loves us. Where would we be without that hope? When the Roman Empire started falling apart, many turned to Jesus because of the hope they saw displayed in the lives of God's people. Our times are similar to those of the early church as well as Israel before judgment came. We, too, can shine our light of hope in a dark and hopeless world. Remember, the hope of the world is Jesus!

OUTLINE OF MICAH

I. PROPHECY OF RETRIBUTION (Judgment on God's People) 1-3

- A. Judgment is Certain 1
- B. Greedy People 2
- C. Unjust Leaders 3:1-4
- D. False Prophets 3:5-8
- E. Perverse Priests 3:9-12

II. PROMISE OF RESTORATION (Blessing for God's People) 4-5

- A. Characteristics During the Kingdom 4:1-6
- B. Events Before the Kingdom 4:9-13
- C. His Coming 5:1-3
- D. His Kingdom 5:4-7
- E. His Conquest 5:8-15

III. PLEA FOR REPENTANCE (Lawsuits against God's People) 6-7

- A. Indictment #1 6:1-5
- B. Confession #1 6:6-8
- C. Indictment #2 6:9-16
- D. Confession #2 7:1=10

NAHUM: JUSTICE

TITLE: After Prophet who wrote it

AUTHOR: Nahum ("Comforter")

DATE of WRITING: 661 - 612 BC

PLACE of WRITING: Israel

TIME COVERED: About 50 years

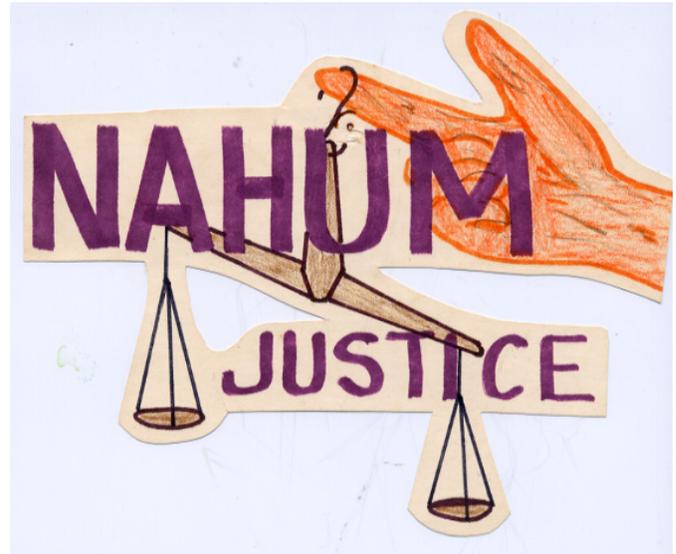
RECIPIENTS: Nineveh

KEY VERSE: 3:5-7 *"I am against you," declares the LORD Almighty. "I will lift your skirts over your face. I will show the nations your nakedness and the kingdoms your shame. I will pelt you with filth, I will treat you with contempt and make you a spectacle. All who see you will flee from you and say, 'Nineveh is in ruins-- who will mourn for her?' Where can I find anyone to comfort you?"*

KEY WORD: "Vengeance/Revenge" 3 times

PURPOSE: About 150 years after Jonah's revival, Nineveh is deep in sin so God announces their destruction because of sin.

THEME: The justice of God in destroying Nineveh



Suppose someone invited you out to lunch and took you to a nice restaurant. They ordered expensive food for both of you, enjoyed the meal, then got up and walked out without waiting for the check. When you asked them why they didn't pay they were surprised, saying they didn't know they had to pay and weren't prepared to pay. They just wanted a nice meal is all! Sound unbelievable? Everyone knows you must pay for what you do. Or do they? Often people sin assuming they'll never have to pay for it. God holds each one accountable for their sin. Unless it is put under the blood of Jesus, it remains on the account of the one who committed the sin.

Nineveh is a prime example of this. Founded by Nimrod, who also founded Babel, it was a large, virtually impregnable city. The walls were 100 feet high and wide enough for 3 chariots to ride side by side. In addition there were 1,500 towers which were 200 feet high. A moat 60 feet deep and 140 feet wide surrounded the whole city. The walls were 60 miles long, making the city about 350 square miles. The Tigris River flowed along one side and the Khoser River came through the town. This provided valuable water as well as further protection. Suburbs and fields surrounded the city. At least 1 million people lived there. These were cruel, heartless people. They had a mania for blood and savagery, comparable to the worst in Nazi Germany. They didn't just defeat other nations, they enjoyed bringing the worst suffering and misery possible. Jonah's revival of 150 years earlier had completely faded and their evil was worse than ever.

DOOM DECLARED (1) I don't know what kind of speaker Nahum was, but he was a tremendously gifted writer. The book is a beautiful literary masterpiece. He uses special Hebrew words to describe God. He points out God is very angry at Nineveh for its sin. God has been patient but even God's patience has limits -- and His limits are almost here. God is all powerful, and withholding judgment so far wasn't done because He was weak but to give more time for repentance. Actually God isn't being cruel in destroying Nineveh, He has been very patient with them. Judging them brings justice to the world and glorifies Him. It just gives them what they chose anyway.

Ironically, God used the rivers and walls they used for protection to destroy them. That was His show of justice on them.

DOOM DESCRIBED (2) Nahum not only tells WHAT will happen (chapter 1) but also HOW it will happen (chapter 2). Babylon will use the rivers to flood the city and easily destroy it. Inside the nobles and people will be so overconfident that they will party and be drunk, not believing Nineveh could fall. They will be wrong! History records the fall of Nineveh just exactly as God predicted!

DOOM DESERVED (3) In chapter 3 the WHY of the destruction is detailed. The people are evil, cruel and bloody. They are guilty of idolatrous practices, witchcraft and destruction. They will reap what they sowed. They showed no one mercy, and none will be shown to them. The city will be so thoroughly destroyed no one will even remember its location. That is what happened. For almost 3,000 years its very location was unknown, until 1842. The city literally sinned itself to death. It didn't even try to change or think of repenting. It died. Somehow they thought God would judge lesser nations for lesser sin, but they would escape. Not so. Unfortunately there are many parallels with America. I remember hearing Billy Graham say that if God doesn't judge America He will have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah! Well, God isn't going to apologize. There is a price to pay for sin.

No one would think of going into a restaurant and not having to pay for the food they eat, but many today think they won't have to pay for their sin. This applies to nations and individuals both. Aren't you glad that Jesus paid for your sins on the cross and, because you accepted His free gift of salvation, you don't have to worry about that any more? Take some time now and thank Him for what He has done for you and what He will do for you.

OUTLINE OF NAHUM

I. DOOM DELCARED (Wrath against Nineveh) 1

- A. The God of Vengeance 1:1-7
- B. The Vengeance of God 1:8-15

II. DOOM DESCRIBED (Woe in Nineveh) 2

- A. The Attack 2:1-5
- B. The Defeat 2:6-13

III. DOOM DESERVED (Warning to Nineveh) 3

- A. Wickedness Unlimited 3:1-7
- B. Warning Unheeded 3:8-10

ZEPHANIAH: DAY of the LORD

TITLE: After the prophet who wrote it
AUTHOR: "Zephaniah" means "He Whom God Has Hidden"

DATE of WRITING: About 630 BC

PLACE of WRITING: Judah (Jerusalem?)

TIME COVERED: 630 BC to eternity future

RECIPIENTS: Judah and Jerusalem

KEY VERSE: 1:7, 12 *Be silent before the Sovereign LORD, for the day of the LORD is near.*

The LORD has prepared a sacrifice; he has consecrated those he has invited. ... At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps and punish those who are complacent, who are like wine left on its dregs, who think, 'The LORD will do nothing, either good or bad.'

KEY WORD: "Day of the Lord" (20 times), "desolation" (7 times), "remnant" (4 times)

PURPOSE: to warn of coming judgment and to comfort the faithful remnant

THEME: Day of the Lord as prefigured by the Babylonian invasion



Everyone would like to know the future. People are hoping to find some answers to what lies ahead. Unfortunately they assume the future will be better than the present. That's what they base their hope on. But what about when the future gets worse? Then what? That was God's message through Zephaniah to the people of his day, and it is God's message to people today, too. The only hope God could offer to them then was in the distant future -- the Day of the Lord.

JUDGMENT IN THE DAY OF THE LORD (1:1 - 3:8) Zephaniah ministered at the same time as Jeremiah, when Jerusalem fell to Babylon. While Jeremiah was tender in wooing the people to God, Zephaniah hammered hard at the nation's conscience. His message is contained in just 53 verses but it contains some of the strongest statements of judgment in the whole Old Testament. God is the God of the universe. He is holy and righteous and expects people to live in accordance with his will. Sin and rebellion **MUST** be punished. The Jews have gotten so far from God that it's too late to stop the coming judgment. Sins of idolatry, indifference, conformity and irresponsibility have gone too far for too long. Judgment is coming for sure. The only hope is the coming Day of the Lord (see JOEL for a chart and more information).

This future judgment will include not only Israel but all the Gentile nations, too. It will culminate with the battle of Armageddon.

SALVATION IN THE DAY OF THE LORD (3:9-20) Then will come Israel's rejoicing as the Millennium comes. The Jews will repent and turn back to God and the Messiah will rule on David's throne forever. Unfortunately it will take the tribulation for them to repent.

Their problem then, as is often also the case today, is complacency. Complacency has been called the 'curse of Christendom.' It opens God's people to compromise. It's more deadly than outright rebellion because it is harder to recognize and change. Lukewarmness is something God hates (Revelation 3:15-16). Complacency is like a malignancy: lethal when ignored, but conquerable when confronted. Ask God to point out any complacency that has slipped into your life. Repent and turn to God for His forgiveness and restoration.

OUTLINE OF ZEPHANIAH

I. JUDGMENT IN THE DAY OF THE LORD (Retribution) 1-3:8

- A. Judgment on Earth 1:1-3
- B. Judgment on Judah 1:4-2:3
- C. Judgment on Gentiles 2:4-15
- D. Judgment on Jerusalem 3:1-7
- E. Judgment on All Nations 3:8

II. SALVATION IN THE DAY OF THE LORD (Restoration) 3:9-20

- A. Israel's Regathering 3:9-10
- B. Israel's Repentance 3:11-13
- C. Israel's Rejoicing 3:14-15
- D. Israel's Redeemer 3:16-20

HABAKKUK: PATIENCE



TITLE: After prophet who wrote it

AUTHOR: Habakkuk (“embrace”)

DATE of WRITING: 610 - 599 BC

PLACE of WRITING: Judah

TIME COVERED: Judah’s Conquest by Babylon

RECIPIENTS: Judah, just before conquest

KEY VERSE: 2:4 *“See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright-- but the righteous will live by his faith--*

KEY WORDS: “Why” “Woe” (5 times)

PURPOSE: Habakkuk is concerned over God’s apparent lack of concern about Judah’s sin. God says He will discipline them through Babylon, then judge Babylon.

THEME: God’s patience in dealing with man

What do you do when you find yourself in a world ruled by evil, when people around you flout the will of God, yet God does nothing about it? That is the problem Habakkuk faced. Month after month, year after year he saw his nation falling apart because of flagrant sin. “Do something, God!” he cries out. Then God starts doing something - He disciplines His people with the Babylonians! “But they are worse than we are!” Habakkuk cries. “I know,” God says, I’ll judge them before long, too.”

Habakkuk is 3 short, pointed chapters. It consists of dialogue between Habakkuk and God about what’s happening and about how to accept God’s dealings when we don’t understand them. It applies to us today individually when things happen that we don’t understand. It applies to us as a nation for we, too, have turned far from God.

PROBLEMS (1) Why does God allow His people to live in sin? Why do the wicked prosper? Why does God allow His people to live in sin, oppressing and taking advantage of the minority who try to remain faithful to Him?

People today ask the same thing: why doesn’t God stop war? Why do good people suffer? Why do unfair things happen? How can God let abortion continue? The answer that He gives to Habakkuk is that He is patient. We must be patient to await His making wrong right. After all, if He weren’t patient with us where would we be? If He would have judged this world before we were born where would we be? Patience is an important virtue in those who would be like Jesus. It is very lacking today. Everything must happen fast and efficiently. Our very lives are full of trying to cram more and more into them. God tells us to patiently wait for Him (Psalm 27:14; 40:1). God is never late, but He’s never early either. There is no way of trying to rush God, He works at His pace, and He is a patient God.

Before long, though, God tells Habakkuk, He will discipline the people’s sin with the Babylonians. He isn’t indifferent to sin, He has a plan which is unfolding. That brings up another question to Habakkuk, though. The Babylonians were worse than the Jews! Has God changed His standards? No, the Jews were more accountable. Will God forsake His people entirely? If so, what about His promises to Abraham? How will having His special people destroyed bring glory to God?

POWER (2) God answers these questions of Habakkuk's by reassuring Him that He is righteous -- He will judge Babylon, too. Those who are righteous will be spared the eternal consequences of sin, but not the temporal. "The just shall live by faith" (2:4) is quoted three times in the New Testament (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38). This verse was what God used to motivate Martin Luther to start the Reformation. God says the ungodly, whether Jew or Babylonian, will perish and the godly, whoever they are, will have eternal life. God says He is not indifferent to sin, He will judge it (Galatians 6:7). "Be patient, Habakkuk," God is saying, "I know what I'm doing here!" But patience is hard to learn. It doesn't come naturally or easily. It takes suffering and difficulties to stretch us and teach us patience (Romans 5:3; Job 1:21; James 5:11). We only see how great God is when we patiently wait for Him to act.

