

Surveying The Old Testament

“...WHATEVER WAS WRITTEN IN EARLIER TIMES WAS WRITTEN FOR OUR INSTRUCTION...” (Romans 15:4)

“...THESE THINGS TOOK PLACE AS EXAMPLES FOR US, THAT WE MIGHT NOT DESIRE EVIL AS THEY DID...” (1 Corinthians 10:6)

“...THINGS WHICH ARE A MERE SHADOW OF WHAT IS TO COME; BUT THE SUBSTANCE BELONGS TO CHRIST...” (Colossians 2:17)

Lessons From An Unchanging God

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Prologue: An Unchanging God

This study was originally developed and authored in 2007. In the time since, it has been edited and added to several times. New topics have been tackled, further historical research has been inserted and of course, sentence structure have been improved and grammar corrected.

As the full body of work continues to grow and hopefully improve over time, we believe the core themes and specific lessons have remained doctrinally accurate and in line with Scripture. In fact, the primary reason and intent for developing an “Old Testament Survey” of this type and format remains constant — which is, the Old Testament is neglected far too much by “New Testament Christians” when it, in fact, holds the key to unlocking so many concepts and doctrinal truths for any New Testament Christian’s faith.

Why is that so? Maybe you are asking that question? There are two reasons. The first reason — because Scripture tells us — has always been declared in this Survey. Whether pronounced on the front cover with specific passages or elaborated upon in the “Lesson 1: Introduction” material, the case was made from the beginning regarding the scriptural authority we have to study and apply the Old Testament in a New Testament Christian’s life.

The second reason — because God doesn’t change — has been less obviously covered and is the reason for the addition of this Prologue. In the dozen years since originally compiling this, the Christian’s knowledge of the Old Testament hasn’t improved much (generally speaking). It actually seems to have gotten worse in the sense that many Christians choose to “throw it out” all together.

No longer is the issue provoking Christians to be more attentive to studying the entirety of God’s word, but that we would even find “the God of the New Testament” within the pages the inspired Hebrew teachings at all.

No longer is the issue provoking Christians to be more attentive to studying the entirety of God’s word. Instead, some fail to find “the God of the New Testament” within the pages the inspired Hebrew teachings at all. The entire Old Testament is being cast aside with false notions of grace, judgement, salvation, or the very nature of God. Whatever the reason, we must be able to wrestle and reconcile any incongruity we perceive between the Old and New Testaments in our canon of scripture today. Scripture teaches this as well!

The Christian should know beyond all doubt that they serve a God that is unchanging. Understanding this concept is fundamental for justifying Old Testament study as well as any New Testament doctrine. But the inverse is also true: Misunderstanding or rejecting the O.T. removes the very foundation of the Christian’s faith, opening them up to being “carried about by every wind of doctrine.” (Eph 4:14)

From the pages of the Old Testament into the New, Scripture is clear. Whether it’s His own declarative statement through His prophet Malachi, “I the Lord do not change.” (Mal 3:6) or the Hebrews writer drawing the comparison, “like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same.” (Heb 1:12) These are clear statements of fact, while James puts it more poetically:

“Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” (Jms 1:16-18)

May we consider “all scripture” as his “word of truth” in order for us to be “firstfruits” indeed.

Lesson 1: Introduction

There are several approaches that can, and in fact have been taken in an 'Old Testament Survey'. There is no shortage of material which in itself presents an obstacle. How does one tackle so much material when the time is limited? How does it get condensed to be the most beneficial study possible? It is indeed a challenge!

Objectives

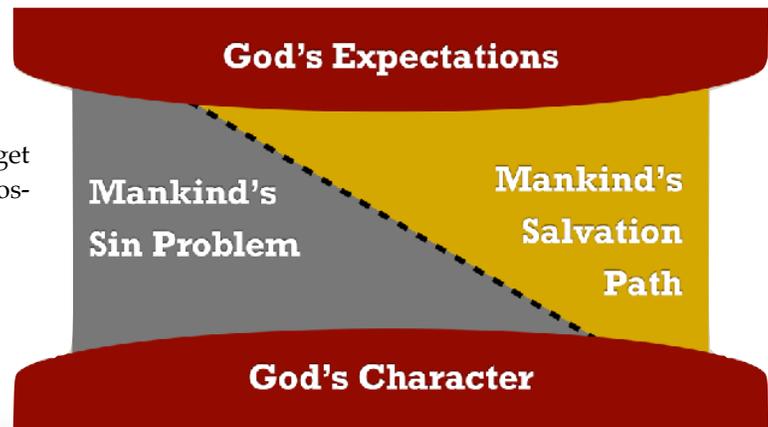
Certainly one would not want to conclude such a study without a general knowledge of the basics: who, what, when, where, etc. While an exact awareness might be a stretch, it would be ideal to come away with a general sense of where an event, topic or theme is found within the Old Testament.

Additionally, you would not want to undertake such a study without making proper application to living a Christian life - that is, after all why it's recorded (Rom 15:4; Col 2:17).

Scripture teaches us that "...these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved." (1 Cor 10:6) Of course "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." (2 Tim 3:16-17).

The very proof that Jesus is the Christ through His lineage is laid out in 1 Chronicles 3 and in Matthew 1. Jesus begins his ministry by declaring, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill." (Matt 5:17) He ends His ministry by walking with two disciples on the way to Emmaus and "...beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures." (Luke 24:27)

Peter preaches Jesus on the Day of Pentecost by referring to passages in Joel and Psalms. We also know that "...according to Paul's custom, he went to [a synagogue of the Jews], and for three Sabbaths

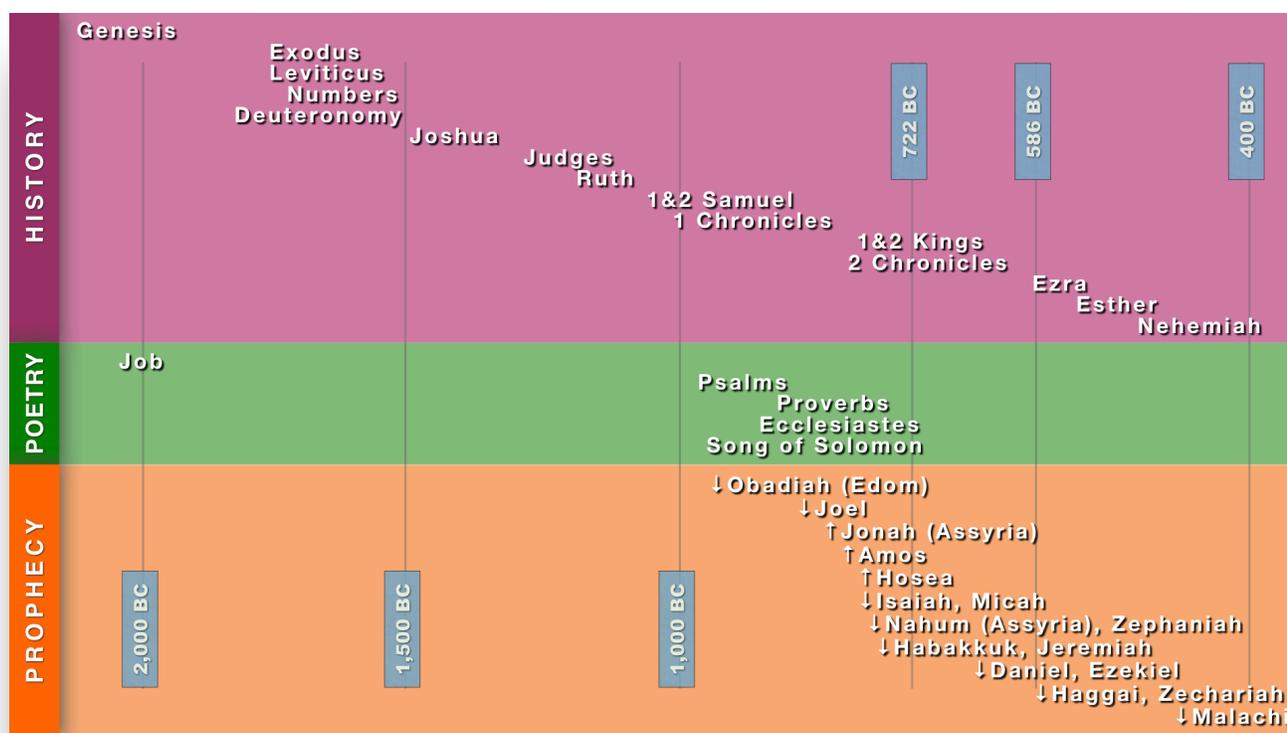


reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead" (Acts 17:2-3). In one chapter in Romans (10), Paul quotes from no less than twelve different passages found in six different Old Testament books!

One very real advantage to a brisk study through the Old Testament is the ability to pick up on the broad, over-arching themes. Additionally, there are clear and consistent patterns that carry through into the New Testament. And of course, it is important to brush up on the basic facts as well. Therefore, the objectives for this study will be to:

- 1) Reinforce basic Old Testament facts such as:
 - * Books
 - * People
 - * Places
 - * Lineage
 - * Timelines
 - * Kingdoms
 - * National Events (Israel)
- 2) Highlight the major themes of the Bible that begin in the Old Testament, namely:
 - * **God's character** - certain aspects that are foundational to all that unfolds in Scripture,
 - * **Mankind's sin problem,**

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- * **Mankind's path to salvation** (...“in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago...” Titus 1:2),
- * **God's expectations from mankind** - they have remained consistent from the beginning of time.

3) Draw conclusions and application based on the patterns that exist in Old Testament stories.

The Prophets

It would be wonderful to also spend time on the prophetic books in the Old Testament. Unfortunately, time does not permit in this study - which is probably for the best.

As you will see in the next section, we have included the appropriate book of prophecy as it relates to the particular place in history for your own reading. Indeed, some prophets do more than others in conveying unique historical facts (Isaiah and Jeremiah are two examples). However, as a whole, the books of prophecy warrant their own study.

Lesson Format¹

This is a historical survey and as such centers around the timeline of history. Therefore, each les-

son focuses around a section of Old Testament that corresponds to the historical timeline. As such, the O.T. text for each lesson is arranged in chronological order. For example, Lesson 3 covers the second half of Genesis and Job, since it is likely that Job lived sometime before the Israelite nation and during the time commonly referred to as the Patriarchal period.

Since our Old Testaments are not arranged chronologically this can get a little confusing. To try to help with that an example of what is found at the beginning of each lesson follows.

LESSON TEXT:

- ~ 1 Kings 12-22
(1 Kings 12-22 = 2 Chronicles 10-20)
- ~ 2 Kings 1-17
(2 Kings 1-17 = 2 Chronicles 21-29)
- Obadiah, Joel, Jonah, Amos
- beginning of Hosea
- Isaiah, Micah

In this example, the historical text is in 1 & 2 Kings with overlapping accounts in parentheses (primary

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reading) and the prophets during that time are bulleted (secondary reading).

While a little confusing, this is critically important with *any* study of the Old Testament. There are several reasons for understanding the O.T. chronologically as opposed to the listing in your Bible's table of contents:²

- 1) *It's the only way to get the entire story.* It is impossible to get a complete picture of events during the united and divided kingdoms without reading (simultaneously, if that were possible) the accounts in both 1&2 Kings and 2 Chronicles. 2 Kings tells us that Manasseh was Judah's most evil king and the reason they were condemned to eventual captivity (21:11-15). It is in 2 Chronicles that we are told of his eventual repentance (33:12-17). The impact of an incredible lesson of God's great patience and forgiveness would be lost if not for the reading of both accounts in sequence.
- 2) *It gives a different perspective of the events and conditions of the time.* Job gives some additional insight on how God interacted with man during or around Abraham's time (Genesis). Ecclesiastes shows that what Solomon experienced in the world around 950 BC (1 Kings) was not at all different to the injustices experienced in modern times.
- 3) *It adds color to the prophets.* Reading Isaiah through Malachi straight through is tough...the events seem random and the message is repetitive, "Repent!" How much more valuable to consider Isaiah within the context of Hezekiah's reign (2 Kings & 2 Chronicles), Daniel within the context of the Babylonian captivity, or Haggai and Zechariah encouraging those that returned (Ezra).
- 4) It is not sinful to do so! Some would believe that because "all Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Tim 3:16), the layout of the books is also inspired. There is no Scriptural support for this nor does an understanding of how they were assembled support any Divine intent behind the order of the books.

It's definitely an enriching way to read through the Old Testament and once done, you won't look at the Old Testament the same way again!

The Bible Blueprint

The Bible — God's revealed word and will for us — must be viewed as a whole. It is after all from the same Divine author. To be sure, it is "the greatest story ever told" and like any story it contains a theme (and sub-themes), a plot (and subplots) and characters.

The plot unfolds quickly in Genesis where the reader is introduced to God, the creator of heaven, earth, and all that is on the earth including humans. Mankind enjoys a period of perfect bliss and harmony until he is separated from God by his disobedience. "For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners..." (Rom 5:19) What will he do now?

With a brief foreshadowing of redemption and a Savior that will right the wrong done by man, the reader is drawn in to the greatest story ever told in order that, "...even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous." (Rom 5:19)

Anatomy 101

Vacation Bible School taught us that the Old Testament is made up of 39 books written by at least 20 different inspired authors (several books not identified). The authors lived over a period of roughly 1,600 years (2,000 BC to 400 BC).

- 47% is historical made up of 17 books. The first 5 of which were written by Moses and make up the Pentateuch.
- 22% is poetic made up of 5 books, most of them written by Solomon.
- 31% is prophetic made up of 17 books written by 16 men – Jeremiah credited with two.

The Hebrew Bible used primarily by Jews today groups our "Old Testament" into three sections known as the Pentateuch, the Prophets and the Writings. The first five books of the Bible (the Pentateuch) should be core study material for any Christian. Written by Moses, these are often referred to by other Scripture as *The Law*, *The Book of*

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BOOKS	AUTHOR
1. Genesis	Moses
2. Exodus	Moses
3. Leviticus	Moses
4. Numbers	Moses
5. Deuteronomy	Moses
6. Joshua	Unknown
7. Judges	Unknown
8. Ruth	Unknown
9. 1 Samuel	Unknown
10. 2 Samuel	Unknown
11. 1 Kings	Unknown
12. 2 Kings	Unknown
13. 1 Chronicles	Ezra?
14. 2 Chronicles	Ezra?
15. Ezra	Ezra
16. Nehemiah	Neh. or Ezra?
17. Esther	Unknown
18. Job	Unknown
19. Psalms	David +
20. Proverbs	Solomon +
21. Ecclesiastes	Solomon
22. Song of Songs	Solomon
23. Isaiah	Isaiah
24. Jeremiah	Jeremiah
25. Lamentations	Jeremiah
26. Ezekiel	Ezekiel
27. Daniel	Daniel
28. Hosea	Hosea
29. Joel	Joel
30. Amos	Amos
31. Obadiah	Obadiah
32. Jonah	Jonah
33. Micah	Micah
34. Nahum	Nahum
35. Habakkuk	Habakkuk
36. Zephaniah	Zephaniah
37. Haggai	Haggai
38. Zechariah	Zechariah
39. Malachi	Malachi

Books of Old Testament by Author

the Law or, at least in part as the *Book of Moses* (by Jesus, Mark 12:26).

It is with passages from The Pentateuch that Jesus rebuffed Satan when He was tempted in the desert. Matthew and Luke each record this pivotal event in the story that is The Bible.

Its chapters are full of relevant history, symbolism and foreshadowing of God's great plan. It is where today's Christian can really come to understand the character of the God they serve and obtain foundation for their faith.

Our survey will rely heavily on the Pentateuch and the remaining books of history. These are color-coded purple in the preceding charts.

Modern Bible 'Scholars'

So as not to be ill-informed of what current Bible 'scholars' believe regarding the Old Testament, below are just a few things currently being discussed and debated in secular theology classes:

- 1) The Pentateuch is not written by Moses but it is instead a product of four ancient writers and editors labeled "J", "E", "P" and "D" – "J" is the oldest and was a scribe in King David's court. Different writings are ascribed based on "differences in style and theology."
- 2) The Apocrypha is additional "scripture" that contains added works of poetry, wisdom and stories of Israel during the Greek and Roman periods. Fifteen books such as 1&2 Macabees, Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah are included in the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox versions of the Old Testament.
- 3) Various alleged contradictions of names, dates or events. Some very easily refuted, such as God renaming of Jacob to Israel in Gen 35:10 and then God supposedly forgetting that He renamed him based on Gen 46:2. How about that God was pleased with His creation in Gen 1:31 but not pleased with His creation in Gen 6:6? Others might pose more challenging to refute, such as Noah's taking of the animals by pairs (Gen 7:9) or by sevens (Gen 7:2,3) – still not too difficult.

The Pentateuch testifies to the saving acts of God, who is sovereign Lord of history and nature. The central act of God in the Pentateuch (and indeed the Old Testament) is the Exodus from Egypt. Here God broke in upon the consciousness of the Israelites and revealed Himself as the redeeming God.

D. A. Hubbard

It's too bad these so-called scholars are too smart for their own good. Paul knew these individuals when he wrote, "Professing to be wise, they became fools." (Rom 1:22)

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Summary

As one contemplates the volume Old Testament text including the character stories and spiritual themes there is no shortage of study material or topics for discussion. The goal is that the lesson material will help to guide and focus your study on important themes that are new or review for you.

As much as possible, we have written to include and connect the Prophets and New Testament writers with the complete story that is our Bible. "All Scripture" is designed for reproof and edification with new treasure to be found with each study.

Questions for Discussion

- 1) How might we adjust our vocabulary when speaking to a Jewish person about the "Bible" generally or the "Old Testament" specifically?

- 2) What span of time does the Old Testament document?

- 3) Is the Old Testament the Old Covenant?

- 4) List the books of Law.

- 5) List the books credited to the Kings of Israel.

- 6) What significance is there in the traditional or common referral to the books of prophecy as the "Minor Prophets" and the "Major Prophets"?

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- 7) What would you say is the single, most meaningful chapter in the Old Testament and why?
- 8) What would you say is the single, most meaningful verse in the Old Testament and why (not in your 'most meaningful chapter' above)?
- 9) Order these events chronologically (without your Bible).

___ Jacob's dream

___ Esther's reign

___ Rebekah's deception

___ David's sin w/ Bathsheba

___ Rebuilding of the wall

___ Aaron's death

___ The tower of Babel

___ Joseph's prison time

___ Job's trials

___ Assyrian Captivity

___ Korah's rebellion

___ Battle of Jericho

___ Gideon's victory

___ The golden calf

___ Daniel in the den

___ The Exodus

___ Battle of Carchemish

___ The flood

___ Moses' death

___ Melchizedek's gift

___ The sin of Peor

Lesson 2: Creation through Flood



LESSON TEXT:
 ~ Genesis 1-11

Science says that for anything in the physical world to come into existence, there must be "Time", "Force", "Action", "Space" and "Matter". The first sentence recorded by Moses shows that he understood this:

- Time: "In the beginning"
- Force: "God"
- Action: "created"
- Space: "the heavens"
- Matter: "and earth"

It is powerful evidence to the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. Scientists would not quantify these building blocks of life until thousands of years after this writing.³

The first eleven chapters of Genesis form a fairly clean, natural division as 'Part 1' of the book. Before details about the lives of specific people are given, Moses gives details about some major world events – not the least of which is the creation of the universe.

After all, Paul argues that it is through the creation – "through what has been made" – that man is "without excuse" to clearly see God's "invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature." (Rom 1:20) Peter also cites the creation as testimony to warding away false teachers. (2 Pet 3:4-5)

Therefore, the creation plays a key role in man's ability to know that there is a God – a being higher and more powerful than himself. It also serves as a daily reminder for man to know that God is in control and has a plan that will be fulfilled (2 Pet 3). If man is to understand these things through witnessing the creation, how fitting for God's adversary to attempt to undermine that which should be "clearly seen."

Biblical Account	Theory of Evolution
<i>Earth created before the sun and stars (1:1,16)</i>	<i>Sun and stars existed long before the earth.</i>
<i>Plants were growing on the earth before the sun was created (1:11)</i>	<i>Demands</i> that the sun shine before the plants grow.
<i>Land plants preceded marine life (1:11,20)</i>	<i>Demands</i> that marine life precede plants.
<i>Birds were created before insects (1:20,24)</i>	<i>Demands</i> that insects precede the birds.
<i>Birds were created before reptiles (1:20,24)</i>	<i>Demands</i> that birds be the direct descendants of the reptiles.
<i>Man was created before rain fell (2:5-7)</i>	<i>Demands</i> that rain fell on the earth for millions of years before man.
<i>Death and suffering are the result of sin, and sin entered through Adam and Eve (2:17)</i>	<i>Demands</i> that life and death struggle were going on millions of years before man.
<i>Man was made first, then woman (2:18-22)</i>	<i>Demands</i> that the sexes evolved together.

Theistic Evolution

One of the ways Satan accomplishes man's inability to see what should be "clearly seen" is through slow and methodical compromise. For Bible believers, the theory of evolution in its purest state is heresy. But because of the aggressive onslaught of evolution's tenants, some have compromised their Bible belief with compromise between "Creation" and "Evolution".

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Theistic Evolution is the result of this compromise. It is the belief that the creation account in the Bible only addresses the “Who?” and not the “How?”. It purports that God did indeed create the universe (i.e. “theistic”), but He did so over millions and millions of years (i.e. “evolution”).

A ‘theistic evolutionist’ tries to balance popular, secular theory with the Biblical account. They relegate the “How?” down to the figurative. They would say, “A day doesn’t really mean a day.”

It is a sad and frightening testimony of Satan’s ability to whittle away at our faith. A theistic evolutionist is simply someone that lacks faith in an all powerful God. This person must likely also conclude that the Red Sea was parted because of a strong east wind – not by God’s power.

If a “Bible believer” compromises on this point, how susceptible would they be to rejecting Jesus’ resurrection from the dead?

God and Man[kind]

In chapter 2 we see the special relationship that man has with God. It is worth making special note of these characteristics:

- 1) *Subjection*: God created and gave life to man (v. 7).
- 2) *Stewardship*: Man was tasked to cultivate and keep the garden (v.15).
- 3) *Freedom*: Man was given free reign in the garden (v. 16).
- 4) *Obedience*: Man was given one command to obey (v. 17).
- 5) *Pre-eminence*: The natural order was established (v. 19).
- 6) *Affection/Concern*: Man was given companionship (v. 20).
- 7) *Authority*: Man was given authority over woman (v. 22-23).

That’s a remarkable list when you really think about it.

Unfortunately the perfect, blissful state of things – summed up in the phrase “And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed” – did not last long, at least as far as the account is concerned. The very next phrase begins “Now the serpent.”

The Antagonist

An antagonist is defined as one that contends with or opposes another. This aptly describes Satan and his role throughout the Bible and in our lives today.

The theory of evolution teaches that language evolved from animal sounds, to speech and finally to language.

Satan, as first introduced in the form of a serpent, successfully destroys - or at least inhibits - the perfect relationship between God and man.

Throughout the Bible, the character of Satan is expounded upon to present to us an ominous figure. Satan is not only a serpent that is “more crafty than any beast of the field” but also:

- The adversary (1 Pet 5:8)
- The Devil (Matt 4:1)
- Our common enemy (Matt 13:39)
- Evil spirit (1 Sam 16:14)
- The father of all lies (Jn 8:44)
- The god of this world (2 Cor 4:4)
- The murderer (Jn 8:44)
- The power of darkness (Col 1:13)
- Prince of demons (Matt 12:24)
- The spirit that works in all disobedient people (Eph 2:2)
- The wicked one (Matt 13:19)

However, there is hope! A glimpse is given into the perfect plan that God has given, that there is One that will redeem man. In chapter three we read of the one that would eventually defeat the great antagonist.

True Worship

Thanks to Satan’s deception and man’s disobedience, a very new relationship exists between God

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and man. God and man no longer share the close relationship they enjoyed in the garden.

Sin has been introduced resulting in separation. It is interesting that “in the course of time” both Cain and Abel feel the need for reconciliation (4:3). Maybe it is because of the example given by their parents – an attempt to reconcile with God through honoring and offering to Him.

Or, maybe it is a personal journey by Cain and Abel, each spurred by the natural yearning described by Solomon in Eccl 3:11 and Paul in Rom 1:19.

Regardless of how they arrived at this point, they each demonstrate worship to God in their own way. From the text alone, the reader may surmise that Cain’s offering was rejected because he brought fruit instead of the animals that Abel brought. However, there is much more to *why* Abel’s sacrifice was accepted and Cain’s rejected...