PRAISE (3) Habakkuk realized God's sovereign power and that all creation was the work of His hands and under control. God is in control of the forces of nature as well as the nations of the world. Even though it seemed things were out of control, God was (and is) still in control. He closes with a tremendous affirmation of God's sovereign control and recommitment of Himself to praise and trust God no matter what. *Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.*

OUTLINE OF HABAKKUK

I. PROBLEMS (Questions) 1

- A. Question 1: "Why Does God Allow His People to Live in Sin?" 1:1-4
- B. Answer 1: "God Will Use the Babylonians to Discipline the Jews" 1:5-11
- C. Question 2: "How Can God Allow Unbelievers to Discipline His People?" 1:2-2:1

II. POWER (Answers) 2

- Answer 2: "God is righteous and will judge Babylonians, too." 2:2-20

III. PRAISE (Response) 3

- A. Praise for the Person of God 3:1-3
- B. Praise for the Power of God 3:4-7
- C. Praise for the Purpose of God 3:8-16
- D. Praise because of Faith in God 3:17-19

BIBLE OVERVIEW

17. ASSYRIAN CAPTIVITY

MAIN EVENTS: North (Israel) Captive into Assyria

MAIN PEOPLE:

BOOKS OF THE BIBLE:

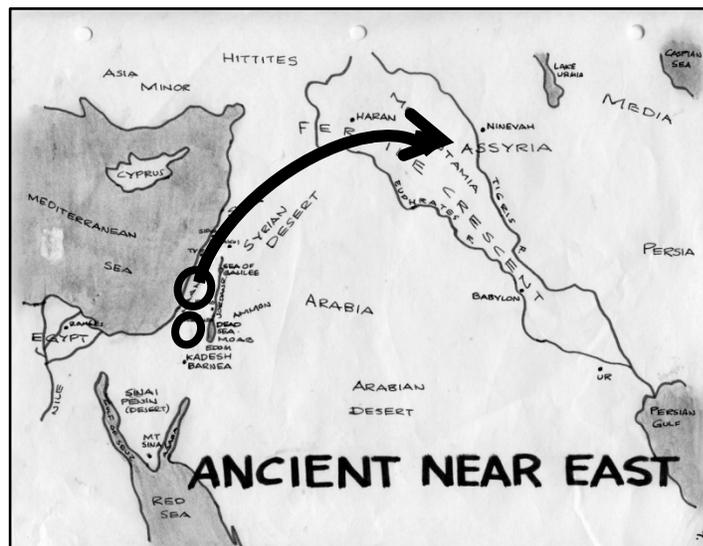
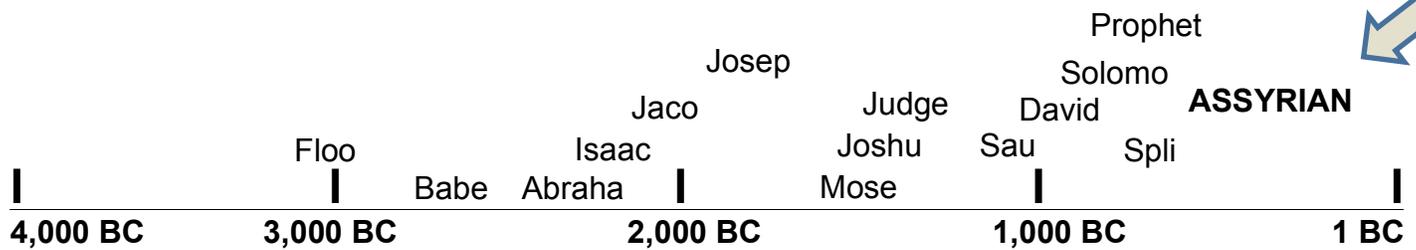
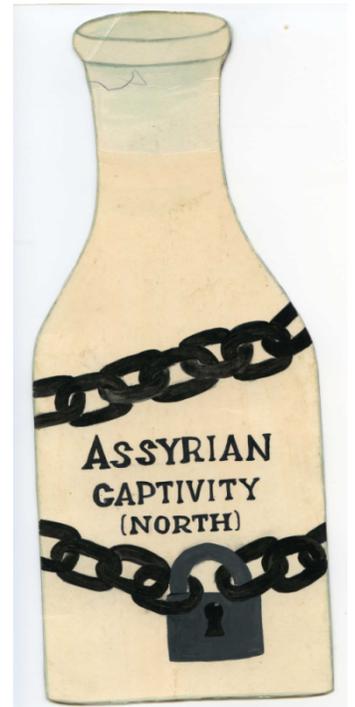
BIBLE VERSE: *2 Kings 17:18 So the Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them from his presence. Only the tribe of Judah was left.*

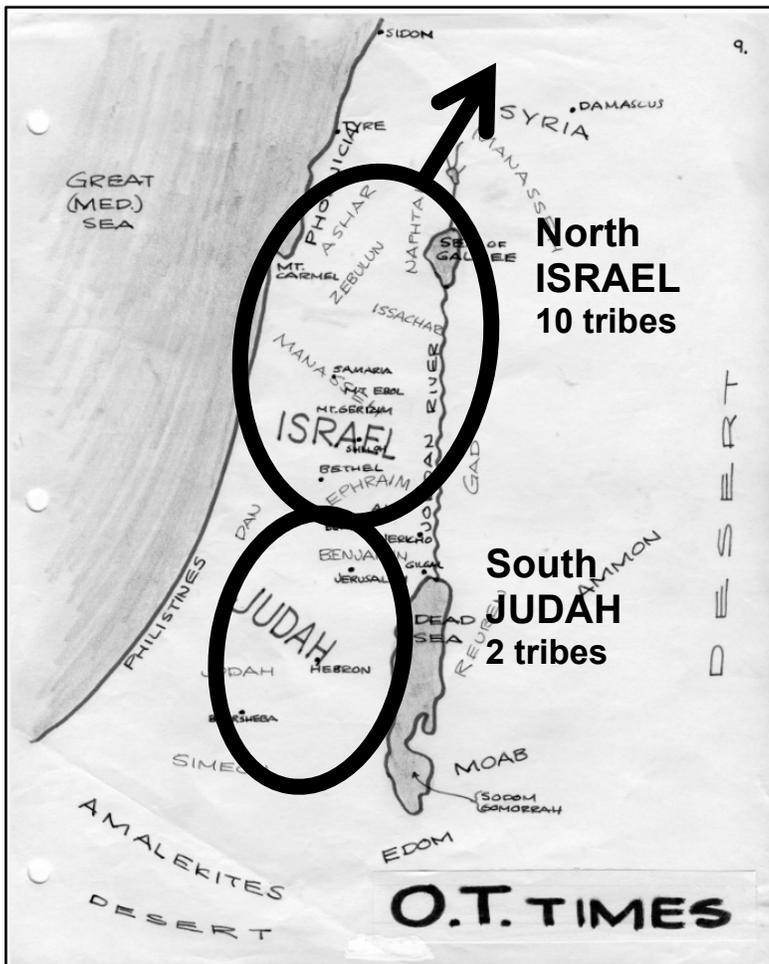
TIME: 722 BC

WORLD EVENTS AT THIS TIME:

Zoroaster in Persia

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION: Palestine to Assyria





During this time in Bible history the Northern Kingdom, Israel, was taken captive by Assyria. Assyria was the leading world power in the area and was very cruel. They brought nation after nation under their control. They attacked Israel three or four times and forced them to pay a heavy tribute to Assyria. Shalmaneser then attacked and, after a three year siege of the capital city, Samaria, defeated it in 720 BC. The Northern Kingdom, Israel, had existed as a nation for almost 200 years. Every one of their nineteen kings was evil, not one was godly.

It was the practice of the Assyrians to completely destroy each country it captured by taking off a large number of the people there and moving in people who had been captured from other nations. This left the north, Samaria, with a mixture of Jews and Gentiles who intermarried over time and became a race of half Jews half Gentiles. This is why Nehemiah rejected their help rebuilding the city and why Samaritans were so rejected in Jesus' day (Nehemiah 2:19-20; 4; John 4:1-9; Luke 10:33; 17:16; John

8:44). God did not allow them to conquer Judah because He did not want His godly remnant there to be moved to other countries and have their descendants intermarry. So He did not allow Assyria to defeat Judah and take them captive as well.

When these ten tribes went into captivity they weren't 'lost,' for the godly, believing remnant in each of them had already moved to the south, Judah. Thus the Southern Kingdom, Judah, became in effect the true Jewish nation containing the believers from all twelve tribes. So the nation stayed together as a whole and no tribes were 'lost' (James 1:1; Acts 26:6-7). But those who were taken to Assyria never returned, and the Northern Kingdom, Israel, never existed as such again.

What a sad ending for people who were so richly blessed by God. We see that pattern over and over throughout the Bible: God reaches out in love and grace, but the response is rejection and disobedience. Still He is willing to forgive, to restore and to continue His blessings. Most reject Him, though. That is still the case today.

BIBLE OVERVIEW

18.

BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY



MAIN EVENTS: The Jews in Captivity in Babylon

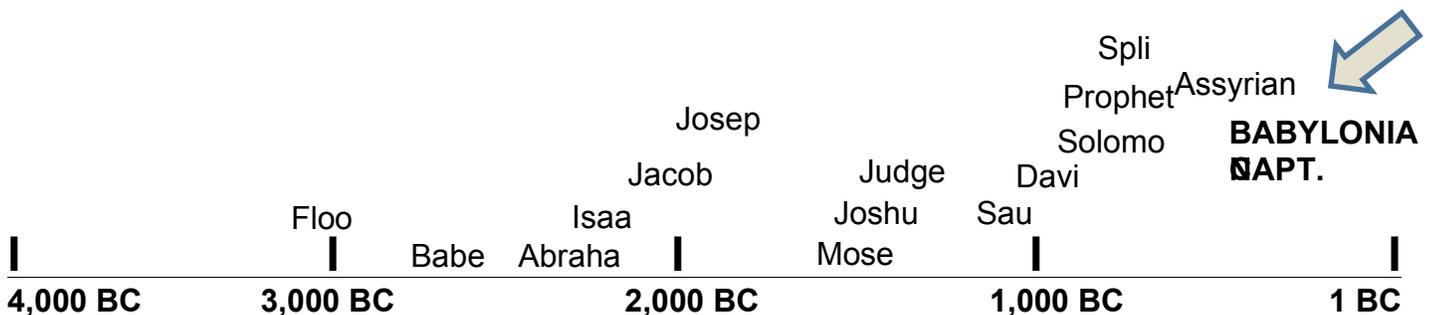
MAIN PEOPLE: Jeremiah

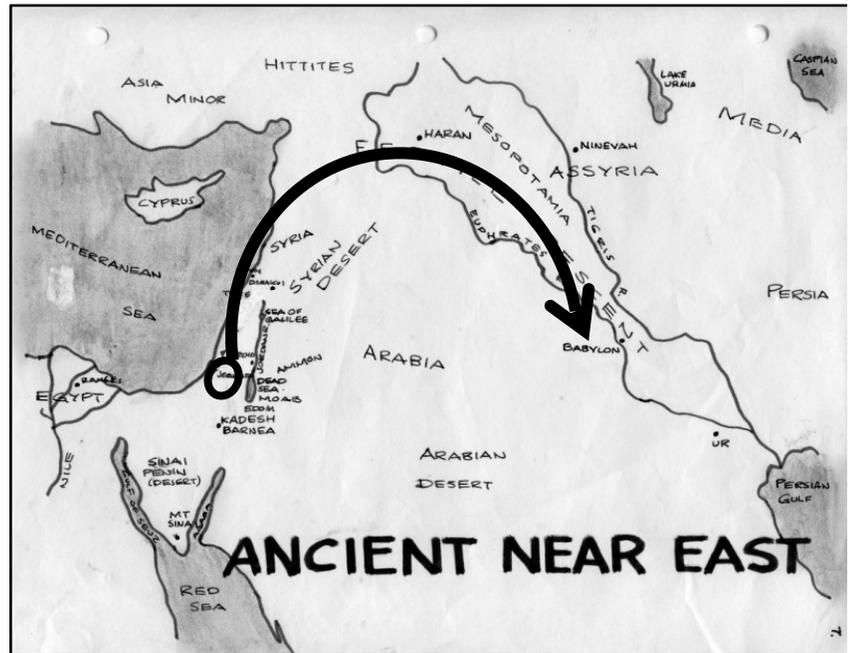
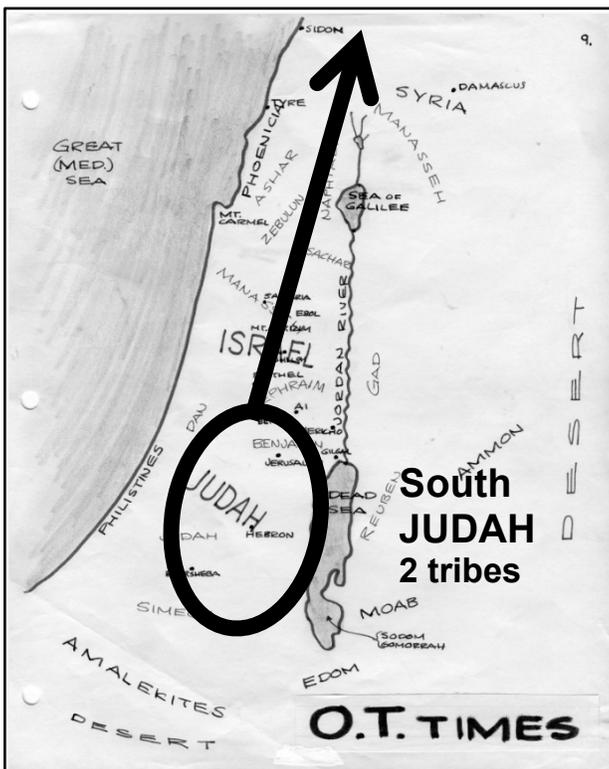
BOOKS OF THE BIBLE: Jeremiah, Lamentations

BIBLE VERSE: *Jeremiah 21:14 I will punish you as your deeds deserve, declares the LORD. 2 Chronicles 36:15-19 The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. 16 But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. 17 He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and spared neither young man nor young woman, old man or aged. God handed all of them over to Nebuchadnezzar. 18 He carried to Babylon all the articles from the temple of God, both large and small, and the treasures of the Lord's temple and the treasures of the king and his officials. 19 They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there.*

TIME: 586 BC

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION: Palestine, Babylon





This section of the Bible overview focuses on the nation of Judah also going into captivity.

The Southern Kingdom, Judah, existed as a nation for about 150 years after the North went into captivity to Assyria. They existed as a nation for about 350 years. They had twenty kings but only eight of them were godly, and most of those were not godly for their whole reign.

Despite repeated warnings by the prophets, the Southern Nation turned from God and continued following pagan gods and idols. There were a few times of revival, but those were short-lived. Finally, judgment came from the nation Babylon, which had replaced Assyria as the power in that part of the world. Their empire was growing as they captured one nation after another.

In 605 BC Babylon attacked and took many captives from Judah, including Daniel (Daniel 1:1-6). Then in 597 BC Jehoiakim was taken into captivity (2 Chronicles 36:5-6). Three months and ten days later Jehoiachin, along with other members of the royal family, were also taken into captivity (2 Chronicles 36:9-10; 2 Kings 24:15-17). Finally, in 586 BC, after a siege of a year and a half, Jerusalem was conquered and destroyed. Most of the people were taken into captivity, along with articles from the temple. Only the poorest people remained (2 Kings 25).

After seventy years God allowed His people to return to their land (Jeremiah 25:12; 29:10). This happened in 516 BC when Cyrus allowed some Jews to return to the land of Palestine. The Babylonian Captivity had a lasting impact on the Jews, however. For one thing, they have never again wandered into idolatry, even to this very day. Also, they turned from an agrarian culture of farmers and shepherds, to business men. They remain among the best and most successful business men in the world to this very day. Despite their failure to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior, He still protects and blesses His chosen people.

JEREMIAH: FINAL CHANCE:

TITLE: After Prophet Who Wrote It
AUTHOR: Jeremiah, prophet for 66 years
DATE of WRITING: About 650 BC
PLACE of WRITING: Judah and then Egypt
TIME COVERED: 626 - 560 BC
RECIPIENTS: Jews in Judah & Jerusalem

KEY VERSE: 21:7, 14 *After that, declares the LORD, I will hand over Zedekiah king of Judah, his officials and the people in this city who survive the plague, sword and famine, to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and to their enemies who seek their lives. He will put them to the sword; he will show them no mercy or pity or compassion.' ... I will punish you as your deeds deserve, declares the LORD. I will kindle a fire in your forests that will consume everything around you.'"*

KEY WORDS: "Iniquity/sin/transgression" 53 times, "captive" 51, "scatter" 14, "evil" 81

PURPOSE: To show that the sin of Judah brings Babylonian captivity.

THEME: Last appeal for Judah to avoid judgment by repenting and turning from sin.



Gravity is one of the unbreakable laws God has built into his universe. What goes up must come down. Slip on ice and you'll go down. The law can't be broken without consequences. God has other laws with consequences, too. They all aren't in nature. Many are spiritual laws. One of the most firm of these is that sin brings judgment. Break this principle by sinning and there will be consequences. Unfortunately we learn about these laws the hard way: falling on ice or suffering the consequences of our sin. The Jews living in Judah after the split learned this the hard way, too. God sent Jeremiah to warn them but they refused to listen until it was too late.

JEREMIAH was called to be a prophet when he was quite young. God forbid him to marry because of the terrible times. He ministered for 66 years, during the reigns of the last five kings of Judah. His message broke his heart, and he often cried as he spoke. That's why he is called the "weeping prophet." His words hurt him so much that he wanted to stop preaching, but God wouldn't let him. Despite his long faithfulness, he never had one convert. He was rejected, hated, beaten, put in stocks and prison, and charged with treason. After Jerusalem was captured by the Babylonians he was forced to go to Egypt by a group of Jews who fled there for freedom. Jeremiah died at an old age in Egypt, perhaps being stoned to death.

LAST CHANCE FOR THE JEWS (chapters 1-45) God, through Jeremiah, warns the Jews of coming destruction. They have been too evil too long. It is too late for national repentance, but individuals can still repent and find salvation. None do. They have lost sight of the seriousness of sin. No one but Jeremiah and perhaps a small faithful remnant will call sin sin and call for repentance. God's people were hypocritical, prideful, arrogant and indifferent to God. Outwardly they were living in a time of great success and prosperity, but inwardly they were corrupt and empty. Jeremiah tried to show the people the sinfulness of their ways by his words and actions. He didn't marry, go to parties or feasts, and used object lessons to illustrate God's truth. He smashed a clay pot to show God's

sovereignty over the nation He had formed. At another time he wore a wooden yoke to show the people they would soon be in bondage.

Still, there is a ray of hope among the judgment. They will be allowed to return to Jerusalem after 70 years in captivity, and there is a future time of deliverance coming when God Himself will rule forever on David's throne. In anticipation of this and to show hope, Jeremiah purchases land just before the city falls when everything seems hopeless.

As the people became aware of their danger and that destruction by Babylon seemed certain and soon, they still would not repent. They were too hard and prideful by this time. Even after Babylon came and destroyed the city and killed or enslaved most of the people, they still wouldn't turn to God. God's law that sin must be judged cannot be broken.

LAST CHANCE FOR GENTILES (chapters 46-51) This principle of reaping what you sow doesn't just apply to Jews, but to ALL the nations, and all who don't repent will also be judged. God judges sin, first among His people (1 Peter 4:17) but ultimately among everyone.

GOD STILL JUDGES SIN TODAY Lest anyone think God has changed this principle, look at the cross. That is ultimate proof of what God thinks of sin. If He would be willing to judge it on His only beloved Son, how can we think He won't judge it on us? In fact, our only escape from His wrath is found at the cross. By accepting what Jesus did for us in accepting God's judgment on our sin, we have forgiveness and eternal life. Jesus took our consequences, we must freely accept His gift of salvation. If not, our sins will be judged. A holy God cannot overlook sin, He wouldn't be God if He did and we couldn't love and respect a God like that. One day, sooner or later, He will judge the sins of this country and world because man today, like in Jeremiah's time, refuses to believe the principle that God judges sin. Still, we can have eternal salvation in Him no matter what this life brings by accepting His payment for our sins. What a God of grace and mercy He is! Make sure all your sins are covered by the blood of Jesus!

OUTLINE OF JEREMIAH

Preface: Jeremiah's Call 1

I. LAST CHANCE FOR THE JEWS 2-45

- A. Condemnation of Judah 2-25
 - 1. Judah Under Judgment 2-6
 - 2. Judah in Idolatry 7-10
 - 3. Judah in Rebellion 11-15
 - 4. Judah in Sin 16-20
 - 5. Judah in Captivity 21-25
- B. Conflicts of Jeremiah 26-29
- C. Consolation from Jeremiah 30-33
- D. Consistency of Jeremiah 34-45
 - 1. Jerusalem Before the Fall 34-36
 - 2. Jerusalem During the Fall 37-39
 - 3. Jerusalem After the Fall 40-45

II. LAST CHANCE FOR THE GENTILES 46-51

Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Arabia, Elam, Babylon

Appendix: Jerusalem's Fall 52

LAMENTATIONS: SIN BRINGS SORROW



TITLE: From Septuagint, Jeremiah's 'Cry'

AUTHOR: Jeremiah

DATE of WRITING: About 586 BC

PLACE of WRITING: Jerusalem

TIME COVERED: Fall of Jerusalem - 586 BC

RECIPIENTS: Judah & Jerusalem as well as all who observed fall of Jerusalem

KEY VERSE: *1:1 How deserted lies the city, once so full of people! How like a widow is she, who once was great among the nations! She who was queen among the provinces has now become a slave.*

KEY WORDS: Zion (Jerusalem, 15 times), Jerusalem (7 times), desolate (7 times)

PURPOSE: To show Jeremiah's sorrow over Jerusalem's destruction for sin

THEME: A lament over the destruction of Jerusalem

Put yourself in this unsavory situation for a moment: someone has been trying to hurt you for some time. They stop at nothing to embarrass and criticize you. They tell your friends lies about you and have even tried to harm you physically. As time goes on this just gets worse. Then you hear they have had an accident and got hurt -- not seriously but painfully. What would your inner response be? How would you feel inside? Would you cry out loud in misery for them? Jeremiah was in a similar situation, with people who tortured and tried to kill him. When they suffered he cried long and hard because these were his people and his nation. Thus he is known as the "weeping prophet."

LAMENTATION "To lament" means "to cry out in grief, to mourn aloud." The book of Lamentations is 5 funeral dirges, "a eulogy in a graveyard." It's the saddest book in the Bible. It was written about the fall of the nation Israel in 586 BC. The Jews never really ruled their own land again until 1946 AD.

Suppose China invaded your country and worked its way across the land, destroying all buildings and crops and either killing or enslaving all the people. Famine would have gotten so bad that people would eat anything to live, even their own babies. Towns are destroyed, people are killed. Dead bodies bloat and pop under the hot sun. What few survivors remain are marched off to slavery. That is what happened to Judah and Jerusalem. Jeremiah knew it was coming and, for 40 years, warned the people to repent but not one did. As he saw the destruction all around him he wrote his feelings down in 5 melancholy poems, each of 22 verses (except the middle one which is three times as long -- 66 verses). The first four are acrostic to make memory easier. Each poem ends in prayer to God.

Jerusalem is destitute (chapter 1). Jerusalem is pictured as a solitary widow, sitting and mourning in lonely sorrow. She is pictured as crying and wailing, asking for sympathy and mercy but getting none. In her pride and self-centeredness she has been humbled. Her grief is described in chapter 1. In chapter 2 **Jehovah is angry** because of the people's sin. That is why they are suffering. Sin brings sorrow. Unbelievably bad things are happening to them because of their refusal to repent of their sin and obey God. Still, God is a God of mercy who forgives and restores so chapter 3 (the long poem) talks about how **Jeremiah is hopeful**. His words throb with pain as he identifies himself with his suffering people. The Jews are learning the hard way that sin brings sorrow. It seems that

everyone needs to learn that lesson for themselves, the hard way. There are no exceptions to that principle, even the innocent suffer for the sins of the others. Jeremiah puts his hope in God, though.

Again the misery is described as chapter 4 again tells how **Jerusalem is defeated**. Contrasts are shown between how she was and how she now is. Her riches and glory have been replaced by famine and misery. It's too late. All this is because of the sins of the people and leaders. They didn't believe it would really happen to them, even though they saw it happen to their sister country in the north, Israel, 150 years ago. The leaders who weren't killed were rejected like lepers by the surviving people.

The final chapter, 5, shows that **Joy is absent** among the people. They appeal to Jeremiah for help and tell him of their distress and misery. In this final brief but forceful poem they pray to God to restore them. They recognize God's sovereignty. The book closes on a word of distress: "unless you have utterly rejected us and are angry with us beyond measure".

The message of the book is obvious: sin brings sorrow. It started in Eden and has been happening ever since. If we sin He won't force us to repent, but we will suffer the consequences of our sin. Remember, sin does bring sorrow!