A clue to discovering this is found when one reads that Abel brought of his “firstlings” and “their fat portions,” and the full picture is revealed in Heb 11:4. There we learn that the difference was that Abel offered “by faith.” This early story teaches about God’s character and His expectations for us.

- 1) *God desires worship.* It would be illogical for God to accept one (Abel’s) and reject the other (Cain’s) if He did not care either way.
- 2) *God expects formal worship.* It is not enough for man to casually ‘worship’ God while living each day. While “living for Jesus” daily is certainly a form of worship, it does not constitute the formal worship that God desires.
- 3) *God discerns worship.* Clearly there is “right” worship and there is “wrong” worship.
- 4) *Attitude is what matters.* Abel proved righteous through demonstrating a faith that gave his best over to God. More than what he gave, the manner by which he gave it gained him approval in God’s sight.
- 5) *Pride is the primary stumbling block to proper worship.* Not only did Cain hold back his best but he became angry when it was given no regard by God. A humble man would submit and cor-

rect his action. Furthermore, Cain was jealous of his brother and demonstrated his feelings of superiority and self-justification through an act of murder.

It would serve Christians well to consider these tenants as they worship God today. In the most simple of scenarios we can see that God not only expects worship but considers how one’s worship is to be offered.

Salvation

The state of man only deteriorated...to the point that God was sorry He had made man (6:6). Because of the wickedness, He determined He would blot out every living thing from the earth. Still His *grace* was upon one that was righteous.

Noah was an exception to the sin that plagued the earth. He was a man that had *faith* and “walked with God.” As a result, “Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.” However, take careful note that his salvation from mankind’s pending doom was not automatic.

God had some very specific instructions for Noah – and “Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.” Noah acted on his faith and demonstrated exacting *obedience*.

So what saved Noah and his family? It began with God’s grace, but it was fulfilled through Noah’s faith and obedience. The absence of any one of these three ingredients would not have led to Noah’s salvation. So we can learn what God expects from us and benefit from the same grace that Noah benefited from!

Yet the lesson for us does not stop there. We must also take careful note of the medium by which Noah and his family were saved. We must take note because the apostle Peter through divine inspiration took note. He writes in 1 Peter 3:20-21:

“...when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water: which also after a true likeness doth now save you, (even) baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ;” ASV

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Other translations record this Old Testament salvation through water as the “antitype” of our New Testament salvation through water (i.e. baptism). Noah’s salvation is the model for our salvation - grace, faith, and obedience (through baptism).

One final observation regarding Peter’s phraseology: they “were saved through water.” Does it strike you how odd that is? What person would say that? We would say they were saved by the ark or by God - the water is what threatened them as it killed everyone else. It makes no sense on a physical plane, but of course makes perfect sense when applied to spiritual concepts. A small example of how the Scriptures defy the notion of human inspiration and authorship.

The Father of all Nations

As Noah and his family emerge from the ark, God causes a couple of things to happen leading to the physical world we know today. It all started with one man and his three sons - Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Prior to Noah and the flood, Moses recorded ten generations. After the flood, he records another even number of ten generations (up until Abraham). This second ten generations again populates the earth, and Gen 11:1 states that the whole earth spoke the same language.

God then does the first thing that shapes our societal divisions as we know it today. Possibly since a world that could communicate as one could indeed accomplish much, God confused their language. Presumably this is done by family so that they could not communicate.

As they undoubtedly migrated over time, the second thing God did was divide the earth (10:25). Verse 5 would indicate that this happened *after* God confused their language at the tower of Babel.

Geologists have generally concluded that the earth’s continents were at one time connected forming a single large land mass. Considering the shapes of the continents, they would indeed appear to fit together like a puzzle. Of course, they conclude that this “Continental Drift Theory” – also

called “Plate Tectonics Theory” - happened over millions of years.

Son’s Name	People Associated With the Name
Japheth	Greeks, Aryans of India
Gomer	People living in area of the Black Sea, Germany and Wales
Magog	Reference to “Gog” referring to Georgia, a region near the Black Sea and Scythians
Madai	Medes (Persia), Japheth through Madai father of peoples of India.
Javan	People of Greece and Cyprus
Tubal	Russian, city of Tobolsk
Meshech	Russian, (Name Muskovi) city of Moscow
Tiras	Thracians, possibly the Etruscans of Italy
Ashkenaz	Germany, Armenia, Scandinavia, Denmark, northern islands of Europe and European west coast
Ripath	Generally Europe, Carpathians and Paphlagonians
Togarmah	Armenians, Germany and Turkey
Elishah	Greeks (“Hellas” is a form of word Elishah)
Tarshish	Spain, Carthage in North Africa
Kittim	Greeks, Cyprus, Macedonia
Dodanum	Greeks, Rhodes, Dardanelles
Henry M. Morris, The Genesis Record, pg 247-249	

However, Moses records in 10:25 that this happened during the 239 years Peleg lived on the earth (and did you know that Peleg literally means “division” or “earthquake”?). This is iterated again in the chronologies that begin 1 Chronicles, where the inspired writer notes of Peleg, “for in his days the earth was divided.” (1 Chr 1:19)

After families had sufficiently migrated to other parts of the earth due to their language differences, they became isolated with the sudden division of land mass. The *reason* was to divide an otherwise unified mankind. The *cause* was the purpose, plan and power of God. The *result* is the different cultures that we know today.

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Summary

In the first eleven chapters of the Bible, Moses gives account for a time spanning 2,000 years. As such, Moses - in just eleven chapters - gives an accounting of time that is roughly half of the time spanning the entire rest of the Bible!

The first four chapters give a synopsis of the entire Bible story. Through the creation we meet an all powerful God that cares for and desires a relationship with man — the created. However, Satan separates them through sin. So man begins his journey back to God, eventually made perfect again by the promised One that would bruise Satan's head (Gen 3:15).

Questions for Discussion

- 1) What attribute of God is first shown and what are the implications for you?
- 2) If you were to list the purposes for having the creation account (Gen 1-2) - why God chose to reveal it to us – what would you list?
- 3) Study Gen 2:7 and list 2-3 observations?
- 4) From this text, what verses would you select as the key passage on which the complete Bible story unfolds and why?
- 5) What is the only part of Paradise that is still in existence today?
- 6) List the four 'major events' told in this text.
- 7) The lineage of humankind is through which of Adam's sons?

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- 8) After the flood, what three commands are given in chapter 9?
- 9) Who (or What) were the Nephalim (6:4)?
- 10) List the covenants, or laws, established in this text that are timeless in nature.
- a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
 - f.
 - g.

Lesson 3: The Patriarchs

LESSON TEXT:

~ Genesis 12-50

● probably Job

As the accounting by Moses of the history of the world continues, his writing shifts from major world events to that of individuals. He documents men and women who shape world events and pave the way for the coming of the Messiah.

Moses, through inspiration of the Spirit, records the height of mankind's ability to be faithful and righteous coupled with man's imperfections, character foibles, and propensity to disobey and sin.

It is in this period of human history that we gain tremendous insight into the basic character of man. If one thinks hard about the great personalities revealed in these stories, it is possible to relate in a very real way to the intentions, emotions, faults, and circumstances of these great characters. It is this realism regarding man's character – specifically, his propensity to sin - that serves as evidence that the Biblical account was not man-made.

More importantly, it provides a modern day Christian with comfort in knowing that we are not alone in our struggles. These great characters were human beings just like us and faced similar struggles...sometimes successfully and sometimes not. We are grateful that the Holy Spirit has recorded them for our understanding and comfort.

Ur

There is much that is known about this great city - the birthplace of Abraham. Thanks to one archaeologist in particular, Sir Leonard Woolley⁴, there are many artifacts that show this was truly a civilized community. Two-story houses lined the nar-

row streets of the city proper and it served as the center of worship for several pagan deities. The great ziggurat (or temple) still stands today.

It would be interesting to consider how Abram - a man of God - must have felt in such an environment. Surely we can relate given the increasingly pagan and sinful world in which we live.



The Ziggurat of Ur

The Promises

Our lesson text opens with three verses that are pivotal to the rest of the Biblical account. They contain three promises that lead to a wonderful fulfillment for the modern Christian. Unfortunately, they also serve as a foundation for a false doctrine taught (and believed) by most of the denominational world.

These great promises are the framework for a covenant that God made with Abraham. They are:

- 1) The **Land** (12:1)
- 2) A Great **Nation** (12:2)
- 3) A **Seed** to Bless all Nations (12:3)

In addition to Abraham, God repeats these covenant promises to Isaac (26:1-5, 24), Jacob (28:3-4, 13-14) and to Judah (49:10) - three generations of descendants. We also learn more detail about the timing of the covenant (15:13-18) and that the sign of the covenant would be circumcision (17:9-12).

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Key Dates in Bible History

Abraham first travels to Canaan	2050 BC
Jacob took his family to Egypt.....	1875 BC
Israel's exodus from Egypt.....	1445 BC
Israel's conquest of Canaan.....	1405 BC
Saul's accession to the throne	1050 BC
David's accession to the throne	1010 BC
Solomon's accession to the throne	970 BC
Division of the Kingdom (Israel & Judah).....	931 BC
Fall of Samaria (Israel).....	721 BC
Josiah's reforms.....	622 BC
Fall of Nineveh (Assyria).....	612 BC
Judeans (1 st group) taken to Babylon.....	606 BC
Fall of Jerusalem (2 nd group to Babylon).....	597 BC
Destruction of Jerusalem & temple.....	586 BC
Cyrus' decree.....	538 BC
Temple rebuild; dedicated by Zerubbabel.....	516 BC
Law re-instituted by Ezra.....	458 BC
Jerusalem walls rebuilt by Nehemiah	444 BC
Alexander Great captures Judah	332 BC
Temple cleansed by Judas Maccabaeus.....	165 BC
Birth of Christ.....	5 BC
Death of Christ.....	30
Fall of Jerusalem to Rome.....	70

All three promises were delivered by God unconditionally over different spans of time. God promised them, and God is not slack concerning His promises (2 For 1:20; 2 Pet 3:9). However, man's retention of the promises was always conditioned upon his faithfulness and obedience.

Let's look at each element:

- 1) The Land: All the land was given (Josh 21:43-45, Neh 9:7-8) and retention of it was conditioned on faithfulness (Deut 30:17-20, Josh 23:12-16).
- 2) The Nation: The Law of Moses was given at Mt. Sinai that established the nation (Ex 19:4-5, 20:1-17). It indeed became great (1 Kings 3:8-9). However, their eventual decimation and the reason for it is documented many places and even foretold by Moses (Deut 32:15-22) and again by Joshua (Josh 23:16).

- 3) The Seed: Through Abraham's seed alone would all the families (12:3) or nations (22:18) be blessed. The promise of the Messiah! (Acts 3:25-26). Of course, Christ's 'blessing' is received conditionally by those who believe on Him, obey and are baptized (Gal 3:26-29).

Some "Bible scholars" would say that Israel never really achieved nation status; they were never more than a loose band of tribes. Others would say that they never really inherited the land, only parts. Both of these concepts are likely born and rooted in the false doctrine of Premillennialism, for both concepts - if true - would give credence to the idea that the land and nation are yet to be delivered to the people of Israel.

While the aforementioned passages explicitly state the fact they were given by God in their entirety, it is also interesting to consider different O.T. individuals and how they acted according to these promises. Ask yourself as we read and look into their lives in coming lessons, "Did he believe that any part of God's promise was not complete and fulfilled?"

Consider just a few of these now:

- Joshua - What do think Joshua felt about the land promise after the Lord commissioned him directly to "Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land." (Josh 1:6) Did Joshua have any doubts? Later it's written, "So the Lord gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it." (Josh 21:43) and Joshua himself attests before the people, "not one word of all the good words which the Lord your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed." (Josh 23:14)
- Psalm 78 - The writer of this Psalm understands the current state of things as he writes, "So He brought them to His holy land, To this hill country which His right hand had gained. He also drove out the nations before them, and He apportioned them for an inheritance by measurement." (Psalm 78:54-55) Note that all of this is written in past tense - the writer

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believes and understands that this has already happened.

- David - When addressing the people near the end of his reign, he tells the assembly to “seek after all the commandments of the Lord your God in order that you may possess the good land and bequeath it to your sons after you forever.” (1 Ch 28:8) David’s concern was not that God had yet to give them the land, but rather that the people might disobey and be expelled.
- Solomon - When addressed by God at the beginning of his reign, he is warned to follow after His commandments or, “I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them...” (1 Kings 9:7) Did Solomon really believe there was land yet to be conquered? Was his reign consumed by wars and attempts to gain additional territory? Not at all! His were the “golden years” of Israel’s existence.
- Asa - When seeking after God and seeing that God was with him, King Asa “said to Judah, ‘Let us build these cities and surround them with walls and towers, gates and bars. The land is still ours, because we have sought the Lord our God. We have sought him, and he has given us peace on every side.’” (2 Ch 14:7)
- Jehoshaphat - When praying to God before a great battle, he states matter of factly, “Didst Thou not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and give it to the descendants of Abraham Thy friend forever?” (2 Ch 20:7)
- Jeremiah - Prays to God in the waning days of Jerusalem’s existence. He says, “you gave them this land...and they entered and took possession of it.” (Jer 32:22-23)
- Nehemiah - In a great scene of revival, the Levites address the people and speaking specifically about Abraham and “the covenant to give to his offspring the land” proclaim, “Thou hast fulfilled Thy promise.” (Neh 9:8)

We will continually see throughout the O.T. that everyone consistently understood and believed

that God was faithful and had delivered on His end of the bilateral agreement. We can even see it in the New Testament. For example, Paul in Acts 13 preaches in Antioch that God, “gave them their land as an inheritance.” (Acts 13:19)

There is never any question or dissent about it. Likewise, they understood that the promises could be lost due to their disobedience.

Premillennialism

The false doctrine of Premillennialism stems from a very different understanding of the promises that God made to Abraham. While there are foundational N.T. passages that give rise to this doctrine - namely, a literal interpretation of Rev 20:1-6 - from an O.T. perspective it essentially comes down to these questions:

- Was the promise ever totally fulfilled?
- Was the promise in any sense conditional?
- What is the meaning of “forever?”

The first two questions were addressed in the previous section and the third is a “Question for Discussion” so no more commentary will be made here. Suffice it to say that Premillennialism teaches the physical promises were *not* fulfilled, that they were *unconditional* and that “for ever” meant eternal.



St. Irenaeus (c. 130–202),
an early Christian
Premillennialist

These views, coupled with a literal interpretation of Rev 20:1-6 (and a few things in between) form the basis of false teaching about the rapture, the tribulation, Christ’s physical 1,000 year reign on earth, etc. It is a false doctrine that is not new, and has throughout history ebbed and flowed in popularity as world events might dictate. One surge in popularity was in the 1750’s when the (Catholic) French were at war with the British.

It would appear we are again in a period where this false doctrine is made popular with current world events. The birth of the modern state of Is-

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rael in 1948 has spurned an entire generation of “prophets” and “seers” attempting to interpret world events in light of end times” Bible prophecy. We should be ready to give answer with sound, simple Bible teaching.

And what is the simple Bible teaching? It includes:

1. An awareness of the passages included in the following chart, and
2. An understanding of the basic Bible study principles of context, literal vs. figurative language and handling prophecy.

But maybe the greatest lesson to be learned while considering this false doctrine in the context of an Old Testament study is recognizing the overall message of the Bible. The message of the Bible - both Old and New Testaments - is a spiritual message.

We will see repeatedly through this study how the physical things of the Old Testament - characters, events, rituals, feasts, locations, promises, triumphs - are meant to foreshadow the spiritual realities of the Christian. As Colossians 2:17 states, these are “things which are a mere shadow of what is to come.”

Read Galatians 3 for Paul's explanation of how this all fits together!

While these promises to Abraham were certainly physical, their real meaning and message to us today is spiritual. Israel indeed inherited a physical land. It was for them an object of great promise, desire and eventual bounty and peaceful rest once occupied.

How much greater is the Christian’s promised land? Hebrews 4 talks about the “Sabbath rest for the people of God.” Heaven is our “promised land” and as much as it meant to the Israelites and was central to their quest (in a physical sense), it is

even more so the Christian’s desire and quest for heaven.

Israel did in fact become a great nation - one admired and for a time revered by surrounding nations. How much greater is the Christian nation? Peter draws from several O.T. passages to call it, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession.” (1 Pet 2:9)

Finally, Israel was in fact born from Abraham’s seed with kings that sat on her physical throne in Jerusalem. But how much greater is the Christian’s King, Jesus Christ, who sits on the spiritual, eternal, heavenly throne in heaven...right now! (Acts 2:33)

Of course, Jesus was physically born from the lineage of Abraham (Matt 1:1) - important as it fulfilled prophecy that the Messiah would come from David and the tribe of Judah. However, Premillennial error teaches that He is yet to reign on a physical throne in Jerusalem.

Let us not hold on to the physical but step with faith into the spiritual. It is for spiritual application that these things are given to us. It is Christ who blesses all nations (e.g. including Jew and non-Jew alike). Specifically, the faithful in Christ receive forgiveness of sins and become joint heirs with Christ as children of God (Rom 8:16-17). What began as just a thread in Gen 3:15 – someone to bruise the head of Satan – expands in Gen 12:3 with the blessing of all nations (i.e. “all Gentiles”).

Monumental Faith

Abraham, as recorded in many New Testament passages (Rom 4, Gal 3, Heb 7, 11, Jms 2), was a man who walked with God and demonstrated great faith. Just as he left his home and wandered to a land “he did not know,” the one who wears the name of Christ is called to wander through this “foreign land” to a promised rest. “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” (Gal 3:6)

The greatest triumph of Abraham's obedient response is not in any intellectual rationalization of God's command but in his ability to control his emotions and still act on his intellectual belief.

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There are many events from his life that we can learn from, but possibly the greatest and certainly the most well known is the offering of his son Isaac. In this story we see demonstrated the monumental level of faith to which Abraham had evolved in his lifetime.

As is typical with Old Testament stories, the account in Gen 22 reads straightforwardly and matter-of-factly. God calls Abraham, Abraham responds, God tells Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, and Abraham proceeds to do it. In eleven brief verses, we read about the facts of a story that transpired over at least three days. But what of the emotions?

We must not forget that these are **real** events that happened to **real** people. Even when factoring in that Abraham believed God would raise Isaac from the dead (Heb 11:19), we should give real consideration to the emotions that must have, quite literally, consumed this family.

How must Abraham have felt? We have no record of him wavering for one moment - from God's call, to His request, to Abraham and Isaac's 3-day journey, to Abraham's raising his arm to slaughter his son of promise. But just because it is not recorded does not mean that he may not have

questioned somewhere along the way, and it certainly does not mean he was not emotionally distraught and conflicted during these actions.

Beyond the single question from Isaac that we have recorded, what other conversation might have taken place over their 3-day journey? How must he have felt binding his son?

What about Sarah? We have no record that Abraham told Sarah about his mission, but that does not mean he didn't. In fact, since he and Isaac were leaving for a few days it would seem likely he told her at least something about it. What would her reaction have been? If she knew and if she accepted God's will completely, what would that farewell have been like? How would she have said goodbye to Isaac?

What about Isaac? At what point did Isaac realize HE was the one to be sacrificed? His age at the time would have a bearing on this...We are not told exactly, but he was obviously old enough to journey for three days and carry wood. Was he old enough to understand the task at hand? If he did understand, did he accept it?

5 COMMON BELIEFS OF PREMILLENNIAL DOCTRINE				
O.T. "Kingdom prophecies" not fulfilled; current "church phase" 1	God's promises to Abraham are not yet fulfilled thus the Jewish nation will convert & return to Palestine 2	Christ came to establish His Kingdom, but circumstances led Him to set up church instead 3	Righteous dead raised at Christ's return & unrighteous dead raised at end of reign 4	Christ will return to earth to establish Kingdom & reign for 1,000 years on David's throne in Jerusalem 5
	Sub-point: Abraham's descendants are "in the flesh"		Sub-point: First resurrection will only be Gentiles (from Matt 25)	Sub-point: A literal interpretation of Rev 20:1-6; all premillennial doctrine requires this
Scripture Says: • God's Kingdom would be established during Roman times • Dan 2:44 • Act 2:16-17 • O.T. "Kingdom prophecies" ARE N.T. church • Ps 2, Joel 2, Ish 2, Dan 2, Hag 2, Acts 2, Eph 2 • 2 Sam 7:8-17 • 2 Chron 21:7; Ps 89:30-36	Scripture Says: • God "is not slack"; did His part • Josh 1:3; 21:43-45 • 1 Kings 8:56 (Deut 27, 28:62-63) • Jews believed fulfilled, but didn't keep their end • 1 Kings 9:4-9 • 2 Kings 17:18-19 • 1 Chron 28:8 • 2 Chron 20:7-11 • Ps 78:54-57 • Christian's are Abraham's true desc. "in the faith" • Rom 2:28-29 • Gal 3 • 1 Pet 2:1-10	Scripture Says: • Jews wanted an earthly kingdom • John 6:15 • John 18:36 • The church was part of God's eternal plan and purpose • Eph 3:10-11 • Jesus accomplished all He came to do • John 17:4 • God cannot be thwarted • Job 42:1-2 • Ish 8:10,13 • Ish 14:27	Scripture Says: • One resurrection • John 5:28-29 • Matt 25:31-34 • One Gospel for all • Matt 28:19 • Rev 1:7 • No second chance • Heb 9:27	Scripture Says: • Christ on Earth? • 1 Thes 4:15-17 • Jesus did not know? • John 18:36 • Jesus' reign present tense • John 14:1-3 • Acts 2:33 • 1 Tim 6:13-16 • Jesus could not possess literal throne • Jer 22:24-30

And what if he was not old enough to understand? Think of what he would have been doing as Abraham bound him, placed him on the alter, and raised his blade. What affect would that have on Abraham?

Any way you look at it, this had to be a time of intense emotions for all involved. The greatest triumph of Abraham's obedient response is not in any intellectual rationalization of God's command (e.g. "God had come through before" or "God will raise him up") but in his ability to control his emotions and still act on his intellectual belief.

In addition to his great act of faith, there are three other things to note about this story. First, that God used this to "test" Abraham. The KJV says that God "tempted" Abraham. If you are familiar with the passage that says God "does not tempt anyone" (Jms 1:13) then this might set off some alarm bells..."Contradiction! Contradiction!"

Actually, both "test" and "tempt" can be derived from the same Hebrew (O.T.) and Greek (N.T.) words. The distinction should be made instead on the motive for the test or temptation - is it to prove or build your faith? Or, is it to induce you to sin? God does the former (Gen 22:1-14, Jms 1:12, 1 Pet 1:6-7) while Satan is committed to the latter (Mt 4:3, 1 Cor 7:5, 1 Thess 3:5).

The second noteworthy point in this story is the type/anti-type relationship between Isaac's sacrifice and the greatest sacrifice - that of Jesus Christ. There are several "anti-types" from these events that would take place some 2,000 years later. "Types" for the eventual "anti-types" include:

- Isaac bearing the wood as Christ bore the cross,
- Isaac offered by his father as Christ was offered by His,
- The "only begotten" of the father/Father,
- Isaac being innocent as Christ was (which might be an argument for a younger Isaac),
- Reference to "the lamb,"
- The role that resurrection would play (Abraham's belief and Jesus' actual).

Finally, this story teaches us that God not only expects but demands action on our part. "Faith" does not stop with belief but is demonstrated and proven by obedience. And just as it was for Abraham, that obedience will often seem illogical to us or our worldly friends. It will likely be difficult and even contrary to our natural emotions - but, Godly obedience will prepare us, make us stronger and ultimately reward us with a home in heaven.

The Cave of Machpelah

Bought by Abraham for four hundred shekels of silver, the cave of Machpelah would become the earthly resting place for Abraham (25:9-10) and Sarah (23:19), Isaac and Rebekah (49:31), and Jacob and Leah (50:13). Jews and Muslims also believe it is the burial place for Adam and Eve (and Jews further believe it is the threshold to the Garden of Eden).

The cave was first owned by Ephron the Hittite (23:10), one of the sons of Heth, descendant of Noah, then Ham and then Canaan. The Hittites have some notoriety as an ancient nation given they were not at all accounted for until early in the twentieth century. Thought to be a Biblical fable or an insignificant tribe until then, they are now well documented by modern archeologists as a major ancient power existing between roughly 2,000 and 1,200 BC.

The Ishmaelites are mentioned as a distinct tribe in the Assyrian records. They later intermarried with and were absorbed by the Midianites and other local tribes. In Gen. 37:25-28; 39:1, the Ishmaelites are called the Midianites and in Judges 8:22-24 cf. 7:1f, the Midianites are called the Ishmaelites.

They were predominately located far to the north of the land of Canaan in modern day Turkey. Most commonly, reference is made to the Hittites as part of the list of nations that the Hebrews would drive out ("the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, etc.). We further see their Biblical reference when Esau's two wives (26:34) brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah. Finally, we can't forget David's captain, Uriah the Hittite.

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Twelve Sons

A nation for God's own possession was born beginning with Abraham, it continued through his younger son Isaac, and then through Isaac's younger son Jacob. The nation of Israel then unfolds through Jacob's twelve sons.

However, and somewhat true to form, the first born is denied his birthright. Because of his sin with Bilhah (the mother of Dan and Naphtali), Reuben's birthright is given to and shared between the sons of Joseph.

Jacob prophecies about his sons with some interesting observations into their characters and personalities (49:1-27):

- Reuben: "uncontrolled as water"
- Simeon and Levi: "cursed be their anger, for it is fierce"
- Judah: "Your father's sons shall bow down to you."
- Zebulun: "shall dwell at the seashore"
- Issachar: "a strong donkey"
- Dan: "shall be a serpent in the way"
- Gad: "raiders shall raid him"
- Asher: "his food shall be rich"
- Naphtali: "gives beautiful words"
- Joseph: "with blessings of heaven above"
- Benjamin: "a ravenous wolf"

What conclusions can you draw from their father's prophecy? For one, poor Zebulun - he was

the only one to have nothing said of his disposition, only where he would live. Maybe he did not have much of a personality?

Children of Jacob by Wife (in order of birth)	
<i>Leah</i>	<i>Reuben (1)</i> <i>Simeon (2)</i> <i>Levi (3)</i> <i>Judah (4)</i> <i>Issachar (9)</i> <i>Zebulun (10)</i>
<i>Rachel</i>	<i>Joseph (11)</i> <i>Benjamin (12)</i>
<i>Bilhah</i> <i>(Rachel's servant)</i>	<i>Dan (5)</i> <i>Naphtali (6)</i>
<i>Zilpah</i> <i>(Leah's servant)</i>	<i>Gad (7)</i> <i>Asher (8)</i>

Benjamin also stands out. The youngest that had garnered so much doting and protection from his father. Maybe that negatively affected his adulthood?

Of them all, of course it is Judah that stands out. Indeed the other sons would bow down to him. Jacob also says "The scepter shall not depart from Judah." In Psalms 60:7, God says "Judah is My scepter [lit. 'lawgiver']."

Summary

Through Judah would come the hope for all peoples; the promise of blessing to all nations. In spite of imperfect individuals, God's plan is carrying through.

His promises are true and His plan is perfect.

Questions for Discussion

- 1) From this text, what verses would you select as the key passage on which the complete Bible story unfolds and why?
- 2) What four major characters are presented in the Genesis lesson text (e.g. not counting Job)?

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- 3) Of the four major characters, which one fits the least and why?
- 4) In ONE word, state the message/theme of the book of Job?
- 5) How would you explain passages like 17:7-8, 19 that state that God's covenant is "everlasting"?
- 6) What is the significance of Melchizedek?
- 7) What does the angel of the Lord prophesy about Ishmael?
- 8) How would you explain the difference between the "3 men" reference in 18:2 and the "2 men" in 19:1?
- 9) What else can we learn from other Biblical reference about the "cities of the valley"? (Gen 19:29)
- 10) What observations can you make about the way in which Abraham, Isaac and Jacob similarly blessed their sons?
- 11) How many parallels can you find between Isaac and Jesus (3 is 'so-so', 5 is 'good', 8 is 'super student')?
- 12) What became of Dan that Jacob would prophesy that his descendants become "a serpent in the way?"
- 13) What wrong did Reuben commit that would later cost him the birthright?

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14) In what way does Judah, during the story of Joseph, foreshadow what Christ did for us?

Lesson 4: Exodus and the Law Given



LESSON TEXT:

- ~ Exodus
- ~ Leviticus
- ~ Numbers 1-14

Moses began writing about major events, then key individuals, and now finally about *the* nation of God's own people. Not only are the events of Israel's evolution as a nation interesting and historically relevant, it foreshadows the great plan that God had for "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation." (1 Pet 2:9)

Israel emerges from the pain and suffering of more than 400 years of slavery and oppression in Egypt, into a land flowing with milk and honey. It is just as Peter describes that God's royal priesthood will "proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. For you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." (1 Pet 2:10)

Peter is using the physical example of Israel's exodus to describe the spiritual kingdom. In fact, the second book of the Pentateuch foreshadows God's great redemption for His people. The story of salvation for His physical people gives us insight into the plan of redemption for His spiritual people.

It is these events that a Christian needs a basic understanding of in order to appreciate the New

Testament book of Hebrews. The author of Hebrews draws parallels from the nation of Israel's suffering in the bondage of Egypt, their wanderings and reliance on God (or disobedience as the case may be), the great figure of Moses, the required animal sacrifices and finally their preparation to enter the promised land!

The text for this lesson begins a nearly unending list of parallels between the physical and spiritual. The great harmony of the Bible really compounds at this point. Jesus Himself testifies to its harmony in John's gospel, "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" (Jn 5:46-47)

A high-level outline of Exodus would include three major sections:

- *Israel in Egypt – chap. 1-12*
- *Journey to Sinai – chap. 12-18*
- *Israel in Sinai – chap. 19-40*

A Great Leader

Where would we be without great leaders? And where would leaders be without the wisdom and guidance of The Almighty?

In Moses we find a man with incredible insecurities and often demonstrating great self-doubt. Yet with great wisdom and maybe even greater humility (he was after all more humble than anyone on earth – Num 12:3), he led a band of 'rag-tag misfits' – an oppressed collection of tribes in fact – to the threshold of greatness and glory.

Moses was a man blessed through obedience with the guidance of God but he was also thoughtful,

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courageous and determined enough to counsel with God face to face (Ex 33:11ff). Although humble, he was not a patsy or a pawn. Indeed, his own glorification would limit his 'reign' over Israel but not his place in history or in the Kingdom of Heaven (Heb 3:5).

Moses is referenced at least 80 times in the New Testament, depending on the translation. A short sampling includes:

- Jesus and the Apostles referring to the Law of Moses and proving God's great plan. (Luke 24:27, Acts 7, etc. etc.)
- The great events associated with Moses and how they foreshadow the Christian's life. (Jn 3:14, 2 Cor 3, Rev 15:3, etc. etc.)
- Moses' personal example of faith and righteousness.

"By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel." (Heb 11:24-28) NIV

Type / Antitype

Seemingly endless correlations can be drawn between events and figures in the Old Testament and the New Testament. The foreshadowing that takes place in the Old Testament is often referred to as 'Type/Antitype.' The Type offers a glimpse, impression or shadow of the Antitype that is to come later.

The Old Covenant as a whole can be described as the Type of the New Covenant. If a reader has not drawn that conclusion for him or herself by the ninth chapter of Hebrews, the writer states it plainly in 10:1, "For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near."

Nowhere else can so many of the individual Type/Antitype comparisons be drawn than from this lesson's text. One of the most obvious is the Type – Moses to the Antitype – Christ. It is striking to consider that they both were:

- The child of a slave, and yet...the son of a king.
- Born in a hut, but...lived in a palace.
- The leader of armies, yet the keeper of flocks.
- The meekest of men, and...the giver of the Law.

Scientific Evidences

The Bible declares that blood is life about 3,000 years before man.

1,400 BC - "For the life of the flesh is in the blood" (Lev. 17:11)

1,500 AD – Illnesses commonly treated by blood letting.

1,628 AD – W. Harvey described how blood flows through body.

- **It can't be manufactured.**
- **Animal blood can't replace it.**
- **People are the only source of blood for those who need it.**

It could be an exhausting study to consider the numerous parallels between the Old and New Testaments and it is not necessarily a "stretch" to do so. Moses himself writes, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him." (Deut 18:15) How many more Type/Antitype relationships can you think of?

What other OT characters would be Types of Christ?

- 1) Moses
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

The Tent of Meeting

The book of Exodus concludes with the building of the Tabernacle. This temporary tent of meeting would be the center for worship for the Israelites beginning one year after their exodus (Ex 40:17, about 1445BC) - throughout the period of their wanderings - until the time that David captures Jerusalem and his son Solomon builds the first permanent temple (around 950BC).

For about 500 years, this structure served as a constant reminder that God was at the center of their lives. And in this case that was literal. Not only were the tribes physically distributed around the tabernacle when camped, it was the actual dwelling place for God (Ex 25:8). They could witness the cloud over the tabernacle by day and the pillar of fire by night. (Ex 40:34-Lev 1:1)

There are a significant number of chapters in Exodus giving the tabernacle's blueprint. Detailed and specific instructions regarding its construction and all of the implements. It is unquestionably a prime Old Testament example of what God requires in terms of obedience. While there are many other examples of this, the building of the tabernacle and all the instructions about its use shows the detail in the way God expects to be worshipped.

Just think about all the elements involved here:

- The exacting way in which it was built. Everything was built and laid out exactly as God had commanded. (Ex 39:32-42)
- The physical talents of those who contributed to the building. Each contributed according to his or her God-given skills.
- The monetary gifts that were given by all the people for its financing. All gave cheerfully and willingly until such a time that Moses had to command them to stop. (Ex 36:6)
- The otherwise ordinary things that became holy because of their use in the tabernacle or for worship. Food, incense or clothing made

holy because of their application in service to the Lord.

- The care with which the priest had to approach the worship. Often preparing themselves with special clothing, bathing or other rituals.

It is truly a model for the Christian "priesthood" (1 Pet 2:9) that ministers in Christ's church today. But even more glorious is the fact that our access to the Father is not limited by a physical veil and High Priest with access only once a year. (Heb 9:7, 2 Cor 3:14-18)

The veil that concealed the Holy of Holies in the temple in Jerusalem was reportedly 60ft high, 30ft wide and 4in thick. How miraculous that this veil

was torn from *top to bottom* when Christ died on the cross. (Mt 27:51) But greater still is the Christian's redemption made possible by the blood of Christ that spilled making

God accessible.

Ex 19:6 - "and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

"Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near." (Heb 10:19-25)



There is no longer a physical tabernacle or temple. The last one, accredited to Herod, was destroyed by the Romans in 70AD never to be rebuilt.

However, long before this God promised through the prophets, "My dwelling place shall be with

them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” (Ez 37:27). Even more poignantly, God states through Ezekiel:

“I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. 25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. 28 You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.” (Ez 36:24-28)

As we turn to the pages of the New Testament and see God’s plan was fulfilled through the sending of His Son, the Apostle John testifies, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory...” (Jn 1:14). God was dwelling again among His people.

But ultimately, Jesus points us further still when He promised His disciples that, “Whoever believes in me” would receive the Holy Spirit (Jn 7:38-39). Eventually, Peter declared this promises ultimate fulfillment for all of those on the Day of Pentecost that responded to the gospel call (Acts 2:38-39) and anyone that would going forward (Acts 5:32).

What an amazing thought and comfort! Any baptized believer today is the dwelling place of God through His Spirit! (Rom 8:11, 1 Cor 6:19, Eph 2:22, 1 Jn 4:4, 2 Jn 1:9)

The Lord’s Feasts (Lev 23)

The annual feasts that ancient Israel was commanded to observe have significant symbolism and prophetic meaning for us today. Accounting for them as laid out in the book of Leviticus:

THE FIRST CALENDAR MONTH

- 1) **Passover** – On the fourteenth day Israel was to commemorate their deliverance from Egypt when the lamb’s blood on the doorpost averted God’s judgment on that family.
- 2) **Unleavened Bread** – The day following Passover began a week long celebration show-

ing the purity that Israel was to walk in after the blood deliverance of the Passover lamb. This purity was demonstrated by only eating unleavened bread.

- 3) **First Fruits** – The day following the Passover’s Sabbath, Israel was to wave a sheaf to thank God for the grain He has provided.

THE THIRD CALENDAR MONTH

- 4) **Pentecost** (or Weeks) – 50 days (or 7 weeks) from the First Fruits, Israel brings a new grain offering and literally waves two *leavened* loaves in the air.

THE SEVENTH CALENDAR MONTH

- 5) **Trumpets** (Jewish modern day Rosh Hashanah) – On the first day, trumpets were blown to gather the people for a holy convocation to the Lord.
- 6) **Day of Atonement** (Jewish modern day Yom Kippur) – On the tenth day another gathering for holy convocation but in solemn reflection, not a celebration. They were to do no work and “afflict” their souls. The High Priest was to lay the sins of the people on the head of a goat and release it into the wilderness (Lev 16:20-22).
- 7) **Tabernacles** (or Booths) – On the fifteenth day began a celebration of gratitude and remembrance of God’s provisions during their wanderings and entrance into the Promised Land. This was eight days long where the first and eighth days were days of rest.

Structurally, these could be linked or grouped together. The first four seem to relate to the work of Jesus in His first coming and earthly ministry.

- During the Jewish **Passover** feast is when Jesus was put to death (Jn 19:14). As Christians under the New Covenant, Jesus is our Passover (1 Cor 5:7) – the perfect Lamb sacrificed once for all. Christ’s spilled blood replaces the lamb’s blood on the doorpost and provides for God’s judgment to pass over those who receive it. Furthermore, a Christian’s “Passover feast” is celebrated every first day of the week in the partaking of the Lord’s Supper – the unleavened bread His body and the fruit of the vine His blood (1 Cor 11:24-25).

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- The Feast of **Unleavened Bread** could relate to Christ's death as a perfect and sinless being or simply to a Christian's duty to purge the leaven (i.e. sin) from them (1 Cor 5:7,8).
- The **First Fruits** related to the resurrection of Jesus. Paul teaches in 1 Cor 15:20-23 that Christ has raised from the dead and is the first fruits of those asleep.
- "When the day of **Pentecost** had come, they were all together in one place." (Acts 2:1) The time had come for the ushering in of Christ's church and the fulfillment of prophecy from Psalms 2, Isaiah 2, Daniel 2 and Joel 2!! The significance of the leavened loaf may symbolize the inclusion of the Greeks into the church beginning in Acts 10 and confirmed in Ephesians 2.

Remember that the Old Testament refers to other "Feasts" that were instituted in later times. One will also find reference to these same seven "primary" Feasts by different names. Finally, these Feasts involved and included various sacrifices and/or rituals. Reference might be found to these when reading about "sin offerings", "wave offerings", "guilt offerings", "peace offerings", etc.

The last three are closely connected to each other in proximity (about three weeks) as well as activity for the ancient Israelites. However, their significance and symbolism for the Christian are less certain.

Some would contend that they map closely to Christ's second coming. Certainly Paul writes that Christ's second coming will be heralded by the trumpet of God (1 Thes 4:16). This may directly correlate to the Feast of Trumpets. But New Testament support falls away as attempts are made to draw further connection to a "Day of Atonement" for the modern day nation of Israel. Premillennialists teach that this will occur during the "Great Tribulation" (Jer 30:7). They would carry this a step further and teach that the Feast of Tabernacles correlates to the 1,000 year 'millennium rest' that is coming for Israel and God's people (Zech 14:16-19).

The New Testament does support the symbolic significance of the Day of Atonement in the sense that Christ is our 'scapegoat' (2 Cor 5:21). This single day that atoned the Israelites for their sins happened once every year, but a Christian's Day of Atonement happened once for all (Heb 10:1-10).

Kingdom Cards



This time period of world history provides an opportune time to focus even more on the world that is developing and surrounding God's chosen people. The Hittites, Egyptians and soon the Syrians play significant roles in Israel's own, national history but new, greater kingdoms will emerge and the Old Testament has much to say about them.

As history moves forward, these kingdoms keep better records and the Bible student can begin to see an alternate but parallel historical record emerge. It is fascinating to see where these points intersect.

This is where the Kingdom Cards may be useful. Beginning here and over several subsequent lessons you will find a card for each of these nations: Egypt, Syria, Assyria, Babylon, Persia. Each card attempts to chronicle the nation's leaders that have some historical relationship to the Biblical account of history.

It's appropriate to introduce Egypt's card at this point in the historical record. This nation plays the longest "recurring role" in God's plan (and for that reason is split between two cards). Obviously, they are central to the Exodus story. Their card's "Part 1" highlights the Pharaohs during three pe-

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riods of Israel's history - Exodus, Conquest and Judges.

As these cards appear in future lessons, take a moment to review each of them for additional insight and confirmation of the historical account we have revealed in God's word. This first card is a little unique in that it does not have any scriptural references, but this will change dramatically as we move forward in history in subsequent cards. In either case, take some time to note the intersection of the Biblical account.

Summary

This section of the Old Testament is critical for a Bible student's understanding of God's overall plan. It is rich in the foreshadowing of New Testament characters, principles and doctrine. Lessons from this text could continue for many more pages to illustrate these types and aspects of God's unchanging character that are revealed so plainly and clearly.

Unfortunately time does not permit further examination, but hopefully these thoughts and the questions that follow will encourage more in depth individual study of this section of God's great story.

EGYPT - Exodus-Conquest-Judges	
Senusret II	1897-1878
● Suggested to be Pharaoh of Joseph's time	
Thutmose II	Eighteenth Dynasty 1493-1479?
● Suggested Pharaoh of Exodus; no son; widow Hapshepsut took throne	
Thutmose III	1479-1425
● Reign if using the "High Chronology of Egypt" 1504-1450	
● Called Egypt's greatest conqueror	
● Battle of Meggido against kingdoms of Canaan; became vassals to Egypt 1457	
● First 22 years as co-regent with Hapshepsut	
● First son died (in tenth plague??)	
● Final 2 years named Amenhotep II as co-regent	
Amenhotep II	1427-1400?
● Likely Pharaoh of Exodus 1446-45?	
● His firstborn likewise died; Thutmose IV was his second son	
Thutmose IV	1400-1390
● Joshua entering the Promised Land	
Amenhotep III	1390-1352
● Many of the Amarna Letters written to him (letters from Canaan kings dealing with "the Hebrews")	
Amenhotep IV	1352-1336
● Also received many of the Amarna Letters	
● His son/successor was the famous Tutankhamun ("King Tut")	
Ramesses II (the Great)	Nineteenth Dynasty 1279-1213
● Pharaoh of Exodus in the movies (but not likely)	
● Battle of Kadesh against Hittites at Kadesh; largely a stalemate 1274	
● Signed Egyptian-Hittite peace treaty 1258	
Merenptah	1213-1203
● Stela in Cairo Museum celebrating triumph over "Israel" 1208	
● "Israel is laid waste and his seed is not"	

Questions for Discussion

- 1) Is anyone held responsible for the "golden calf" incident?

- 2) In Num. 12:1, why might Aaron and Miriam speak against Moses because of "the Cushite woman whom he had married"?

- 3) On what occasions did Moses change the mind of God?

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- 4) List as many Type/Antitypes as you can from this text.

- 5) What N.T. scripture might support a Type/Antitype regarding the Holy Spirit?

- 6) What was put in the Ark (support this with Old and New Testament scripture)?

- 7) How many temples followed the tabernacle?

- 8) When are we introduced to Joshua and what is he doing?

- 9) What time span does the book of Leviticus cover (ref: Ex 40:17, 32-38; Lev 1:1,2; Num 1:1)?

- 10) Recount the “ten tests” referenced in Num 14:22.
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
 - 4) _____
 - 5) _____
 - 6) _____
 - 7) _____
 - 8) _____
 - 9) _____
 - 10) _____

- 11) There are many specific “Moses events” mentioned in the New Testament and used to make application of a specific “Christian event.” List as many as you can.

Lesson 5: Wilderness Wanderings

LESSON TEXT:

~ Numbers 15-36

~ Deuteronomy

The Israelites have endured much up to this point. After their great exodus from 400 years of persecution in Egypt, they have:

- Been provided with manna & quail,
- Begun observance of the Sabbath,
- Gotten water from a rock,
- Fought 'first fight' against Amalek,
- Received the Law from God, via Moses,
- Consecrated the priests,
- Built the Tabernacle and implements,
- Received instruction regarding the Feasts,
- Numbered the people (603,550),
- Been guided by cloud and fire,
- Spied out the land of Canaan.

They have journeyed to the border of the Promised Land but lack of faith sentences them to forty years of wandering in the wilderness.

False Teachers

The New Testament book of Jude is a short book written to remind the recipients "to contend earnestly for the faith" because "certain persons have crept in unnoticed...ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness..." They were false teachers and they threatened to destroy the faith of the believers!

Jude uses examples of events and characters from the Old Testament to make his point. In fact, an

appropriate heading for the book of Jude is "*Warnings from History to the Ungodly.*"

In Jude 11 he identifies three specific types of false teachers:

- 1) Cain, who through substitution lead himself (and possibly others) astray. We don't know if the motivation was selfishness, haughtiness or simply laziness, but the result for Cain was the same either way. (Heb 11:4)
- 2) Balaam, who because of greed and personal gain led the entire nation of Israel astray and caused the annihilation of a second nation. (2 Pet 2:15-16)
- 3) Korah, a gainsayer who led a group to go against the authority of God. This group was men of renown who presumed that God was with every one of them and the entire congregation was holy. They were convinced that Moses was out of line and over-stepping his authority. (Col 3:17)

Three excellent examples that demonstrate all that can be learned from the characters in the Old Testament. There is also an implied lesson in God's attitude and reaction to those characters. God dealt harshly with each of these Old Testament figures because of their self will and arrogance. The times, places and events may change, but God never changes and His reaction to our actions is consistent. (Jms 1:17)

Grace, Faith and Obedience

God's expectations for mankind have also never changed. Above and before any actions we might take, God expects our hearts to be centered on Him. That translates into humility. When the Israelites began to grumble against God and Moses in Num 21, God sent fiery serpents to bite them, leading to certain death for those bitten.

There are numerous parallels to draw from this story. After the people recognize their sin, they ask Moses to intercede on their behalf. God di-

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rects Moses to lift a fiery serpent on a standard so that when someone is bitten, they can look to it and live.

Jesus draws a parallel to Himself in Jn 3:14 that just as Moses lifted up the serpent, so too “must the Son of Man be lifted up.” But for what benefit? Jesus later explains that it was so “...whoever believes may in Him have eternal life.” (Jn 3:15) Roughly 1,400 years before Christ, God demonstrates the same process by which man would have eternal life:

- God’s free *grace* would be offered.
- Man would have to have *faith* and believe.
- Man would, based on his faith, exercise *obedience* and do the things required by God.

This same pattern was seen in the saving of Noah (see “[Salvation](#)”, page 9) and again in the taking of Jericho (see “[A Formula through Time](#)”, page 35), and again in the healing of Namaan (see “[A Working, Obedient Faith](#)”, page 59). And still 3,400 years later the pattern remains the same (see the books of Romans and James in the New Testament).

For the Israelites in Num 21, God demonstrated His grace by providing a means of escaping the “fire” among them. Before anyone was saved, they had to believe in God’s plan and take action – specifically, they had to look to the bronze serpent.

Observe three other interesting facts and parallels about this story:

God’s plan and purpose will always be achieved - with or without our cooperation.

- 1) What the people asked for *versus* what they received. They asked to have the fiery serpents removed from their midst. That did not happen; the serpents remained in their midst. The path to salvation that they expected or seemed logical to them was *not* what God had planned. How many of the bitten were disheartened, disillusioned or just plain stubborn...and still did not look to the standard? There is an implication that there were, quite incredibly, some that refused to look at the standard for their healing.

- 2) The affliction happened *before* salvation. A man did not look to the bronze serpent to live until *after* he was bitten. The serpents were among them; the threat was constant. How much are those fiery serpents like the sin that “so easily besets us?”
- 3) Even knowing the remedy, some would not look...and died. The Apostle Paul instructs that “We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents.” (1 Cor 10:9) Apparently, there were some stubborn enough to not simply look up to the brazen serpent in order to be saved. Who knows, maybe they were thinking, “God’s powerful enough to save me...I don’t need to ‘do’ anything for my salvation.”

The parallel between this Old Testament story and God’s greater plan for salvation is unavoidable and undeniable. “All have fallen short” and must look to Christ for salvation.

Driven by the Spirit

Poor Balaam! He was only trying to do what was best for God’s people. He blessed them three times, in spite of Balak’s bribes to entice him to curse them...well, not exactly.