OUTLINE OF LAMENTATIONS

I. DESPAIR 1-2

- A. Jerusalem is Destitute 1
 - 1. Destitute of People 1:1-11
 - 2. Destitute of Sympathy 1:12-22
- B. Jehovah is Angry 2
 - 1. An Angry God 2:1-10
 - 2. A Weeping Prophet 2:11-19
 - 3. A Fallen City 2:20-22

II. HOPE 3

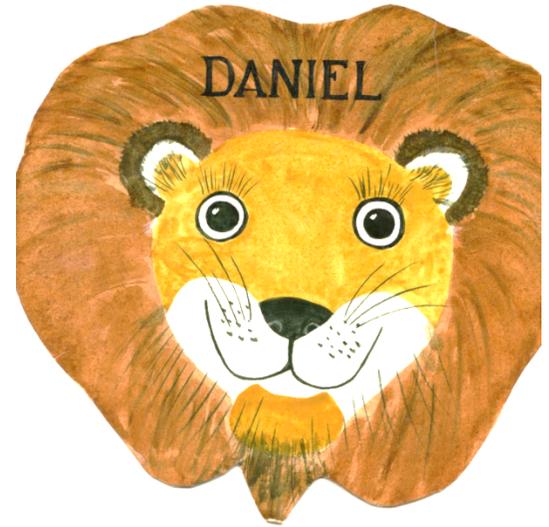
- A. Jeremiah's Afflictions 3:1-18
- B. Jeremiah's Hope 3:19-39
- C. Jeremiah's Prayer 3:40-66

III. DETERMINATION 4-5

- A. Jerusalem is Defeated 4
 - 1. A Stricken City 4:1-11
 - 2. An Exposed City 4:12-22
- B. Joy is Absent 5
 - 1. "Remember Us" 5:1-18
 - 2. "Restore Us" 5:19-22

BIBLE OVERVIEW

19. DANIEL



MAIN EVENTS: Daniel in captivity in Babylon

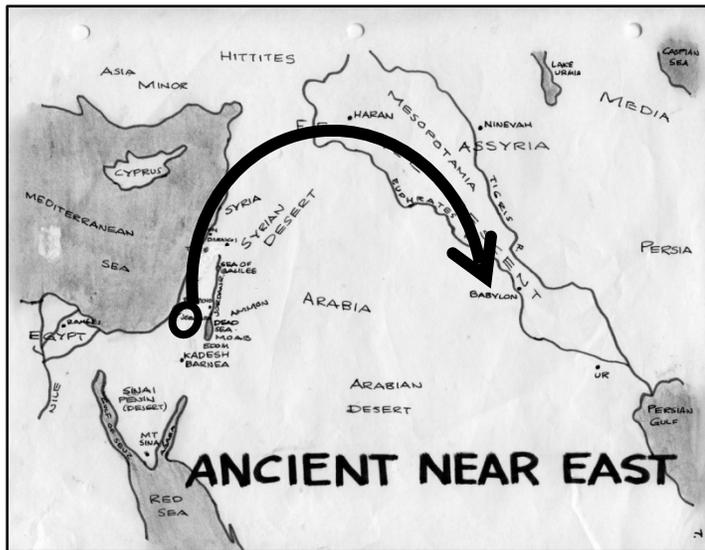
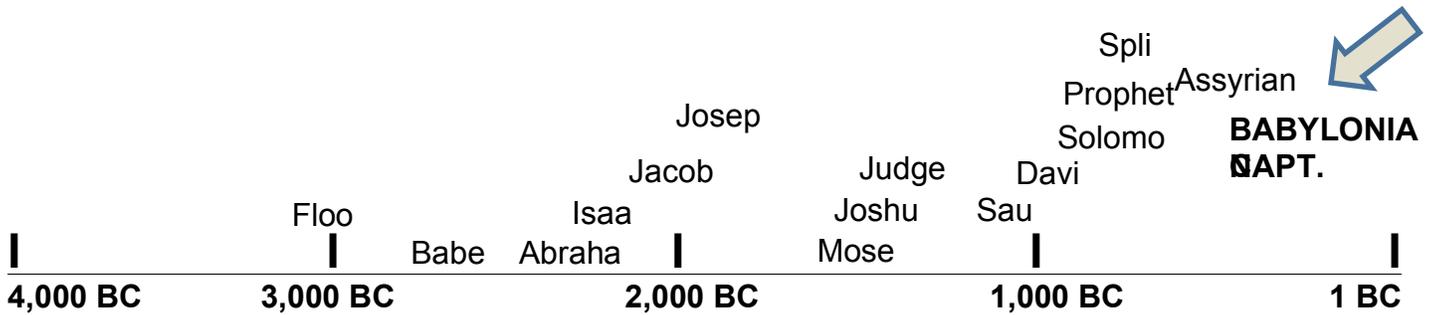
MAIN PEOPLE: Daniel, Hanannah, Azariah, Mishael

BOOKS OF THE BIBLE: Daniel. Ezekiel

BIBLE VERSE: Daniel 6:10-11 Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

TIME: 605 - 536 BC

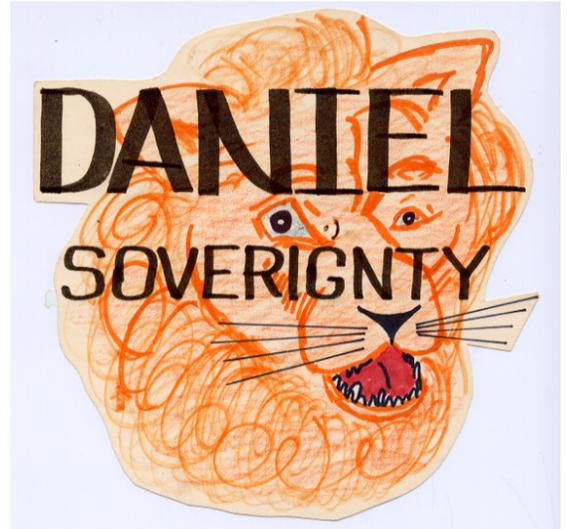
GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION: Palestine, Babylon



The man Daniel is special enough to be remembered in our Bible overview. He lived in Babylon during the time the Jews were taken there in captivity. He was a great man of prayer, of faithfulness, and received many wonderful revelations from God. He was taken to Babylon in 605 BC (Daniel 1:1-6). He lived a life bringing glory to God. Ezekiel was also in Babylon at this time, having been taken there in 597 BC.

This was another sad stage in our overview, but one which God used to bring His people, at least some of them, back to Him. It is similar to the time they went into captivity in Egypt. Neither would have to happen had they stayed faithful and obedient to God.

DANIEL: SOVEREIGNTY



TITLE: "Daniel" = "God is my Judge"

AUTHOR: Daniel

DATE of WRITING: 605 - 525 BC

PLACE of WRITING: Babylon

TIME COVERED: 80 yrs (605-525 BC)

RECIPIENTS: Jews in Babylon

KEY VERSE: 7:13-18 *"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples,*

nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. "I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me. I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this. "So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: 'The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever-- yes, for ever and ever.'

KEY WORDS: "king" 183 times; "kingdom" 55 times; "Daniel" 74 times

PURPOSE: To show God's greatness and plan for the future

THEME: God's sovereignty over nations and peoples

OUTLINE OF DANIEL

I. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER GENTILES 1-7

- A. Faithful Few (Daniel is 15 years old) 1
- B. Fantastic Figure (Daniel is 18 years old) 2
- C. Fiery Furnace (Daniel is 20 years old) 3
- D. Fallen Fiend (Daniel is 76 years old) 4
- E. Forecasting Fingers (Daniel is 86 years old) 5
- F. Finagling Foes (Daniel is 93 years old) 6
- G. Frightening Fauna (Daniel is 53 years old) 7

II. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER JEWS 8-12

- A. Vision of the Beasts (Daniel is 54 years old) 8
- B. Vision of the Weeks (Daniel is 94 years old) 9
- C. Vision of Israel's Foes and future (Daniel is 95 years old) 10-12
 - 1. Satan's Opposition 10
 - 2. Antichrist's Opposition 11
 - 3. Israel's Deliverance 12

MEET DANIEL

Suppose tonight your country was attacked and defeated, and the victorious enemies took you from your family to their capital to serve them. What would you think? How would you feel? What would you do? That's exactly what happened to Daniel. He was taken from Jerusalem to Babylon when He was 14 when Judah was defeated (Daniel 1:1-2).

INTO CAPTIVITY (14 years old) The name, Daniel, means "God is his judge." His godly parents brought him up in the faith of the Lord. The northern kingdom, Israel, had long ago fallen to Assyria. Many in the south (Judah) thought that would never happen to them. His parents thought differently and prepared him for it. Still, how does one prepare for losing their family, friends, home land -- everything they have? He knew God was sovereign and still in control of all, that's what he rested his hope on.

KING'S TRAINING PROGRAM (15 years old) Daniel was chosen to be put into a special training program to serve the King of Babylon. It was a great opportunity to live a good life instead of dying young from overwork as a slave. Anyone would have jumped at the chance, and he thanked God for it, but there was a catch. He would have to disobey God's law and eat non-kosher food. Even though He knew He could be sent out to toil as a slave, He refused to eat. The end does not justify the means. He would be faithful, God would take care of the consequences if He desired. Praise be to God, He chose to prosper him and honor his stand. Glory to His name!

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM (18 years old) Soon another problem presented itself. Nebuchadnezzar, the king, had an awful dream. He wouldn't tell his advisors what it was for he knew they'd make up with some interpretation to please him. He could only know they had supernaturally received an interpretation if they also received the dream itself. Of course, none of them could know the dream, so he decided to kill them all! By His grace, God revealed the dream and its meaning to Daniel and he passed it on to the king, making sure God got all the glory for it! The dream was of a large statue whose gold head stood for Babylon, silver chest for Medo-Persia, bronze thighs for Greece and iron legs for Rome. It was an outline of world history.

IDOL WORSHIP (20 years old) Nebuchadnezzar was so impressed by the dream he decided to make it all apply to himself. In his pride he built a golden statue and had everyone worship it. Daniel was away on assignment, so his friends Hannaniah, Azariah and Mishael had to decide what to do. To refuse to worship meant death. They refused to worship and were to be thrown into a fiery furnace. They knew God was able to deliver them, but they didn't know if that was His will for them or not. It was, and they were protected from the flames. All that happened was that the ropes that bound them were burnt away. Praise God for His sovereign control!

VISION # 1 (53 years old) Many years later God gave Daniel more details about the coming world empires from his day to the end. Instead of a statue God used animals to describe characteristics of the coming kingdoms: lion for Babylon, bear for Media-Persia, leopard for Greece and beast for Rome (Daniel 7). God's sovereign control over history future was clearly revealed (1 Chronicles 29:11). "Our God is in heaven, He does whatever pleases Him" (Psalm 115:3). We can't understand all about Him and what He does (Isaiah 55:8), it is all by His sovereign choice (Revelation 4:11). He controls the angels, nature, history past, present and future and all mankind.

VISION # 2 (54 years old) Shortly after, God gave him many more details about the middle two empires, the ones soon coming (Daniel 8). Those were the ones he was most interested in. A ram (Medo-Persia) and goat (Greece) were used in this vision. The focus was more on their enemies, preparing them for what would come. Alexander the Great and Antiochus Epiphanes were prophesied and many details given. God is in control of nations, even each individual in each nation. Daniel was greatly humbled by this, as anyone who thought about God must be humbled.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR HUMBLLED (76 years old) Not everyone was humbled by God's sovereign control, though. Nebuchadnezzar was very prideful and arrogant, taking credit for great Babylon as if he had done it without God's help! God warned him (Daniel 4:29-34) but he refused to humble himself, so God allowed him to live and act like an animal for seven years until he turned to God for help and deliverance. God healed and restored him, and then he gave all the credit and glory to God!

HANDWRITING ON THE WALL (86 years old) Before too long, though, Belshazzar replaced his father Nebuchadnezzar as king. He, too, was very proud and mocked God. He blasphemed God by using utensils from God's temple in Jerusalem for a pagan orgy. God wrote on the wall that judgment was coming (Daniel 5). No one could read it, so Daniel was sent for to interpret it for them. The prophecy was fulfilled that very night when Darius and his Medo-Persian army entered the complacent city and took over Babylon's kingdom.

LION'S DEN (93 years old) Darius was just as proud and self-sufficient as the rulers before him had been, so it was easy to trick him into signing a law stating that only he could be worshipped. When Daniel refused to worship him and was therefore condemned to death, Darius realized his pride had tricked him but it was too late. He couldn't save himself, but God could. Even among many starving lions he was safe for he was under God's sovereign control as if he'd have been safely sleeping in his own bed. Darius recognized God's total control over everything through this and worshipped Him. He wanted everyone in his kingdom to worship his God, too.

VISION # 3 (94 years old) Daniel had been praying to God about the future things He had revealed to him, asking for more details and information. He knew the Jews could leave Babylon after 70 years of captivity (Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10). What then? God told him their future would consist of 70 7-year periods. The first 483 years will be from when they can return to Jerusalem until when the Messiah is rejected (Daniel 9). Then after a gap of undetermined time will be one final 7-year period before the Messiah returns to set Himself up on David's throne forever. What a God! "Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord is the Rock eternal" (Isaiah 26:4).

VISION # 4 (95 years old) After 3 weeks of praying and fasting about these things the Lord had been showing him, God gave him one more vision. The angel messenger sent with the answer to Daniel's prayer was held up by Satan's forces (Daniel 10). Angel reinforcements came to give victory in this spiritual battle in the heavenlies. God gave Daniel more information about the future, especially about the coming Antichrist and the battle of Armageddon.

God is totally in control of everything. "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:37-38).

His message to you is that no matter what happens, trust God. Eli said, "He is the Lord; let Him do what is good in His eyes" (1 Samuel 3:18). Job stated, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised" (Job 1:21). Jesus Himself said, "Not My will but Thy will be done." He taught them to pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done." Make that your prayer, too. Rest in God's sovereign control over everything and everyone. No matter what, trust in Him. "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; He makes my feet like the feet of a deer. He enables me to go on the heights" (Habakkuk 3:17-19).

EZEKIEL: GOD'S GLORY

TITLE: After prophet who wrote it

AUTHOR: Ezekiel ("God will Strengthen")

DATE of WRITING: 592 to 570 BC

PLACE of WRITING: Judea & Babylon

TIME COVERED: 592 to 570 BC - 22 years

RECIPIENTS: Jews, esp those in Babylon

KEY VERSE: *36:17-19, 24-28 "Son of man, when the people of Israel were living in their own land, they defiled it by their conduct and their actions. Their conduct was like a woman's monthly uncleanness in my sight. So I poured out my wrath on them because they had shed blood in the land and because they had defiled it with their idols. I dispersed them among the nations, and they were scattered through the countries; I judged them according to their conduct and their actions. ... "For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God.*

KEY WORDS: "You shall know I am the Lord" (70 times); "Son of Man" (79 times)

PURPOSE: to show God judges sin but will one day restore Israel and fill them with His glory

THEME: the Glory of God is gone, but will one day return

God has revealed His glory in the vast complexities of the universe and the minute complexities of cells, atoms and DNA. All this is to help us see what a great God He is (Psalm 19:1; Revelation 4:11) so we will better trust and praise Him (Psalm 8:1). Everything He does reveals His glory. Even having His people being defeated and taken into captivity shows His glory. If His people don't show His greatness by their serving Him, they will show it by their being disciplined by Him. The purpose of their capture by Babylon was to show them the seriousness of their sin and have them turn their hearts back to Him, the same purpose as the tribulation. Through Ezekiel, God reveals truths beyond the current misery to the new closeness between God and His people that will one day result. It often takes pain and suffering for us to turn to God and see His misery. It's better for us to see it before that, for it is clearly seen throughout nature and life, but often we have to come to that point to see it. That's the message of Ezekiel.