It appears that Balaam was a Gentile prophet of God who is looking out for God’s people. After his “blessings,” he “departs and returns to his place” (Num 24) and in a seemingly unrelated event, Israel “joined themselves to Baal of Peor” (Num 25:3).

An early clue to Balaam’s true intentions is discovered when God was angry with him going to see Balak, but still, it appears Balaam repents and God allows him passage. (Num 22:34-35) But the rest of the story unfolds in Num 31 where we learn it was Balaam that counseled the Moabites (or Ammonites) to negatively influence the Israelites through intermarrying.

The legacy of Balaam’s actions lives throughout the Bible. Besides Moses’ condemnation, other writers negatively refer to Balaam’s actions as:

- The “error of Balaam” (Jude 11)
- The “way of Balaam” (2 Pet 2:15)
- The “teaching of Balaam” (Rev 2:14)

He was truly a notorious character, but other interesting questions about this story arise. For example, when considering who Balaam was – why was he a prophet of God? He was a heathen Gentile that clearly had prophetic capability. God spoke with him directly and he apparently had some level of respect for and belief in The Almighty. His relationship with God was something that he was well known for, enough that the King of Moab sought him out.

Also, what about the role of the Midianites? Balak, seeking additional counsel (or just moral support), goes to the elders of Midian who then go together with the elders of Moab to find Balaam. What must that have meant to Moses who was (a) married to a Midianite woman, (b) counseled with his father-in-law who was himself a priest of Midian (Ex 18:1), and (c) later had to destroy the Midianites (Num 31) because of Balaam’s counsel?

This story shows us a time that God worked directly with/through an individual to achieve His purpose, even when the individual’s will was contrary to God’s will. This is contrasted with how the Christian is instructed to live today. We are to be “led by the Spirit” (Rom 8:14, Gal 5:18) since all revelation has been given through His Word, the Gospel. It would appear that Balaam was driven by the Spirit instead of being led by it.

Additionally we can learn something about God’s providence. Man’s desires can “strive” against God’s will (Gen 6:3) and for the time being man will have his way. In spite of the Spirit’s intervention, Balaam found another way to get what he wanted (glory and riches) by providing King Balak with what he wanted (a way to undermine the growing threat at his doorstep).

However, in the end, God’s plan and purpose will always be achieved – with or without our cooperation.

The Great Summation

The wanderings have ended and the children of Israel stand ready to enter the Promised Land. Moses is 120 years old and is about to die. But he will first recount all that has happened since their exodus from Egypt including their battles, their disobedience and their requirements under God’s law.

The book of Deuteronomy covers only about a five-week period and is second only to the Psalms for quotation in the New Testament. It is strikingly similar to a vassal treaty – a common treaty of the day (particularly the Hittites) drawn up by a conquering nation. Both nations would keep a copy of the agreement.

The pattern followed by vassal treaties was always the same:

- 1) Introduction (the where, when and who)
- 2) A historical prologue
- 3) Legal Section: the laws to be enforced
- 4) Blessings and Curses
- 5) The witnesses (to the agreement)
- 6) A provision for deposit and regular reading

Indeed, Deuteronomy adheres to the format of a typical vassal treaty of that day. It is reasonable and very likely that the vassal treaty was something the people were familiar with since the Hittite nation was the prominent nation during this time (along with the Egyptians).

Deuteronomy’s outline according to a standard vassal treaty is worth noting:

- 1) Introduction (1:1-5) – given on the plains of Moab (the “where”) in the 11th month of the 40th year (the “when”). Jehovah and the children of Israel are present (the “who”).
- 2) A historical prologue (1:6-4:49) – a summary of what God had done for them.
- 3) Legal Section (5-26) – general principles in 5-11 with specifics in 12-26.
- 4) Blessings and Curses (27-28)

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- 5) The witnesses (28-33) – Jehovah, heaven and earth, the song of Moses (31:21), the Ten Commandments.
- 6) A provision for deposit and regular reading (31:10-13, 22-26) – both copies kept in ark and read every seven years.

The results of this treaty are revealed by Micah (6:1-5) where the same witnesses (heaven and earth) are called to testify in a dramatic courtroom scene. As Moses had prophesied earlier (4:25-28) and then again later through much of his song (32:15-33), the people would be found guilty and in breach of the treaty.

Summary

After Moses proclaims the curses from mount Ebal and the blessings from mount Gerizim, it was up to the people to obey. The beginning and end of Moses' counsel can be summarized by just two verses.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." (Deut 6:5)

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants." (Deut 30:19)

Questions for Discussion

- 1) What might have caused Korah to rebel and to whom was it directed?
- 2) What was the aftermath of "Korah's Rebellion?"
- 3) Whatever happened to the "Bronze Serpent?"
- 4) Recount the main characters and lessons learned from the "Sin of Peor?"
- 5) What other cities were destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah (Deut 29:23) and what are they equated to in prophecy?
- 6) What impact must the "Sin of Peor" had on Moses personally?
- 7) Why does Moses repeat everything to the people of Israel (recorded in book of Deuteronomy)?

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- 8) What traits of God are pointed out in the book of Deuteronomy? (Hint: Find one or more in each of these chapters - 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 12)

- 9) What do Deut. 7:22 and Josh. 2:1 teach us about God's providence?

- 10) What do we learn about prayer in Deut 8:10-14?

- 11) What do we learn in Deut. 9 about the events of the "golden calf" that we did not learn in Ex 32?

- 12) From this reading, what two victories of the Israelites over Kings stand out above all others?

- 13) What is significant about Satan's objections with God about Moses' burial in Jude 9?

Lesson 6: Conquest

LESSON TEXT:

~ Joshua

The mantle has now been passed to Joshua, another great leader of God’s people. He was about 40 when he spied the land with the other eleven. After about 40 more years of wilderness wanderings he is now 80 and he will lead Israel for 30 years – the span of time that his book covers.

He is quite possibly the ‘least flawed’ character in the Old Testament – at least of what is recorded. Joshua is one who is responsible, humble, courageous, wise and ready to do what is right in the sight of the Lord. That “Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua” (24:31) is certainly a tribute to a great and wise leader.

Patterns

It’s difficult to ignore. Possibly the greatest benefit to reading through the Old Testament is the opportunity to gain an intimate understanding of the character of God Almighty...

- ...The degree to which He hates sin...
- ...His desire to have a relationship with man...
- ...His expectation of praise and worship...
- ...His compassion...
- ...His unwavering judgment.

Like a good friend, one can begin to almost predict what God’s response is going to be before reading about a particular event or action. The greatest value from these insights is in our application and interpretation of New Testament doctrine.

Especially when controversial or difficult to understand, New Testament doctrine viewed through the lens of Old Testament stories often make our understanding much clearer. The Old Testament holds many clues to help our understanding of doctrine that might otherwise be hard to understand...or accept.

This is only possible because God doesn’t change (Mal 3:6, Heb 6:17; 13:8, Jms 1:18)! So often that fact is simply stated without why it is so important. It is a fact that is central to a Christian’s belief today.

His plan was set at the creation of the world. Throughout the history recorded for us in the Old Testament we see God’s character in distinct ways. God does not and has not changed! It is therefore not only logical, but because He does not change it requires that principles and patterns are consistently applied throughout God’s revelation to humanity — Old Law or New Covenant.

A Formula through Time

Rahab was a Gentile and a harlot. There should be no expectation of her salvation except that she does two things: she has faith in God and she acts on that faith.

Likewise, in the taking of



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Jericho, the children of Israel have faith and act on that faith. When presented with a completely ridiculous and illogical method, they trusted God and obeyed His instruction to the letter. The Hebrews writer summarizes, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days." (Heb 11:30)

Note that all of this happened *after* God had told Joshua, "I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and valiant warriors." (Josh 6:2). Did the people possess the city when God revealed this to Joshua? Of course not. God's *grace* was first extended.

Furthermore, God expected *belief* and full *obedience* in activities that must have seemed unnecessary or silly. One wonders if the children of Israel thought back to the bronze serpent (see "[Grace, Faith and Obedience](#)," page 29). Maybe it is with these examples that Philip "preached Jesus" to the eunuch, causing the eunuch to respond and say, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:36)

Grace – Faith – Obedience (i.e. Works): God's formula through the ages. Like the legs of a three-legged stool, all three are required. They were required with Noah & Abraham, with Rahab & Joshua and with us today. Again, why would it be different – God does not change.

Unfortunately, Israel later lost Jericho because of her disobedience. (Judges 3:13) So too must Christians remain obedient. Just as Joshua warned in 22:5:

"be very careful to observe the commandments and the law which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, to love the Lord your God and walk in all His ways and keep His commandments and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul."

Why would God's expectation be any different today?

"Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God. But encourage one another day after

day, as long as it is still call 'Today,' lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." (Heb 3:12-13)

God's Providence

It is interesting to observe how one might interpret the direct role that God is playing in their life. There have been times in history (not too long ago) when almost every human experience was followed by an "interpretation" of what God must have meant or intended by the event.

Of course, the interpretations still occur today. Expressions such as "I am waiting for God to open a door" or "God helped me find this job" or even "God has blessed me with [this] or [that]." Certainly, if Scripture is our authority, then there is ample authority for one to conclude that there is nothing wrong with making these kinds of statements. Throughout the Bible, statements of this type are made by righteous – and unrighteous alike.

It is good and right to acknowledge that "every good and perfect gift is from above" (Jms 1:17) and we should be giving God thanks for these gifts. God is working in our lives and doing what is best for us!

However, those Bible truths do not replace a Christian's responsibility to apply his/her God-given talents and exercise good judgment and wisdom (also Bible truths). While we can make these statements like, "I'm waiting for God to open a door," understand the danger in literally applying it!

In other words, we can't simply "let Jesus take the wheel" of our lives while abdicating our individual responsibility - effectively replacing God's providence with our own Godly decision-making. We are called to be constantly growing in the truth and knowledge of the Lord. "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." (2 Tim 2:15)

We can't simply "let Jesus take the wheel" of our lives.

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Joshua had pre-knowledge directly from God that wherever he stepped, God had given that land to him (1:3). Yet he sent spies to scout out the land before entering (2:1). Joshua had the luxury of knowing from God His providential plan and still exercised what he knew as sound judgment and took action. How much more should those who do not have direct knowledge of God's providential plan exercise sound judgment and take action? (see "A Divine Gift," page 52)

Summary

It would be a long time before Israel knew a stronger and more upright leader than Joshua. It can't be known for sure what the divine appearing to Joshua meant in 5:13-15, but inference can be made about many possibilities.

Was the "captain of the host of the Lord" the Son of God - the very Word that was from the begin-

ning? Possibly. But it's not too much of a stretch to conclude that the appearance at least meant:

- Joshua's activities and leadership were approved by God, especially given the timing – right after the circumcising of the people and the observance of the Passover.
- Joshua should take courage that the Lord was on his side with the ensuing battles – particularly that of Jericho.
- Joshua himself was a bold and courageous leader – approaching the man/angel and inquiring of His intent.
- Joshua was decisive and action-oriented. He was ready to engage if the man/angel was an enemy.

Joshua was a true hero.

Questions for Discussion

- 1) What chapter in Joshua seems to really signify that the people were no longer wandering but were now "home"? What five things happened to "mark" the transition? (HINT: An early chapter before they take Jericho.)
- 2) What would be most striking about the story of Achan if told to Oprah Winfrey (or any other Humanist)?
- 3) What did it mean for an enemy city of Israel to be "under the ban" and what was it for?
- 4) From the conquest of Ai (8:26), where else had Joshua seen the "lift up your arm to win the battle" miracle?

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- 5) What is the best reference from this lesson's text that demonstrates God fulfilled His promise to Abraham regarding the land inheritance? (HINT: Near the end of the book.)

- 6) To whom did the 'curse of Jericho' later befall?

- 7) What is the "hornet" and where all does it appear?

Lesson 7: The Judges



LESSON TEXT:

- ~ Judges
- ~ Ruth
- ~ 1 Samuel 1-7

If the thirty years of Joshua's reign marks the highest point in the nation of Israel's relatively young existence, then this period of the judges marks the lowest. How quickly the leadership of Moses and Joshua has faded from the people's memory.

Besides the great children's stories this text provides, Christians have an opportunity to learn more about not only the character of the God they serve, but also their own character. Particularly the fundamental human character that allows humanity to quickly forget, become complacent and fall prey to the sin that can "so easily beset" him.

The Cycle of Sin

In the stories of the judges, a well-documented pattern quickly emerges.

- 1) The Israelites do evil.
- 2) God allows them to become the captives of their enemies.
- 3) The Israelites repent and cry out to God.
- 4) God raises up a judge and deliverer.
- 5) God delivers the enemy leader into the hand of the judge.

- 6) The land has rest and peace under the judge's leadership.

This cycle to at least some extent occurs fifteen times in the book of Judges and the elements are summarized in Judges 2:11-22. This text also importantly testifies that the children had broken the covenant with the Lord. They have played the harlot and worshipped idols.

With each iteration of this cycle it seems that the people (even the judges) drift further and further from God. Othniel and Ehud are the "model" judges while Gideon requires a good bit of convincing from God. Then the people – not God – appoint Jephthah as their leader (11:6) and he makes a very foolish (and unnecessary) vow to God. Finally, Samson marries a Philistine! What a sad and significant downward spiral...to the point that "everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (Judges 21:25)

God's Providence cont'd

Have you ever driven down a street, possibly dozens of times, without noticing a particular store? At least not until you needed the product or services they provided? When driving with your focus on the store you need at that time, you spot it right away...and maybe for the first time.

What a rewarding study it would be to read the Old Testament while only looking for scripture relating to a specific topic or theme. One such study would be to focus on the a) actual and b) falsely interpreted examples of God's providence. The Old Testament is rich with insight into how God works.

This lesson's text provides several cases for consideration:

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- Generally misinterpreting the current state of affairs (Judges 6:11-18). When the angel of the Lord visited Gideon, his lackluster response was because he was convinced that God had abandoned them. One can almost hear the despair in Gideon’s answer. Additionally, Gideon required a great deal of convincing by miraculous signs. Of course, God had allowed Midian to conquer them (6:1) but only for a time. A reminder that God’s time is not man’s time and our faith must not be restricted to our finite world.
- Missing a specific intervention by God (Judges 14:4). How could Samson’s parents have known it was God’s will that Samson marry a girl from a heathen nation? God uses us in our weakness. It was Samson’s weakness to desire such a woman, and it was his parent’s weakness to allow it.
- Misinterpreting a specific event as God’s approval of you personally (Judges 17:13). Micah believes that because he has a Levitical priest at his personal behest, the Lord would bless him. To the contrary, it is from Micah and his personal priest that probably the lowest point in the nation’s history is reached. The depth of their religious decay is conveyed in this account (Judges 17-18), followed by another account describing their moral decay (Judges 19-21).
- Misinterpreting a specific event as God’s rejection of you personally (Ruth 1:13). After the death of her husband and sons, Naomi states that “the hand of the Lord has gone forth against me.” Not so! She became the great, great grandmother of the future King David!

What then can be concluded about God’s providence? At least this: No matter what one might *think* about God’s working in their life, we can know for a certainty that God is in control.

There is so much that is uncertain in this life. Disease could at any time seize the body, not discriminating the healthy food we might eat or exercise we might endure. The geopolitical status is wholly unstable and seems on the verge of ignition by the smallest of sparks. An environment of peace

and a sense of normalcy could be disrupted at any moment.

What greater inner peace could one derive than to know and be convinced by example after example that God is in control? “For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on...But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.” (Matt 6:25-34)

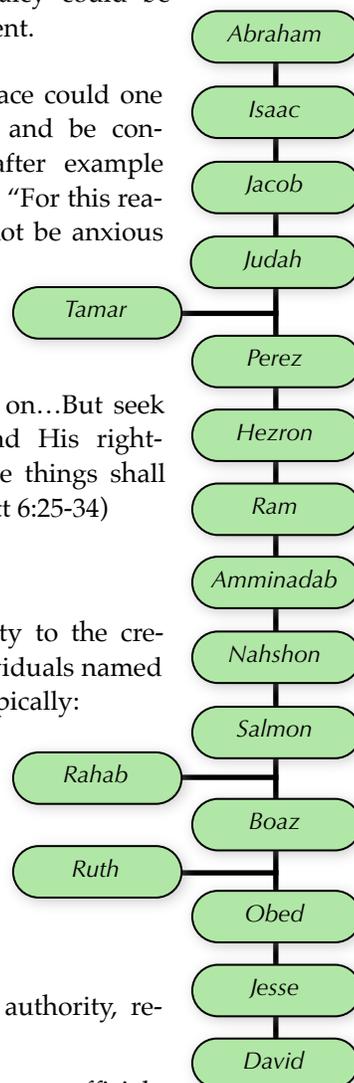
Judges?⁵

There is a commonality to the credentials for those individuals named a judge over Israel. Typically:

- 1) They held temporary authority.
- 2) They were non-dynastic (not passed through lineage).
- 3) They had limited authority, regional in nature.
- 4) They did not possess an official, civic office.

The previously documented cycle that includes God raising up the judge as a deliverer for the people is often but not always the case. There are some ‘minor’ judges that we know very little about, except that Scripture names them a “judge” (e.g. Tola, Jair). There are others like Jephthah that fulfilled the typical responsibilities of an official Judge during this time but that were not appointed by God.

Then we have someone like Abimelech. An entire chapter is devoted to him (Judges 9) – much more than several other so-called judges. Judges 9:22 states that he “ruled” Israel for three years - but ruling over the people does not mean he was a judge, nor does the fact that his story is in the



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book of Judges. In fact, there are several things about how he came to power that run contrary to the other judges. For one, he was Gideon's son and was assuming power based on that fact.

JUDGE	YEAR REIGN	TRIBE	ENEMY	YEARS SUBJECT
1. OTHNIEL	40	Judah	Mesopotamia	2
2. EHUD	80	Benjamin	Moab	18
3. SHAMGAR	?	?	Philistines	?
4. DEBORAH	40	Ephraim	Canaanites	20
5. GIDEON	40	Manasseh	Midian	7
6. TOLA	23	Issachar	?	?
7. JAIR	22	Gileadite	?	?
8. JEPHTHAH	6	Gileadite	Philistines, Ammonites	18
9. IBZAN	7	Zebulun	?	?
10. ELON	10	Zebulun	?	?
11. ABDON	8	Ephraim	?	?
12. SAMSON	20	Dan	Philistines	40
13. ELI	40	Levi	Philistines	Menace
14. SAMUEL	?	Levi	Philistines	Menace

LIST OF JUDGES

Maybe his story is given attention for another reason. Kings were appointed through lineage and blood lines. Abimelech took power much like a king, and his "rule" was oppressive. Maybe Abimelech served to warn the people against a monarchy; God saying in essence through Abimelech, "You don't want to go down this path!"

Regardless, it would eventually be the people that demanded a king so that they could be like those around them. And it would be kings that lead the people to despair, division and eventually to captivity.

The Ark

Recall the ark's prominence among the people. Resting within the tabernacle inside the Holy of Holies, they believed it to be the very throne of God Almighty (2 Sam 6:2).

It was carried by the priests out in front of the people to seek where they would camp during their wanderings. "When the ark set out that

Moses said, 'Rise up, O LORD! And let Thine enemies be scattered, And let those who hate Thee flee before Thee.' When it came to rest, he said, 'Return Thou, O LORD, To the myriad thousands of Israel.'" (Num 10:35-36)

During the days of Joshua the ark had been carried across the Jordan River, causing its waters to part. It was also carried at the fall of Jericho. Finally, it was placed in the tabernacle which came to rest in Shiloh. This was within the land of Ephraim's inheritance but more significantly it was the geographic center of the collective tribes' inheritance.



However, for seven months the ark was not only *not* in the tabernacle, but not even within the possession of Israel. Considering the ark was Israel's copy of the covenant they had made with God, what does this say for the state of that covenant?

It is further evidence to a point made earlier in this lesson but bears repeating. The covenant that God made with Abraham has already been broken by the people. (Judges 2:11-22)

"The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God was taken." (1 Sam 4:22)

Summary

What can be said of God's people at this point? Just as an ox was customarily quartered and distributed to each tribe to call the people to war, a human being was quartered and distributed to each tribe to alert them to their sin. A deplorable

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state of moral decay had been reached in about five generations.

Thankfully, regardless of the state of society's morality as a whole, God considers the heart of the individual.

"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the

flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Eph 2:1-10)

Questions for Discussion

- 1) Why does Judah ask Simeon to fight with them against the Canaanites?
- 2) What peoples persisted in living with the children of Israel? Why?
- 3) What city did Eglon capture?
- 4) Who were the Gileadites?
- 5) What case could one build for Abimelech's NOT being an actual judge?
- 6) Why were the Danites "seeking an inheritance" in Judges 18:1 when they had already received their inheritance (Joshua 19:40-48)?
- 7) How would you characterize Samson's character and why?

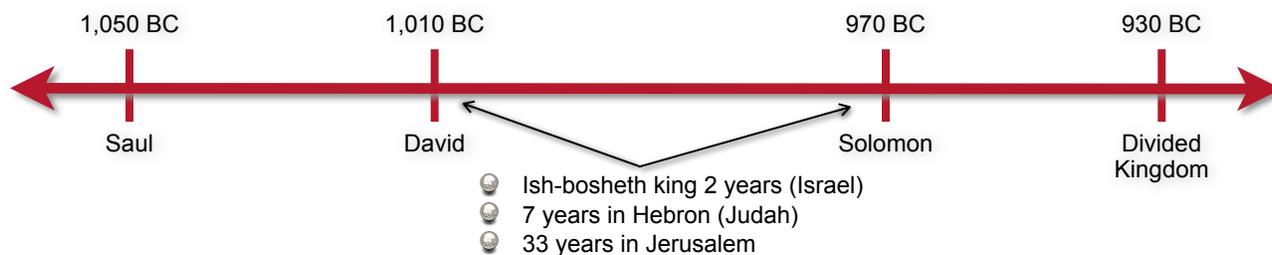
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- 8) What Philistine cities did the ark of the covenant 'tour'?

- 9) What was the fate of the ark after the Philistines returned it?

- 10) What sins were committed by Eli's sons?

Lesson 8: The Nation Israel



LESSON TEXT:

~ 1 Samuel 8-31

(1 Samuel 31 = 1 Chronicles 10)

~ 2 Samuel

(2 Samuel 5-10 = 1 Chronicles 11-19)

(2 Samuel 21-24 = 1 Chronicles 20-29)

~ 1 Kings 1-11

(1 Kings 1-11 = 2 Chronicles 1-9)

~ 1 Chronicles 1-9

This period in the history of God's people is given much attention and study – but why? These are considered the 'glory years' of a people that earned their statehood through the appointment of a king. A limited monarchy that enjoys prominence for a brief period on the world stage! Albeit brief, they stand shoulder to shoulder with other nations in wealth and military might.

But how does God see it?

It would appear that the term "God's people" as applied to a collective, earthly body of people is beginning to shift (or already has shifted) to the spiritual sense. Indeed, the refrain delivered to the people by Moses in Deut 4:9 is echoed again by Samuel.

After the people have again refused to listen to wise counsel, the Lord relents and simply says to Samuel, "listen to their voice." Despite the warnings, all that Samuel can say during the appoint-

ing of the king is, "fear the Lord and serve Him in truth with all your heart." (1 Sam 12:24)

Spiritual Need

Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand." (John 10:27-29)

Consider some of the characteristics of sheep:

- Sheep have a strong instinct to follow the leader. When one sheep decides to go somewhere, the rest of the flock usually follows, even if it is not a good decision. For example, if the lead sheep jumps over a cliff, the others are likely to follow.
- Sheep always look behind and therefore their tracks are never straight. The winding of trails allows sheep to observe their backside first with one eye and then the other.
- Sheep are gregarious. They will stay together in a group when grazing. A sheep will become agitated if it is separated from the group. It is banding together in large groups that protects sheep from predators because predators will go after the outliers in the flock.



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Source: www.sheep101.info

How true and consistent with our own human instincts and characteristics! As a result, it is no wonder that what we want is rarely what we need – especially concerning spiritual needs.

What do you need spiritually?

While each member of the local body – the church – is to be looking out for other members' needs, the Elders have ultimate responsibility for guiding the flock. It is indeed an important role. The importance may not be emphasized more graphically than when considering how God's people fared during the time of Moses, Joshua, the Judges and now the Kings.

Leader after leader was placed before the people. Depending on the leader's commitment, knowledge, wisdom, humility, and zeal they were able to guide the people to righteousness...or destruction.