GOD'S GLORY SEEN BY JUDAH'S FALL (before the siege of Jerusalem, 595-587 BC - chapters 1-24) God reveals glimpses of His glory in the book of Ezekiel similar to what is in Revelation and what Ezekiel's contemporary Daniel saw. There are elaborate visions full of exotic creatures and scenes of angels assigned to guard God's holiness. All this is to reflect God's sovereign majesty and holiness. Through words and actions, Ezekiel was to warn the people that a holy God would judge their sin. If they didn't recognize and reflect His glory in their obedience to Him, they would in their discipline by Him.



GOD'S GLORY SEEN BY JUDAH'S FOES (during the siege of Jerusalem, 586 BC - chapters 25-32) God not only judges His people, He judges all who do not glorify Him. Judgment starts with God's people first (1 Peter 4:17). However it doesn't end there. The Ammonites, Moabites and Edomites are judged for taking pleasure in seeing Judah fall, and for their refusal to serve God. Tyre, Sidon and Egypt are also to be judged.

GOD'S GLORY SEEN BY JUDAH'S FUTURE (after the siege of Jerusalem, 585-570 BC - chapters 33-48) Now that Jerusalem has fallen, it is time to look to the future and to better times ahead. God always offers hope during times of darkness. Sin has consequences, but God's glory is always there to see us through it. Through Ezekiel God points to the time when the Jews will be restored to the land (33:1-14), a prophecy being fulfilled during our lifetime. Then will come a time of spiritual revival and renewal, of rebuilding the Temple and worshipping God in spirit and in truth. These are future for us, taking place during the coming tribulation time. Then in the millennium which will follow the tribulation all will worship God and give Him the glory due Him, the glory which His people should have given Him throughout history. There is a day coming when the whole earth will recognize God's glory and He Himself will again dwell with His people on earth.

GOD'S GLORY SEEN BY YOU AND ME We, today, are to bring glory to God by all we do (1 Corinthians 6:20; Romans 9:23). That is the reason God created us (Psalm 96:7-8; 2 Chronicles 16:28-29). Man today glorifies man instead of God (Romans 1:25).

How are we to glorify God? By appreciating all He has done for us and recognizing our own insufficiency and unworthiness (1 Corinthians 1:29-31), by living a holy life in obedience to Him (John 15:8; 1 Corinthians 10:31) and by worshipping and praising Him (Psalm 50:23; 89:12; 91:1) we bring glory to Him. He is worthy of all glory (Romans 11:36; 16:27; Galatians 1:5; 1 Timothy 1:17; Ephesians 3:21). Forever. Amen!

OUTLINE OF EZEKIEL

I. GOD'S GLORY SEEN BY JUDAH'S FALL 1-24

Before the Siege of Jerusalem 592-587 BC

- A. Judgment Decided 1-3
- B. Judgment Demonstrated (by Symbols) 4-5
- C. Judgment Declared (by Sermons) 6-7
- D. Judgment Demanded (by Visions) 12-19
- E. Judgment Deserved 20-24

II. GOD'S GLORY SEEN BY JUDAH'S FOES 25-32

During the Siege of Jerusalem 586 BC

Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, Egypt

III. GOD'S GLORY SEEN BY JUDAH'S FUTURE 33-48

After the Siege of Jerusalem 585-570 BC

- A. New Shepherd for Israel 33-36
- B. New Life for Israel 37-39
- C. New Temple for Israel 40-43
- D. New Worship for Israel 44-48

BIBLE OVERVIEW

20. EZRA

(RETURN)

MAIN EVENTS: Jews return to Israel

MAIN PEOPLE: Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah,

BOOKS OF THE BIBLE: Ezra, Esther, Haggai, Zechariah, Nehemiah, Malachi

BIBLE VERSE: *Ezra 7:6 Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.*

Esther 4:15-16 Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

TIME: 550 BC

WORLD EVENTS AT THIS TIME:

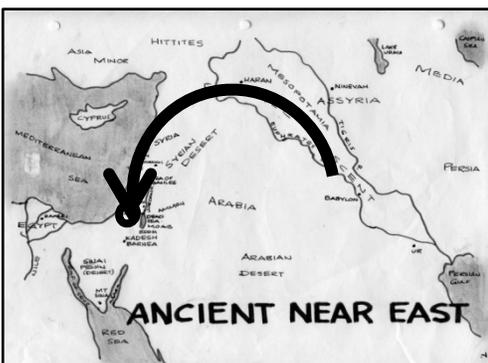
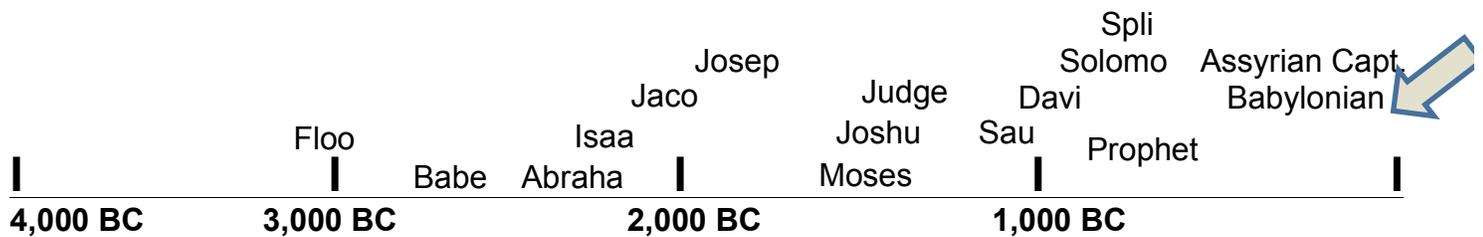
Buddhism was founded in India by Siddhartha Gautama

Jainism was founded in India by Mahavira Jains

Persia captures Pakistan

Confucius in China

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION: Babylon, Palestine



When the seventy years of captivity in Babylon were over, God allowed some of the Jews to return home from Babylon, as prophesied by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 25:12; 29:10). Some returned under Zerubbabel, some later with Ezra and others still later with Nehemiah. However the vast majority of Jews choose to stay and enjoy the prosperity they were experiencing in Babylon instead of returning to the place of God's will for them, the Promised Land. Those who returned had been cured from idolatry and were faithful to God. Their faith and trust in God was deepened and they were willing to endure the harder living conditions in the land in order to be faithful to God. There was much work to do in rebuilding the Temple, then the walls of the city. They endured many problems from within their own ranks as well

as threats and persecution from the Gentiles living around them, but they endured. Even so, there were many who didn't stay faithful to God but wandered into sin. God sent godly men to warn them and turn them back to Him, as He had been doing since the very beginning.

MEET NEHEMIAH

His name is Nehemiah. He was a leader of the Jews. Some people think being a leader is hard. It's really quite easy. All you need is inexhaustible patience, unflinching insight, unshakable stability, unbreakable will, decisive judgment, indefatigable physique, irrepressible spirit and unfeigned affection for all people. Nehemiah didn't have that. But God helped him with it.

If you are a leader, perhaps there's something you can learn from him. If you have a job, a family or a friend, then you are a leader. A leader is someone who knows where he is going and how to get others to follow him. Being a leader is something you **ARE**, not something you **DO**. It's a function, not a title conferred by others. That's the way it was for him.

Nehemiah lived in Babylon after Jerusalem fell to Babylon. This story starts in Babylon, 100 years before Nehemiah was born. **ZERUBBABEL**, grandson of the 2nd last king of Judah (Jehoiachin), led the first group of Jews back to Jerusalem. Not many wanted to return, though - about one of every hundred. Most didn't want to leave the prosperity and good living in Babylon to return to a depressed and ruined country. Of course some, like Daniel (who was in his 60's) were too old to go back.

When Zerubbabel led his group of 15,000 back, God provided Haggai and Zechariah to preach while he led work on rebuilding the temple. They didn't get too far, though, before they stopped for 20 years. Then they finished their work.

It was during this time that Hadassah, better known to you as **ESTHER**, was used by God to preserve the Jews from annihilation not only in Persia but also in Palestine.

Eighty-five years after Zerubbabel, **EZRA** led another group of people back to Jerusalem. He was a great-grandson of the man who was the high priest when Jerusalem fell. He was the equivalent of the Secretary of State for Jewish affairs. Ezra was a godly scholar who knew the Old Testament by heart. He wrote the books of Ezra, Chronicles and Psalm 119 as well as finishing books such as Deuteronomy and Joshua. Ezra edited the whole Old Testament, changing it over to the square Hebrew script which is still used today. He also started the synagogue system which your church and school systems are built upon. The synagogue system kept the Jews together when they were away from their temple. Ezra also developed the Sanhedrin, 70 top men to govern Jews in and out of the land.

Only 1,500 men followed him back. He taught the Bible and persevered in trying to encourage them to follow God. He didn't get much good response, though.

Fifteen years later the spotlight switched to **NEHEMIAH**. His story starts in 445 BC. He was born in Babylon. His grandparents had been taken into captivity at the fall of Jerusalem. He was a top advisor to the king, Artaxerxes. God used him in some very unexpected ways. There are some clear leadership lessons we can learn from Nehemiah's life.

A leader is a person who prays. When he heard about the terrible conditions in Jerusalem Nehemiah prayed for God to send someone to help the people -- and wouldn't you know it, God sent him! (Nehemiah 1:1-4) God used him because he spent so much time in prayer with Him.

A leader is a person who prepares. When he finally got to Jerusalem he found everyone there was discouraged and very pessimistic (Nehemiah 2:11-12). It seemed hopeless. He patiently gathered as much firsthand information as he could, prayed about it, talked with some trusted advisors and made some long-range plans. To carry them out he had to detail short-range goals and

all that would be necessary to accomplish the needed work (Nehemiah 2:4-8). When the time was right he shared his plans with others, motivating and encouraging them to follow (Nehemiah 2:17-18). He had delegated work so everyone had a specific assignment to carry out. When the enemy was about to attack to stop them they kept working and didn't give in to fear (Nehemiah 4:3-9). Nehemiah prayed, trusting God to protect them, but he also posed a guard. It takes prayer and work to be a good leader: pray as if all depends on God and work as if all depends on him.

A leader is a person who perseveres. Food shortages forced poor people to have to sell their children to the rich so they could have money to feed their other children. Money was lent at a high rate, with 50% inflation. A leader must contend with internal problems, which are often more difficult to handle than attacks from without. Nehemiah had to take action about these difficulties, so he did. He did what was necessary, even though it wasn't popular. He stood for the right (Nehemiah 5:9-11)

Even when the enemy attacks intensified he didn't let them intimidate him or distract the work. Not even threats of assassination stopped him (Nehemiah 6:1-4). A leader can't be influenced by fear!

A leader is a person who purges. He needed to remove sin and evil from among them. Ezra was still preaching, and God used his words to start a revival. Lives were changed and people started obeying the Bible.

Later Nehemiah went back to Babylon for a very short visit and when he returned he found more purging had to be done, for the people had quickly returned to their sinning. Praying, preparing, persevering and purging are ongoing duties of a godly leader. They aren't always enjoyable, but they are certainly necessary! Which of these do you need to work harder at? Set some goals and start today. You don't have any option about being a leader -- you are one. But it is up to you what kind of a leader you are!

EZRA: RETURN

TITLE: After the chief character, Ezra

AUTHOR: Ezra (priest)

DATE of WRITING: 456 BC

PLACE of WRITING: Jerusalem

TIME COVERED: 81 years (538 - 457 BC)

RECIPIENTS: Jews after the captivity

KEY VERSE: *Ezra 7:6-10 This Ezra came up from Babylon. He was a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses, which the LORD, the God of Israel, had given. The king had granted him everything he asked, for the hand of the LORD his God was on him.*

Some of the Israelites, including priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers and temple servants, also came up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes. Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in the fifth month of the seventh year of the king. He had begun his journey from Babylon on the first day of the first month, and he arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month, for the gracious hand of his God was on him. For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.

KEY WORD: "Go Up/Went Up" "Jerusalem" (47 times)

PURPOSE: To show the history of Israel as they return from captivity and get re-established.

THEME: The importance of returning to God when away from Him.



King Richard III went out walking one night among his army. There he found a guard fast asleep at his post. Promptly he took a knife and stabbed him in the heart. He pinned a note to him which said, "I found him asleep and I left him so." It's a good thing our King doesn't do that to His subjects when they fall asleep spiritually! He tries to bring them back to alertness. The book of Ezra illustrates this spiritual truth.

RESTORATION The book opens with the Jews in captivity for their idolatry. Still God is faithfully working for them. This discipline has kept them from ever returning to idolatry since then. God blessed them materially. Previous to this time they were farmers and shepherds, but in Babylon they learned to be business men and bankers, trades they still excel in. God was working in the hearts of godly leaders as well as in King Cyrus to allow them to return. Like the father of the prodigal son, He lovingly looks for their return. He is the 'God of the Second Chance'.

When Zerubbabel sent out a call to return to the land, only 50,000 Jews answered. This was a very small percentage of those in Babylon. The majority didn't want to leave their newly-found prosperity. It was God's will for His people to live in the land He gave them, but they chose staying in the world. Only a very committed godly minority returned. Out of all mankind, it is always only a small minority which accept Jesus' free gift of salvation. And it is only a small minority of that group that then go on to put Jesus first in daily life and live as a disciple of His.

Upon arriving back in the land, Zerubbabel started rebuilding the temple. The Samaritans opposed this, so the work stopped for 15 years. Haggai and Zechariah preached during this time. When the temple finally was rebuilt it was so inferior to Solomon's Temple that those who remembered the former wept.

ESTHER Between Ezra 6 and 7 is a gap of 58 years, during which the events in the book of Esther took place.

REFORMATION Eighty years after Zerubbabel, Ezra came on the scene. He led a second group back to the land. Ezra was a priest and scribe (copied the Bible by hand). He reputedly knew the whole Old Testament by heart and was a very committed believer. He founded the Sanhedrin to decide cases and give guidance to the Jews worldwide. He instituted the synagogue system which held the Jews together while away from the temple. It was a place of teaching, worship, fellowship and community activities. The church today is based on the synagogue. Ezra also wrote 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Psalm 119. He edited the whole Old Testament, gathering the inspired books and forming them into the Old Testament as we have it today. He made sure all was perfect, in groups and order, edited and updated. In doing so he replaced the old Hebrew script with the newer, square Assyrian characters, which are still in use today. God chose Ezra because of His deep Bible knowledge. He studied, practiced and taught it (Ezra 7:10). The Bible is the key to returning to God, not emotional appeals, guilt, etc. When God's people no longer have an appetite for God's Word, it is a sign that revival is needed. Loss of appetite is a sign of sickness. Ezra fed himself and others a good, balanced diet of God's Word.

Only 1,514 able men volunteered to return with him. After 4 months of travel they arrived at Jerusalem, only to find the people had again turned from God. The sin of intermarrying unbelievers led the people from God. The unbelieving wives had to be sent home. Then the people turned back to God. Sin brings sorrow!

Return 1: Zerubbabel 536 BC

Return 2: Ezra 458 BC

Return 3: Nehemiah 445 BC

OUTLINE OF EZRA

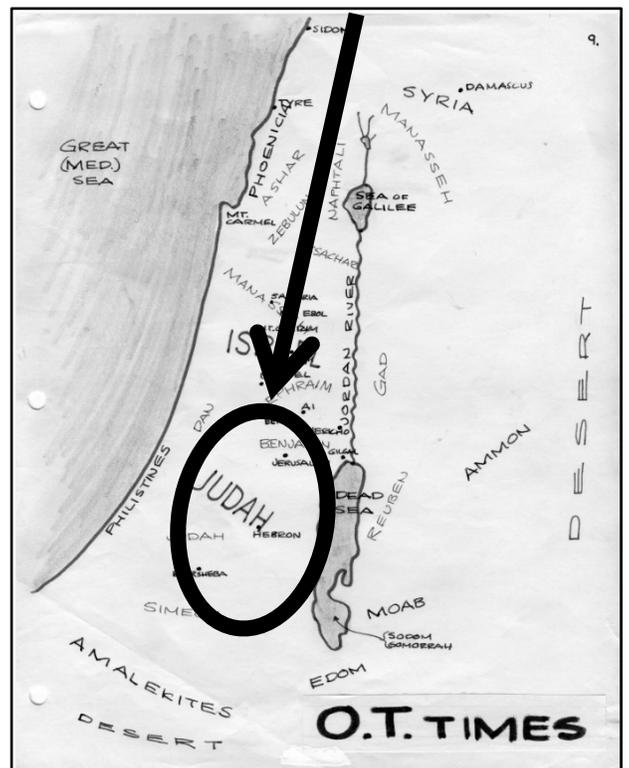
I. RESTORATION (Zerubbabel, 538-516 BC) 1-6

- A. Rebuilding the People of God 1-3
 - 1. The Restoration 1
 - 2. The Registration 2
 - 3. The Reconstruction 3
- B. Rebuilding the Temple of God 4-6
 - 1. The Resistance 4
 - 2. The Reapproval 5
 - 3. The Rededication 6

(BOOK OF ESTHER 483-473 BC)

II. REFORMATION (Ezra, 458-457) 7-10

- A. Rebuilding the Priesthood of God 7-8
 - 1. The Restoration 7
 - 2. The Registration 8
 - 3. The Return
- B. Rebuilding the Worship of God 9-10



ESTHER: PROVIDENTIAL CARE

TITLE: After the main character

AUTHOR: Unknown (possibly Mordecai)

DATE of WRITING: About 473 BC

PLACE of WRITING: Shushan, Babylon

TIME COVERED: 10 years (483 - 473 BC)

(Took place during the middle of the book of Ezra)

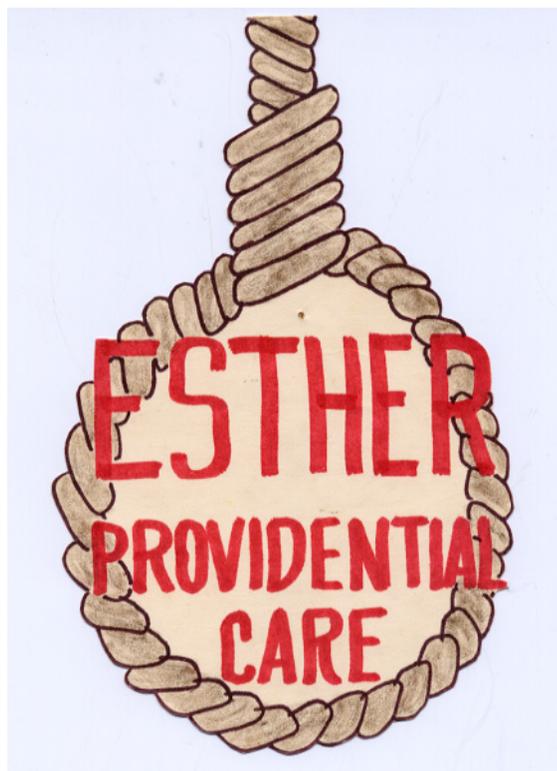
RECIPIENTS: Jews dispersed in Persian Empire.

KEY VERSE: *4:14 For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"*

KEY WORD: The Jews (51 times); also Jew and Feast

PURPOSE: To study how all the Jews were saved from extermination by Esther

THEME: God's providential care



One day a Christian man had an orchard of thousands of trees. His whole family depended on it for food. One morning he found half-grown apples being destroyed by strange worms. Every tree was affected. The family gathered and prayed, then spent the whole day picking off worms, but they multiplied far faster than they could be picked. Weary from working all day at top speed and desperate, they prayed and went to sleep. Early the next morning they started to see hundreds of strange birds landing on the trees. They stayed all day eating worms but never hurt the trees or apples. They spent three days there, then left. All the worms were gone and the crop was saved. Coincidence? No way. Our sovereign God was in control of the whole thing. He cares for and provides for His own. Unfortunately we forget about that. When we do, we should read the book of Esther!

DANGER TO GOD'S PEOPLE (Esther 1 - 3) A sordid story unfolds (Esther 1) in the first chapter of Esther. The scene is the great Persian city of Shushan. After a series of banquets (really great drunken orgies) King Ahasuerus (Xerxes in secular history) commands his queen, Vashti, to provide the entertainment for the grand finale. Because of her own standards of modesty, she refused and was banished from the kingdom forever. Therefore the king began a world-wide search for a new queen.

A Jew named Mordecai, who had a minor job at the palace, entered his cousin (who he was raising) in the contest and she won! Now it must be noted that the Jews were not to remain in Persia. They should have returned with Ezra or Nehemiah, but didn't want to leave the prosperity and fine living in Persia for the poverty and difficulties of Jerusalem. Thus they were out of God's will. As a result there is no mention of God's name, prayer or sacrifices in the book of Esther. Still, God keeps His promises to protect His people.

After Esther is made queen Mordecai overheard a plot to kill the king, told Esther, and she reported it (Esther 3). The plot was stopped and the king saved. That's all part of God's plan.

The plot thickens when Haman, the prime minister and favorite of the king, pushes through legislation to have all the Jews in the kingdom killed. His hatred for Mordecai, who won't bow to him,

makes him miserable. That sets the scene for God's deliverance. He uses Esther to save her race and influence her stepson Artaxerxes to allow Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls.

DELIVERANCE OF GOD'S PEOPLE (Esther 4 - 10) When Mordecai hears about the plot to destroy all Jews he is really upset and sends word to Esther, asking her to intercede for her people, even though it may mean her death. To speak out to the king was forbidden, and to reveal that she was a Jew could also mean her death. However she courageously does so, inviting the king and Haman to a banquet she would have just for them (Esther 5).

Meanwhile Haman is miserable because of his hatred of Mordecai. His wife says he will feel better if he builds a large scaffold and anticipates his killing of Mordecai, so he has it built.

One night the king had a hard time sleeping (one of those little things that God uses in a big way). He read from his histories and discovered Mordecai's work in saving his life, and the next day finds out that Mordecai was never rewarded for it. He determines to take care of this.

When prideful, self-centered Haman comes to work the next day the king asks him which he thinks the king should do to honor a man he deeply appreciates. Thinking the king is referring to him, Haman lays out his own prideful dreams of glory and honor, only to find out the king meant it for his enemy Mordecai -- and he had to be the one to honor Mordecai! Talk about a bad day at the office!

Later that day, when Haman showed up for the banquet with Esther and the king, she revealed his legislation to destroy all Jews. The king was furious at how he was tricked and left the room to get control of his anger. Haman fell upon Esther begging her for mercy, and when the king entered he thought Haman was attacking Esther. He had Haman killed immediately on his own gallows! Not only that, but the Jews were allowed to kill those who wanted to destroy them. In addition, Mordecai was elevated to Haman's job as top advisor to the king! Talk about a happy ending!

Even today the Jews celebrate this important deliverance as the Feast of Purim. They give gifts, eat together, and children reenact the events in the book of Esther (similar to the way we celebrate Christmas). Truly this is a wonderful reminder of God's sovereignty and His providential care of His people, even those who are out of His will. What a great God we have!

OUTLINE OF ESTHER

I. DANGER TO GOD'S PEOPLE (Trial) 1-3

- A. Divorce of Vashti 1
- B. Discovery of Esther 2
- C. Devotion of Mordecai 2
- D. Decree of Haman 3

II. DELIVERANCE OF GOD'S PEOPLE (Trust & Triumph) 4-10

- A. Depression of Mordecai 4
- B. Decision of Esther 5
- C. Determination of Haman
- D. Defeat of Haman 6-7
- E. Decree of Ahasuerus 8
- F. Delivery of Israel 9a
- G. Days of Purim 9b
- H. Dignity of Mordecai 10

NEHEMIAH: RENEWAL



TITLE: After the main character

AUTHOR: Nehemiah

DATE of WRITING: About 420 BC

PLACE of WRITING: Jerusalem

TIME COVERED: 30 years (445-415 BC)

RECIPIENTS: Returned Jews

KEY VERSE: *1:1-7 Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem. They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire." When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.*

KEY WORD: Walls (32 times) Build (23 times)

PURPOSE: Tell how the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt under Nehemiah

THEME: Steps to Renewal/revival

What comes to mind when someone uses the word "revival"? Do you think of a series of special meetings, of loud and emotional preaching? Webster's says it is the stirring of religious faith among the indifferent characterized by public confession of sin and profession of renewed faith. Basically, revival means to bring back to life. "Re" means to do again, "vive" means life. It refers to bringing something BACK to life which had been alive. Therefore revival basically refers to bringing God's people who have drifted back to a fresh closeness to Him. It is different than evangelism which appeals to unbelievers to make a first-time commitment. Salvation can't be lost, but we can become cold and in need of renewing. Periodically through history God has sparked revivals which have brought His people back to Him. One was during the time of Nehemiah.

BACKGROUND Ezra had led a small remnant of Jews back to their homeland, the majority preferring to stay in the opulence of Babylon. Fifteen years later word came to Nehemiah that things were still in bad shape in the land (Nehemiah 1). It wasn't his fault, and there didn't seem to be anything he could do from 1500 miles away. Still...

1. Revival begins with one devoted believer. Nehemiah turned to God in prayer and fasting and sincerely called upon the Lord. He confessed his sin and the sins of his people. He totally committed himself to God to be used in any way necessary. God worked in Artaxertes' heart to let him return and give him needed supplies. Nehemiah was allowed to return to Jerusalem.

2. Revival spreads to a few ready ones first. Any good fire needs two things: a hot spark and then some kindling ready to catch fire. Nehemiah was the spark, and the first thing he did in Jerusalem was to find a few good men who were open and ready for God to work. He surveyed the situation and gathered facts before acting, then spread his vision to a few he felt were ready. You can't expect all the green wood to catch right away, only wood that is dry and ready catches right away. It takes a good core group to start a revival, then the spark spreads. Pretty soon others caught the vision and before long they were rebuilding the walls.