Of course it's true that individuals are responsible for their own salvation, but just as teachers are held to a higher standard (Jms 3:1) and likewise the condemnation for false teachers in the New Testament, so too are leaders of any type held up for greater opportunity to lead toward or away from God.

Contradictions?

There are those that have assembled lists of supposed contradictions that exist in the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament. A simple Internet search will yield hundreds of such sites. For example, the "101 Clear Contradictions in the Bible" posted by a Muslim.

Many so-called contradictions are easily explained when possessing a full contextual understanding. Many more might be explained through errors in translation.

To illustrate this point, and for a little fun, how would you explain the following:

- Saul committed **suicide**. "Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it. So Saul died." (1 Sam

31:4) "Then said Saul to his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. So Saul took a sword, and fell upon it." (1 Chr 10:4)

- Saul was killed by an **Amalekite**. "And he [Saul] said unto me, Who art thou? And I answered him, I am an Amalekite. He said unto me again, Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me. So I stood upon him, and slew him." (2 Sam 1:8-10)
- Saul was killed by the **Philistines**. "Philistines had slain Saul." (2 Sam 21:12)
- **God** killed him. "So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it; And enquired not of the LORD: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse." (1 Chr 10:14)

Or this one:

- Abiathar was the **son** of Ahimelech. "And one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar." (1 Sam 22:20) "Abiathar the son of Ahimelech." (1 Sam 23:6)
- Abiathar was the **father** of Ahimelech. "Ahimelech the son of Abiathar. (2 Sam 8:17, 1 Chr 18:16, 24:6)

While these are presented as contradictions by some, hopefully you are able to easily explain them. They are not contradictions. It is important that Christians study the Bible and apply its truths to their life. In such study, the Christian Bible student must face and reconcile for themselves what disbelievers call 'contradictions'.

Here is one more 'contradiction' that might pose more challenging:

- **Seven** years of famine. "So Gad came to David and told him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land?" (2 Sam 24:13)
- **Three** years of famine. "So Gad came to David and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, choose

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thee either three years of famine.” (1 Chr 21:11-12)

This discrepancy does not exist in the NIV version as that translation renders both texts, “...three years of famine...”. So why the discrepancy? For this one the answer is not as clear cut.

The “three years” rendering certainly fits with the pattern that would be established with the other curses (e.g. three months, three days). The NIV translators rendered the “seven” to be “three” based on the Greek translated Septuagint.

At the end of the day, a Christian can know that whatever apparent discrepancies may exist in the Biblical text, none affect His plan of salvation. Indeed, the mountains of textual harmony, prophecies, historical and scientific evidence are proof enough to know any apparent Bible contradiction is due in some way to man’s shortcoming.

It’s not unlike the computer card game Freecell. Some games may seem impossible to win, but knowing that every game is in fact winnable causes the player to approach it and play it much differently.⁶

A Youth’s Reasoning

The story of David and Goliath (1 Sam 17) is probably one of the most recognized stories of the Bible. It is a testament to the great faith of an individual – and that of a youth.

Equal to David’s great faith, his amazing wisdom and courage are likewise demonstrated. This can be seen early in the story. A young and eager David is showing up to this battle and has to do some convincing of those much older and experienced than he.

Notice his first argument about why he should be able to battle the Philistine. He says matter-of-factly, “For who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should

taunt the armies of the living God?” (1 Sam 17:26)

This argument was probably very natural and obvious to David given his faith. David saw someone that was taunting God; there was no hesitation in his concluding that they should be dealt with immediately. But unfortunately, it doesn’t appear that anyone else was quite that resolute. What a sad representation from “God’s people” of that time.

Remember that David is coming into this situation having been removed from the ‘norms of society.’ He has been tending sheep — alone with his thoughts and meditations — convinced of the supremacy of God and His ultimate authority. ‘*Why is he so bent out of shape?*’ those around him must have thought.

Unsuccessful but not willing to back down, David shifts his argument to one of a more carnal nature. He instead produces testimony of his ability to kill lions or bears as he was tending sheep (1 Sam 17:34-35). This apparently was something that Saul could get behind and understand.

Of course, the pureness of David’s heart is displayed not only by his faith but by the fact that he

EGYPT - Kingdom Years	Shishak (or Sheshonk I?) 945-924
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Connecting the Bible’s “Shishak” to secular record “Sheshonk” is questioned ● Jeroboam lived under protection until Solomon’s death (1 K 11:40) ● Fought Rehoboam (and north), sacked temple (1 Ch 12:1-9) 925 ● Megiddo stele fragment indicates some dominance of Megiddo
	So(?) 700s
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● K Hosea sought his help against Assyria’s Shalmaneser V ● Not clear which Egyptian leader as there were a few regional leaders at this time
	Taharka 690-664
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Before becoming Pharaoh, led army to Palestine; attempt to aid Judah in Jerusalem siege (2K 19:8-9); possibly the “rumor” from God (2K 19:7) 701 ● Referred to in Bible as “King of Ethiopia” (2K 19:9) aka Cush - his origin ● Opposed Esarhaddon (Assyria) unsuccessfully (Isa 20:1) 671 ● Portrayed with hooks in his mouth in Assyrian stela; possibly Isa 18-20
	Necho II 610-595
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Killed King Josiah at Megiddo (2 K 23:29; 2 Chron 35:20-24) 609 ● Battle of Carchemish allied with Assyria against Nebuchadnezzar II 605 	
Hophra (or Apries) 589-570	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Defeated by his own general Amasis; forced to seek refuge in Babylon ● Defeated again after a few years of raising an army with Babylonian aid ● Amasis gave him over to the people who strangled him (Jer 44:30; Ezk 29:1-4) ● Several Ezk (29-32) prophecies re: Nebuchadnezzar’s plunder of Egypt 571 	

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gave God the glory. Even though he argued to men according to his own physical ability (and their own low level of faithfulness), he recognizes that it was God that delivered salvation.

Peaks and Valleys

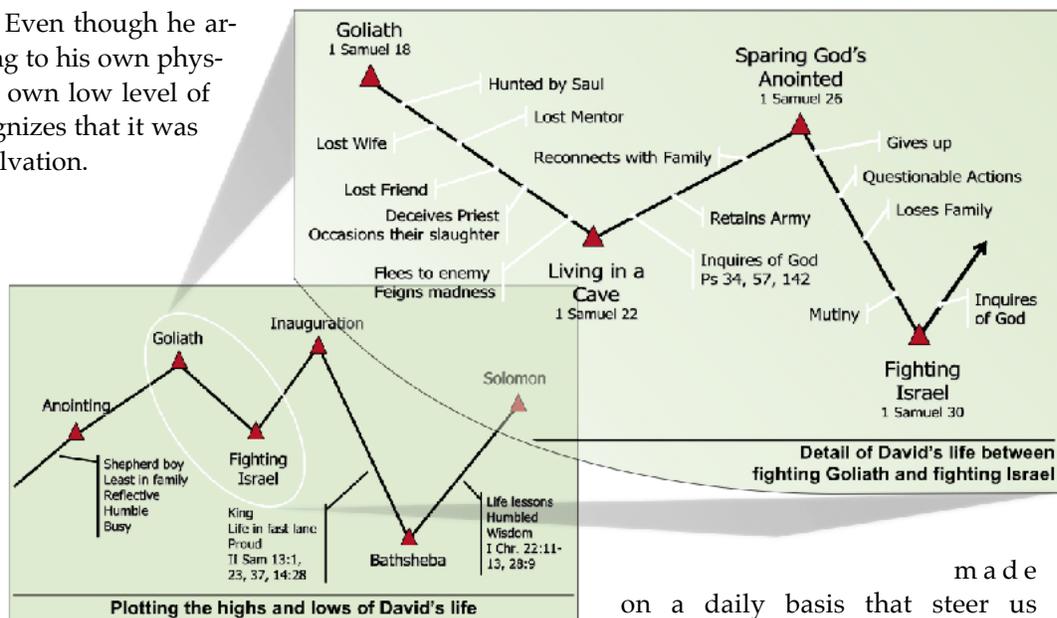
Bible characters, particularly those of the Old Testament are often thought of or remembered by a single great event in their life. If an event of great courage or righteousness, they are remembered as a faithful hero. If an event of great sin or disobedience, they are cast as a villain.

However, it may be more useful in application to consider how these individuals responded to a particular peak or valley. Because so much of David's life is documented, he provides the Bible student with an excellent example of the trends our lives might take.

For example, David is probably remembered most for his lofty victory over Goliath and his terrible sin with Bathsheba. But the fact is that David, and we alike, live life minute by minute, hour by hour and day by day.

Everyone has great, defining moments in their lives. These defining moments have a part in shaping how one is as a person. They also might permanently define that person to outside observers. George Washington is forever 'courageous' and a great general because he crossed the Delaware. Ted Bundy will always be known foremost for his serial murders.

But remember that it is often these defining moments that are preceded by millions upon millions of much smaller and seemingly insignificant decisions. These are decisions that collectively lead to the defining moments in life. It is these choices



made on a daily basis that steer us through life.

David's life certainly had some high, highs and some low, lows...probably not unlike anyone reading this. From a shepherd boy that was least in his family to King of Israel and many points in between. But there appear to be clear points in David's life where he was not making God-centered decisions. As a result, he was ending up in a place in his life that was very far from where he started – or from where he wanted to be.

David was not a man after God's own heart (1 Sam 13:14) because he always did the right thing or made the right decision. Rather, David was humble, demonstrated by the fact that he always repented and returned to God. Where we begin is not nearly as important as where we end.

God wants those that are "poor in spirit," "hunger and thirst for righteousness" and are "pure in heart." (Matt 5:3-9) The story of David's life embodied these traits. Thankfully David was not judged by one terrible action or even a series of poor decisions. Instead, he was judged for his humble and repentant heart. By God's good grace and mercy, so are we.

Summary

Israel's 'golden age' lasted 80 years – the 40 years of David's reign and the 40 years of Solomon's

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reign. During this time the people enjoyed great wealth and prestige on the world's stage.

Major milestones during this period included the final and complete capture of Jerusalem (by David) and the building of the temple (by Solomon). The glory of the Lord finally had a permanent dwelling place among the people (1 Kings 8:10-11) and in the holy city prophesied to represent Zion, the "New Jerusalem" (Rev 21).

However, in spite of the earthly glory enjoyed by Israel during this time something seems to be missing from the spiritual height they achieved during the days of Joshua (Joshua 5). Even their worldly glory is short-lived, as we will see in the next period.

Questions for Discussion

- 1) Why do you think Samuel felt that the people's request for a king was "evil" (it may not be what you think or what you are thinking may be exactly right)?
- 2) Was the Lord speaking to Samuel literally in 1 Sam 8:8? What does that say about such statements in the Bible, such as God's promises to the Israelites that were "forever"? What might that say about God's attitude about the Israelites at this point?
- 3) What character traits can be observed about Saul in 1 Sam 9-11?
- 4) What was Saul's downfall and what did it cost him? What from the traits above got him in trouble?
- 5) In Saul's disobedience regarding the Amalekites, what caused his misjudgment (he thought he did right – see 1 Sam 15:13)?
- 6) What other passages throughout the Old Testament and into the New Testament are you reminded of by Samuel's rebuke of Saul in 1 Sam 15:22-23?
- 7) How old was David when he became king?

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- 8) What observations might be made about David's wife taking "the household idol?" (1 Sam 19:13)

- 9) How long was David living among the Philistines?

- 10) What happens in 2 Sam 5 rather 'matter of factly' but of great significance?

- 11) What is God's covenant with David (2 Sam 7:8-16)?

- 12) What was Joab's part in Uriah's death (2 Sam 11:18-21)?

- 13) Why do you think David sinned in numbering the people (2 Sam 24:1, 1 Chr 21:1)?

- 14) What seven things did Solomon pray for when dedicating the Temple (1 Kings 8)?
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
 - 4) _____
 - 5) _____
 - 6) _____
 - 7) _____

- 15) Where does God repeat to Solomon the covenant He made with David?

- 16) Who were Solomon's adversaries that God raised up and what was each man's motivation?

- 17) What covenant does God make with Jeroboam? What did it specifically exclude and why?

Lesson 9: Great Poetry and Wisdom

LESSON TEXT:

- ~ Job
- ~ Psalms
- ~ Proverbs
- ~ Ecclesiastes
- Song of Solomon

This lesson departs from the largely historical format in the other lessons in order to briefly address the books of poetry and wisdom.

David and Solomon

Except of course for Job, these four books are written primarily by David and his son Solomon. (There were some Psalms – about a third - and the latter part of Proverbs that were written by others.)

Considering the social and political environment when they lived, it should not be surprising that they penned what they did. David's writings bear much of the conflict and struggle he faced while Solomon enjoyed many years in which there was great peace and prosperity for the nation of Israel. David wrote for a release while Solomon mused leisurely on his cultural pursuits.

When reflecting upon these collections and their writers, a clear distinction can be made between the two. David's writings strike an *emotional* chord. They are witness to his tender heartedness and are consistent with so many of David's actions (and reactions) documented in 1 and 2 Samuel.

Solomon on the other hand appeals to the reader's *intellect*. His great and timeless truths apply to any human being – to the righteous and unright-

eous alike. Because of this it is important to note that Solomon is writing from the ultimate position of authority since God had given him a wise and discerning heart more than anyone that had come before or would come after him. (1 Kings 3:12)

In Proverbs, Solomon writes about discrete truths that might be most closely associated to the modern day studies of Psychology and Sociology. These social sciences focus on human behavior and how we interact with each other.

In Ecclesiastes, Solomon switches to Philosophy. According to Wikipedia, "Philosophy is the discipline concerned with questions of how one should live (ethics); what sorts of things exist and what are their essential natures (metaphysics); what counts as genuine knowledge (epistemology); and what are the correct principles of reasoning (logic)."

Ever heard of Socrates, Plato, Confucius or Aristotle? These great philosophers had nothing on the wisest man to ever live. Some consider Ecclesiastes to be difficult, dark or even contradicting (interesting that these same descriptors might be applied to the study of Philosophy!). It is definitely a book that demands a contextual understanding while reading individual verses, paragraphs and even whole sections.

In fact, Ecclesiastes might be closely compared to Romans in the New Testament. Its complex thoughts and disciplined application can be a challenging read...but immensely profitable. We should read these challenging texts with the understanding that the Holy Spirit is directing these writers. Therefore, we can know that their words are Truth and are profitable to us for study and understanding.

Messianic Prophecy

Psalms is the most quoted book in the New Testament, ranking somewhere around one hundred references. Those pertaining to Jesus are particu-

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larly enlightening. In many cases, it is through David that the picture of the true Messiah is further revealed.

While there are many individual verses contained in the Psalms that point to Christ, those Psalms that might be considered messianic in their entirety are Psalms 2, 22, 69, and 110 - in particular is the 2nd Psalm. It is divided into four paragraphs with each having a different perspective. The first paragraph (vs. 1-3) is from the perspective of the rulers of nations.

The second paragraph (vs. 4-6) is from the perspective of God the Father. He has installed His own King that sits in Zion.

The third paragraph (vs. 7-9) is from the perspective of God the Son – Jesus. The final paragraph (vs. 10-12) concludes with a summary and a narrator making the proclamation, “How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!” This chapter begins a thread that is carried throughout the Bible and tells a story that is told in “twos” - literally.

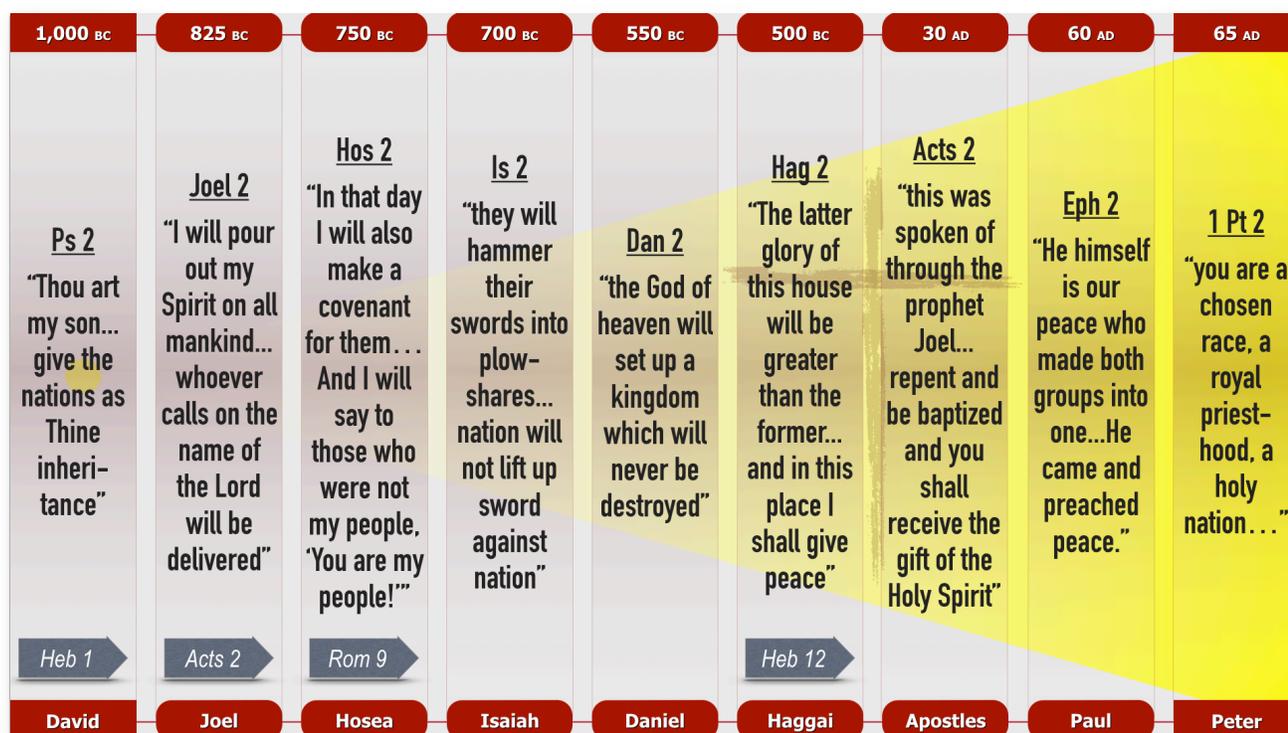
Beginning with the second Psalm from David and continuing with the second chapters of Joel, Hosea, Isaiah, Daniel, Haggai, Peter and Paul a

story is told about Jesus, His message and His Kingdom. Eight different inspired men living at vastly different times weaving an intricate and complete story. Each of these chapters shines an increasingly brighter light on the great message of the Bible.

Chronologically, David begins the thread by declaring the authority that God’s Son would have over all humankind. Joel describes what that day will be like and Hosea describing the law and people of that day. Isaiah writes of the inclusiveness and peacefulness of the kingdom. Daniel adds that it will be eternal and Haggai speaks of its great wealth and glory. Luke (in Acts) documents its actual manifestation on the Day of Pentecost in the first century.

Finally, one thousand years after David’s writings, Peter emphasizes that all believers are priests and a “holy nation” while Paul describes this newly formed spiritual Kingdom in words that harmonize perfectly with those the prophets used to describe it.

The peace that Isaiah wrote of is accomplished not only by the fact that both Jews and Gentiles are one through Christ – who is Himself Peace (Eph



2:14) – but also the message that He and the apostles after Him preached (Eph 2:17).

A Divine Gift

Solomon was born with great promise. It is recorded that after his birth “the Lord loved him” and had him named Jedidiah, literally meaning ‘the beloved of the Lord’. (2 Sam 12:24-25) God must have seen something special in him.

Solomon demonstrated his special character by asking God for wisdom instead of personal glory or honor. He recognized what would be required to lead God’s people and it happens to be the same for Christians today.

In order to live righteously and make proper decisions (big and small), a Christian must possess wisdom. It was Moses’ prayer in a Psalm attributed to him “that we may present to Thee a heart of wisdom.” (Ps 90:12)

Many times in scripture the ‘righteous one’ is synonymous with the ‘wise one’ as in Ps 37:30, “The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom.” Similarly the ‘unrighteous’ are often equated to the ‘foolish.’ Proverbs 18:2 states, “A fool does not delight in understanding.”

“But where can wisdom be found?” Job asks in Job 28:12. The wisdom that a Christian would desire is “hidden from the eyes of all living.” (Job 28:21) In other words it is from above and not an ‘earthly wisdom.’ James distinguishes between these two types of wisdom in his New Testament letter (Jms 3:13-17).

James also very simply states that anyone lacking wisdom can ask of God and He will generously provide it. (Jms 1:5) Such a simple instruction; why would anyone not possess it?

For that answer we can go back to Job, Psalms and Proverbs. Indeed the process to acquire wisdom begins before one would ask God for wisdom. In Job 28, Job asks where wisdom is found, and then later in the same chapter answers his own question. He quotes God saying, “Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom.” (Job 28:28) One must fear God before he can ask for wisdom. This is reiterated in Ps 111:10, Prov 1:7, and Prov 15:33.

Therefore, it could also be concluded that the one that does not ask God for wisdom does not fear Him.

It should also be noted that humility is a pre-requisite to obtaining heavenly wisdom. As the proverb states, “As when pride comes, then comes dishonor, But with the humble is wisdom.” (Prov 11:2)

Finally, while a strong Christian would possess wisdom from above, it does not guarantee one’s place in the Book of Life. Solomon in all his wisdom was not able to maintain a walk with God. Scripture says that later in life his heart was turned away by his wives – serving the idols Ash-toreth and Milcom. (1 Kings 11:4-8)

No doubt *intellectually* Solomon understood that what he was doing was wrong, however his *emotions* overruled good judgment. This struggle within Solomon seems palpable through a reading of his book Ecclesiastes. Maybe Solomon corrected his ways before death?

Regardless, the love and presumed promise that God had for him at his birth turned to anger. (1 Kings 11:9) Maybe that is why his God-given name of Jedidiah did not survive.

Humility

→ **Fear God**

→ **Ask God**

→ **Acquire Wisdom**

Exercise

In the table below fill in the characteristic or action of Jesus described in each referenced Psalm.

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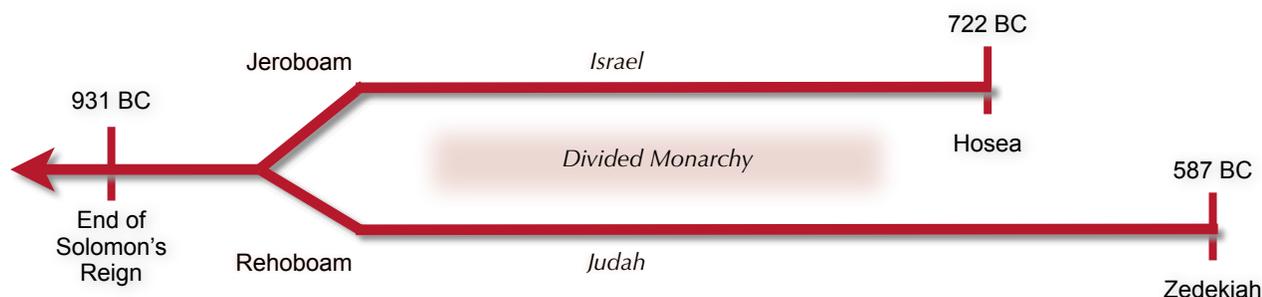
<i>Passage*</i>	<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>N.T. Cross-reference</i>
<i>Gen 3:15</i>	<i>Will crush Satan on the head</i>	<i>Rom 16:20</i>
<i>Gen 12:3</i>	<i>All families blessed</i>	<i>Gal 3:8-9</i>
<i>Deut 18:15</i>	<i>A prophet</i>	<i>Acts 3:22-23, 7:37</i>
<i>Ps 2:7</i>		<i>Heb 1:5</i>
<i>Ps 8:2</i>		<i>Matt 21:15-16</i>
<i>Ps 8:4-6</i>		<i>Heb 2:6-11</i>
<i>Ps 16:10</i>		<i>Acts 2:25-31, 13:25, 15:12-17</i>
<i>Ps 22:1</i>		<i>Matt 27:46</i>
<i>Ps 22:7-8</i>		<i>Matt 27:39</i>
<i>Ps 22:15</i>		<i>Jn 19:28</i>
<i>Ps 22:16</i>		<i>Jn 20:27</i>
<i>Ps 22:18</i>		<i>Jn 19:23-24</i>
<i>Ps 22:22</i>		<i>Heb 2:12</i>
<i>Ps 34:20</i>		<i>Jn 19:31-37</i>
<i>Ps 35:11</i>		<i>Mk 14:57</i>
<i>Ps 40:6-8</i>		<i>Heb 10:5-7</i>
<i>Ps 41:9</i>		<i>Lk 22:48</i>
<i>Ps 45:6-7</i>		<i>Heb 1:8-9</i>
<i>Ps 68:18</i>		<i>Eph 4:8</i>

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<i>Passage*</i>	<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>N.T. Cross-reference</i>
<i>Ps 69:4</i>		<i>Jn 15:25</i>
<i>Ps 69:21</i>		<i>Matt 27:48</i>
<i>Ps 89:4</i>		<i>Acts 13:23</i>
<i>Ps 102:25-27</i>		<i>Heb 1:10-12</i>
<i>Ps 110:1</i>		<i>Matt 22:44, Acts 2:33-35, 5:30-31</i>
<i>Ps 110:4</i>		<i>Heb 5:6, 6:19ff</i>
<i>Ps 118:22-23</i>		<i>Matt 21:42, Acts 4:11, Eph 2:20, 1 Pet 2:7</i>
<i>Ps 118:26</i>		<i>Matt 21:9</i>

* Not an exhaustive list.

Lesson 10: A Nation Divided



LESSON TEXT:

~ 1 Kings 12-22

(1 Kings 12-22 = 2 Chronicles 10-20)

~ 2 Kings 1-17

(2 Kings 1-17 = 2 Chronicles 21-29)

- Obadiah, Joel, Jonah, Amos
- beginning of Hosea
- Isaiah, Micah

The so-called ‘Golden Age’ of Israel’s existence as a unified kingdom ends in 931 BC. Over a short 120 years – 3 kings each ruling 40 years – Israel enjoyed a place on the world’s stage as a nation among nations.

Solomon began his reign by leading the people to a spiritual high. In the eleventh year of his reign he completed the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem (1 Kings 6:1, 38). Again God was in their midst. (1 Kings 8:10) Incredibly, some time within the next 29 years Solomon also builds high places for the idols Chemosh (infant sacrifice) and Molech (1 Kings 11:7).

Look how far he falls. Undoubtedly he leads the people with him into sin. A despicable fall from the very one who instructed the people at the temple dedication, “Let your heart therefore be wholly devoted to the Lord our God, to walk in

His statutes and to keep His commandments, as at this day.” (1 Kings 8:61)

Our conclusion about Solomon’s fall should not be a judgment on Solomon’s lack of faith. Rather, we should consider our own lives, the decisions we make, and the path where they may lead us over time – even over a few short years.

The High Places

The practice that Solomon started recurs throughout the time during which the kingdom is divided. The idea of dedicating a topographical “high place” to a god or gods was something apparently learned from the pagan nations with whom the Israelites came into contact.

The first mention of a high place used for pagan worship goes back to the sin of Peor. It is when Balak, the king of Moab, took Balaam “up to the high places of Baal” (Num 22:41). It is the wisdom of man throughout history that concludes worship should be conducted in a high place - maybe because of its loftiness or maybe because man would feel closer to his god(s).

God had directed that the people “drive out all the inhabitants of the land...destroy all their figured stones, and destroy all their molten images and demolish all their high places.” (Num 33:52) Additionally, it is in the very last line of Moses’ farewell address to the people where he states, “you will trample down their high places.” (NIV - Deut 33:29)

SYRIA	Hadadezer & Rezon 2 Sam 10: 1 Kings 11:23-25 1050?-900?
	● Only in the Bible; fought David and Solomon
	Ben-Hadad I 1 Kings 15:18-19 900-860?
	● Helped Baasha against Asa; Asa paid tribute to fight Baasha
	Ben-Hadad II 860-843?
	● Battles Ahab twice (1 K 20:1-43)
	● Led coalition in Battle of Qarqar against Assyria 853
● Ahab & Jehoshaphat fought to regain Ramoth-Gilead (1 K 22:1-38)	
● Besieged Samaria until cannibalism in the city (2 K 6:24-7:20)	
● Probably Namaan's king (2 K 5:1-19)	
● Inquires for his own illness later (2 K 8:7-10)	
Hazael 843-800?	
● Elijah told by God he would anoint him king (1 K 19:15)	
● Sacked Temple in Jerusalem (2 K 12:17-18)	
● Credited with Tel Dan Stele boasting victories over Israel	
"and my father lay down, he went to his [ancestors]. And the king of [Is-]"	
"rael entered previously in my father's land, [and] Hadad made me king,"	
"And Hadad went in front of me, [and] I departed from the seven [...]"	
"'s of my kingdom, and I slew [seve]nty kin[gs], who harnessed thousands of cha-]"	
"riots and thousands of horsemen (or: horses). [I killed Jeho]ram son of Ahab]"	
"king of Israel, and [I] killed [Ahaz]jahu son of [Jehoram kin-]"	
"g of the House of David, and I set [their towns into ruins and turned]"	
"their land into [desolation]"	
"other [... and Jehuru-]"	
"led over Is[rael and I laid]"	
"siege upon"	
Ben-Hadad III 2 Kings 13, 14 798-?	
● Defeated by Israel, both Joash and Jeroboam II	
● Exact ruling years are not confirmed	
Rezin 2 Kings 15:37-16:9; Isaiah 7 750s-732	
● Tributary King of Tiglath-Pileser III (Assyria)	
● Allied with K Pekah and came up against Judah/Ahaz (2 Kg 15-16; 2 Chr 28)	
...but Ahaz is promised deliverance from both Kings in Isa 7	
● TP III sacked Damascus, killed Rezin; instigated by K Ahaz (2 Kg 16:7-9) 732	

Unfortunately, the literal destruction of these places that Moses wrote about nearly 1,000 years earlier was not often practiced during the years of the divided kingdom. In the North, it started at the beginning with Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:31-32) and continued throughout their existence. Among other things, it is listed as a reason for their captivity (2 Kings 17:9-12).

Likewise in the South it began with Rehoboam continuing what his father started. (1 Kings 14:23) But for the southern kingdom, it is noteworthy that the high places are mentioned repeatedly as a 'blot' against an otherwise "good" king.

Asa (1 Kings 15:14), Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 22:43), Jehoash (2 Kings 12:3), Amaziah (2 Kings 14:4), Azariah (2 Kings 15:4), and Jotham (2 Kings 15:35) are all kings of Judah that were commended for being "wholly devoted" to the Lord. However, they did not remove the high places.

Or did they? In further comparison of the parallel texts between Kings and Chronicles, 1 Kings notes that Jehoshaphat did not remove the high places and 2 Chron 17:6 records "he took great pride in the ways of the LORD and again removed the high places and the Asherim from Judah." So which is it? Did he, or did he not remove the high places from Judah? On the surface this appears to be a gross contradiction.

Both accounts are accurate. Jehoshaphat did indeed remove those high places containing graven images and for that he is praised in 2 Chronicles. However, the high places that *were not removed* were those where the worship was directed to God. For that, the 'blot' on Jehoshaphat's record is so noted in 1 Kings 22:43 and further referenced in 2 Chron 20:33-34 where the writer elaborates, "The high places, however, were not removed; the people had not yet directed their hearts to the God of their fathers."

We learn in this that there were high places dedicated for idols and those dedicated for God. The idolatrous high places are obvious and overt abominations. Just as abominable were the high places for worship to God...although it would seem from these texts more abominable to God than to the people. It is the lack of removal of these high places that a stain results on the record of an otherwise good king of Judah.

Additional evidence that these "Godly high places" were not God's desire is seen when considering Judah's great king Hezekiah. It seems he destroyed the high places (2 Kings 18:4) dedicated to *both* idols *and* God. Additionally he took the extra step and led the people toward proper Godly worship when he:

- "opened the doors of the house of the Lord" (2 Chron 29:3ff),
- consecrated the priests according to the true genealogical record of the tribe of Levi,

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- invited all Israelites (north or south) to come to Jerusalem to worship and observe the Passover.

Even Hezekiah's enemies recognized this and tried to use it against him. Not unlike a modern day political smear campaign, the Assyrian army besieged Jerusalem and yelled to the people in hopes they would surrender:

"Is not Hezekiah misleading you to give yourselves over to die by hunger and by thirst, saying, 'The LORD our God will deliver us from the hand of the king of Assyria'? Has not the same Hezekiah taken away His high places and His altars, and said to Judah and Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before one altar, and on it you shall burn incense'?" (2 Chron 32:11-13)

Ironically, this is the same reason that Jeroboam used when he set up his own religion. Immediately following Israel's split between north and south, Jeroboam felt that if his subjects went to Jerusalem to worship they would end up aligning with Rehoboam. He told the people then, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem." (1 Kings 12:28) He appealed to their desire for convenience.

Today's Christian should take note - God expects to be worshiped the way He has directed. While the practical manifestation of how one worships may be different under the New Testament, the pattern for formal worship and God's expectation remains the same.

The Israelites were to worship in the tabernacle (and later in the temple when built in Jerusalem). The prophets prophesied that one day that would change. Isaiah, Amos, Joel and Micah - all prophets during this time - had something to say about "Zion" and how God would be worshipped "in later times."

"Now it will come about that in the last days, the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways, and that we may walk in His paths.'" For the law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." (Isa 2:2-3)

It is Jesus that confirms these prophesies when He speaks to the woman at the well:

"Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father. You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:21-25)

Evidences

It's exciting for a Christian and true Bible believer when the world of archeology meets the historical record contained in Scripture. The passing of time weakens Satan's ability to cast doubt as the growing stack of recovered artifacts only further confirms the Biblical account.

Until the nineteenth century, critics of the Bible were quick to point out that the Hittite nation never existed. While prominent in the Old Testament, no external evidence could be found. That of course changed. Now there is extensive non-Biblical evidence that they not only existed, but were a major world power during Moses' time - around 1,500 BC.

Likewise, the Assyrians give Bible critics a hard time. Several artifacts come from this period of history - most from ancient Assyrian kings. Of

	NORTH	SOUTH
TRIBES	10	2 (Judah & Benjamin)
NAME	ISRAEL	JUDAH
KINGS	19; 9 dynasties	20; 1 dynasty, all descendants of David
CAPITAL CITY	The first capitals were Shechem and Tirzah, then Omri built Samaria	Jerusalem
SPIRITUAL QUALITIES	All the kings were bad, promoting pagan worship.	A few of the kings were good, some were fair, most were bad.

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course Assyria plays a prominent role on the world's stage during the time of a divided Israel (800 BC – 600 BC). It was also during this time that Jonah was sent to prophesy in the capital city of Nineveh. As a result, "The people of Nineveh believed in God" and the king "covered himself in sackcloth." (Jonah 3:5-6)

Consider some of these great artifacts that come from Egyptian, Moabite, and Assyrian kings:

- Shishak I, Egypt (ruled 945-924) – invaded Judah, plundered Jerusalem and took tribute from Rehoboam (around 925). A relief in the Karnak Temple in Luxor (Thebes) depicts this plus claims some victories in Israel.
- Mesha – "king of Moab was a sheep breeder, and used to pay the king of Israel 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams. But it came about, when Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel." (2 Kings 3:4-5) The Mesha Stele is a large stone with his own account and the rest of the story...



The Mesha Stele
or "Moabite Stone"

"I am Mesha, son of Chemosh, king of Moab... My father was king of Moab for thirty years and I became king after my father: and I built this sanctuary to Chemosh in Qerihoh, a sanctuary of refuge: for he saved me from all my oppressors and gave me dominion over all my enemies. Omri was king of Israel and oppressed Moab many days, for Chemosh was angry with his land. And his son succeeded him and

he also said I will oppress Moab. In my days he said this, but I got the upper hand of him and his house: and Israel perished for ever... I have had the ditches of Qerihoh dug by Israelite prisoners..."

- Shalmaneser III (ruled 859-824) – His 'Monolith Inscription' refers to King Ahab in the famous battle of Qarqar in 853 BC. He writes, "From Argana I departed; to Qarqar I approached, Qarqar, his royal city, I wasted, destroyed, burned with fire; 1,200 chariots, 1,200 horses, 20,000 men of Adadidri, of Damascus; 700

chariots, 700 horses, 10,000 men of Ithuleni, the Hamathite; 2,000 chariots, 10,000 men of Ahab, the Israelite." In the fight against Assyria, Israel joined forces with Egypt and Syria.

- Shalmaneser III also depicts King Jehu on his Black Obelisk paying tribute and writes "Tribute of Jehu, son of Omri. I received from him: silver, gold, a golden bowl, a golden beaker, golden goblets, pitchers of gold, lead, staves for the hand of the king, javelins."
- Sargon II (ruled 722-705) – he wrote "The city Samaria I besieged, and twenty-seven thousand two hundred and ninety people, inhabitants of it, I took away captive. Fifty chariots in it I seized, but the rest I allowed to retain their possessions. I appointed my governor over them, and the tribute of the late king I imposed upon them."



The Black Obelisk
Shalmaneser III
(841 BCE)

It is fascinating to have even a glimpse of a pagan ruler's perspective on God and His people. There is more archeological evidence to consider in the next lesson!

A Working, Obedient Faith

John records Jesus' miracle that gave sight to a blind man. After applying clay to his eyes, Jesus told the man, "'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.' So he went away and washed, and came back seeing." (Jn 9:1-11)

During the divided kingdom, Elisha could hold the title of 'miracle worker.' Even after his death, he is working great signs of God's power - fourteen in all. Most applicable for Christians today, and not unlike Jesus' miracle about 800 years later, is the miracle involving Naaman. (2 Kings 5:1-14)

Naaman was a captain in the Syrian army. He was highly regarded for his victories, but he was a leper. Hearing about Israel's prophet and healer

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Elisha, Naaman pays him a visit to see if this prophet can heal him.

Namaan demonstrates extraordinary faith by his actions. First he knows and recognizes the great power of Israel's God. He brings a dowry, as it were, with a letter from his king, silver, gold and clothing. Second, he fully *expects* that the healing would happen (vs. 11). He does not seem to be acting upon blind faith, but a fair amount of certainty on his part.

However, when Elisha gives him a task to complete that does not meet with his own logic, everything seems to break down. In a rage he says, "Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" (vs. 12)

Lest the reader conclude that this was just a case of weak faith, verse 13 proves the contrary. Namaan's servants remind him, "had the prophet told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean?'"

Namaan had faith...great faith. He was prepared to go to great lengths to do whatever he needed to do to act on his faith. Unfortunately, he was also a little too smart (or proud) for his own good. While he was prepared to do "some great thing," Namaan apparently had a hard time wrapping his mind around a simple and seemingly meaningless — even humiliating — act.

Namaan's reaction can readily be applied to individuals today that erroneously conclude that faith alone saves. Remember Noah? God told him that "everything that is on the earth shall perish. But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark". (Gen 6:17-18) However, it was not until Noah exercised his faith by actually building the ark that he and his family was saved. "Thus Noah did; according to all that God had

ASSYRIA	Shalmaneser III	858-824
	● Battle of Qarqar; Kurkh Monolith Inscription (Ahab mentioned)	853
	● Black Obelisk showing tribute from Jehu (2 Ki 9:10)	841
	Tiglath-Pileser III	744-727
	● Referred to as "Pul" in Babylonian circles (and scripture)	
	● Defeated Syria (2 K 16:9) & much of northern Israel (2 K 15:29)	732
	Shalmaneser V	727-723
	● Hoshea paid tribute; 3 yr siege of Samaria (2 K 17:5, 18:9-10)	725-23
	Sargon II	722-705
	<i>Isa 20:1</i>	
● 'Annals of Sargon II' found in Khorsabad detailing military actions		
● Took credit for destruction of Samaria (2 K 17:6, 24; 2 K 18:9-12)	722	
● Brags of settling other people/religions in area (2 K 17:29-33)		
● Ashdod campaign and vassal state (Isa 20:1)	711	
Sennacherib	705-681	
<i>2 Kings 18-19; 2 Chr 32; Isa 36-37</i>		
● Established Nineveh as capital		
● Siege Jerusalem, Hezekiah (2 K 18:13-19:37); Taylor Prism	701	
● Intercepted Egypt's Taharka ("broken reed" 2K 18:19-21) attempting aid to Judah		
● God placed "spirit" (2K 19:7) causing him to return home		
Esarhaddon	681-669	
<i>2 Kings 19:37; Isa 37:38</i>		
● Rebuilt Babylon; resided, held court there often; several artifacts	670	
● Likely captor of Manasseh (2 Chr 33:11) - implies battle at Jerusalem		
● Captured Taharka (Egypt); stela with hook in mouth		
Ashurbanipal	669-627	
<i>Ezra 4:10</i>		
● "Osnapper" or "Asnapper" in Ezra 4:10 (Aramaic form)		
● Spent much time fighting rebellions in Egypt after Esarhaddon's success there		
● Established great library in Nineveh; height of Assyrian power		
● Famous for his lion hunts; likely when Nahum prophesied in Nineveh (Nah 2:11)		
● Released Manasseh (2 Chr 33:10-13)		

commanded him, so he did." (Gen 6:22) And so they were saved.

And recall Joshua. God told him, "I have given Jericho into your hand" yet Joshua still had to obey by marching around the city seven days and seven times on the seventh day.

But back to Namaan...in addition to being a strong example that dispels the 'faith only' doctrine, his is a striking foreshadowing of baptism and the role it plays in eternal salvation for the N.T. Christian. Baptism is to a Christian's salvation as washing was to Namaan (or building was to Noah, or marching was to Joshua). Just as Namaan felt it was foolish or did not meet with his measure of what salvation should be, so to individuals today falsely conclude that baptism is optional.

'Go get dunked in a bathtub? That's ridiculous. There's nothing special about that water. I expect God can just make it happen. Certainly God is powerful enough to not require such a foolish action on my part.'

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Or, maybe this:

'Surely God does not want me to work for my salvation. You don't earn salvation; it is freely given by God's good grace.'

It is indeed freely given. Just as Paul testified to Agrippa, "First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds." (NIV Acts 26:20)

Christians first humble themselves in repentance, and then naturally submit their will to God's will.

In so doing, they will react as the Ethiopian eunuch did and exclaim, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:36) And so began a faithful journey to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling...both to will and to work for His good pleasure." (Phil 2:12-13)

Of course, other New Testament passages about an obedient, working faith can be studied such as James 2 and 1 Peter 3:21. How much more powerful to *demonstrate* that God's expectations were the same from the beginning? What a vivid example Namaan (and Noah, and Joshua) provides in teaching the principles of salvation!

Questions for Discussion

- 1) What caused the nation to divide?
- 2) What did the true worshippers in the North do when the nation was divided?
- 3) Why did Naboth likely refuse Ahab's request to buy his vineyard?
- 4) Describe the scene in Micaiah's vision.
- 5) Why were Jehoshaphat's ships broken (1 Kings 22:48)?
- 6) Where was the city of Tarshish located and what might be understood in Scripture by the phrase 'ships of Tarshish'?
- 7) What were the primary cities in the North (Israel) in order of their prominence?

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8) What miracles performed by Elisha are recorded (2 Kings 2ff)?

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1) _____ | 8) _____ |
| 2) _____ | 9) _____ |
| 3) _____ | 10) _____ |
| 4) _____ | 11) _____ |
| 5) _____ | 12) _____ |
| 6) _____ | 13) _____ |
| 7) _____ | 14) _____ |

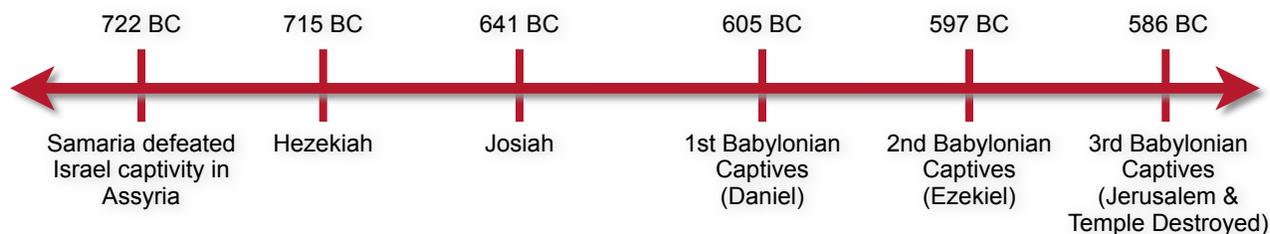
9) List the good kings of Judah.

10) List the good kings of Israel.

11) How did Jehu take power in Israel?

12) What do passages such as 2 Kings 17:18-20 and 23:27 say about modern day Israel's claim to "God's promise?"

Lesson 11: The Babylonian Captivity



LESSON TEXT:

~ 2 Kings 18-25

(2 Kings 18-25 = 2 Chronicles 30-36)

~ Jeremiah 37-44, 52

~ Daniel 1-5, 7-8

- ending Hosea, Isaiah, Micah
- Nahum, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Daniel, Ezekiel

Ten of the original twelve tribes are lost. They have been carried away by Assyria. During this time the Assyrians themselves will be annihilated by the Babylonian empire.

The world's stage of empires becomes alive during this time in history – more than at any other point in the Old Testament. The Syrian, Assyrian, Egyptian, Babylonian, Mede and emerging Persian empires all play prominent roles. The remaining southern kingdom of Judah is, reasonably, a pawn. Its cities are attacked, tribute is paid to appease enemies, and eventually the people are carried away by the Babylonians.

Evidences cont.

Continuing the discussion from the previous lesson, artifacts from this period seem especially rich. They are too compelling to leave out!

- Sennacherib, Assyria (ruled 705–681) – His siege of Jerusalem during the reign of Hezeki-

ah is well documented in 2 Kings 18:13-19:37 and Isaiah 36 & 37. The Biblical account highlights that Jerusalem was not taken, 185,000 of Sennacherib's army were killed by an angel of the Lord, and that Sennacherib returned to Nineveh and died at the hand of his sons. Sennacherib's own account of events are captured on his 'Prism.'

"As for Hezekiah the Judahite, who did not submit to my yoke: forty-six of his strong, walled cities, as well as the small towns in their area, which were without number, by leveling with battering-rams and by bringing up siege-engines, and by attacking and storming on foot, by mines, tunnels, and breeches, I besieged and took them. 200,150 people, great and small, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, cattle and sheep without number, I brought away from them and counted as spoil. (Hezekiah) himself, like a caged bird I shut up in Jerusalem, his royal city. I threw up earthworks against him – the one coming out of the city-gate, I turned back to his misery. His cities, which I had despoiled, I cut off from his land, and to Mitinti, king of Ashdod, Padi, king of Ekron, and Silli-bêl, king of Gaza, I gave (them). And thus I diminished his land. I added to the former tribute, and I laid upon him the surrender of their land and imposts— gifts for my majesty. As for Hezekiah, the terrifying splendor of my majesty overcame him, and the Arabs and his mercenary troops which he had brought in to strengthen Jerusalem, his royal city, deserted him. In addition to the thirty talents of gold and eight hundred talents of silver, gems, antimony, jewels, large carnelians, ivory-inlaid couches, ivory-inlaid



Sennacherib Prism Assyria (689 BCE)

chairs [1 Kg 10:18, Amos 6:4], elephant hides, elephant tusks, ebony, boxwood, all kinds of valuable treasures, as well as his daughters, his harem, his male and female musicians, which he had brought after me to Nineveh, my royal city. To pay tribute and to accept servitude, he dispatched his messengers."

While his account may be slightly embellished, it confirms he left with only some booty. He did not conquer Jerusalem, just as God had promised to Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:32-34).⁷

Following Sennacherib's devastating defeat by the angel of God, he seemed to just "disappear" from the world's stage. No doubt embarrassed and dejected, we can read of his personal demise on another clay tablet that records "On the twentieth day of the month Tebet Sennacherib king of Assyria his son slew him in rebellion... Esarhaddon his son sat on the throne of Assyria."

- Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon (ruled 605–562) – A clay tablet from Babylon gives account of his seven years of insanity chronicled in Daniel (4:28-33) - "His life appeared of no value to him...then he gives an entirely different order...he does not show love to son or daughter...family and clan does not exist..." Additionally, there is notable absence of activity or decrees from the king during the seven years – 582 to 575 BC.
- Cyrus the Great (II), Persia (ruled 550-529) – After his conquest of Babylon, the 'Cyrus Cylinder' documents Cyrus' policy to allow displaced peoples to return to their homelands and worship their gods. Israelites returned from Babylon as recorded by Ezra (Ezra 1:1-4).