3. There must be unity among believers for revival to spread. Nehemiah organized the people to work on the walls, each one working near his own home. However, as is to be expected, enemies opposed. The people pulled together, though. Unity is important for a revival to spread. Disunity, unforgiveness, bitterness, jealousy, etc., can pour water on a revival fire before it really gets going.

4. Revival must be based on knowing God's Word. Nehemiah got the people together and Ezra read and taught God's word all morning. They liked it so much they asked if he'd do that in the afternoon, too. As a result they humbled themselves and worshipped God. They wanted to come back the next day for more! An

appetite for God's Word is a necessary sign for revival. Not only did they learn it, but they obeyed it, putting into practice what they learned.

5. Revival means confessing sins in prayer. The people automatically prayed and confessed their sins (Nehemiah 9), acknowledging His majesty and past help for them. Prayer, starting with confession of sin, is a must for revival.

6. Revival leads to publicly showing a renewed commitment. The people responded to Ezra's teaching by ratifying their covenant with God. They officially promised to follow God only. Publicly the Jews promised (Nehemiah 10) to not marry unbelievers, worship God on the Sabbath, pay their tithes and help provide for the temple and its priests and Levites.

7. Revival results in changed lives. As a result of this people moved back into Jerusalem and it as well as other cities thrived and prospered. The walls and city of Jerusalem were dedicated to God. Malachi ministered during this time, too.

8. To be the real thing, the results must be lasting. For 12 years things continued well under Nehemiah and Ezra's leadership. Then Nehemiah had to return to Babylon and, when he returned a year later, the promises they made had been broken. They had married unbelieving wives and weren't properly caring for God's temple. Before long they again responded to Nehemiah's and Ezra's call to renewal and revival came again.

This ended Old Testament history. After 400 silent (no Bible books were written, but the Maccabees lived during this time) John the Baptist came on the scene, preparing the way for the Messiah. With that the New Testament began -- and another call to revival. Where do you stand? Are you in need of renewing? Is your spiritual life on fire and vibrant, or does it need to be revived? Follow the steps Nehemiah and, if God wills, you'll have revival beginning in those around you.

OUTLINE OF NEHEMIAH

I. RENEWED WALLS (Civil Reform) 1-7

- A. Return to Jerusalem 1-2
- B. Rebuilding the Walls 3-6
- C. Regathering the People 7

II. RENEWED COVENANT (Religious Reform) 8-10

- A. Reading the Law 8
- B. Response of the People
- C. Repentance of the People 9
- D. Ratification of the Covenant 10

III. RENEWED NATION (Political Reform) 11-13

- A. Repopulating the Cities 11-12
- B. Rededicating the Walls
- C. Reviving the People 13

HAGGAI: PRIORITIES



TITLE: After prophet who wrote it

AUTHOR: Haggai ("My Feast")

DATE of WRITING: August to December, 520 BC

PLACE of WRITING: Jerusalem

TIME COVERED: Aug-Dec, 520 BC

RECIPIENTS: Returned from captivity

KEY VERSE: 1:4 *"Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?"*

2:9 *'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the LORD Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the LORD Almighty."*

KEY WORD: "The Lord's House" (8 times) "Consider" (5 times)

PURPOSE: to encourage the people to rebuild the temple

THEME: God must be our number one priority

Have you ever started something you didn't finish? That happens to everyone. What causes it? We may lose interest or motivation or just not have enough time, but I think there is a reason behind these. I think it's because we change our priorities. We no longer see it as important as we once did. Unfortunately many good things in life don't get done for this very reason. They may be important in our mind, but unless we make them a top priority in our time commitments they won't get accomplished. Knowing the importance of learning the Bible means nothing unless we make spending time reading and studying it a priority.

ENTER HAGGAI Haggai found this same thing true of the Jews after they returned from captivity. Haggai lived during the time of Ezra, 14 years after the Jews started returning to Palestine from Babylon. They had started rebuilding the temple by laying its foundations, but never finished it. Haggai calls the people to finish what they started for God.

CALL TO REBUILD (1) The people were making excuses as to why they hadn't finished the building. The people made excuses: too busy and no time for God's house. Their priorities were wrong. Their lives were showing the results of wrong priorities: dissatisfaction and frustration. They worked hard but found no real joy. Zerubbabel (the governor) and Joshua (the high priest) led the people in repentance and the work on the temple was resumed.

CALL TO BEHOLD (2:1-9) Seven weeks later, when the temple was almost completed, the older people started becoming discouraged because it was so grossly inferior to Solomon's temple which they still remembered (but which the Babylonians had destroyed). Haggai says they are not to live in the past (it won't return) and not to compare what they have with what God has given others. God's people aren't in competition with each other -- a good message for churches today. Outer appearances don't tell the whole story by any means. God looks at man's heart, not the size of his buildings. God focuses on eternal values, not earthly things.

CALL TO BEHAVE (2:10-19) Two months after the second sermon Haggai gave a third sermon, warning the people about focusing on the outer functions and rituals of their faith while their hearts stayed hard and far from God. They were just going through the motions of playing 'church.' Haggai challenges them to learn from the past, for this hypocrisy is what caused them to go into captivity in the first place. Again they repented and put God first.

CALL TO BELIEVE (2:20-23) Later that same day Haggai's fourth recorded sermon was given. He encouraged them to keep their gaze on the future and live each day in light of it. That is the only way to have correct priorities today. He talked about when the Messiah will come to rule and reign in Israel. Keeping our eyes on eternal things is the only way to have right priorities today.

How do you determine your priorities? What are your lifetime goals (what do you want to be or do during your lifetime)? In order to accomplish them, what must you do in the next year? Now, what must you be doing each day in order to accomplish those goals?

GOAL AREA	WHAT I WANT TO BE OR ACCOMPLISH DURING MY LIFE	WHAT I NEED TO DO NOW IN ORDER TO MEET THIS GOAL
SPIRITUAL	1. 2.	1. 2.
ACADEMIC & CAREER	1. 2.	1. 2.
RELATIONSHIPS	1. 2.	1. 2.

OUTLINE OF HAGGAI

I. CALL TO BUILD (Sermon 1: Construction of Temple) 1:1-15

- A. Reprimand from God 1:1-6
- B. Remedy from God 1:7-8
- C. Rebuke from God 1:9-11
- D. Reaction from Israel 1:12-15

II. CALL TO BEHOLD (Sermon 2: Courage in God) 2:1-9

- A. Dealing with the Temple (Present) 2:1-3
- B. Dealing with the Covenant (Past) 2:4-5
- C. Dealing with the Messiah (Future)

III. CALL TO BEHAVE (Sermon 3: Cleanness of Life) 2:10-19

- A. The Blessing Wanted 2:10-14
- B. The Blessing Withheld 2:15-17
- C. The Blessing Waiting 2:18-19

IV. CALL TO BELIEVE (Sermon 4: Confidence in Future) 2:20-23

- A. God Will Manifest His Power 2:20-22
- B. God Will Manifest His Prince 2:23

ZECHARIAH: HISTORY



TITLE: After prophet who wrote it

AUTHOR: Zechariah (“God Remembers”)

DATE of WRITING: 520-518 BC

PLACE of WRITING: Jerusalem

TIME COVERED: 520 BC to eternity future

RECIPIENTS: Returned from captivity

KEY VERSE: *9:9-10 Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of*

Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.

KEY WORD: “Word of the Lord” (14 times); “Lord of Hosts” (52 times)

PURPOSE: to encourage the people to rebuild the temple as well as reveal future events.

THEME: God is in control of history.

There used to be a children’s book titled “The Chance World.” It described a world in which everything happened by chance. The sun might rise or it might not, or it might appear at any hour, or the moon might come up instead. When children were born they might have one head or a dozen heads, and those heads might not be on their shoulders -- there might be no shoulders -- but arranged about the limbs. If one jumped up in the air it was impossible to predict whether he would ever come down again. That he came an hour ago was no guarantee that he would do it the next time. For every day, antecedence and consequence varied, and gravitation and everything else changed from hour to hour. What a world that would be!

Fortunately God didn’t make the world that way. He has consistent laws that stay in effect. We live in a world where there is obviously a Power behind everything, controlling and keeping it all going. This doesn’t only apply to nature, it also applies to time. God is also in charge of history. Nothing there, either, happens by chance. It is all as God plans and controls it. He is in control of everything. That should bring great comfort to us!

ENTER, ZECHARIAH Zechariah was both a priest and a prophet. His grandfather returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel and he was a young man when he began prophesying. Haggai was also preaching at this same time and place. Also at this time Esther was going through her conflict for the lives of all the Jews in the world. That, too, shows how God is in control of all.

Zechariah’s book is the largest of the minor prophets. It is similar to Revelation in the New Testament: at the end of the testament, mostly about future prophecy and written to encourage God’s people as they go through hard times. Both show that truly history is “His-story.”

THE GOAL OF HISTORY (Part 1) (8 visions). The first section of the book consists of 8 visions showing that God is in charge of history and bringing it all to the point where He Himself will rule and reign in Jerusalem. Like salmon instinctively return home to spawn, God has built it into man to return to Him. Unlike salmon, however, man has a free will and often goes in the opposite direction. Still, God uses man’s rebellion for His glory. He used Augustus’ census to get Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem so Jesus would be born there and fulfill prophecy (Micah 5:2). He used Domitian’s exiling John to Patmos to give John the vision that resulted in the book of Revelation. God is truly in charge of history.

He used a wind to destroy the Spanish Armada and leave Protestant England free to spread the gospel. He used little snowflakes to defeat proud Napoleon and save Europe. He stopped the sun in its progression so the Jews could defeat their enemies in Joshua's time.

LESSONS FROM HISTORY (4 messages). Then Zechariah preached 4 sermons to the people. He encouraged them to learn from their past failures -- learn from history! But who ever does? They went into captivity because they just went through the motions of fasting and serving God. Now they are doing the same thing. They are 'playing church,' but God isn't first in their hearts. Zechariah tells them a time is coming when they will be fully restored and in God's presence, so they should prepare for that time by living for Him now.

THE GOAL OF HISTORY (Part 2) (2 burdens). Zechariah then writes about the coming King. In his first coming (chapters 9-11) he will be rejected and crucified. Many details are given: betrayed for 30 pieces of silver, riding a colt into town, hands pierced, dying to save others, etc. He is called Servant (3:8), Branch (3:8), Priest (6:13), King (6:13), Betrayed One (11:12-13), Pierced One (12:10), Fountain (13:1), Shepherd (13:7), God (13:7-9) and Lord over all (14:5,9).

The second burden (chapter 12-14) is about the second coming of the Messiah, when the kingdom will be established on earth and Jerusalem will be the center of worship for the Messiah-King. Just as everything Zechariah said about the first coming of the Messiah

OUTLINE OF ZECHARIAH

I. GOAL OF HISTORY I (8 Visions) 1-6

- A. God Sees 1
 - 1. Distressing Indifference of Israel 1:1-17
 - 2. Diminishing Influence of Israel 1:18-21
- B. God Speaks 2-4
 - 1. Israel's Restoration 2
 - 2. Israel's Righteousness 3
 - 3. Israel's Revival 4
- C. God Stirs 5-6
 - 1. Conviction 5:1-4
 - 2. Condemnation 5:5-11
 - 3. Conquest 6

II. LESSONS FROM HISTORY (4 Messages) 7-8

- A. Failure of the People 7
 - 1. Ritual of the People 7:1-7
 - 2. Removal of the People 7:8-14
- B. Future of Jerusalem 8
 - 1. Restoration of Jerusalem 8:1-17
 - 2. Rejoicing in Jerusalem 8:18-23

III. GOAL OF HISTORY II (2 Burdens) 9-14

- A. King Rejected 9-11
 - 1. Coming of the King 9
 - 2. Call of the King 10
 - 3. Crucifixion of the King 11
- B. King Ruling 12-14
 - 1. Deliverance of the King 12
 - 2. Delight of the King 13
 - 3. Domain of the King 14

MALACHI: REPENTANCE

TITLE: After prophet who wrote it
AUTHOR: Malachi ("Messenger of God")
DATE of WRITING: 445 - 397 BC
PLACE of WRITING: Judah
TIME COVERED: Between 445 and 397 BC
RECIPIENTS: Israel after return from Babylon

KEY VERSE: *3:9-10 You are under a curse-- the whole nation of you-- because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.*

KEY WORDS: "You say" (11 times), "wherein" (6), "cursed" (7)

PURPOSE: Reproof for neglect of the temple & worship

THEME: Repent and turn back to God



Once upon a time there was a young man who was 'in love' with a young lady -- at least that's what he told her. Once a week, on his day off, he called on the young lady -- that is if he didn't have other company, feel tired, or have somewhere else to go. She loved good music and great literature but he had no interest in either. Actually, he was restless and fidgety when around her. "Why couldn't he stay longer or come more often?" she wondered.

The reason was that the young man still cared for an old sweetheart. Though he had agreed to make a break, he was still spending several hours a week with her. It seemed they still had so much in common: they loved the same things, the same people and the same amusements. Yet to the young lady to whom he had recently declared his love, he would admit to no other loyalty.

What is the analogy I'm trying to make? Unfortunately it is too obvious: that's the way God's people then, the Jews, were toward God. It happens today, too. Vows and promises are made, but the pull of the world interferes. Words say one thing, but actions another.

BATTER UP! It's the end of the game. Your team is down to its last batter and you're behind 50-0. It looks kind of bleak! Malachi is the last man to step to bat, trying to win the game for God by bringing the home team back to spiritual faithfulness. Can he do it?