The Cyrus Cylinder
Persia (539 BC)

Of course, faith in God's inspired Word is not at all dependent on what has, or has not been discovered by humanity. Other artifacts have been unearthed that some would contend contradict the Bible. They conclude as a consequence that the Bible is discredited.

In reality, it is the Bible that proves consistently accurate. Whether by the discovery of other artifacts or additional technology with the passing of time, the Biblical account remains the standard.

Babylon

It is modern day Iraq. Babylon rose to prominence during the divided kingdom. Known as the Neo-Babylonian or Chaldean Dynasty, it began in 626 BC and lasted until the invasion of Cyrus the Great of Persia in 539 BC.

Under Nabopolassar, the Babylonians solicited the help of the Medes and successfully revolted against Assyria. The Assyrians had controlled the Chaldeans for nearly 300 years. In 612 BC Nineveh was destroyed (Nahum 2-3) and the seat of power was firmly established in Babylon.

A remnant of the Assyrians reestablished a capital in Carchemish. While Nabopolassar's son Nebuchadnezzar II was leading the Babylonian army for the complete destruction of Assyria, Pharaoh Necco II of Egypt was heading north to Assyria's aid. In 608 BC, Necco was moving through Palestine and met Judah's good king Josiah. Josiah was attempting to stop Necco at Meggido but failed and was mortally wounded (2 Kings 23:29).

In 605 BC, Necco arrives in Carchemish but he is too late. Nebuchadnezzar defeats Assyria conclusively. He also defeats Necco, who returns home to Egypt and effectively ends forever their bid for world power.

Back in Babylon in the same year, Nabopolassar dies and Nebuchadnezzar returns to assume the throne but not before taking the first Judean captives back with him, including Daniel. He would return two more times until he completely destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple that had been built by Solomon (Jer 52).

Nebuchadnezzar is a complex figure. The fear he projected on the ancient world was real. He was a savvy conqueror with effective assimilation techniques. With the first deportation of Judean captives, he took individuals of promise and affluence (Dan 1:3-4); those that he felt could be contributors to the Babylonian empire – a policy referred to as

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selective depopulation. Daniel was one of these first individuals. In his book he records much of the Biblical account of Nebuchadnezzar the ruler...and human being.

The stories in Daniel are riveting; worth a read, and a reread. The record includes accounts of interpreted dreams, refusing to bow down, passing through the fiery furnace and being thrown in the lions den for praying. Most incredibly, in the middle of it all is chapter four, written by King Nebuchadnezzar himself! A truly amazing testimony from a pagan king:

"But at the end of that period I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom endures from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What hast Thou done?'" (Dan 4:34-35)

"Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise, exalt, and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride." (Dan 4:37)

"Some have contended that the appearance of Greek words in the book of Daniel indicates that the book was written centuries later, after the days of Alexander the Great. The fact that Greek mercenaries served in the Babylonian army, however, implies that the Greek language must have been known to some degree in Babylonia – even by Daniel. Hence the argument for a later date does not seem to carry any weight. The Greek words in question are names of musical instruments appearing in Daniel 3:5, 7."

Howard F. Vos, Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Manners and Customs, pg. 314

Daniel lived through the entirety of Babylon's 'glory years' – beginning with Nebuchadnezzar's reign and ending with Persia's conquering of the Babylonian Empire. Given that he was one of the

BABYLON	Merodach-Baladan	<i>2 Kings 20:12; 2 Chr 32:27-30</i>	722-710
	● Persisted against Sargon (Assyria) until driven out of Babylon		710
	● Returned and reigned 9 months until Sennacherib drove him out again		704
	● Sent letters to King Hezekiah and an envoy to witness Judah's wealth (Is 39:1)		
	Nabopolassar	<i>Chaldean Dynasty</i>	626-605
	● Allied with Medes and defeated Assyrians in decisive "Battle of Nineveh"		612
	● Josiah dies at hands of Necho (Egypt) on way to help Assyria		609
	Nebuchadnezzar II	<i>Daniel 1-4</i>	605-562
	● Defeated Egypt and Assyria at Battle of Carchemish		605
	● Destroys Jerusalem, Temple, deports people (2 Ki 24:8-17)		605, 597, 586
● Siege of Tyre; 13 years (Ezk 26) - final destruction by Alexander the Great		585-72	
● No decrees - maybe his seven years of madness (Dan 4)		582-575	
● Ezekiel 29-32 prophesies against Egypt at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar		571	
Amel-Marduk	<i>2 Kings 25:27</i>	562-560	
● Referred to as Evil-Merodach in Bible (also Nabu-Shuma-Ukin)			
● Earlier had spent time in prison for bad behavior (maybe met Jehoiachin?)			
● Releases King Jehoiachin from 37 yrs of prison (2 K 25:27-30)			
● Found in Royal archives in Babylon: ration book for "Yaukin king of Judah" and his family			
Nergal-Shar-uzer	<i>Jeremiah 39:3</i>	559-556	
● A clay tablet (letter) found from Nebo-Sarsekim - another official in Jer 39:3			
Labashi-Marduk		556	
Nabonidas	<i>Daniel 5, 7-8</i>	556-539	
● Dead Sea Scroll – 'Prayer of Nabonidas'; an exile called an exorcist (Dan 5:11?)			
● Spent much of his time in Arabia on spiritual pursuits			
● Belshazzar, his son, was co-ruler but de-facto king (Dan 5:1)			
● Explains why Daniel was third in kingdom (Dan 5:29)			

highest government officials in Nebuchadnezzar's royal court (Dan 2:49), he provides a unique perspective into the events of that time. Through all of it, Daniel remained faithful and loyal to God. He served Him when it was not only inconvenient but imminently life threatening.

His influence and moral integrity even affected Nebuchadnezzar the Great.

Dueling Prophets⁸

Those that claim to have some special revelation from God are certainly around today...just as they were in Old Testament times. These "prophets" profess to know God's will and proclaim it to others as such. But how does one determine they are truly "spokesmen for God?"

God did provide the Israelites with advice on how to make this determination. You might recall Moses' instruction to the people as he made his final address in Deuteronomy.

"And you may say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?' When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the

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thing which the LORD has not spoken." (Deut 18:21-22)

In Scripture, this is certainly the most overt and obvious statement for testing the authenticity of a prophet. However, it might be necessary to apply some other tests - also supported by Scripture - but not as obviously stated as above.

For example, what if what the prophet says happens to come true by chance? Or, what if the prophet is prophesying about things in the distant future, longer than your lifetime? In these cases, the test of seeing if it will come about or come true by itself will not work.

Consider the situation that existed for Judah. Their brothers to the north had long been taken into Assyrian captivity and now Nebuchadnezzar was taking them away to Babylon in waves. Their fate appeared sealed. In fact, the prophet Jeremiah was confirming that God intended they would be taken away for no less than seventy years. (Jer 25:1-11)

But wait! Another prophet was saying something very different. In Jeremiah 28, Hananiah in fact opposes Jeremiah to his face and says that the people would be brought back after only two years. So who would you believe? On the surface, it would have been difficult:

- 1) The name "Hananiah" is certainly a good Bible name. Just as "Jeremiah," the "iah" on the end is short for "YHWH" or Jehovah. The full name means "let Jehovah be gracious."
- 2) He is speaking in the house of the Lord and in the presence of all the leaders. His surroundings would be impressive.

A footnote to this discussion should include conditional prophecy - the idea that God can reverse His judgement. A familiar example would be Jonah and his prophecy regarding Nineveh. His prophecy did not come to pass but not because Jonah was a false prophet, rather because Nineveh repented.

Micah was a prophet God sent to Judah more than 120 years before Jeremiah (even though Micah comes after Jeremiah in the Old Testament). He was contemporary with Isaiah and among other things prophesied that Jerusalem would be destroyed by the Assyrians. (Micah 3:11-12)

However, we know that Sennacherib's Assyrian army was turned from destroying Jerusalem by the angel of God. King Hezekiah prayed to God just in time. (2 Kings 18:13-19:37)

So, did history brand Micah a false prophet? Some individuals probably did, but 120+ years later scripture records that at least some during Jeremiah's time used this example to put down Jeremiah's detractors and recognized that Micah's prophecy was conditional. (Jer 26:16-19)

3) He is confidently prefacing his comments with, "Thus says the Lord!"

4) He even makes his point physically, by breaking a yoke that was apparently on Jeremiah.

5) Finally, there is one important point to be made about the current events. At this same time, back in Babylon, there was an uprising against Nebuchadnezzar taking place from within.⁹ Jews already in Babylon may have been contemplating joining this revolt.

So, you have a well-spoken, impressively presented, confident prophet with current events that would certainly cause a well-intentioned Jew to think, "Maybe this is God's plan to have us out in two years." It would also have forced a Jew to make their decision about which prophet to listen to based on something other than waiting to see which would come to pass. They did not have two (or seventy) years to wait. "The revolt is now" some must have been saying; therefore they needed to act now!

In his response, Jeremiah provides insight into at least two other tests that might be used to distinguish between a true and a false prophet. First, he argues to be careful when a "prophet" comes to you with a prophesy of peace. (Jer 28:8-9) His appeal is to look back at previous prophets and notice that they almost always prophesied destruction (because of the people's disobedience). To paraphrase Jeremiah, he is basically saying, "Be suspicious of the one saying, 'Everything is going to be okay!'"

Yet another test can be found in the very way Jeremiah makes his appeal - by looking to past prophets. He is establishing the pattern; what have previous prophets (that have proven true) prophesied and is it consistent with this prophet? Once again, his implication is, "Be suspicious of one that speaks a prophesy that is not consistent with previous true prophets."

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So it would seem there are at least a few tests for determining if a prophet is indeed speaking for God:

- 1) See if what they say comes to pass.
- 2) Be careful of one with a message of “peace.”
- 3) Look to see if the message is in harmony with prophets that have come before.

These are not independent tests but are rather to be applied together. For example, in Deut 13:1-3 we have another important text regarding true and false prophets. In this text God, through Moses, is instructing the people what to do when a prophet leads them to worship other gods. In this situation, notice that the prophet is identified as FALSE, yet his prophecy comes TRUE. An instruction to follow other gods would indeed go against previous instruction and prophets.

Summary

Regardless of what the world has to offer with aggressive nations or power-hungry leaders, God is in control. During the period of the divided kingdom and captivity we witness God’s direct intervention with leaders from Assyria, Babylon and Persia.

As the people of Judah were led away to Babylon, some must have thought what would become of them. Indeed, according to the physical promises first given to Abraham, the phrase “God’s people” was defunct. It began when they did not keep their end of the covenant.

“Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals, and they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the LORD to anger. So they forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtaroth. And the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around them, so that they could no longer

stand before their enemies. Wherever they went, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had spoken and as the LORD had sworn to them, so that they were severely distressed. Then the LORD raised up judges who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them. And yet they did not listen to their judges, for they played the harlot after other gods and bowed themselves down to them. They turned aside quickly from the way in which their fathers had walked in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do as their fathers. And when the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed and afflicted them. But it came about when the judge died, that they would turn back and act more corruptly than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them and bow down to them; they did not abandon their practices or their stubborn ways. So the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He said, “Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers, and has not listened to My voice” (Judges 2:11-20)

God’s patience finally ran out after the reign of Manasseh. The door was shut on God’s earthly nation.

“And I will abandon the remnant of My inheritance and deliver them into the hand of their enemies, and they shall become as plunder and spoil to all their enemies; because they have done evil in My sight, and have been provoking Me to anger, since the day their fathers came from Egypt, even to this day.” (2 Kings 21:14-15)

Thus, recalling God’s promise to David nearly 500 years earlier...

“When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me;” (2 Sam 7:12-14)

God’s fulfillment would instead be in a spiritual sense (Heb 1:5, Ish 9:6-7).

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Questions for Discussion

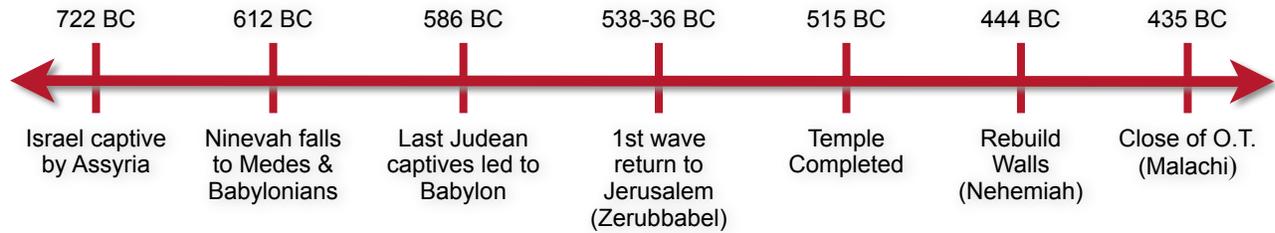
- 1) Read 2 Chron 33:15-19. What can you conclude about the 'high places' during Manasseh's reign?

- 2) Identify the ages of Josiah at each of his 'life events.'

- 3) What parallels can you draw between the lives of Daniel and Joseph (shoot for five)?

- 4) Match the King to the descriptor.
 - a) Youngest to take throne in Judah; tutelage from Jehoiada _____ Jehoiachin
 - b) Eliminated house of Ahab; 'the best of the worst' in Israel; anointed by Elisha; notorious bad driver. _____ Manasseh
 - c) First in Israel; established his own religion. _____ Athaliah
 - d) First good king in Judah; warred with Israel. _____ Hezekiah
 - e) Second youngest to take throne in Judah (aged 8 yrs). _____ Omri
 - f) First in Judah; Solomon's son _____ Jeroboam
 - g) Taken from throne into Babylon. _____ Josiah
 - h) Worst in Israel. In 853, fought in famous Battle of Qarqar. _____ Jehu
 - i) One of the best in Judah; encouraged by Isaiah _____ Joash (Jehoash)
 - j) Built Samaria in Israel; Hebrews called by his name by outsiders. _____ Ahab
 - k) Worst in Judah. _____ Asa
 - l) Only queen to rule (in Judah); granddaughter of Omri _____ Rehoboam

Lesson 12: The Remnant



LESSON TEXT:

- Lamentations
- ~ Daniel 6, 9-12
- ~ Ezra 1-6
- Haggai, Zechariah
- ~ Esther
- ~ Ezra 7-10
- ~ Nehemiah
- Malachi

The decree of Cyrus the Great marks the end of Judah's captivity – 70 years since they were taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar. It has also been nearly 200 years since the ten northern tribes were led away by the Assyrians.

While northern cities such as Samaria, Bethel, and Meggido probably retained a small population of the poorest Jews left behind by the Assyrian army, they now had many other races of people living there and intermixing. (This was the root cause for the distain that had developed between the Jews in Jerusalem and the people to the North known as Samaritans during the first century.)

Unlike the Jews that were taken into Assyrian captivity, there was likely at least some comfort among the southern kingdom in that they were largely kept together during their captivity. They had the support of each other and were able to

continue in their personal devotion to God – if they were so inclined. It was probably during their captivity that the idea of a Synagogue started; a central gathering place for Jews to worship.

Additionally, they had Daniel. The political positions held by himself and his friends afforded the people comforts and considerations they would not have otherwise received. It's reasonable to assume that policies were affected in a way that would allow a Godly people to exist and even prosper under an otherwise ungodly government.

But even more than this, what we see in the Bible account is the power of example. Daniel's (and his friends') example had to have a tremendous effect on the people. It certainly did for the kings he came into personal contact with - from both Babylon and Persia. Their example in refusing to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's idol was an incredible public display of devotion to God.

The combination of public policy and personal example/influence combined not simply to maintain, but increase a flame of faith. When the people were allowed to return, they were ready to trade what had become a reasonably comfortable life for one that would be very difficult. They would start a journey back to a devastated land and begin the hard work of rebuilding.

With the combination of focus, dedication and great leadership, they began a journey back to God.

The Remnant - A Case Study in Jeremiah

Webster defines the word 'remnant' simply as "a usually small part, member, or trace remaining; a small surviving group." It is applied in a physical

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sense often by the prophets and it describes the Jews that returned as Ezra recorded:

"And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and our great guilt, since Thou our God hast requited us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us an escaped remnant as this, shall we again break Thy commandments and intermarry with the peoples who commit these abominations? Wouldst Thou not be angry with us to the point of destruction, until there is no remnant nor any who escape? O LORD God of Israel, Thou art righteous, for we have been left an escaped remnant, as it is this day; behold, we are before Thee in our guilt, for no one can stand before Thee because of this." (Ezra 9:13-15)

However, many of the prophets write of the eventual return of the 'remnant of Jacob,' 'of Judah,' or 'of Israel' in a spiritual sense. Specifically, they are referring to those – Jews and Gentiles – that would be part of Christ's Kingdom – the Church. How do we know that 'remnant' is being used in a spiritual sense?

To answer that question we first have to identify some of the prophetic passages referring to the remnant. Isaiah 10, Jeremiah 31 and Amos 9 are a few such passages. But before diving into them, we should acknowledge the writings of the prophets as a unique class of scripture which deserves special care.¹⁰

While portions may be straightforward, historical accounts that have direct bearing on our historical survey (e.g. Dan 3-6, Jer 26-29), far more of the prophets' writings consist of highly figurative and symbolic language. In fact, there are times the prophet himself did not (or could not) have known the full meaning of his writing(s) given other inspired writers' interpretations that we have recorded for us (1 Pet 1:10-12; ex: Hos 11:1 cf Matt 2:15).

As a result, we really need to apply at least two criteria when attempt-

ing to interpret a prophet's writing. First, *the immediate (and broader) context* should be taken into account. This is a primary rule for the proper interpretation of any scripture and it applies to the prophets' writings as well.

Of all the prophets, Jeremiah spoke the most about the remnant so contextually, he's probably the best place to start. At his point in history the northern tribes of Israel have been swept away by the Assyrians for some 150 years and Babylon is now doing the same to Judah. God calls on Jeremiah to tell the people that their fate is sealed (1:15-16). His instruction to the people through the prophet was to go away to Babylon willingly and live for seventy years (25:8-13, 29:4-10).

As we looked at in the last lesson, other [false] prophets were preaching resistance (27:18-22). For those already carried away they wooed them with

PERSIA		
Cyrus the Great, II	<i>Daniel 6, 9-11, Ezra 1-4</i>	559-530
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Defeated Medes, Babylonians ● Decree allowing Zerubbabel to return (1st exiles); Cyrus Cylinder 539 ● aka Darius the Mede (Daniel 5:31, 6, 9, 11) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Either another name for Cyrus (11:1 in Septuagint reads Cyrus), or more likely • A governor of Cyrus, also named Gobryus 		
Cambyses III	<i>Ezra 4:6?</i>	530-522
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The elder son of Cyrus the Great ● Some believe the Ahasuerus in Ez 4:6 when work on the Temple stopped 		
Bardiya	<i>Ezra 4:7?</i>	522
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The younger son of Cyrus the Great (Cambyses' half-brother) ● Some believe the Artaxerxes in Ez 4:7 ● Rumored by Darius I that he was actually a Magian imposter priest 		
Darius I (the Great)	<i>Ezra 5-6, Haggai, Zech.</i>	521-486
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Temple completed after 14 year hiatus 515 ● Battle of Marathon (Athens and Sparta) 490 		
Xerxes	<i>Esther</i>	486-465
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Possibly the Ahasuerus in Ez 4:6 (if vv.6-23 are citing future events) ● Battle of Thermopylae (300 Spartans) 480 ● Defeated by Greeks in Salamis (Themistocles); Marries Esther 480 		
Artaxerxes I	<i>Ezra 7-10, Nehemiah</i>	464-424
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Possibly the Artaxerxes in Ez 4:7 (if vv.6-23 are citing future events) ● Decree allowing Ezra to return (2nd exiles) 458 ● Letters allowing Nehemiah to return to rebuild the wall (3rd exiles) 444 ● Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem a second time (Neh 13:6) 433 		
Darius II		423-404
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Possibly 'Darius the Persian' in Nehemiah 12:22 		
Artaxerxes II		404-359
Darius III		336-330
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Defeated by Alexander the Great ● Probably the fourth king of Persia (Dan 11:2) 		

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proclamations that their captivity would only amount to a few years or 'time already served' (28, 29:8-9,24-32). Those that remained in Jerusalem - still under Babylonian rule - believed fleeing to Egypt was the best option (42, 44:11-15,24-29). In chapter 24 this "remnant of Jerusalem" (vs. 8) is compared to "bad figs" that will be destroyed while the "good figs" are those who dutifully left. They will be brought back to live in the land (vv. 5-6)

The context for these passages clearly speaks about a "small remaining group" - by definition a physical remnant. But in the many other contexts where the prophet Jeremiah speaks about a remnant, the astute Bible student might wonder if a physical remnant was all that Jeremiah had in mind.

First, consider the language Jeremiah uses in some of these other passages:

- In 3:14, God says, "I will take you, one from a city and two from a family" (e.g. a remnant) and He will bring them "to Zion." In the next four verses He describes a time ("in those days") where shepherds will feed them with knowledge, when they will no longer remember or follow the old covenant, when all nations shall be called to the throne of the Lord and be gathered to the land which God promised.
- In 12:15-17, God describes after "plucking them up" and having compassion on them, He will "bring them again each to his heritage and each to his land" along with other nations (i.e. Gentiles) that swear by His name.
- In 16:15-16, God says He will bring them back to the inherited land from the north countries to which they were driven and He is "sending for many fishers, declares the Lord, and they shall catch them."
- In 23:3-8, after He chastises "the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture," God says, "I will gather the remnant of my flock" and "I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and

righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely."

- In 50:1-7, after a series of judgments against the nations (46:1), God again reminds them "In those days and in that time" the scattered "lost sheep" of Judah and Israel "shall ask the way to Zion, with faces turned toward it, saying, 'Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant that will never be forgotten.'"

Do you notice a pattern throughout these? A Christian should recognize some familiar words, phrases and concepts from the New Testament. It certainly seems Jeremiah is hinting toward a remnant of spiritual consequence...

...But there's more. In fact, one significant omission from the preceding list is Jeremiah 30-33. In these four chapters Jeremiah almost exclusively talks about the "remnant of Israel" (31:7). His words (e.g. God's words¹¹) expand upon the same characteristics described elsewhere, such as:

- **The Timing:** It would take place in the future - "In that day" (30:8), "At that time" (31:1, 33:15), "days are coming" (30:3, 31:27,31,38, 33:14) - and be understood "In the latter days" (30:24).
- **The Law:** God says of this remnant, "you shall be my people, and I will be your God." (30:24, 32:38) and further lays claim to them with "a new covenant" (31:31) "not like the covenant that I made with their fathers" (31:32). This new law will be "everlasting" (32:40) and He "will put...within them, and on their heart I will write it" (31:33). He "will give them one heart and one way" (32:39).
- **God's part:** He "will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock" (31:10) and lead them "in a straight path in which they shall not stumble." (31:9)
- **The people's part:** They will enjoy an almost Eden-like environment with "land" and "fortunes". (30:3, 32:44, 33:6-7). They will have "quiet and ease" (30:10) and sing "songs of thanksgiving" (30:19, 31:23, 33:11 - this last reference adding "the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride" to those heard

singing). They will be comprised of "the blind and the lame, the pregnant woman and she who is in labor" (31:8) together with "young women [who] rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry." (31:13)

- **Their Leader:** God will give them a "prince" who will "be one of themselves" (30:21) and he will be able to draw near to God in a way the people cannot. This leader whom God will "raise up" is also called "David their king" (30:9) and "a righteous Branch to spring up for David" (33:15). Very emphatically, God reaffirms that the Davidic covenant first entered in 2 Sam 7 will yet be honored (33:17-22).

A good summary to the entire four chapter section largely discussing the remnant would be in 31:25:

"For I will satisfy the weary soul, and every languishing soul I will replenish."

When we consider these four chapters together with the previous list, it's clear that Jeremiah was *not* talking about the physical remnant - those subset of people which returned to the land during the days of Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah and prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. The description simply doesn't fit.

Even though he is using physical concepts and language they could relate to, Jeremiah appears to be describing New Testament times and the Christian's walk as a part of Christ's body - the church. We can begin to see that only after culling together the various references and noting the peculiar (but consistent) way in which the 'Seers' spoke God's word.¹²

So we have considered the first, primary rule: the context - immediate and broad. In doing so we have discovered a pattern in language and word choice which further helps our correct interpretation.¹³ We know Jeremiah spoke clearly of a physical remnant that would return from Babylonian captivity, but he also hinted to something quite different.

While we now have strong indicators to a 'spiritually applied remnant' in these Jeremiah texts, we must acknowledge the fact it is highly figurative prophetic language. How can we make a confident interpretation? Well...we can't...except when we can leverage the second rule for prophecy interpretation - *another inspired writer interpreting it for us.*

In this instance, the writer of Hebrews does just that. In the middle of a book dedicated to substantiating why the Jewish Christian should hold fast to his new faith in Christ, the writer confirms in Hebrews 8 that Jeremiah's "latter days" remnant is in fact the spiritual remnant living under Christ's covenant.

Using an inspired writer's interpretation of Jeremiah 31:31-34, the God-fearing student can confidently assert Jeremiah was talking about the spiritual remnant that began on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2.¹⁴ Furthermore, we can return to the context and see all of the wonderful, figurative ways in which the prophet speaks of that time and those people.

There was of course a physical remnant of Jews who returned from exile to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Upon their return, Ezra and Nehemiah lead the people in an emotional religious restoration.

They "assembled with fasting, in sackcloth, and with dirt upon them...While they stood in their place, they read from the book of the law of the Lord their God for a fourth of the day; and for another fourth they confessed and worshiped the Lord their God." (Neh 9:1, 3)

Yet the restored exiles of physical Israel were only a foreshadowing of the true remnant - spiritual Israel. A remnant which would be set free by the blood of Christ. As is the case repeatedly in the Old Testament, that which was physical (and inherently imperfect) was pointing to something spiritual (and inherently perfect).

The restored exiles of physical Israel were only a foreshadowing of the true remnant - spiritual Israel.

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Numbers

A high level study through the Old Testament should, it seems, include something about the symbolic roll that numbers play. Because certain numbers appear over and over and the consistent way in which they are applied give reasonable cause to draw some conclusions as to their meaning.

(While patterns can be observed and inferences made about their usage, drawing direct application and meaning from numbers in the Bible can also get quickly out of hand. Many a modern day false 'prophet' has attempted to read into the use of numbers in the Bible a meaning that is not there. For proof of this, one only has to recall the turn of the millennium in 2,000. Contrary to many predictions, Christ did not come.)

Nevertheless, certain numbers do appear to have significance. Most prevalent would be the numbers 3, 7, 10, 12, 40 and 70. For example, the holiness of the number *three* in the Godhead, or the completeness of number *ten* in the ten plagues or the Ten Commandments.

The occurrence of the number *forty* should certainly not escape one's notice at this point in the Old Testament:

- The forty days and nights it rained on the earth (Gen 7:4),
- The life of Moses: forty years each in Egypt, in Moab and leading Israel,
- The forty days and nights Moses did not eat or drink while receiving the Law (Ex 34:38),
- The wandering of Israel forty years in the desert,
- The spying out of the Promised Land for forty days (Num 13:25),
- During the period of the judges, several cycles of forty years during which the people were either undisturbed or under foreign rule,
- The forty year reign of each of the three kings of the united Israel¹⁵.

- In the New Testament, the forty days and nights that Jesus was in the desert tempted by Satan (another type-antitype between Moses and Jesus).

The context and consistency with which it is used indicates there is symbolism in its use. It is clear its meaning is that of something running its course (in an earthly sense) – as in a generation.

Most significant and interesting of all the numbers is probably the number *seven*. Through its use one could conclude it symbolizes perfection, most typically in a spiritual sense. It plays a heavy role in the rituals, feasts and sacrifices of God's people:

- The seventh day of the week was the Sabbath,
- the seventh year was a sabbatical year,
- the jubilee year came after seven sabbatical years (7x7),
- circumcision was done on the seventh day after birth,
- the sevenfold sprinkling of blood at the altar when anointing the tabernacle,
- the Passover was on the fourteenth day (7x2),
- Pentecost was fifty days (7 weeks) after the Passover's Sabbath,
- the seventh month included the Day of Atonement and Feast of Booths.

This list could go on in referencing various random events in the Old Testament:

- Joseph interpreting Pharaoh's dream as seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine. (Gen 41)
- Joshua's march around Jericho seven days, with seven priests carrying seven trumpets... and on the seventh day marching around the city seven times. (Josh 6:1-4)
- Namaan bathing in the Jordan seven times. (2 Kings 5:1-14)
- Nebuchadnezzar ordering the furnace to be heated at seven times its normal temperature. (Dan 3:19)

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- Nebuchadnezzar's humbling from God for "seven periods of time." (Dan 4:16)

Numerous references to the number seven could be cited in the New Testament as well. For example, we have Jesus' teaching to His disciples that they forgive "up to seventy times seven" (Matt 18:22). Or the selection of "seven men of good reputation" at the first century church in Jerusalem (Acts 6:3). And finally, the seven churches in Asia. (Rev 1-3)

Related to this would be the use in Scripture of the number *seventy* – or the combination of seven and ten. To just list a few: Jacob's total offspring was seventy (Gen 46:27), Moses had seventy elders (Num 11:24, 25), and Ahab's seventy sons that Jehu killed (2 Kings 10).

Summary

So what does all of this symbolism mean? First, what it *does not* mean. God is not trying to send a secret message for those with a calculus degree to figure out. There are no hidden codes or formulas.

Whatever number symbolism exists in the Bible is not there for man to apply his finite wisdom or logic to predict the second coming of Christ. That is not for man to know (Lk 12:40, 1 Thess 5:1-4, 2 Pet 3:10). Nor is it for us to make endless and speculative literal application as in this misguided instance:

It is interesting to speculate on the figure of 7,000 mentioned in both 1 Kings 19:18 and Romans 11:4. Amos 5:3 and Isaiah 6:13 show very clearly that the remnant of physical Israel will be about one-tenth, a

tithe, a literal decimation of Israel. The nation's population totaled about 2 1/2 million at the time of the Exodus from Egypt. Six hundred years later during Elijah's ministry, her population must have been similar or even higher. Today, the nations of modern Israel have a combined population in excess of 470 million, so the remnant of physical Israel at the end time may be over 47 million people!

But how big is the remnant of spiritual Israel, the church of God? If we assume that the figure of 7,000 is one-tenth of the whole like the remnant of physical Israel, then the original number of spiritual Israelites is 70,000. If we combined the membership lists of all the churches of God, could we not produce a list well over 100,000? Does this mean that God does not consider many "members" to be part of His elect? Or could it mean that the spiritual remnant is even smaller than one-tenth?

"The Remnant", by Richard T. Ritenbaugh
Forerunner, "Prophecy Watch," April 1995

It *does* mean simply that God had a plan. In a more elegant way than the greatest human author could ever accomplish, God consistently communicated that plan. Furthermore, he did so with multiple writers that stretched across hundreds and hundreds of years.

So, what meaning is there behind the fact that the Judean captivity lasted seventy years and the entire Jewish system was destroyed in 70 AD with the destruction of Jerusalem? Only God knows the answer to that question.

However, it does provide for the N.T. Christian further evidence as to the power and foreknowledge of God. Not only did He have a plan from the beginning, but He had the power to make it "work together for good."

Questions for Discussion

- 1) Who was not able to give evidence of their lineage? Why would that matter?
- 2) How much time transpires between Ezra chapters 6 and 7?

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- 3) What reason was given that work should stop on building the temple?
- 4) What caused the people to start building again?
- 5) It is not the first occurrence (xref 2 Chr 29:34), but in Ezra 6:8 why are priests and Levites named separately? Are they not the same?
- 6) Who was Nehemiah's nemesis during the building of the wall? Why do you think there was so much strife between them?
- 7) How long did it take to complete the wall?
- 8) What from the peoples' confession in Nehemiah confirms their understanding of God's promise to them?

Lesson 13: Summary and Review

This study has attempted to consider the Old Testament within its historical context. Its writers, through the Holy Spirit, have not simply written about Jewish history but have provided the very backdrop and foundation for all that a first century Christian believes.

Hopefully you do not think about the Old Testament as simply a random collection of 39 books. Instead it should be thought of as seventeen books of history telling the story of God's great plan...

...supported by seventeen books written by prophets of God that preached to God's people within a particular historical context...

...supported by five books of poetry and wisdom giving us greater insight into the mind of God and practical ways in which to live a Godly life.

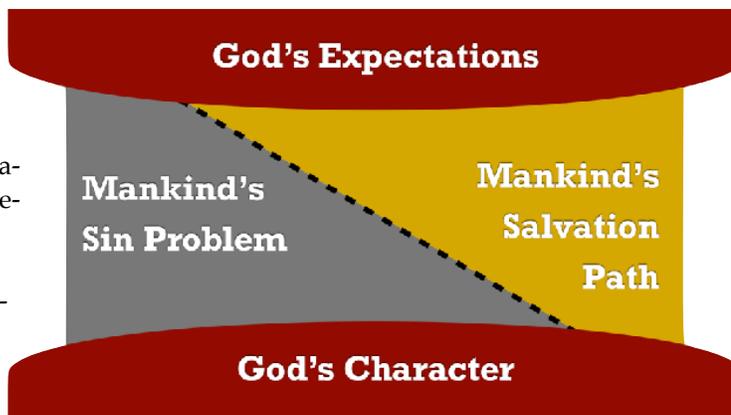
Themes

Every book of the Old Testament contains evidence of the Bible's four great themes:

- 1) God's character
- 2) Mankind's sin problem (or "dilemma")
- 3) Mankind's path to salvation (inferring God's desire to save mankind)
- 4) God's expectations

They are themes that belong uniquely within the pages of the Old Testament. For example, consider the picture a Bible student would form of any of these subjects if they only read the New Testament.

It is probably why so many today have a one-dimensional view of God. They believe that God is Love – *only*. They miss the fact that God is also Just. His perfection requires that one's sin demands a just recompense (Matt 16:27).



The selfishness and shortsightedness that are inherent in man just don't jump off the page in the New Testament like they do in the Old Testament. The individual examples in the New Testament just don't compare to the comprehensive and practical examples from generation after generation in the Old Testament.

Since the New Testament opens with the birth of Christ, it is obvious that only in the Old Testament can one read about the promise of His coming. Furthermore, the prophecies about Jesus give testimony not just to His coming, but also His character, the message He would bring and the establishment of His Kingdom and Bride – the church.

Finally, God's expectations are repeatedly demonstrated. Not the least being His requirement for full and complete obedience. In most cases, the characters of old would be classified as either the 'best of the best' (e.g. Noah, Moses, Joshua, David, etc.) or the 'worst of the worst' (e.g. Balaam, Ahab, Manasseh, pagan Kings/nations, etc.) based solely on the degree to which they adhered to God's commands or instructions.

These four Old Testament themes are indeed interesting to consider individually, but are most exciting when applied collectively. For example, while one can obtain a richer understanding of God's characteristics in the Old Testament, His patience and mercy in particular are accentuated

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by His desire to save and have a relationship with man.

	GOD'S CHARACTER
	ALL POWERFUL
	MERCIFUL
	PROVIDENCE
	MANKIND'S SIN PROBLEM
	ACQUIRED, NOT INHERITED
	FORGETFUL NATURE
	MANKIND'S PATH TO SALVATION
	MESSIAH WOULD COME
	PATH TO SALVATION / PATTERN
	GOD'S EXPECTATIONS
	SOLE SOURCE, ATTENTION
	MAN'S HEART IS HIS DESIRE
	FORMAL WORSHIP / PATTERN
	CARE FOR WIDOW AND ORPHAN
	OBEBY BETTER THAN SACRIFICE
<hr/>	
O.T. Major Themes: Sub-themes & Patterns	

Of course, Peter states in his letter that the Lord “is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” (2 Pet 3:9) But a fuller and richer understanding of His patience is vividly understood when considering the lives of Old Testament figures such as David or Manasseh. God is indeed longsuffering!!

Sub-Themes

These themes carry with them many sub-themes, any one of which could warrant extensive study. God’s longsuffering is but one of His characteristics showcased throughout the Old Testament. Also illuminated are His characteristics of grace, mercy, authority, power, jealousy, wrath, judgment, even His providence. If it were not for the Old Testament, we would not have a full understanding of the character and attributes of God Almighty.

From God’s character to God’s expectations, we can know exactly what He requires through the Old Testament. The principles of undivided allegiance to Him (e.g. Israel “playing the harlot”) and that obeying is better than sacrificing (e.g. the story of Cain and Abel) are sub-themes that are reinforced in the New Testament. The greatest expectation that God has is for man’s heart (Deut 5:29, 10:16, 30:6, 32:46, Josh 22:5, 1 Sam 12:24).

Patterns

Along with many sub-themes, there are also many patterns that give greater meaning and emphasis to New Testament doctrines. For example, God expects that He be worshiped in a formal way. Some “religious” people today argue that they can worship God in “their own way,” by going camping and witnessing the beauty that is in creation. Certainly, that is a great way to appreciate God, but God expects formal worship.

If that is not clear enough of the examples given in the New Testament book of Acts where Christians met on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7), it certainly should be clear by reading through the Old Testament. There is example after example, beginning with Cain and Abel, the Patriarchs, and on through the nation of Israel and the remnant. Not only are there many examples of formal worship, but we also have the pattern for formal worship given through the Israelite’s tabernacle (see [“The Tent of Meeting,”](#) page 24), and later, Temple worship.

Recall also the repeated pattern of God’s grace, man’s faith, and the demonstration of his faith by a working obedience. *God’s nature has not and does not change.* These patterns for worship and obedience remain as expectations by God for us.

The Golden Lamp Stand

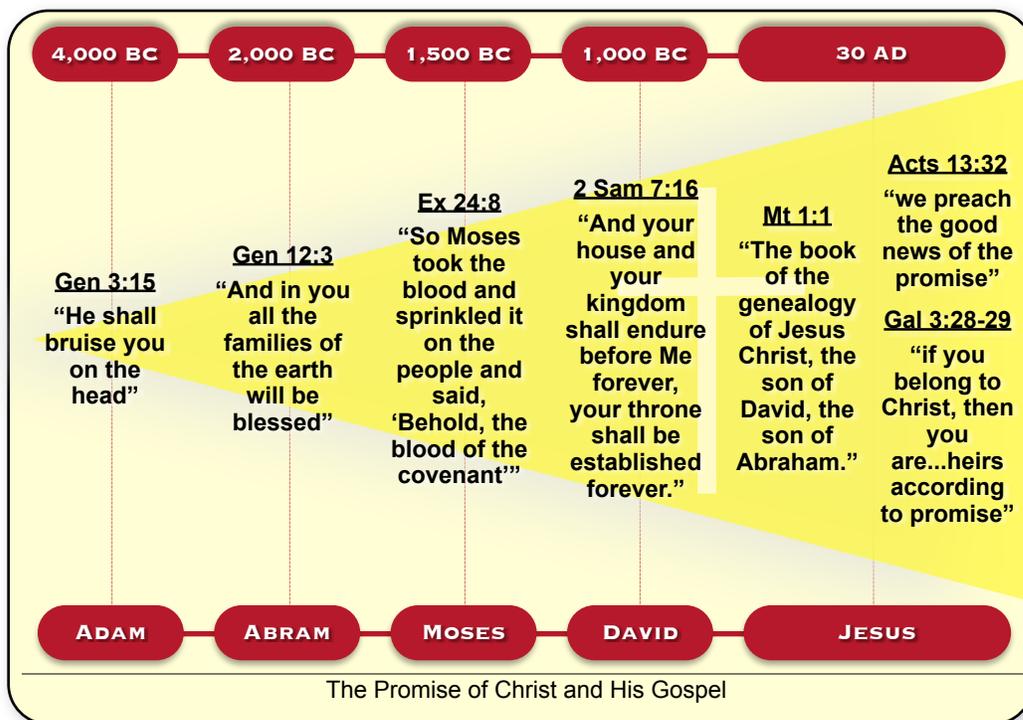
The charting of all the symbolism, foreshadowing, and types in the Old Testament would be an exhausting work. Really, all one needs to know and understand is the plan that God had for man’s salvation. Reconciliation needed to happen the very moment the relationship was broken by Adam and Eve’s sin in the Garden. While by temporary means throughout the Old Testament, He had a plan for permanent reconciliation through the sending of His only begotten Son.

The glimpse into His great plan is first seen all the way back in the beginning – in Genesis 3:15. It is a thread that is woven throughout the Bible; a thread that without which the entire fabric would come undone. Instead of a “thread” metaphor, consider the Biblical writers’ analogy of Jesus as “the chief corner stone.” It is first prophesied by

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David (Ps 118:22) and confirmed to be fulfilled through Jesus' life by Matthew (Matt 21:42), Mark (Mk 12:10), Luke (Lk 20:17, Acts 4:11), Paul (Eph 2:20) and Peter (1 Pet 2:6-7).

Just as the solid gold lamp stand was the sole source of light in the otherwise dark Holy Place of the Tabernacle, so too is Jesus the light of the world. This fact is a major theme of John's gospel. In that New Testament book Jesus says,



- "For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed." (3:20)
- "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." (8:12)
- "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (9:5)
- "For a little while longer the light is among you. Walk while you have the light, that darkness may not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. While you have the light, believe in the light, in order that you may become sons of light." (12:35-36)
- "I have come as light into the world, that everyone who believes in Me may not remain in darkness." (12:46)

The picture is complete when considering that John opens his book by equating Jesus, this light of the world, to the Word (Jn 1:1-5). If Jesus "lit" the world when he walked upon its surface (Jn 9:5), and Jesus and His Word are one and the same, then His Word – the Gospel of Christ - continues to "light" the world even today.

So how does the Word give light today? Paul gives instruction to "let the word of Christ richly dwell within you." (Col 3:16) Therefore, not only was Jesus the light of the world when he was on earth because of the gospel he taught, we too will light the world if His word is dwelling in us.

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matt 5:14-16)

"No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it away in a cellar, nor under a peck-measure, but on the lampstand, in order that those who enter may see the light. The lamp of your body is your eye; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness. Then watch out that the light in you may not be darkness. If therefore your whole body is full of light, with no dark part in it, it shall be wholly illumined, as when the lamp illumines you with its rays." (Luke 11:33-36)

May the light shine in each of us as we come to know and prayerfully understand His word, manifesting it each day through our actions.

Endnotes

Message from the Author:

While I doubt this material was more useful to you than it was to me in creating it, I hope that it provided some assistance in your study through the Old Testament. I obviously had to reference other secular material for some of the content but my goal was to base most of the content on personal observations gleaned by simply reading the Bible text. In large part I believe that I accomplished that goal.

However, in so doing it is certainly possible that something I have written is not an accurate interpretation of Scripture. Whether due to a misunderstanding on my part, poor articulation or just bad writing style, I trust that you would make it known to me.

Darren Brackett

dbrackett27@gmail.com

¹ Teacher's Note: This guide is designed to be taught over a thirteen-week quarter. While one might neatly cover each of the thirteen lessons over each week with two classes each week, one suggestion might be to abbreviate the first lesson ("Introduction") and abbreviate or skip all together lessons nine ("Great Poetry and Wisdom") and thirteen ("Review"). The poetry and wisdom books could be a class to themselves and don't contribute to the chronological, historical focus of this study while the review can (and probably should) be handled in small increments in each class. This effectively gives ten lessons covering twelve weeks which is challenging enough! Please contact the author if you would like other supplementary materials such as charts, Keynote presentation (which can be converted to PowerPoint), etc.

² A chronological Bible might be a good investment. Several are available, but most in the NIV translation. There is at least one book available that conveniently aligns the complementary text of 1&2 Samuel, 1&2 Kings and 1&2 Chronicles. Not unlike a harmony of the Gospels, "*A Harmony of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles*" by William Day Crockett might be a good addition to a personal library.

³ In 1882, staunch evolutionist Herbert Spencer, an English philosopher, biologist, and sociologist who was a prominent classical liberal political theorist of the Victorian era, recognized "likenesses and unlikenesses among phenomena..., which are segregated into manifestations..., and then into **space** and **time**, **matter** and **motion** and **force**..." (Soylent Communications, 2011, emp. added). In *First Principles*, under the chapter heading, "Space, Time, Matter, Motion, and Force," he wrote, "These modes of cohesion under which manifestations are **invariably presented**, and therefore **invariably represented**, we call...Space and Time,...Matter and Motion [action—JM]" (1882, 1:171, emp. added). "Though Space, Time, Matter, and Motion, are apparently all necessary data of intelligence, yet a psychological analysis...shows us that these are either built up of, or abstracted from, experiences of Force" (p. 169). So, time, force, action, space, and matter are the five manifestations of all scientific phenomena. (<http://www.apologeticspress.org/>)

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⁴ Woolley uncovered more than 2,000 tombs from Ur between 1922 to 1934 and before that he participated in the excavation of the ancient Hittite city of Carchemish in 1912 to 1914.

⁵ The lists of those counted as judges seem to vary greatly. There is after all some degree of subjectivity in designating an actual judge of Israel during this time. Abimelech is traditionally counted as a judge but the only qualifier appears to be that some portion of the book of Judges is dedicated to his story.

⁶ Actually, it's been found that #11982 is one Freecell game that has proven to be un-winnable ☺

⁷ After this, history is conspicuously absent of any more exploits by Sennacherib. Secular historians are left to wonder how such a powerful Assyrian king is not heard from again. After all (they reason), Sennacherib's own account of events leaves him victorious. If only they would read the Bible, they would understand why!

⁸ This article is inspired by a sermon I heard delivered in 1998 by the late Dr. Phil Roberts. Brother Roberts was an amazing student of the Old Testament and the Prophets in particular. I have a tape of this sermon he delivered at a Miller Avenue church of Christ lectureship. I have a few more of his sermons from that series on tape - I wish I had more!

⁹ In about 595BC, a rebellion took place in Babylon as recorded in the Babylonian Chronicles. Nebuchadnezzar successfully put it down as he continued to rule for about 32 more years.

¹⁰ This article is taken from a much larger study called "Prophecy 101 - How to Study the Prophets".

¹¹ We must remember that all of God's prophets literally spoke the words of God. Unlike preachers or teachers today who speak their own words (which are hopefully inspired by prayerful study and interpretation of God's written word), prophets like Jeremiah spoke God's literal words. We see a vivid representation of this with the commissioning of prophets like Ezekial (Ezk 3:1-4), Jeremiah (Jer 1:7-9, 15:16), and John (Rev 10:8-11).

¹² The fact that the prophets were often called "Seers" is important to note. The distinction to be made here is that God didn't necessarily tell them what to say but rather *showed them* what to say. This would in turn explain the often graphic way in which the prophets divulged God's word to the people, not to mention the impact it must have had on the prophet personally. Imagine the difference in your description of the Grand Canyon if someone told you what it looked like versus you witnessing it for yourself. In the latter instance, not only would you be more convicted and passionate - maybe even emotional - in your demeanor but likely more colorful and verbose in your language - maybe even poetic.

¹³ The peculiar words and phrases used by Jeremiah are not unique to him. Other prophets use the exact same language to describe seemingly identical things (and why should that be surprising since in all cases they are God's literal words?). Whether reading Jeremiah, Isaiah, or Ezekiel we would offer the following "top ten list" of words/phrases often (but not necessarily always) tipping the reader toward a special, spiritual meaning or application: Israel/Jacob/Ephraim/Judah, land/inheritance, nations, war/peace, zion/holy mountain/Jerusalem, remnant, day of the Lord, last days/latter days, everlasting kingdom, light/lamp. As a bonus, consider these less frequent but equally compelling "trigger words": stone/rock, springs (of water), sword (two-edged), marriage/married/husband. Any use of these by the prophets - especially when combined together - deserve a close contextual examination.

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¹⁴ Isaiah and Amos also write about the spiritual remnant. In Isaiah 10, Isaiah refers to it as the “remnant of Israel and those of the house of Jacob” (10:20). He says they will rely on the Lord and “a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse” (11:1). “He will lift up a standard for the nations, and will assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” (11:12) For Amos' part, he writes in chapter 9:12 (with broader context of 9:7-15) about the "remnant of Edom" and describes it in almost the identical imagery and language used by Jeremiah. Once again, as with Jeremiah, before we jump to emphatically declare Isaiah and Amos' interpretation, two apostles do that for us with direct application of the prophets' writings to the first century church: (1) Paul (Rom 9:27, 11:5): He makes application of Isaiah 10 to the church as he argues works alone do not save, (2) James (Acts 15:13-19): He applies Amos' prophecy in his judgment that Gentiles were to be included in the first century church.

¹⁵ There is question as to the exact reign of Saul. The original text of 1 Samuel 13:1 is damaged and therefore rendered very different depending on the translation. Later translations state that Saul was forty when he began his reign, but only reigned thirty-two years. However, Acts 13:21 states that Saul reigned forty years.