Malachi lived and ministered during the time of Nehemiah, who was the leader. Malachi was the prophet who preached to the people. Almost 90% of the book was spoken directly by God. The book concludes with a call to repentance. This book is a link, a bridge between the Old and New Testaments.

COMPASSION (1:1-5) The book opens with God clearly declaring His love for His people, but they doubted His love. "How can you love us?" they asked in their doubt and self-pity. God answers by saying His actions in the past prove His love. No matter what they did or didn't do, God still loved them. He wants His people to feel loved and secure and to respond to that love by loving Him in return.

COMPLAINT (1:6 - 3:15) God expects and deserves the total honor and devotion of His people, but often He doesn't receive that. In Malachi's day the leaders were leading the people astray because of their unfaithfulness. While outwardly claiming to follow God, they married unbelieving Gentiles and let them bring their heathen idols into Israel. Throughout the nation the family was breaking down

and divorce was common. Because God hadn't judged their life styles they said God approved of what they were doing! They didn't support God's work and workers financially as they were commanded to do. They were prideful and arrogant. They needed to repent, to "change their mind" and reverse their direction. They needed to do a U-turn, an about-face, in attitude and action. If they don't there will be judgment from God.

CONDEMNATION (3:16 - 4:6) There is a faithful minority in Israel and God promises to remember them even though they will suffer the consequences the whole nation faces. The majority, though, need to repent or suffer judgment. Unfortunately they didn't repent when Malachi preached or even later. The book ends with a promise of coming judgment unless God's messenger's message of repentance is accepted. *Malachi 4:5-6 "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."*

This prophet is to be like Elijah. He will preach a message of repentance like Malachi did. If the people repent, they will be forgiven and restored. God so deeply desires this that He will soon send His Messiah, but first He will send this messenger to prepare the way for Him (3:1-6). With this call to repentance and promise of a coming messenger the Old Testament closes. Four hundred years later the New Testament opens with John, who fulfilled Malachi's prophecies, coming preaching the same message of repentance.

God's message of repentance is still being delivered today. He wants and deserves our whole being, not just some parts some times. Anything less must be repented of and changed. God still loves His people and welcomes them home. The longer we put off repentance the more we will have to repent of and the less time to repent in! Don't be like the young man in the story whose actions didn't match his profession of love.

OUTLINE OF MALACHI

I. GOD'S LOVE REJECTED 1:1-5

- A. Declared 1:1-2a
- B. Doubted 1:2b
- C. Demonstrated 1:3-5

II. GOD'S STANDARDS REJECTED 1:6-3:15

- A. Cheating 1:6-14
- B. Unfaithfulness 2:1-9
- C. "Mixed" Marriage 2:10-12
- D. Family Breakdown 2:13-16
- E. Disobedience 2:17
- F. John the Baptist Foretold 3:1-6
- G. Robbery 3:7-12
- H. Arrogance 3:13-15

III. GOD'S JUDGMENT COMING 3:16-4:6

- A. Ungodly People 3:16-18
- B. Godly Judgment 4:1-6

BIBLE OVERVIEW

21. 400

SILENT

YEARS



MAIN EVENTS: Between the Old and New Testament

MAIN PEOPLE: Maccabees

BOOKS OF THE BIBLE:

BIBLE VERSE:

TIME5: 430-5 BC

WORLD EVENTS AT THIS TIME:

India invaded by Alexander the Great

India dark ages politically, golden age for art

Ashoka became emperor in India

Greece: Persian & Peloponnesian Wars

Greek Classical Age: Parthenon, Socrates, Plato, Euripides

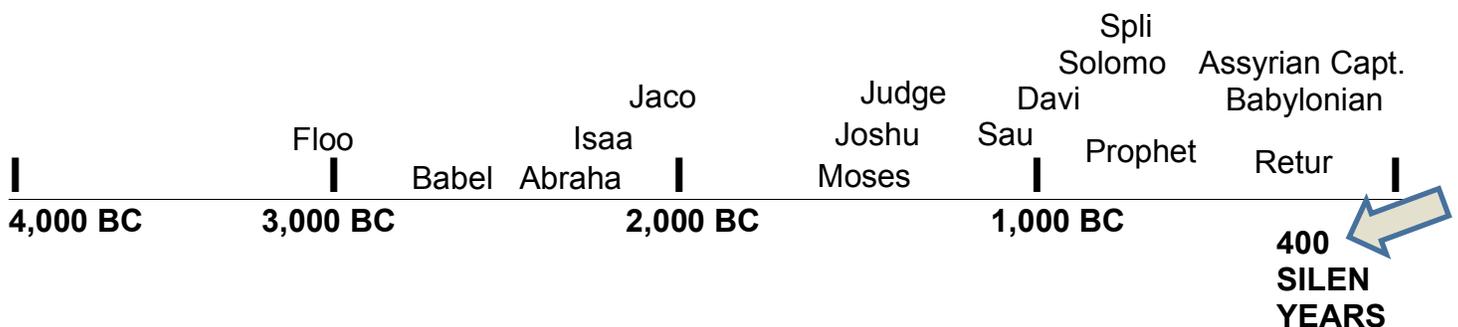
Alexander conquers Persia, Seleucids succeed him

Han dynasty in China

Rise of Roman Republic, conquers Carthage, Greece, Asia Minor and Egypt

Maccabean revolt overthrows Seleucids in Israel

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION: Palestine



This final period in the Old Testament portion of our overview of history is called the “400 Silent Years” because no Bible books were written during that time and the Jews were, for the most part, turning from God. But much was happening in the rest of the world during the time between Malachi and Matthew. Three successive world empires operated during this time: Persia, Greece and Rome. Alexander the Great lived and died. He, too, controlled Israel for a time. The Jews revolted under the family of the Maccabees and gained temporary freedom from Greece, but lost it to Rome’s might. While no inspired Bible books were written during this time the many Apocrypha books were written. Only recently has the Catholic Church considered them on a level with other Scripture, but for 1500

years they were known to be just writings of the day. They do contain historical information about the time period, though. God was using this time to prepare everyone for the coming of the Messiah.

400 SILENT YEARS

Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980), the movie director, told a parable in *Guideposts* (1959) about the unknown. There once was a king who was granted two wishes. His first was to see the future. But when he saw all that lay ahead -- the beauty and the pain -- he immediately asked for his second wish; that the future be hidden. "I thank Heaven," the master of suspense proclaimed, "that tomorrow does not belong to any man. It belongs to God."

HISTORY = HIS STORY In fact, ALL history belongs to God: past, present and future. Every single event is under His control, even to a bird coming to land on the ground (Matthew 10:29). The rising and falling of the most powerful nations of the world are also under God's control (Daniel 2:32-47; Acts 4:25). This is very comforting in a world that seems out of control.

One of the best examples of this is the coming of Jesus to earth. God says that this was in the very time He chose: *Galatians 4:4* *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law.* God didn't sit around waiting for the right time, He actively controlled history so that all the conditions necessary were present when He came to earth. Just what made this particular time so special?

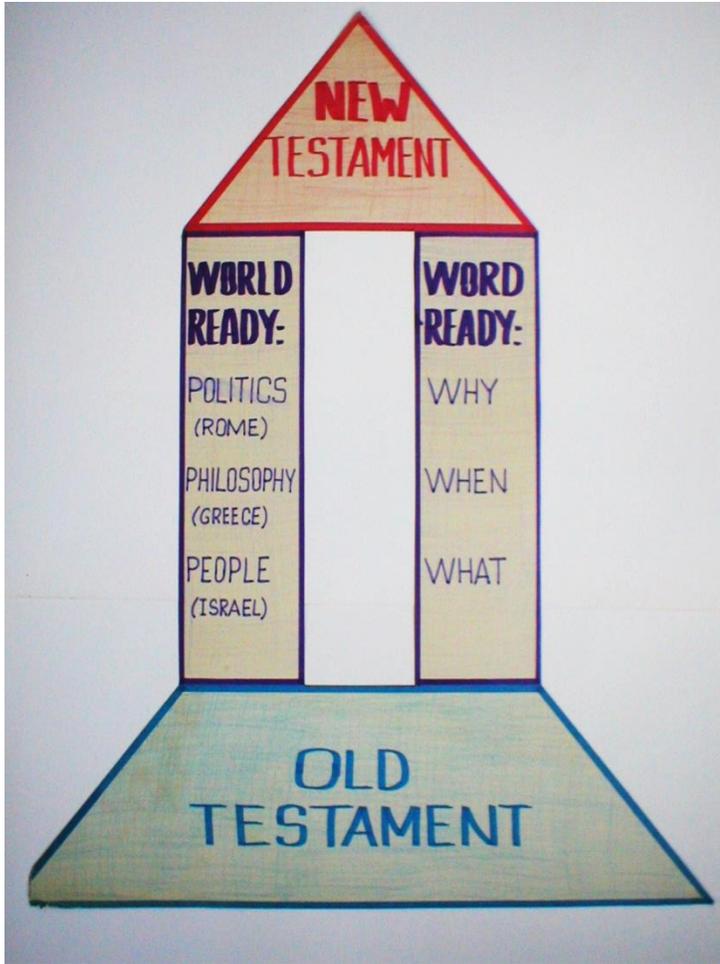
There were three main groups of people God used to prepare the world for Jesus' first coming. These affected all areas of life at that time. Everything was perfectly prepared in the area of politics (Rome), philosophy (Greece) and the people (Israel).

GREECE (PHILOSOPHY) Greece took over control of Palestine from Persia in 334 BC when Alexander was conquering the whole area. When he died in 323 the Ptolemies ruled there until the Seleucids took over in 219 BC. During this time the area was totally saturated with Greek culture, thought and philosophy (a kind of humanism not much different from New Age thought today). Many Jews bought into this, led by a group of very liberal-thinking Jews called the Sadducees. God used this Greek thought to prepare people for the coming Messiah and the spread of the early church because Greek thought was looking for answers but, despite all the attempts to find them, didn't really produce anything to fill people's hearts. There were Epicureans, Stoics, Academics, Orphism, Pythagoreans, Cynics, Skeptics and many more. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle were influencing the people. God was just an intellectual abstraction. There were no strong gods or goddesses demanding the loyalty and attention of the common people. Questions were asked but not answered.

Of great impact on the world, and the Bible, was the spread of Greek as the universal language. Now people could speak to each other in a common language -- very essential to the quick spread of the early church. Not only was Greek a universal language, but it was a very precise language. It was just what was needed to convey all the theological nuances and flavors of the New Testament. God obviously prepared Greek for His Word.

ISRAEL (PEOPLE) While the Greeks greatly influenced the land of Palestine, they never conquered the hearts of the people. Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the temple in the most awful ways and killed any Jews who practiced their religion in any way. Even quoting a Bible verse was punishable by death. The Maccabean revolt, led by the Hasmonean family, won back Jewish independence and culminated with the rededication of the temple on December 25, 164 BC. Unfortunately the Hasmonean rulership soon became almost as oppressive as the Seleucids had been before them. A movement of conservative Jews who wanted to have the nation turn back to God and His Word arose. Called the Pharisees, they led the people in civil war which just made everything worse. This

so weakened the nation that the Romans, having defeated the Greeks, were easily able to annex Palestine in 63 BC.



During all this, though, Jews were moving into virtually every nation of the world. This dispersion was very foundational to the spread of the early church. The Jews brought their message of one God as revealed in the Bible Who wanted His people to live a holy life, to every nation, setting the groundwork for the spread of the early church. Their synagogues became perfect places to first preach the Good News of Jesus the Messiah. The church became patterned after the synagogue.

Also during this time period the Septuagint (LXX) was translated. For the first time the Jews, and also anyone who could read Greek, could read the Bible for themselves. This opened the way for the spread of the Gospel, too. God was working to bring all this about.

ROME (POLITICS) While the Greeks influenced the minds of men, Rome controlled their bodies. Rome's take-over of that whole part of the world also was important in setting the groundwork for what was to come. For the first time there was world peace, and it lasted for several hundred years. That meant it was safe to travel anywhere. Rome built marvelous

roads for travel. Travel by ship was safe, too. Pirates and robbers were kept under control. Because of peace as well as advances in technology, it was no longer for everyone to spend the vast majority of their time growing their own food. Many people moved into cities and pursued other crafts. This made it possible for Paul and the other early missionaries to go into the cities where people were already gathered and preach. This was MUCH more efficient than going from farm to farm!

Then, too, Rome allowed religious freedom. They did not dictate who or what was to be worshipped. People could decide for themselves. The old gods and idols their ancestors worshipped no longer held much interest and often didn't apply to their new lives in the cities. City life brought its share of new problems, too. Sin was rampant. Alcoholism, immorality, homosexuality, prostitution, crime, murder, extortion and political corruption were rampant. Something was needed to give meaning, peace and satisfaction in life. The stage was set for the message of Jesus

Galatians 4:4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law. God IS in control of history, of ALL history. He has everything set up just the way He wanted it to be for Jesus' first coming. He's doing the same right now, getting ready for Jesus' return. It's His world. He is sovereign Lord over all that happens. Praise His name!

END OF BOOK REFLECTION QUESTIONS

To help you get more out of this book, think about the following questions and how you would answer them. You can write down your answers if you want, or just meditate on them. The answers don't get turned in; they are for your benefit.

If the prophets in the Bible were alive today, what message would they of the preach?

Which of the prophet's messages means the most to you? Why?

Jeremiah and Isaiah ministered their entire lives without a convert. How did they stay faithful despite opposition?

How did the choices young Daniel made affect him for the rest of his life?

What impresses you about Daniel's life?

What leadership lessons did you learn from the life of Nehemiah?